

Mystery Lost: A Catechetical Theology of Worship for Today's Protestant Evangelicals

Aaron S. Bunnell

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for Graduation
from the Malone University Honors Program

Advisor: Bryan C. Hollon, Ph.D.

March 21, 2012

Table of Contents

CHAPTER ONE	INTRODUCTION: WHY CATECHESIS	5
	• Worship and the Knowledge of God	
	• Why Catechesis	
	• The Role of Theologically-Informed Worship	
	• Catechesis Should Be Employed	
CHAPTER TWO	WORSHIP AS A THEOLOGICAL ISSUE	17
	• The Impact of Individualism	
	• God, Worship, and Theological Anthropology	
CHAPTER THREE	CATECHESIS AND WORSHIP	37
	• The Apostles' Creed	
	• The Lord's Prayer	
	• The Ten Commandments	
CHAPTER FOUR	CONCLUSION: A HOPEFUL DIRECTION	69
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	76

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my sincerest gratitude for:

Dr. Diane Chambers, from the very beginning of my studies, you have been both supportive and encouraging of the idea of this project. Along the way you have provided the guidance I have needed to construct what this project has become.

Dr. Matthew P. Phelps, with much enthusiasm, you have provided crucial insight while playing an invaluable role in keeping my ideas grounded and accessible. Because of your devotion along the way, I have felt the utmost support.

Dr. Stephen K. Moroney, your diligent and thoughtful responses during the writing of this project truly inspired and encouraged my efforts. You, too, have played an invaluable role in the development of this project, and without your devoted contribution, this project would not be what it is.

Dr. Bryan C. Hollon, the nature of this project changed enormously since the beginning of our discourses. Nonetheless, you have shown remarkable passion for my thoughts as you helped me to form my ideas into what this project has become. For your wisdom, leadership, and guidance I am truly thankful.

Preface

In the words of the apostle Paul,

And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God. (Philippians 1:9-11 *ESV*)

CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION: WHY CATECHESIS

The Church is like a listing ship. The cargo is loaded either too much to starboard or to port. One generation shifts the weight too far and the ship then lists in the other direction, waiting for another generation with insufficient nuance to start shifting things too far back the other way . . . The task of discerning God's truth is infinitely complex and unfortunately lies in the hands of sinners.¹

- George Guiver

Worship and the Knowledge of God

Over the course of the last few centuries, traditional theological approaches to worship have been forfeited by many evangelical churches. Many Christians have forgone traditional worship patterns and distinctive liturgical elements because they have not been taught to understand them. “Churches have acted ‘like inheritors of an estate who camped in the yard because they neither knew nor cared how to live in the house,’” as Leander Keck has described.² Consequently, this has led to increasingly anthropocentric worship and to shallow preaching and teaching of Scripture.

To reclaim what many have begun to overlook, pastoral leaders should seek a more biblical and explicitly liturgical theology of worship and educate their congregants accordingly. As J. I. Packer has written, “Where wise catechesis [instruction] has flourished, the church has flourished. Where it has been neglected, the church has floundered.”³ Although a vast amount of literature already exists concerning Christian worship theology and praxis, few authors have addressed the relationship between catechesis and worship—that is, the proper theological formation of worshipers in Christian doctrine. Thus, this project will focus, specifically, on the interrelatedness

¹ George Guiver, *Vision upon Vision* (Norwich, UK: Canterbury Press, 2009), 159-60.

² Quoted in Marva J. Dawn, *Reaching Out without Dumbing Down* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), Kindle e-book, 60-61.

³ J. I. Packer, *Grounded in the Gospel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2010), 184.

between worship and catechesis in order to encourage worship in faith communities that is better informed, theologically. In addition, the theology of worship that unfolds in this project will be largely concerned with and guided by the structure of catechesis. Our worship and knowledge of God are inextricably connected, and the former can only be made better by our growth in the latter.

At various times in the history of the Church, a number of influential theologians have recognized the connection between knowledge of God and worship. Right beliefs and right practices were inextricable components of the apostles' message.⁴ A few centuries later, some of Augustine's earliest remarks in Book I of the *Confessions* concerned his knowledge of God and whether he could call on God before he knew him. He wrote, "'Grant me Lord to know and understand' . . . which comes first—to call upon you or to praise you, and whether knowing you precedes calling upon you."⁵ Then, during the time of the Reformation, Martin Luther also averred that having a right knowledge of God was a prerequisite for worshiping God rightly.⁶

Today, Protestant evangelical Christians often have a misconstrued or incomplete understanding of their practices. Typically, the problem does not originate from the actions themselves or their understanding of those actions, but rather from a misunderstanding of who God is.⁷ Our worship and knowledge of God have a fundamentally reciprocal relationship, but regrettably, many of today's Protestant evangelical churches have overlooked how their worship practices are forming the

⁴ Michael Horton, *Christless Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2008), Kindle e-book, 156-57.

⁵ Saint Augustine, *Confessions* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1992), I.i.1.

⁶ Michael Horton, *Putting Amazing Back into Grace* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2002), Apple iBook, 84 of 313.

⁷ Graeme Goldsworthy, *Prayer and the Knowledge of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 10.

character of their congregations and teaching them the language of the faith.⁸ Worship and catechetical instruction are the two primary ways through which we can grasp a knowledge of God,⁹ and “what we believe is fundamental for how we respond.”¹⁰ Packer writes, “[O]ur hymnody has significant power as a catechetical tool, as Ambrose, Luther, the Wesleys, Watts, Toplady, and countless others have recognized . . . What we sing when we come together in congregational worship . . . has power to help clarify for the congregation matters of doctrine, devotion, and duty, and to enhance our delight in the Lord.”¹¹ In sum, people learn the depth of the truths we affirm as Christians through faithful worship.¹²

Due to the rising increase in biblical illiteracy that has recently become evident,¹³ a return to catechetical instruction would be more appropriate than the direction in which many Protestant evangelical churches have moved. Marva J. Dawn quotes George Gallup Jr. who has found that a knowledge of the Bible in many Protestant evangelicals is dwindling and few are able to articulate what they believe or why.¹⁴ While many church leaders recognize this trend, some Protestant evangelical churches have responded by dumbing down the content of their worship services to avoid being too serious or abstract.¹⁵ In turn, rich, traditional forms of worship have been forgone because those who participate in them have not been schooled in how to appreciate them.¹⁶

⁸ Dawn, 105-06.

⁹ LeeAnne Van Dyk, *A More Profound Alleluia* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), Kindle e-book, locations 138-40.

¹⁰ Dawn, 85.

¹¹ Packer, 200.

¹² Dawn, 72.

¹³ Packer, 51. See also Horton, *Christless Christianity*, 41.

¹⁴ Dawn, 114.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 216.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 149.

Why Catechesis

According to Dawn, most Protestant evangelicals would welcome worship that is deeper and more meaningful, but in order for worship to become deeper and still relate, worshipers need to be catechized—that is, formally taught the traditions and heritage of the Christian faith—to appreciate and understand the worship practices that offer the depth they desire.¹⁷ The Church must live in the tension between being set apart from the culture and constantly revitalizing its practices in order that they are accessible to all. Dawn writes, “The primary key for holding the two poles of this dialectic together is education—teaching the gifts of the faith tradition to those who do not yet know and understand them and teaching those who love the heritage some new forms in which it can be presented to others.”¹⁸ After interviewing a number of Christians who had left their churches, William Hendricks concluded that “teaching about God, the body of Christ, the nature of humanity, sin, salvation, spiritual growth, and other theological issues made a profound difference in people’s thinking, attitudes, and behavior.”¹⁹ Perhaps if the individuals Hendricks interviewed had been instructed in these theological matters, they would have stayed.

Historically, explicit catechetical instruction, especially in ethics and the creeds, was held as a vital component of becoming a Christian.²⁰ Unfortunately, over the last few centuries, education of new believers in Protestant evangelical churches has been given less emphasis. As a result, the most dominant form of Christianity in America today—

¹⁷ Ibid., 125.

¹⁸ Ibid., 59-60.

¹⁹ Quoted in Ibid. 290.

²⁰ Robert E. Webber, *Who Gets to Narrate the World?* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), Kindle e-book, locations 426-429. See also James F. White, *A Brief History of Christian Worship* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1993), Kindle e-book, 47.

namely, Protestant evangelicalism—reflects a passion for God that lacks knowledge²¹ and has made belief in God a trivial matter.²² Packer offers three observations for why he suspects believers abstain from catechetical instruction. First, Western culture has developed in individuals the inclination to reject any external authority, including Scripture, and catechesis assumes that proper knowledge must be handed down through instruction, a belief that is unsupportable by many of today's Western thinkers. The second objection to catechesis is derived from the first, that is, Western culture rejects the preeminence of Christian dogma and instruction. The third reason for the dwindling of catechesis is the preoccupation of our churches with current programming.²³

As we work toward change, both history and daily life will play a large role in our thinking about worship and catechesis.²⁴ Whether we are aware of it, our practices are always influenced by inculturation.²⁵ Accepting this truth, George Guiver argues that the true problem concerning worship is to be found in ourselves because we have failed to recognize how culture has formed us.²⁶ In accord with Guiver, Michael Horton would add that the Church has been so bent on being relevant that it has mirrored the world.²⁷ Without educating our congregations in the right knowledge of God and the rich tradition of the Church, we have lost the substance of our worship.²⁸

The Role of Theologically-Informed Worship

Worship renewal can only come from deep changes in theological understanding,

²¹ Horton, *Christless Christianity*, 21.

²² *Ibid.*, 24.

²³ Packer, 10-12. See also White, 143.

²⁴ Guiver, 3.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 80.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 190.

²⁷ Horton, *Christless Christianity*, 16.

²⁸ Webber, *Who Gets to Narrate the World?*, locations 117-18.

which catechesis provides. LeeAnne Van Dyk has contended, “Christian worship is strongest when it is integrally and self-consciously related to the person and work of Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit.”²⁹ For Christians, the gospel is the unique message that our practices, especially our worship, offer the world. While the growth of a person is not the primary aim of worship, in effect an individual will grow in their understanding of themselves through theologically-informed worship. Worship that proclaims the gospel rightly catechizes worshipers, allowing them to properly see, understand, and explore God’s created order.

Christians believe that what is essentially true for human life is found in Jesus Christ.³⁰ Through worship and catechesis that proclaim the gospel, the Church teaches believers how to live rightly, offers a larger story in which the individual can find oneself, and passes on a tradition in which the believer can be grounded.³¹ Accordingly, the focus of the clergyman and congregations must be how they can faithfully reveal God in the Church and to the world,³² for there is nothing more relevant to “guilty image-bearers of God” than the message of redemption that has come through Jesus Christ.³³ It is only by growing in the gospel that we are able to grow and move forward in the faith.³⁴

As Christians, we must always be reminded in our worship that our reverence for God beckons us to live in a way that is noticeably different from the world around us, and when we gather to worship we can encourage one another to remain faithful to the life to

²⁹ Van Dyk, locations 400-402.

³⁰ Dawn, 137-38.

³¹ Ibid., 70.

³² Ibid., 62-63.

³³ Horton, *Christless Christianity*, 22.

³⁴ Packer, 140.

which we have been called in light of God's faithfulness.³⁵ As Dawn has written,

Christians

need worship in which we can encounter God and learn that God is trustworthy, that God is large enough to care for us in everything. We need worship that teaches us God's concern and welcome for all of our neighbors and invites us to participate in God's purposes on their behalf. We need worship deep enough to change us, strong enough to kill our self-absorption, awe-full enough to shatter the little boxes into which we try to fit God, and thorough enough to address the world's needs because God is already at work to meet them.³⁶

Even in its worship, the Church constantly lives in the tension of exercising both truth and love. Truth connects us with the rich Judeo-Christian tradition and history we have inherited. At the same time, love is what allows us to minister to the individuals who need the truth. Truth and love cannot be defined apart from one another. If truth is the sole emphasis with a neglect of love, then believers are inclined toward a Gnostic elitism based on knowledge. On the other hand, if love is the sole emphasis with a neglect of truth, the Church forfeits what distinguishes it from the world and loses the opportunity to offer the truth that has been passed down by tradition.³⁷ Truth and love meet each other best when the Church brings genuine worship before God, which also provides nourishment for the character formation of worshipers. As we worship, we proclaim what we believe about God, allowing participants to embrace his love.³⁸

Catechesis Should Be Employed

Simply stated, those who are ignorant of what Christians believe are prone to

³⁵ Ibid., 203.

³⁶ Dawn, 126.

³⁷ Ibid., 60-61. See also White, 15-16.

³⁸ Ibid., 67.

dangerous errors in doctrine, experience, and practice.³⁹ If believers are going to be equipped to worship rightly, grow in the knowledge of their faith, and be properly formed in character, catechesis must be employed to complement our current practices of worship, preaching, and Bible studies.⁴⁰ Fortunately, many who already claim to be believers are hungry for a basic knowledge of the Christian faith, according to Packer.⁴¹ In fact, there is a growing movement among younger evangelicals to embrace ancient elements of the Judeo-Christian tradition.⁴² This younger generation is frustrated by the shallow faith that has grown from the influence of culture's narcissism, and they desire an authentic faith that produces genuine community and is more concerned with greater issues than the endless passing fads.⁴³

Packer defines catechesis as “the church's ministry of grounding and growing God's people in the Gospel and its implications for doctrine, devotion, duty, and delight,”⁴⁴ and he suggests several reasons why incorporating catechetical instruction into our churches is advantageous. First, Jesus commands that catechesis be a part of the initiation of believers in the Great Commission.⁴⁵ Second, this form of teaching is both biblically and historically grounded, for it began in the Old Testament with the handing down of instruction on the Torah from Israelite parents and teachers to their children and continued in the New Testament where the teaching became centered on the person and work of Jesus Christ.⁴⁶ Lastly, catechesis is not merely instruction in abstract theology

³⁹ Packer, 59.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 17.

⁴¹ Ibid., 22.

⁴² Ibid., 26.

⁴³ Horton, *Christless Christianity*, 18.

⁴⁴ Packer, 29.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 49.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 34.

and Christian doctrine, but rather a pattern of behavior embraced by the instructors who pass on the tradition, believing that obedience to God's standard is the only proper response to who God is and what he has done.⁴⁷ Catechetical instruction has long been devoted to the formation of whole persons.⁴⁸ Ancient catechesis showed a deliberate concern for spiritual readiness, ongoing development in new believers, a holistic approach to instruction, and a combination of sobriety and celebration concerning entry into the church.⁴⁹

The three dimensions of faith within Judaism—namely, learning, worship, and action—were what originally guided the structure of catechesis.⁵⁰ These three elements were preserved in the Patristic Era⁵¹ and were finally concretized by Reformation thinkers who structured catechetical instruction around the Apostles' Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments, determining that “[t]hese three plainly and briefly contain exactly everything that a Christian needs to know” and constitute the “articles of faith common to all Christians.”⁵² The Apostles' Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments all have a firm and specific basis in Scripture.⁵³ The Apostles' Creed provides the fundamental Christian beliefs needed for proper theology, the Lord's Prayer aids us in our communion with God both through prayer and worship, and the Ten Commandments provide fundamental instruction for Christian behavior and function as a

⁴⁷ Ibid., 36. See also Peterson, 29.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 37.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 58.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 37.

⁵¹ For Augustine, the Apostles' Creed trained the individual in faith, the Lord's Prayer in hope, and the double commandment of love in love (Ibid, 63).

⁵² Both quotations are found in Ibid. 62. The former is attributed to Martin Luther while the latter to John Calvin. Luther also included the sacraments as a fourth component in his original structure of the Catechism.

⁵³ Ibid., 122.

primer on ethics.⁵⁴ Thus, these three summaries of the faith “provide a comprehensive introduction to the Christian faith”⁵⁵ and will serve as the basic components of the theology of worship below.

Once again, our worship and knowledge of God are inseparable. All that we know about God has the ultimate purpose of leading us to respond in worship.⁵⁶ “[T]heology is inseparable (though distinct) from prayer and worship—thinking appropriately about God means regularly engaging with God.”⁵⁷ Worship is a fundamental way by which we can proclaim the truths of the gospel and acknowledge God’s sovereignty over nature and history. Worship helps Christians to maintain confidence in who God is and what he has done while being conformed to God’s will against the tides of a world that has turned from its creator.⁵⁸ Ultimately, “[Catechesis] is designed, not for the self-expression and self-culture of a particular Church, but to serve the Communion of Saints, so that all who use it may worship one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and be schooled in one Faith in the unity of the whole Church of God past and present.”⁵⁹

“The goal of all catechetical ministry [can be summarized] as follows: Taught by the Truth and liberated by the Life, we walk in the Way.”⁶⁰ Or, as the Latin expression holds, *lex orandi, lex credendi, lex vivendi* (“and as we pray and believe, so we live”).⁶¹ Continual growth is necessary for believers in all stages of life and in all stages of the

⁵⁴ Ibid., 87.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 123.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 13.

⁵⁷ Jeremy S. Begbie, *Resounding Truth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2007), 20.

⁵⁸ Peterson, 278.

⁵⁹ T. F. Torrance quoted in Packer, 61-62.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 91.

⁶¹ Ibid., 124.

faith.⁶² Catechesis helps to transform sinful human beings into faithful worshipers of God.⁶³ As a crucial component of the Church's identity, expression, and formation, our worship must be thoughtfully and faithfully considered, and all those who participate in worship must be grounded in the language of Scripture and the Christian tradition in order for faithful worship to be understood. This necessitates catechesis.⁶⁴ If the Church worships faithfully by utilizing the richness of Scripture and the heritage of the Church, believers will be properly formed to engage the world. On the other hand, if the Church worships in a manner that is self-serving and self-focused, as many have begun to do, believers will be ill-equipped to engage the world.

As our discussion continues, we must be mindful that we ask the right questions concerning proper worship.⁶⁵ Much of the literature that addresses the current tension over worship practices does not consider worship theologically.⁶⁶ For instance, the debate of the last few decades over worship style is not the central issue. Rather, some of the key questions that must be raised are: Is our worship faithfully conveying the truth about God?⁶⁷ What kind of character is our worship nurturing in people? Are they being prepared to engage the world?⁶⁸ Does our worship proclaim God's character and what he has done, focusing on the truths of the gospel? Or, is it focused on us? Does our worship

⁶² Ibid., 139.

⁶³ Ibid., 197.

⁶⁴ Some critics may argue that there could be another solution besides catechesis that would remedy the apparent problems that result from Protestant evangelical worship (chapter two). However, true worship requires a knowledge of God, and a knowledge of God can be gained through catechesis, thereby necessitating catechetical instruction. Moreover, worship is an end in itself, not a means to another end. "Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever" (*Westminster Shorter Catechism*, Q. 1), and worship is a means by which "Man's chief end" may be accomplished. God the Father seeks true worshipers (Jn 4:23 *NRSV*). Thus, it is my argument that true worship can be ascertained through the traditional three parts of catechesis, which will be discussed in the third chapter.

⁶⁵ Guiver, 3.

⁶⁶ Peterson, 16.

⁶⁷ Dawn, 94. See also Packer, 189.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 123.

give us hope for what he will do in the future? Does it help us to understand what we believe about God?⁶⁹

Worship is ultimately a theological issue, for what we understand about God will beckon a certain response while making some practices untenable. As Christians, we must keep an ear on the ground of culture in order to understand how we are being formed by the society around us, which is where our discussion turns next. As we come to understand how secular culture has influenced individuals, we must begin forming our understanding of worship with regard to God, which can be done in a faithful manner by using the three traditional parts of catechesis—i.e., the Apostles’ Creed, the Lord’s Prayer, and the Ten Commandments—as primers for our thinking. Then, we can begin to draw conclusions and set a hopeful course toward the renewal of our worship.

⁶⁹ Peterson, 278.

CHAPTER TWO WORSHIP AS A THEOLOGICAL ISSUE

The wise Christian catechist must discern the competing catechisms at work in controlling the heads, hearts, and hands of our congregants. We then draw lines and choose sides. With Joshua we are bold to name competing gods and call for decision. Will it be 'the gods that your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you now dwell' or will it be the One, the true God, the LORD? We ourselves must lead in the declaration, 'As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD' (Josh. 24:15).¹

- J. I. Packer

While a right knowledge of God should inform proper worship practices, theologically-informed worship should encourage the proper formation of Christian beliefs and character in worshipers, as previously mentioned. However, the opposite is also true: theologically impoverished and self-centered worship can impoverish worshipers. As church leaders plan worship services, they should be conscious of the beliefs that undergird their practices. For every Christian believer, worship is a fundamentally theological issue, not simply a matter of taste or preference. Thus, the following chapter will address two important issues before we look to catechesis for direction in reformation. First, because Western individualism has had a broad effect on twenty-first century thought, its influence on the Church must be considered to frame our

¹ J. I. Packer, *Grounded in the Gospel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2010), 163.

theology of worship. Second, Christian worship² requires both proper beliefs about God and a proper understanding of ourselves.

The Impact of Individualism

Worship, Emotionalism, and Experientialism

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, an “anthropological turn” occurred. As a result, many Americans’ pursuits turned inward, and their beliefs were justified when their personal experiences and perceptions supported them.³ Protestant evangelicals too often mimic this trend, focusing more on us than on who God is and what he has done. We try to place God in a supporting role in our story rather than finding ourselves in the biblical narrative, and our worship reflects this tendency as a time when we express our own piety, experience, and commitment rather than declaring who God is and what he has done.⁴

There is a human-centeredness that is natural and good, for it is derived from a sense of responsibility for how we have been made, but this is not the human-

² “[W]orship begins with God. God the creator, the rescuer, and the redeemer initiates our human approach to Him. The remembered events of the Exodus, the Passover, the crucifixion, and the Resurrection evoke a response from God’s people. The response is worship. . . . ‘Worship’ is from the Saxon/Old English word ‘weorthscipe’ or ‘weordhscipe,’ which means ‘worthship’ or worthiness. This connotes actions motivated by an attitude that reveres, honors, or describes the worth of another person or object. In the context of the OT and NT worship refers specifically to worship of the divine. Worship is seen as reverent devotion and service to God motivated by God’s saving acts in history” [Geoffrey W. Bromiley, *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979), 1117-18]. As a response, worship can be enacted through a number of forms, including service (Heb. *abad*, or Gk. *latreúō* and *leitourgía*), showing reverence (Gk. *proskynéō*), and kneeling (Gk. *gonypetéō*), according to *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*. “Worship, then, is the dramatic celebration of God in His supreme worth in such a manner that His ‘worthiness’ becomes the norm and inspiration of human living. Defined in this way worship (1) places God at the center because of His worthiness; (2) avoids the tyranny of subjectivism; (3) allows for the reexamination of the self in the light of God’s knowledge of us” (Ibid., 1118). Worship claims exclusive allegiance to God [David Peterson, *Engaging with God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992, 265].

³ Jeremy S. Begbie, *Resounding Truth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2007), 142. See also James F. White, *A Brief History of Christian Worship* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1993), Kindle e-book, 158.

⁴ Michael Horton, *Christless Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2008), Kindle e-book, 18. See also Begbie, *Resounding Truth*, 192.

centeredness that has influenced our worship.⁵ Modern thought has introduced us to the “buffered self,” the self that can be disconnected from everything on the outside, including various phenomena, commitments, and relationships.⁶ We also live in an age of suspicion and uncertainty where claims must be proved before they can be trusted.⁷ Due to our separation from what is around us, our skeptical inclination, and the disillusionment many feel from today’s busyness, there is an acute feeling of restlessness in the life of Western culture.⁸ George Guiver blames this restlessness, and the uncertainty it breeds, for leading us into the age of individualism, for now one can only believe in himself.⁹

Individualistic thought believes fulfillment can be attained by seeking it within oneself, which means the only meaningful religious experiences are those which support the development of the individual’s spiritual journey.¹⁰ By expecting worship services to

⁵ George Guiver, *Vision upon Vision* (Norwich, UK: Canterbury Press, 2009), 191, 193.

⁶ “. . . [I]n a slow process originating in the Middle Ages our consciousness has shifted from a corporate one where each is dependent on all for a sense of self, to the modern ‘buffered self.’ The buffered self sees a boundary between me and everything outside, and that boundary is treated as a buffer. I am independent of everything outside – nothing need ‘get to’ me; whenever I want I can disengage from whatever is beyond the boundary of my self. Although I may enter into various kinds of commitment with other people, this self can if it wishes override any of my commitments, so that commitments entered into nowadays remain such only so long as my buffered self wishes it – commitments such as marriage, community, church or employees. They can be dropped, and even while I am still in them, I may live them out only so much as I choose. The weak commitment so widespread in our congregations is an obvious example” (Ibid., 180-81).

⁷ Ibid., 168.

⁸ Jeremy S. Begbie, *Theology, Music and Time* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 72.

⁹ Guiver, 169. See also Robert E. Webber, *Who Gets to Narrate the World?* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), Kindle e-book, locations 930.

¹⁰ Ibid., 182.

be satisfying on our terms, our worship has become self-centered.¹¹ We more readily celebrate ourselves during our worship services than celebrate God by turning our worship into performance and entertainment,¹² an indication of how anthropocentric our theological orientation has become.¹³ Many American evangelicals hold personal experience as the ultimate measure of spiritual genuineness. For instance, American evangelicals would rather see more vulnerability and authenticity in their church leaders—which presumably demonstrate their personal relationship with Jesus Christ—than a thorough knowledge of God, a proper handling of Scripture, and the confirmation of their calling by Jesus Christ through the ordination of the church.¹⁴ In addition, superficial, self-serving Christian doctrine and ambiguous theological understanding pervade many of the same churches.¹⁵ If the richness of the Christian faith is not preserved, there will be less and less to leave to the next generation, as Michael Spencer avers in his ominous reflection:

We Evangelicals have failed to pass on to our young people an orthodox form of faith that can take root and survive the secular onslaught. Ironically, the billions of dollars we've spent on youth ministers, Christian music, publishing, and media has produced a culture of young Christians who know next to nothing about their own faith except how they should

¹¹ Ibid., 191. In bold language, Marva J. Dawn proposes a better worship service: “Everything that we do in worship should kill us, but especially the parts of the service in which we hear the Word—the Scripture lessons and the sermon. One reason I especially treasure the Church’s historic Mass is that so much of it is composed of direct quotations from the Scriptures, which kill me every time I sing them. I get more comfortable under liturgies composed of human words that make it easier to escape the death blow and remain satisfied with myself” (206). The order of the service is also crucial. Worship should recount the biblical narrative, allowing congregants to participate in the story of salvation in meaningful ways. In *A More Profound Alleluia*, LeeAnne Van Dyk structures the essays in the book around the following liturgical structure: the opening of worship, confession and assurance, proclamation, creeds and prayers, Eucharist, and the ending of worship.

¹² Michael Horton, *Putting Amazing Back into Grace* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2002), Apple iBook, 15 of 313.

¹³ Ibid., 85 of 313.

¹⁴ Horton, *Christless Christianity*, 169.

¹⁵ Packer, 16.

feel about it.¹⁶

In an attempt to make worship more appealing and accessible to a modern generation, new worship music often dumbs down theological content and, in effect, has become very shallow.¹⁷ At its worst, some worship music no longer proclaims who God is or what God has done and focuses solely on the feelings of the worshiper.¹⁸ This anthropological turn in our worship is detrimental to the Church's role in the world, which finds hope only in the message of the gospel. Rather than only involving our feelings, worship must be a response to what has been given to us through God's efforts to reconcile all things to himself,¹⁹ for if the content of our worship does not make

¹⁶ Quoted in *Ibid.*, 52. Young Christians can only receive what the previous generation has grasped themselves and bequeathed. In a 2010 article in *Christianity Today*, Collin Hansen writes, “*Time* magazine observed in a 2007 cover story that only half of U.S. adults could name one of the four Gospels. Fewer than half could identify Genesis as the Bible’s first book. Jay Leno and Stephen Colbert have made sport of Americans’ inability to name the Ten Commandments—even among members of Congress who have pushed to have them posted publicly. Perhaps the first step toward improved Bible literacy is admitting we have a problem. A 2005 study by the Barna Group asked American Christians to rate their spiritual maturity based on activities such as worship, service, and evangelism. Christians offered the harshest evaluation of their Bible knowledge, with 25 percent calling themselves not too mature or not at all mature” (Collin Hansen, “Why Johnny Can't Read the Bible,” *Christianity Today*, May 24, 2010, http://christianitytoday.com/ct/article_print.html?id=87842). In addition, after synthesizing their poll results from 2009 on Christianity in the United States, the Barna Group concluded that “little progress, if any, is being made toward assisting people to become more biblically literate. Bible reading has become the religious equivalent of sound-bite journalism . . . The problem facing the Christian Church is not that people lack a complete set of beliefs; the problem is that they have a full slate of beliefs in mind, which they think are consistent with biblical teachings, and they are neither open to being proven wrong nor to learning new insights. Our research suggests that this challenge initially emerges in the late adolescent or early teenage years.” (“Barna Studies the Research, Offers a Year-in-Review Perspective,” Barna Group, accessed February 17, 2012, last modified 2009, <http://www.barna.org/barna-update/article/12-faithspirituality/325-barna-studies-the-research-offers-a-year-in-review-perspective>.)

¹⁷ Marva J. Dawn, *Reaching Out without Dumbing Down* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), Kindle e-book, 89.

¹⁸ Begbie, *Resounding Truth*, 268. For example, one popular praise song says, “A thousand times I've failed/Still your mercy remains/And should I stumble again/Still I'm caught in your grace//Everlasting, Your light will shine when all else fades/Never ending, Your glory goes beyond all fame//My heart and my soul, I give You control/Consume me from the inside out Lord/Let justice and praise, become my embrace/To love You from the inside out.” The focus throughout this praise song is on the worshiper and what she/he is doing for God, to the neglect of what God has done for her/him. While there are vague references to the grace we have received from God (“A thousand times I've failed/Still your mercy remains/And should I stumble again/Still I'm caught in your grace”) and to God's glory throughout his creation (“Never ending, Your glory goes beyond all fame”), little else in the song expresses any explicit truths of the Christian faith. If a song such as the one quoted above were to be used in a service, it may best be utilized after a Scripture reading or the sermon as a time for the congregation to reflect on the content of the reading or the sermon.

¹⁹ Dawn, 87. See also White, 172-73.

objective claims about God, it encourages worshipers to create their own faith.²⁰

While the benefits of a worship service that feels good may seem abundant at first, the true costs are all too high. The practices that appear to bring people into the worship services may actually be detrimental to how worshipers think and reflect on God, themselves, and the world. When our worship and preaching focus on good feelings, we distort the true nature of the gospel and stunt the development of true Christian character. Our current culture believes in the ability to perfect the self. On the other hand, the biblical picture is clear that it is only through Jesus Christ that we are justified, and apart from the gospel we can only be sinful creatures.²¹ This message must be at the center of our worship and should be evident in both the songs we sing and in the structure of the service as a whole.

The focus of many American evangelicals has become feelings and experiences, often claiming their spiritual journey, to the neglect of God's sovereignty over daily life, his shaping of reality, and the ultimate meaning he has for the lives of human beings.²² Now, good feelings are often mistaken for genuine faith rather than a deeper understanding. LeeAnne Van Dyk explains, "People in our time are not interested in the content of faith 'because it is not necessary for [their] 'religiosity.'"²³ As worship should form its participants, which was discussed in the previous chapter,²⁴ worship that focuses on an emotional response teaches the believer to rely on their feelings as a measure of

²⁰ Ibid., 174.

²¹ Ibid., 111.

²² Ibid., 84.

²³ LeeAnne Van Dyk, *A More Profound Alleluia* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), Kindle e-book, locations 1000-01. Here, Van Dyk borrows a quote from Alexander Schmemmann.

²⁴ See "Worship and the Knowledge of God" in chapter 1.

faith rather than their dependence on God's gift of grace.²⁵ Today, when individuals gather to worship, they want their experience to be satisfying on a personal level.²⁶ However, many do not realize that only the gospel speaks to and satisfies our deepest longings as human beings and provides answers in our search for truth, the meaning of existence, and what is good.²⁷ As C.S. Lewis has contended, our desires have become too weak, for we would rather see our superficial needs met in our worship than receive God's gift of everlasting life.²⁸

Although feelings have an important function as a part of our response to God, they cannot be the focus. If good feelings are the goal of our worship, then the focus of our worship has clearly turned away from God and has been placed on us.²⁹ The danger comes when we have lost the foundational Christian beliefs that once stirred up our emotions.³⁰ The psalmist gives a good example of what it means to praise God with all of his heart—that is, with the center of his intellect, will, and being. For the psalmist, to praise God with one's whole heart meant that he would deliberately worship God for who God is and what he has done, regardless of whether his feelings led him to do so. Today's understanding for "heart," however, places the focus of worship on how the individual feels rather than on God's character.³¹

Authority

Modern people tend toward an anthropocentric ordering of their lives as they take

²⁵ Dawn, 109.

²⁶ Peterson, 16.

²⁷ Packer, 130.

²⁸ Horton, *Christless Christianity*, 34.

²⁹ Dawn, 70.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 132.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 109.

responsibility for presuming what is right and wrong, guiding their lives accordingly.³² In American culture, “the ultimate authority is the individual,”³³ and concern for the self has become the individual’s highest priority.³⁴ For example, one might place his previous commitments above his belief in the gospel, especially when the gospel seems incompatible with the commitments he has already made.³⁵ In practice, the beliefs of many Protestant evangelicals today demonstrate that they believe in a God who exists for their benefit. For this reason, we need not look upward for true power because the ultimate authority rests inside us.³⁶ Regardless of what the Church or Scripture teaches, the final arbiter of truth for some Protestant evangelicals is the self. Even Jesus Christ becomes a figure molded by our experiences, feelings, and needs.³⁷

When the self is the final authority, the nature of spirituality becomes a journey through which the individual finds truth and meaning within oneself.³⁸ As a result, evangelistic efforts have sometimes been fashioned by this understanding of spirituality and the Christian faith. When talking with nonbelievers, evangelicals too often resort to explaining their own personal experiences as evidence of the Christian faith because they know so little about their actual beliefs.³⁹ “We always gravitate back toward ourselves,” Michael Horton has noted,⁴⁰ and if all Christians proclaim is the change they have experienced individually, both believers and nonbelievers are doomed to

³² Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), Kindle e-book, 326.

³³ Van Dyk, locations 1042.

³⁴ Dawn, 83.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 228.

³⁶ Horton, *Christless Christianity*, 30, 65.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 169.

³⁸ Dawn, 83-84.

³⁹ Horton, *Christless Christianity*, 190-91.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 120.

disappointment,⁴¹ for the gospel message is “trivialized when we write the script.”⁴²

Horton quotes George Barna, who concludes,

In short, the spirituality of America is Christian in name only . . . We desire experience more than knowledge. We prefer choices to absolutes. We embrace preferences rather than truths. We seek comfort rather than growth. Faith must come on our terms or we reject it. We have enthroned ourselves as the final arbiters of righteousness, the ultimate rulers of our own experience and destiny. We are the Pharisees of the new millennium.⁴³

In a culture where the individual is the highest authority, the Church must be firm yet gracious in teaching that ultimate authority rests in God alone and that God’s will must be sovereign over our lives.⁴⁴ The Church needs to resist the self-centeredness of culture. In order for the Church to remain faithful to its calling as an alternative community, its members must be formed by the fullness of God’s character, which is revealed in their worship.⁴⁵ The Church’s call to love requires that we minister to others in a way that meets people's true needs, and this requires serving them in a way that can be graciously received.⁴⁶

The individualism that permeates Western culture has led some Protestant evangelicals to believe they can faithfully worship God by their own efforts, with minimal help from God himself.⁴⁷ Meanwhile, self-centered prayer, worship, and preaching suggests a lack of understanding concerning the gospel and Christian tradition.⁴⁸ As Horton indicates, it seems that we reflect more on our efforts to grow

⁴¹ Ibid., 254.

⁴² Ibid., 242.

⁴³ Ibid., 31.

⁴⁴ Dawn, 84.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 114.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 66.

⁴⁷ Guiver, 182.

⁴⁸ Webber, *Who Gets to Narrate the World?*, locations 103-04.

closer to God than on God himself.⁴⁹ When we sing to God of our efforts to be in relationship with him, we overlook what he has done for us.⁵⁰ By singing only of ourselves, we participate in a modern Pelagianism⁵¹ that concentrates on what we are doing for our salvation.⁵² We are placing our trust in faith itself, in our own experience, and in our actions, rather than in Jesus Christ.⁵³ Worship that focuses on what we do for God never allows the congregation to truly worship God.⁵⁴ The gospel calls us to look outside ourselves for salvation, namely, to God. Meanwhile, Pelagianism draws our attention to look inward,⁵⁵ and any movement toward Pelagianism is a dangerous movement away from the true gospel of Jesus Christ.⁵⁶

⁴⁹ Horton, *Putting Amazing Back into Grace*, 172 of 313.

⁵⁰ For example, another contemporary worship song says, “When the music fades/And all is stripped away/ And I simply come/Longing just to bring/Something that’s of worth/That will bless your heart/I’ll bring You more than a song/For a song in itself/Is not what You have required/You search much deeper within/ Through the ways things appear/You’re looking into my heart/I’m coming back to the heart of worship/And it’s all about You/All about You, Jesus/I’m sorry Lord for the thing I’ve made it/When it’s all about You/It’s all about You Jesus.” The idea behind this particular song is laudable, for God certainly deserves more than what we are capable of bringing to him in worship and he ought to be the focus of our worship. However, this song seems more concerned with what the worshiper is doing for God than what God has done for the worshiper.

⁵¹ According to Erickson, Pelagianism believes that “the grace of God is simply something present everywhere and at every moment. When Pelagius spoke of ‘grace,’ he meant free will, apprehension of God through reason, and the law of Moses and Jesus’ instruction. . . . Grace is available equally to all persons. . . . As Pelagius spelled out the implications of his various tenets, the idea emerged that humans can, by their own efforts, perfectly fulfill God’s commands without sinning. There is no natural inclination toward sin at the beginning of life; any later inclination in that direction comes only through the building up of bad habits. A salvation by works is thus quite possible, although that is something of a misnomer. Since we are not really sinful, guilty, and condemned, this process is not a matter of salvation from something that presently binds us. It is rather a preservation or maintenance of our right status and good standing. By our own accomplishment we keep from falling into a sinful condition” (649-50).

⁵² Dawn, 171-72.

⁵³ Horton, *Christless Christianity*, 155. According to Goldsworthy, “Biblical faith can be illustrated by considering the faith we would need when about to drive a vehicle across a rickety-looking bridge. We would not ask, ‘Have I got enough faith?’ Rather the appropriate question is, ‘Can this bridge take the load?’ Once we can answer in the affirmative, the question about faith vanishes. Faith is just there because of what we perceive about its object. When faith is lacking the antidote is not introspective self-examination but contemplation of the object of our faith: Jesus the Lord, our sufficient Savior” [Graeme Goldsworthy, *Prayer and the Knowledge of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 70-71].

⁵⁴ Dawn, 173.

⁵⁵ Horton, *Christless Christianity*, 166.

⁵⁶ Packer, 142.

The Church and Culture

The Church must also keep from consumeristic endeavors. Kenneth Myers believes that popular culture “encourages a mood of expecting everything to be immediate, a mood that deters greater depth and breadth in other areas of our lives, including our understanding of Christianity and our experience of obedient faith.”⁵⁷ If the Christian faith of the Church becomes simply another consumer item, we are catechizing our congregation in a way that they will never comprehend how only God can fulfill.⁵⁸ Many people attend a worship service expecting to be entertained, and they declare the church did not meet their needs if they leave disappointed.⁵⁹ As a result, many church attenders have a cheap relationship with the churches they enter. If one church does not meet their perceived needs, the simple solution is to search for another that will.⁶⁰ If the focus of a person seeking a church is only to find one that will fulfill their needs, it is unlikely they will stay in one church for long,⁶¹ a trend which Guiver has named “the age of Shopping.”⁶²

Churches become impoverished when they capitulate to cultural norms that are contrary to the gospel. Christians must return to the idea that they are a “peculiar” people who best influence the world around them by being who they truly are in God. When we are aligned with transcendent truth, both our knowledge of God and our worship prepare us to share the faith with a world of “microhopes.”⁶³ Theologically-informed worship is

⁵⁷ Quoted in Dawn, 184.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 65.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 124.

⁶⁰ Van Dyk, locations 1049-51. See also Webber, *Who Gets to Narrate the World?*, locations 115-17.

⁶¹ Dawn, 66.

⁶² Guiver, 3.

⁶³ Dawn, 157-58. See also Begbie, *Resounding Truth*, 283.

crucial to enduring a complex culture. As proper worship forms godly character in its participants and draws them into a common understanding of God, the community will begin deepening the character of its members.⁶⁴

Worship teaches us to live in the midst of life's tensions and equips us to live in a damaged world. Meanwhile, the damage in ourselves continues in the process of healing through the work of sanctification.⁶⁵ Only by God's gift of grace are we able to discover our truest self-identity, and the gift of grace can only be received when we cast off our self-centeredness by admitting that salvation cannot be found within ourselves. If our search for salvation continues inward, our journey will end in horror, as Horton has written,

The more time we spend contemplating our own greatness in the mirror, the more clearly we are bound to see the warts. Without the knowledge of the God in whose image we have been created, and the grace which has made us children of God, narcissism (self-love) quickly evolves into depression (self-hate).⁶⁶

Guiver believes that deep satisfaction is more difficult for modern people than those in the past. We are always rushing forward searching for the new attraction that will satisfy us for the moment, and in our insecurity we refuse to stop and face ourselves. We have become petrified of silence and loneliness,⁶⁷ and unless our faith is returned to its proper place, "[t]his is finally where American spirituality leaves us: alone, surfing the Internet, casting about for coaches and teammates, trying to save ourselves from captivity to this present age by finding those excitements that will induce a transformed life."⁶⁸

⁶⁴ Ibid., 133.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 115.

⁶⁶ Horton, *Putting Amazing Back into Grace*, 15 of 313.

⁶⁷ Guiver, 170. See also Webber, *Who Gets to Narrate the World?*, locations 111-12.

⁶⁸ Horton, *Christless Christianity*, 203. See also Webber, *Who Gets to Narrate the World?*, locations 930.

God, Worship, and Theological Anthropology

Tensions between Culture and a Christian View of Persons

Finding its place in the torrents of human culture,⁶⁹ the Church must be able to recognize the many idolatries of society and to reject these gods, for which the only solution is to acknowledge God as both the subject and object of our worship.⁷⁰ The faith community must discern and act, for we have been called to subvert the cultural worship of the gods which are exalted around us. The Church must strengthen the faith of its members by helping them to recognize their place in the biblical narrative. This should inspire Christian believers to reach out and serve their neighbors, drawing all toward the love and grace of God.⁷¹ Like Augustine believed, and Martin Luther later affirmed, the Church lives in a tension between the realm of God and the realm of humankind. As a countercultural community, the Church's worship offers a witness to society. Because of its deep understanding of itself in relation to God, the Church's worship deepens our understanding of ourselves by exposing our sin while reminding us of the grace offered to us in Jesus Christ.⁷²

Currently, the theological understanding that many evangelical congregations are receiving from their worship services is not as nourishing as it should be, and

⁶⁹ As Augustine has written, "Woe to you, torrent of human custom! 'Who can stand against you?' (Ps. 75:8) When will you run dry? How long will your flowing current carry the sons of Eve into great and fearful ocean which can be crossed, with difficulty, only by those who have embarked on the Wood of the cross (Wis. 14:7)?" [Saint Augustine, *Confessions* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1992), I.xvi.25].

⁷⁰ Webber has written, "Jesus is both the subject and object of the spiritual life. As subject he has attained the spiritual life for us, that is he alone reestablishes the unity between God and man, that unity which Adam lost. As object, we look to him to see what a human being united to God looks like. So what does the spiritual life look like? It can be said with confidence that the spiritual life is a passionate participation in God imitating the one and only human being fully united to God, Jesus" [Robert E. Webber, *The Divine Embrace* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2006), 174].

⁷¹ Dawn, 284.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 68-69.

evangelicals today are not nearly as knowledgeable of the faith as Christians were in the past.⁷³ “[I]n order to be fully useful, Christians must know their faith well,”⁷⁴ and a proper knowledge of God serves proper worship,⁷⁵ for our worship reflects our attitudes and understanding of God.⁷⁶ We must also remember that God desires a holy people, a community set apart for himself, and everything we do when we are gathered as a community works to catechize and form the sort of people we will be.⁷⁷

Although instant gratification is given primacy in today’s culture, in order for Protestant evangelicals to remain faithful to the calling of the Church, they “must sustain orthodoxy” by immersing their worship in doctrinal language. While this practice may seem antiquated and unnecessary to some, it attests to the need for intentional Christian education.⁷⁸ If the Church is to form the character of individual believers rightly, our means of formation must match the ends we desire. Every behavior forms who we are becoming, and as behaviors are repeated, character is reinforced, according to Marva J. Dawn. If we desire the congregation to develop a deep faith, congregants “must be nurtured by deep experiences of its reality.” Therefore, every component of our worship must be thoughtfully and theologically planned, utilizing the language of our doctrines which have undergone refinement for centuries.⁷⁹

Although worship will inevitably be influenced by the surrounding culture, it is not the work of Christians to be cynics, for God can use particular elements of our culture

⁷³ Packer, 10.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 9.

⁷⁵ Peterson, 170.

⁷⁶ Guiver, 102-03.

⁷⁷ Dawn, 107. See also Peterson, 268, 285.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 111. See also Begbie, *Theology, Music and Time*, 105-06; and Horton, *Putting Amazing Back into Grace*, 22 of 313.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 117.

to preserve the truth of the gospel. Instead, as faithful ambassadors of Christ to the world, Christians must be good stewards of culture, which may require them to speak into, or sometimes against, culture.⁸⁰ Guiver explains, “God’s truth for us is a fine, invisible line weaving among immense complexities of life and faith.”⁸¹ As the faith has been preserved and passed down through many generations, each era of the Church has been responsible for preserving the truth of the gospel in its own context, adding layers to the Christian tradition while holding fast to “the narrow line of truth.”⁸²

As the Church struggles in a demanding culture, we must also account for the effect of sin on individuals and Western culture.⁸³ Protestant evangelical churches have done a disservice to their congregations by minimizing an awareness of human sinfulness, which significantly hinders our attempts to gain a true knowledge of God and discover genuine worship. Dawn firmly believes that “we lack such an awareness because we dumb down the truth of God in false efforts to feel better about ourselves.”⁸⁴ The Christian faith has little transcendent value if its adherents neither understand the gravity of sin nor the magnitude of God’s grace.⁸⁵ In its many forms, sin has had a significant influence on human life and is the source of the damage, pain, and suffering in the world. As both sinners and those sinned against, human beings struggle to worship God and not idols.⁸⁶

The faith community lives in the tension of God’s wrath toward our wrongdoing

⁸⁰ Ibid., 58.

⁸¹ Guiver, 158-59.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Peterson, 169.

⁸⁴ Dawn, 91.

⁸⁵ Horton, *Christless Christianity*, 64, 70.

⁸⁶ Van Dyk, locations 528-31.

and God's grace and love. Because of our sinful state and God's holiness, we are ultimately deserving of God's wrath, for we are guilty of committing idolatry against him. However, instead of acting on us in righteous judgment, God has extended his mercy to us through the atoning work of Jesus Christ. Neither true worship nor a proper understanding of ourselves can overlook this tension.⁸⁷ When we ignore the brokenness and apparent damage in human life, we do not allow God to be who he has promised to be. When we praise God even in our suffering and allow him to fulfill what he has promised to do, we are actively holding fast to God's gift of grace when all else says we should be surrendering.⁸⁸

The current emphasis on positive thinking and self-esteem, which downplays the effects of sin, gives many a false understanding of humankind. Theological anthropology must wrestle with the tension of God's gift of grace and our ever-growing need for it.⁸⁹ A Christian understanding of humankind must account for the entire biblical story, including the impact of sin and the gospel, through which human beings can be restored to what they were created to be.⁹⁰ An understanding of humankind cannot stand apart from God and the saving work of Jesus Christ.⁹¹

In the same way Bonhoeffer admonished his readers, it is essential that we see

⁸⁷ Dawn, 96.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 92-93.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 90-91.

⁹⁰ Charles Cameron, "An Introduction to 'Theological Anthropology,'" *Evangel* 23, no. 2 (2005): 55-56. See also Van Dyk, locations 1603-04.

⁹¹ Erickson, 518, 525. See also Horton, *Christless Christianity*, 102-03; and Begbie, *Resounding Truth*, 202.

individuals holistically, as sinners beneath the cross in need of grace.⁹² For Horton, an understanding of grace is invaluable to the Christian faith because

Grace is the gospel. The extent to which we are unclear about who does what in salvation is the degree to which we will obscure the gospel. At a time when moralism, self-righteousness, and self-help religion dominate in much of evangelical preaching, publishing, and broadcasting, we desperately need a return to this message of grace . . . Our sense of purpose, as individuals and as a church, depends largely on how clearly we grasp certain truths about who God is, who we are, and what God's plan for history involves.⁹³

Made in the Image of God

The biblical understanding of human beings is very different from the understanding of human beings of other religions, for the Bible records that human beings have been made in the image of God, according to Gen 1:26-27. While in other religions humans are often negligible in significance, the biblical understanding of humankind places them as the centerpiece of God's creation.⁹⁴ Thus, Christianity gives the individual the most comprehensive identity,⁹⁵ for all human beings, both Christian

⁹² Bonhoeffer writes, "Because Christ stands between me and others, I dare not desire direct fellowship with them. As only Christ can speak to me in such a way that I may be saved, so others, too, can be saved only by Christ himself. This means that I must release the other person from every attempt of mine to regulate, coerce, and dominate him with my love. The other person needs to retain his independence of me; to be loved for what he is, as one for whom Christ became man, died, and rose again, for whom Christ bought forgiveness of sins and eternal life. Because Christ has long since acted decisively for my brother, before I could begin to act, I must leave him his freedom to be Christ's; I must meet him only as the person that he already is in Christ's eyes. This is the meaning of the proposition that we can meet others only through the mediation of Christ. Human love constructs its own image of the other person, of what he is and what he should become. It takes the life of the other person into its own hands. Spiritual love recognizes the true image of the other person which he has received from Jesus Christ; the image that Jesus Christ himself embodied and would stamp upon all men" [*Life Together* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, Inc., 1954), 35-36].

⁹³ Horton, *Putting Amazing Back into Grace*, 23 of 313.

⁹⁴ Moshe Reiss, "Adam: Created In The Image And Likeness Of God," *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 39.3 (2011): 181. See also Andreas Schuele, "Uniquely Human: The Ethics Of The Imago Dei In Genesis 1-11," *Toronto Journal Of Theology* 27.1 (2011): 5; and John H. Walton, *Old Testament, IVP Bible Background Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 29.

⁹⁵ Erickson, 494-95.

believers and nonbelievers, have been created in the image of God.⁹⁶

In the ancient world, an image of a deity was believed to possess something of the nature of the deity it represented, and the deity accomplished its work through that which bore its image. Thus, we see in the Bible that God primarily used humankind to enact his will. However, the image of God provided more than the ability to enact God's will.

Because humankind has been made in the image of God, and he has equipped them with the reflective capacity and discernment to be like him and to represent him on earth, human beings have the capacity to conduct themselves in a manner like God,⁹⁷ although they are still distinguished from God, as Charles Cameron rightly qualifies.⁹⁸

To be in God's image is also a relational term, meaning human beings can only understand themselves with regard to God.⁹⁹ In effect, human beings have an inherent longing for God.¹⁰⁰ Because we are made in God's image, the origin of humankind naturally raises questions about God. We can only reach the fullness and deepest significance of our being human when we give regard to God and what it means to bear his image.¹⁰¹ In order to grow in an understanding of ourselves, we must begin by growing in an understanding of God, for only in giving proper attention to God are we able to make sense of human experience.¹⁰² In perhaps the most famous line from the *Confessions*, Augustine summarizes the innate connection between God and humankind

⁹⁶ Ibid., 532, 535. See also Schuele, 8; and Peter H. Sedgwick, "Thy Kingdom Come: Worship and Social Responsibility Today," *Modern Believing* 40, no. 3 (1999): 27.

⁹⁷ Begbie, *Resounding Truth*, 202. See also Schuele, 7; Walton, 29; and Moshe, 184.

⁹⁸ Cameron, 54.

⁹⁹ Begbie, *Resounding Truth*, 202. The corporate nature of the Christian faith will be discussed in the following chapter.

¹⁰⁰ Rolf Hille, "Worship—the Source and Standard of Theology," *Evangelical Review Of Theology* 33, no. 3 (2009): 248. See also Servais Pinckaers, "The Natural Desire To See God," *Nova Et Vetera (English Edition)* 8.3 (2010): 628.

¹⁰¹ Cameron, 54, 57, 60. See also Erickson, 534; Hille, 247; and Moshe, 184.

¹⁰² Ibid., 53.

when he writes, “You stir man to take pleasure in praising you, because you have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you.”¹⁰³ We have been created to find our place in God alone, who promises rest and peace, and to praise him by reminding ourselves of his deeds and his faithfulness.

As Christians, we believe that human beings were made for God as bearers of his image, but sin has damaged that image and necessitates that we need to be redeemed, remade, and reconciled to God. Through his life and death on the cross, Jesus Christ came and lived as the model for true godliness.¹⁰⁴ With a holistic understanding of humanity, theological anthropology combats the current trend of looking inside oneself for salvation, which has led to the diminution of the gospel.¹⁰⁵ Theological anthropology places us in a proper stance before God as we recognize our sin in light of God’s holiness, yet we experience salvation in light of God’s grace.¹⁰⁶ According to 2 Cor 3:18, the image of God, which was damaged by the fall, is being renewed through salvation in Jesus Christ.¹⁰⁷ Through the process of transforming human life, God is restoring the relationship that once existed between humankind and its creator.¹⁰⁸

That human beings have been made in the image of God serves as a basis for our understanding of God and ourselves and how we ought to worship our creator. While all human beings have been made in the image of God, the Church has been given the charge of exemplifying God’s grace and the restoration of his image in humankind through its worship while calling the rest of humanity back to right relationship with God through

¹⁰³ Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, I.i.1.

¹⁰⁴ Packer, 177.

¹⁰⁵ Horton, *Christless Christianity*, 18.

¹⁰⁶ Hille, 261.

¹⁰⁷ Erickson, 535.

¹⁰⁸ Cameron, 57.

the proclamation of the gospel. As those in whom the image of God is being restored and who actively participate in God's history of salvation, the people of God have been called to minister to the world, and it is only by God's grace, which enables and equips us, that we are able to worship him and serve others, bringing glory to his name.

CHAPTER THREE CATECHESIS AND WORSHIP

We are torn out of our own existence and set down in the midst of the holy history of God on earth. There God dealt with us, and there He still deals with us, our needs and our sins, in judgment and grace. It is not that God is the spectator and sharer of our present life, howsoever important that is; but rather that we are the reverent listeners and participants in God's action in the sacred story, the history of the Christ on earth. And only in so far as we are there, is God with us today also . . . Our salvation is "external to ourselves." I find no salvation in my life story, but only in the history of Jesus Christ . . . What we call our life, our troubles, our guilt, is by no means all of reality; there in the Scriptures is our life, our need, our guilt, and our salvation.¹

- Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Many Christians object to theology, and as a result, avoid deepening their knowledge of God. While to many theology may seem disconnected from life, in reality it serves as “the basis for loving God and living for Christ,” according to Michael Horton. To avoid the richness of a growing Christian faith is to prevent us from growing in wisdom, in our knowledge of God, and in the assurance of what God has done. To cling to ignorance leads to malnourishment in one’s faith.² To worship rightly, we should know why we are praising God, especially as we respond with thanksgiving. What we believe about God determines the object of our worship,³ and whom or what we worship “is an important clue to one’s character,” according to Leander Keck, for “[t]he object of praise reveals what one deems praiseworthy, what we value and perhaps aspire to be like.”⁴

The focus of catechesis is faithfulness in both the teaching and learning of the tradition that has been preserved in the historic Church.⁵ If Christian believers are going

¹ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, Inc., 1954), 53-54. For a discussion of Bonhoeffer’s quote, see Michael Horton, *Christless Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2008), Kindle e-book, 94-95.

² Michael Horton, *Putting Amazing Back into Grace* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2002), Apple iBook, 79-80 of 313. See also Graeme Goldsworthy, *Prayer and the Knowledge of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 125-26.

³ *Ibid.*, 85-86 of 313.

⁴ Marva J. Dawn, *Reaching Out without Dumbing Down* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), Kindle e-book, 118.

⁵ J. I. Packer, *Grounded in the Gospel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2010), Kindle e-book, 42.

to understand the salvation they have received, and in response worship appropriately, individuals should be catechized—that is, formed—according to the Christian tradition they have received. While catechesis will lead us into a deeper experience of true worship,⁶ it will also set a spiritual, moral, and theological foundation so Christian believers can be firmly established in the faith and remain unswayed when compromise threatens their doctrine and practice.⁷ Good catechesis will encourage believers in the fact that they are always serving Jesus Christ in their worship, life, and work.⁸ While an exhaustive commentary on the three traditional parts of catechesis is beyond the scope of this project, the study below—which follows the three-part structure of catechesis—will (1) outline the fundamental knowledge of God and the Christian faith that should serve as the foundation for our worship, (2) provide an orientation for how we should understand our worship in order to praise God rightly, and (3) provide direction for how our worship should form us to live and witness faithfully in the world, using the Apostles’ Creed, the Lord’s Prayer, and the Ten Commandments, respectively, as primers for our thinking.

The Apostles’ Creed

*I believe in God the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth. And I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From there he shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting. Amen.*⁹

As the first component of catechesis, the Apostles’ Creed outlines the fundamental

⁶ Ibid., 79.

⁷ Ibid., 45.

⁸ Ibid., 169.

⁹ “The Catechism,” in *An Anglican Prayer Book* (Philadelphia, PA: Preservation Press of the Prayer Book Society of the U.S.A., 2008), 122.

Christian tenets we should affirm in order to worship rightly and functions as a summary of the biblical narrative as well as a primer for theology. The propositions of the Apostles' Creed were drawn line by line from Scripture in order that a biblical faith could be passed on to new converts.¹⁰ Reflection on the centrality of the Apostles' Creed raises a number of questions. For instance, how should Protestant evangelicals understand the longstanding historic Church that has preceded them? Since Augustine was known to have taught the *narratio*—i.e., the biblical narrative—as a component of his catechism,¹¹ how should today's churches connect their worship to the biblical narrative? Second, because the Creed was typically recited corporately, should we understand Christian beliefs as intended solely for the individual, as many today believe, or for the community of faith as a whole? In addition to providing a summary of our fundamental Christian beliefs, the Apostles' Creed leads us to recognize the value of understanding the biblical narrative, the importance of the historic Church for Christian faith, and the inherently communal nature of Christian beliefs.

What We Believe about God

When Christians gather to worship, there are two fundamental beliefs that should serve as the foundation for our understanding and practices. First, our worship—and, therefore, catechesis—should begin with an understanding of the gospel. In the New Testament “worship . . . [meant] believing the gospel and responding with one's whole life and being to the person and work of God's son, in the power of the Holy Spirit.”¹²

¹⁰ LeeAnne Van Dyk, *A More Profound Alleluia* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), Kindle e-book, locations 1112-13.

¹¹ Packer, 82.

¹² David Peterson, *Engaging with God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 286.

Thus, to proclaim Christ is the first and proper task of worship and catechesis,¹³ for all of the responsibilities of the Church should be understood in relation to the gospel.¹⁴ As Christians, we “believe in God the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth,” and Jeremy S. Begbie writes, “[Jesus Christ] opens up to us the mind and heart of the Creator, revealing the why of creation, the way in which the Creator relates to creation, and the goal for which all things were created.”¹⁵ Even as Christians, we need to be reminded of the gospel both in worship and catechesis because we can be easily distracted from the object of our faith.¹⁶

The Christian faith offers a unique story that explains humankind’s relationship with God. Contrary to secular culture, Christians believe that human beings have fallen out of God’s favor and can do nothing to save themselves from his wrath and judgment. However, Christians also believe that God extends grace—“the forgiveness of sins,” according to the Creed—through the work of his Son, Jesus Christ, to all who will place their faith in him. For those who accept, God forgives their sins and remakes human beings, conforming them to what he created them to be. Our worship today is primarily in response to this story because Christianity is centered on the saving work of Jesus Christ,¹⁷ which is summarized in the Creed:

I believe in Jesus Christ, [God’s] only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From there he shall come to judge the

¹³ Packer, 45.

¹⁴ Horton, *Christless Christianity*, 244.

¹⁵ Jeremy S. Begbie, *Resounding Truth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2007), 189.

¹⁶ Horton, *Christless Christianity*, 125. See also Bonhoeffer, 28-29.

¹⁷ Packer, 14.

living and the dead.

The new life that a believer receives is founded on the objective truth of Jesus Christ's work of redemption.¹⁸ "Jesus Christ is God's Word to a world deaf to the truth. Jesus Christ is God's Light to a world blind to the truth. In worship, we hear that truth and see that light. Jesus Christ is truly present with us," Leeanne Van Dyk writes.¹⁹ The community of faith is formed into the body of Christ by the Word of God through their worship.²⁰

Second, as a vital aspect of the structure of the Apostles' Creed, a trinitarian understanding should also lie at the center of worship and catechesis.²¹ According to the tenets of the Creed, we "believe in God the Father Almighty . . . in Jesus Christ, his only Son, . . . [and] in the Holy Spirit." To think of God as triune has been the fundamental understanding of God in orthodox Christian thought.²² In worship, this means that when we address God, whether in prayer or worship, we should understand that we are not beginning the dialogue with the triune God. Rather, we are entering a dialogue that already exists between the persons of the triune God in whose image we have been created.²³ The Holy Spirit prompts us to pray to and worship God the Father, who hears

¹⁸ Dawn, 210.

¹⁹ Van Dyk, locations 778-80.

²⁰ Leeanne Van Dyk explains, "On this view, Scripture forms the community into the body of Christ. This happens most centrally in the worship service. Although certainly it can and does happen in private devotion and prayer, it happens paradigmatically in communal worship. Burgess says, 'When Scripture is read, when it is explicated in preaching, when it is incorporated into prayers of thanksgiving and lament, when it frames the celebration of the Lord's Supper, Scripture becomes a means by which Christians are gathered into the body of the living Lord.' Scripture is a 'means of grace' used by the Holy Spirit to nourish and build up the community of faith. The Spirit uses the words of the text in much the same way that the Spirit uses the water of baptism and the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper to form the community of faith and to unite believers to Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit uses Scripture as a sacramental 'element,' as it were, to unite the believer to Christ" (locations 834-40).

²¹ Peterson, 285.

²² Van Dyk, locations 185-86.

²³ Jeremy S. Begbie, *Theology, Music and Time* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 239.

our words spoken to him through our mediator, Jesus Christ.²⁴

The trinitarian nature of our worship demonstrates how God is still active, as opposed to the modern deistic understanding of a God who sits and listens passively.²⁵ When we worship God, we participate, through the power of the Holy Spirit, in the fellowship between Jesus Christ and God the Father. God is present with us and we are present with God in the life of the trinity when we worship,²⁶ for that “is what true worship is: our participation in inner-Trinitarian communion.”²⁷ Human beings are the most capable of all creatures to participate in the triune God because we alone have been created in his image.²⁸ Millard J. Erickson writes,

[T]he image of God is intrinsic and indispensable to humanity. . . . [W]e may observe that whatever sets humans apart from the rest of the creation, they alone are capable of having a conscious personal relationship with the Creator and of responding to him, can know God and understand what he desires of them, can love, worship, and obey their Maker. These responses most completely fulfill the Maker’s intention for the human.²⁹

²⁴ Van Dyk, locations 149-55. See also Goldsworthy, 169-70; and Begbie, *Resounding Truth*, 71.

²⁵ Ibid., locations 164-66. See also Robert E. Webber, *Who Gets to Narrate the World?* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), Kindle e-book, locations 626-29.

²⁶ Ibid., locations 722-24. See also Peterson, 173.

²⁷ Ibid., locations 796. See also Packer, 78; and Begbie, *Resounding Truth*, 294. As C. S. Lewis describes, “You may ask, ‘if we cannot imagine a three-personal Being, what is the good of talking about Him?’ Well, there isn’t any good talking about Him. The thing that matters is being actually drawn into that three-personal life, and that may begin any time—tonight, if you like. What I mean is this. An ordinary simple Christian kneels down to say his prayers. He is trying to get into touch with God. But if he is a Christian he knows that what is prompting him to pray is also God: God, so to speak, inside him. But he also knows that all his real knowledge of God comes through Christ, the Man who was God—that Christ is standing beside him, helping him to pray, praying for him. You see what is happening. God is the thing to which he is praying—the goal he is trying to reach. God is also the thing inside him which is pushing him on—the motive power. God is also the road or bridge along which he is being pushed to that goal. So that the whole threefold life of the three-personal Being is actually going on in that ordinary little bedroom where an ordinary man is saying his prayers. The man is being caught up into the higher kinds of life[:] . . . he is being pulled into God, by God, while still remaining himself” [C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 1952), 162-63].

²⁸ Paul J. Griffiths, *Intellectual Appetite* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2009), 192-94. According to Karl Barth, to bear the image of God is a “triune pattern of activity” (Van Dyk, locations 1604-05).

²⁹ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), Kindle e-book, 493-94.

The Biblical Narrative

The biblical narrative seems to be at odds with the modern and postmodern thought of today. While many people are looking for a story that will make sense of their own,³⁰ our individualism has made it difficult to receive beliefs and practices from our heritage, including a traditional understanding of the biblical narrative.³¹ If our worship does not engage believers in the rehearsal of salvation history in meaningful ways, Christians today may live with enormous uncertainty and without direction.³² When the biblical narrative is neglected, the future becomes uncertain, and we tend to focus on ourselves and our own stories.³³ “The narrative of American narcissism,” Robert E. Webber suggests, “tells us that nothing is more important than the self. By contrast, God’s narrative tells us that we will only become what we are meant to be when we submit ourselves to his story.”³⁴

Regrettably, many Protestant evangelicals have not been adequately educated to understand the significance of the biblical narrative or Christian tradition.³⁵ By its nature, worship is an act of recalling God’s actions in salvation history, especially the gospel.³⁶ As discussed above, those who worship should continually proclaim to one another the salvation they have received in Jesus Christ as a way of edifying the community and preparing one another to engage everyday life.³⁷ Like the psalmists, we praise God for what he has done in the past, learning more about his character through our reflection.

³⁰ George Guiver, *Vision upon Vision* (Norwich, UK: Canterbury Press, 2009), 219.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 203.

³² *Ibid.*, 167.

³³ Webber, *Who Gets to Narrate the World?*, locations 93-95. See also Dawn, 132-33.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, locations 319-20.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, locations 119-20.

³⁶ Van Dyk, locations 291.

³⁷ Peterson, 252.

Meanwhile, we praise God for what he will do in the future, as his acts of the past and his promises for the future point to the ultimate reconciliation of humankind and the rest of creation.³⁸ By looking to the biblical narrative and remembering God's saving work, Christians have hope for the future,³⁹ especially as we anticipate "the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting," in the words of the Apostles' Creed.

The biblical narrative is what distinguishes Christianity from other religions and beliefs. According to J. I. Packer,

The vital thing is that God has acted, is acting, and will act in and through Jesus Christ to reconcile all things to himself. In this Story we learn that we, as God's people, have already been reconciled to God through the cross of Christ. And having been reconciled we ourselves have been made ministers of reconciliation.⁴⁰

Christianity is not the story of our ascending heavenward to be in relationship with God. Rather, God descended to us that we may be reconciled to him through the blood of Jesus Christ.⁴¹ Despite its complexities, the biblical narrative should be conveyed in its fullness through the content of our worship services,⁴² for proper worship will be connected to all parts of the biblical narrative.⁴³

For Constance M. Cherry, that the congregation participates in the biblical narrative through the elements of the worship service is essential, because

the order *is* the gospel [italics original] . . . Each time you use the fourfold order, you are subtly telling the gospel story—God's plan for salvation. Every Sunday there is an underlying rhythm in motion: God approaches us, God reveals truth, we respond to the invitation to accept the demands

³⁸ Goldsworthy, 60.

³⁹ Van Dyk, locations 1315-16.

⁴⁰ Packer, 79.

⁴¹ Horton, *Christless Christianity*, 102. See also Horton, *Putting Amazing Back into Grace*, 102 of 313.

⁴² Dawn, 255-56.

⁴³ Peterson, 17-18. See also Goldsworthy, 60.

of the gospel, and we are sent out into the world with a missional purpose. The fourfold order is the relentless telling and retelling of the story every time we gather in Christ's name.⁴⁴

She recommends the following “fourfold order” for free Protestant worship services as a means of retelling the biblical narrative:⁴⁵

The Plan of Salvation	Parallels	Worship Order
God acts first; God seeks us, calls us; God desires to be in fellowship with humanity; God initiates an awakening through the power of the Holy Spirit; God comes to us.	↔	The gathering
Because our relationship with God is fractured through the fall, he sends his Son to restore the relationship; Christ, the living Word, is freely given to the world through his life, death, and resurrection; Christ is God's revealed truth.	↔	The Word
Such revelation demands a response; we are offered an invitation to repent and believe the gospel; we come to Christ in faith and respond to God's plan of salvation by saying “Yes”; we lay our sins on Jesus, accept his forgiveness, and resolve to take up our cross daily and follow him in true discipleship.	↔	The Table
Becoming the followers involves being sent; God intends for his people to be active representatives in the world; the message of Christ is now our message.	↔	The sending

As Marva Dawn has written, “In order to be the Church ‘at a time when so many of its actual historic links are being weakened,’ we ‘must be a community of memory by perpetuating the narratives of the past, by telling stories that bring the past into the present.’”⁴⁶ Only when we have an understanding of the full scope of Scripture can we understand our role, for the biblical narrative is our story.⁴⁷ Anthony Thisleton suggests that “‘who we are’ emerges in terms of God’s larger purposes and promises for the world, society, for the church and for us. This purposive anticipation of the future finds expression in our sense of being called by God to a task within that frame.”⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Constance M. Cherry, *The Worship Architect* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2010), 49.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Dawn, 144. In her quote, Dawn borrows from Robert Wuthnow.

⁴⁷ Bonhoeffer, 54.

⁴⁸ Begbie, *Theology, Music and Time*, 152.

In its ministry, the Church calls attention to the hope offered by the biblical narrative.⁴⁹ Unlike secular culture, the Church offers a different story which gives meaning to the experiences of those who desire more than what the world offers and long for God because they have been made in his image.⁵⁰ Worship provides a means of contextualizing the gospel and manifesting salvation history in the present.⁵¹ Our worship also connects us with believers across the dimensions of time and space—that is, with “the Holy Catholic church” and “the communion of saints,” as the Creed declares—as we remember and reenact the events of the life of Jesus Christ.⁵² The biblical narrative is “the greatest story ever told,” Cameron adamantly contends, for it lasts the length of eternity, giving meaning, depth, and hope to our experience as we participate in God’s story.⁵³ Van Dyk suggests that worship leaders ask the following questions when they select elements for the service:

1. Does our liturgy speak of God with reference to particular actions in history recorded in Scripture?
2. Does corporate worship in our congregation rehearse the whole of the divine economy in a balanced way?
3. Does worship present each particular biblical event and image in an integrated way, with attention to how it fits in the whole framework of biblical teaching and the triune work of God?
4. Does worship open up the meaning of these events in ways that help us perceive God's character more clearly, correcting the theological astigmatism to which we are prone?
5. Does the community itself model the kind of intimate fellowship or *koinonia* that is central to both divine life and the Christian life, and do we see the Trinity's own communion as the source of that communion?⁵⁴

⁴⁹ Peterson, 17.

⁵⁰ Guiver, 219.

⁵¹ Rolf Hille, “Worship—the Source and Standard of Theology,” *Evangelical Review of Theology* 33, no. 3 (2009): 251, 253.

⁵² Guiver, 35. See also Hille, 253, 260; and Begbie, *Resounding Truth*, 275.

⁵³ Charles Cameron, “An Introduction to ‘Theological Anthropology,’” *Evangel* 23, no. 2 (2005): 54. See also Horton, *Christless Christianity*, 94.

⁵⁴ Van Dyk, locations 391-95.

Through its unfolding in Scripture, God beckons us to recognize that we are participants in his story, a cosmic narrative that has meaning for humanity and the rest of creation.⁵⁵ The gospel inserts us into this story, for we are now alive in Christ.⁵⁶ Horton remarks,

When we try to fit God into our life movie, the plot is all wrong—and not just wrong but trivial. When we are pulled out of our own drama and cast as characters in his unfolding plot, we become part of the greatest story ever told. It is through God's Word of judgment (law) and salvation (gospel) that we are transferred from our own pointless scripts and inserted into the grand narrative that revolves around Jesus Christ.⁵⁷

In the end, we are freed from believing that we are at the center of history, because, in reality, we are a part of the longstanding biblical narrative.⁵⁸

The Value of Christian Tradition

In addition to recalling the events of the biblical narrative, the value of the Christian tradition we have inherited should also be recognized in our worship. Christians have a tendency to forget their history and neglect the previous developments and practices of those before them.⁵⁹ To not learn from history, even for the sake of presumed freedom, is futile and potentially dangerous.⁶⁰ As Webber believes, “One of the major reasons why the church has fallen prey to a cultural accommodation is that it has become disconnected from its roots in Scripture, in the ancient church and in its heritage through the centuries.”⁶¹ Ultimately, what has been lost by jettisoning the past is how we interpret

⁵⁵ Webber, *Who Gets to Narrate the World?*, locations 177-79, 858-60.

⁵⁶ Horton, *Christless Christianity*, 129.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 94.

⁵⁸ Horton, *Putting Amazing Back into Grace*, 228 of 313.

⁵⁹ Guiver, 9. See also Erickson, 485.

⁶⁰ Begbie, *Theology, Music and Time*, 218.

⁶¹ Webber, *Who Gets to Narrate the World?*, locations 91-92.

reality and how our perception influences the formation of society.⁶²

As one generation of the historic Church, we are not the first to wonder how we can correct our course. As we develop ways to worship faithfully, we cannot overlook the struggles undergone in each generation of the Church that have contributed to the richness and wisdom of the Christian tradition.⁶³ Rather, as Marva J. Dawn professes,

We stand on the shoulders of the giants before us to see more clearly than we could by ourselves. As the Christian community, we celebrate the universal Church both historically and geographically. Throughout the ages and throughout the world God's people have baptized believers in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit and welcomed them into this unique community who claim that God is one, yet three persons.⁶⁴

Truly vital worship should be informed by tradition and should pass the test of time,⁶⁵ for the identity of the Church is at stake when any reforms or changes are proposed. Old forms and practices cannot be thoughtlessly cast off without the potential for doing great damage to the Church's legacy. If we neglect the history of the Church, we are not properly equipped to develop new practices.⁶⁶ As we develop new ways of singing, playing, and teaching the truths of the Christian faith, we should always preserve the heritage of our beliefs.⁶⁷ The Church cannot jettison its attachment to the historic Christian tradition. In doing so the Church would lose its greater sense of meaning and purpose,⁶⁸ for "[h]istory can tell us how we came to be as we are."⁶⁹ For this reason, Van Dyk asserts, "Perhaps the stately language of the [creeds] can serve as a needed reminder

⁶² Ibid., locations 708-09.

⁶³ Guiver, 160. See also Packer, 25, 122.

⁶⁴ Dawn, 104.

⁶⁵ Guiver, 202.

⁶⁶ Dawn, 144.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 141.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 256-57.

⁶⁹ Guiver, 3.

to us, who are tempted to chase after the ‘new and now,’ that we have been shaped by the witness of those who have gone before us and by the Spirit of God, who has guided the church and continues to guide us today.”⁷⁰

To adhere to tradition does not eliminate the potential for creativity because creativity requires a proper grounding in the thoughts and forms of previous generations.⁷¹ Traditions that survive the test of time are invaluable to the Church, for “past tradition frees us from the tyranny of the present, from the damaging immunity to anything which might criticise and subvert this context, from distorting perceptions which prevent us coming to terms with contemporary reality . . . We are freed for an appropriate and fruitful response to our own context.”⁷²

When rightly understood, the creeds, psalms, and responses of the past give worshipers gifts that may be resources for all aspects of life,⁷³ for right worship will help to develop depth of character in believers by incorporating them into the ongoing Church.⁷⁴ As the community of faith gathers to edify one another,⁷⁵ “[w]e all . . . need to be steeped in a real tradition, through a continuing apprenticeship, sitting under something greater than us that we respect and trust. Christianity depends on the wisdom provided by tradition.”⁷⁶ When we participate in the fellowship of the community of faith, we become heirs of the wisdom that has developed in the “communion of saints,”

⁷⁰ Van Dyk, locations 1016-18.

⁷¹ Dawn, 146.

⁷² Begbie, *Theology, Music and Time*, 219. See also James F. White, *A Brief History of Christian Worship* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1993), Kindle e-book, 178.

⁷³ Dawn, 259-60.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 250.

⁷⁵ Peterson, 287.

⁷⁶ Guiver, 199.

something the world cannot offer.⁷⁷

The Communal Nature of Our Beliefs and Practices

The use of creeds during the worship service is often a cause of discomfort for many believers, due to an underdeveloped ecclesiology. Believing the creeds are the declaration of one's personal faith, the worshiper thinks he must fully understand and believe its contents. However, this understanding of the creeds and of the Church is mistaken.⁷⁸ Van Dyk suggests that "the Creed is not the possession of any single individual; it belongs to the church catholic, to the covenanted community, called and chosen at God's initiative. 'It's our creed.'" ⁷⁹ We profess the words of the Apostles' Creed with one voice because, as a part of the Church, we see ourselves following in the tradition of those before us. Although we may not fully understand the Creed, we still say it in order that we may "grow into [it]" and understand what it means in time.⁸⁰

The close of biblical history did not bring an end to the need for the Church to recall God's activity to redeem creation.⁸¹ Faith was not something attained by the individual "who reached out independently to take possession of [it]," according to Van Dyk. Rather, faith is passed down to those in the community, and to those who join the community in search of it, in order that all might be formed by the community's longstanding tradition.⁸² Thus, out of the tradition of the Christian faith arises the need for a corporate declaration of what God has done to redeem and save humanity.⁸³ When

⁷⁷ Begbie, *Resounding Truth*, 275. See also Guiver, 20.

⁷⁸ Van Dyk, locations 1026-29.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, locations 1061-62.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, locations 1065-70.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, locations 1012.

⁸² *Ibid.*, locations 1107-09.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, locations 1007-08.

the church declares its faith corporately, the proclamation is not the chorus of personal testimonies. Through the creeds, the congregation shares the words of the Church—living and dead, past and present.⁸⁴

As Christian believers, to be a part of the Church is not a choice we have been given, for Scripture proclaims an understanding that God is setting apart a people for himself “who will demonstrate a new way to be human.”⁸⁵ The entire biblical narrative is an interaction and relationship between God and people: God created a people, set a people apart for himself, called people to return to him, provided a way of salvation through Jesus Christ who lived among people, and sent his Spirit to dwell in people.⁸⁶ Moreover, the future depicted in Scripture is an image of people gathered in community.⁸⁷ Although salvation has been given to human beings as individuals, this gift has been intended for the entire community of faith.⁸⁸ The experience of satisfaction that many desire only comes when we pray and worship as a community,⁸⁹ because worship by its nature “belong[s] to the whole life of God’s people, just as it belong[s] to the whole life of the individual.”⁹⁰ God has called every Christian to live in peace with other members of the Church, even though we have not chosen them.⁹¹

The liturgy—as “the work of the people”—involves the gathering of those who have been redeemed, despite the many faults, flaws, and personality differences that may cause divisions. The community of faith is sustained by the Holy Spirit who “gives us

⁸⁴ Ibid., locations 1063-65. See also Guiver, 35.

⁸⁵ Begbie, *Resounding Truth*, 271.

⁸⁶ Dawn, 138-39.

⁸⁷ Van Dyk, locations 1348-49.

⁸⁸ Begbie, *Theology, Music and Time*, 263.

⁸⁹ Guiver, 175.

⁹⁰ Peterson, 38.

⁹¹ Horton, *Christless Christianity*, 205. See also Begbie, *Resounding Truth*, 271.

strength . . . as we gather together as the church to praise, confess, hear the Word, proclaim our faith, lament, make our petitions to God, and eat and drink with the risen Lord.”⁹² Confession has an especially important role in the life of the Church, for Dietrich Bonhoeffer writes that it is through confession that true community occurs. Our prayers of confession are spoken by and for the community, not only the individual.⁹³

In Christ, individuals are united with one another and given a corporate identity; meanwhile they still retain utmost value as unique persons. The individual discovers his or her value by participating in the corporate life of the fellowship.⁹⁴ Human beings are formed by one another, and when we lose our sense of affinity, we lose our sense of identity.⁹⁵ Christians belong in a community where they can worship, work, and witness alongside one another while enjoying the fellowship of the Church universal.⁹⁶ We better understand ourselves through our participation in Christian community and discover our identity through relationships that are founded on the saving work of Jesus Christ.⁹⁷ Thus, as a corporate declaration, the Apostles’ Creed is vital to the formation of the congregation as a whole and to individuals, for “communities shape persons. With their long and extensive experience, with wisdom accumulated in debate and even conflict, in the very substance of their shared life, communities form the way that novices perceive reality and name it.”⁹⁸

⁹² Van Dyk, locations 1034-35.

⁹³ Bonhoeffer, 110. See also Van Dyk, locations 577-78.

⁹⁴ Guiver, 17.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 169.

⁹⁶ Packer, 177.

⁹⁷ Begbie, *Resounding Truth*, 270. See also Dawn, 105.

⁹⁸ Van Dyk, locations 1082-83.

The Lord's Prayer

*Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.*⁹⁹

We turn now to the Lord's Prayer, the second component of catechesis, which comes to us from Jesus Christ himself.¹⁰⁰ A brief investigation of the Lord's Prayer will benefit our discussion of worship, for many of our songs and hymns are prayers.¹⁰¹ When we pray, whether privately or in corporate worship, we are allowing ourselves to be conformed to God's will as if we are "thinking God's thoughts after him."¹⁰² To pray and to worship is a privilege. God invites us to worship him, and he has provided the means through which we can worship.¹⁰³ Accordingly, the Lord's Prayer reveals the true nature of our worship and serves as a primer for our thinking as to how we can properly respond to God.

God Initiates Our Prayer and Worship

Although some Christians believe we initiate worship because we address "Our Father in heaven," Christians gather in response to God's call,¹⁰⁴ for God—not humankind—has initiated the relationship we have with him.¹⁰⁵ In reality, worship is only possible for us because of who God is and what he has done, for human beings cannot enter the presence of God on their own terms.¹⁰⁶ Because of Jesus Christ's saving work

⁹⁹ "The Catechism," in *An Anglican Prayer Book* (Philadelphia, PA: Preservation Press of the Prayer Book Society of the U.S.A., 2008), 126.

¹⁰⁰ Goldsworthy, 85-86.

¹⁰¹ Van Dyk, locations 276.

¹⁰² Goldsworthy, 61, 94-95.

¹⁰³ Van Dyk, locations 810-12. See also White, 29.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, locations 709.

¹⁰⁵ Webber, *Who Gets to Narrate the World?*, locations 436-37, 566.

¹⁰⁶ Peterson, 19, 32.

on the cross, we are able to engage in worship,¹⁰⁷ for Christ's sacrifice "remov[es] a barrier to fellowship with God that existed at the level of ultimate reality."¹⁰⁸

Traditionally, worship services have begun with a call to worship, which reinforces the idea that God has come to us first before we respond to him.¹⁰⁹ The call to worship is a reminder to those who have gathered that it is only because of God's grace that worship is possible.¹¹⁰ Believers do not gather by their own initiative but are gathered through the power of the Holy Spirit by the grace of Jesus Christ.¹¹¹ God addresses us first, and "[o]nly the Holy Spirit can enable us to worship . . . [because] everything starts with what is received."¹¹²

As mentioned in the previous chapter, our worship of God should be held in close relation to our understanding of God and ourselves. The Church is a people who have been redeemed and are being restored into the image of God, and worship is always our God-enabled response to who God is and what he has done.¹¹³ God can only be approached through the means which he stipulates,¹¹⁴ according to David Peterson, who defines worship as "an engagement with [God] on the terms that he proposes and in the way that he alone makes possible."¹¹⁵ Thus, the components of our worship should draw attention to the God who is present among his people as we respond by participating in his created order in the way he has designed.¹¹⁶

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 171, 175-77.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 235.

¹⁰⁹ Van Dyk, locations 255-56.

¹¹⁰ Dawn, 78.

¹¹¹ Horton, *Christless Christianity*, 226.

¹¹² Guiver, 195-96, 201.

¹¹³ Hille, 246. See also Horton, *Christless Christianity*, 198; and Peterson, 26.

¹¹⁴ Peterson, 35.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 20.

¹¹⁶ Dawn, 140.

Beginning at creation, God has designed how human beings can respond to him in worship. Erickson writes, “God endowed each of us with the powers of personality that make it possible for us to worship and serve him. When using those powers to those ends, we are most fully what God intended us to be, and then are most completely human.”¹¹⁷ Because we have been created in the image of God, we are able to be in relationship with God and communicate with him.¹¹⁸ More specifically, it is because God has spoken first that we are able to respond to him, for the ability to communicate is one of the innate characteristics we have been given as human beings made in his image.¹¹⁹

According to the pattern of the Lord’s Prayer, in which we petition God to “forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us,” corporate confession should be a recurring component of our worship. Through confession, we submit ourselves to God as sinners and recognize our need for the grace he has provided. This is the only proper beginning for theologically-informed worship.¹²⁰ The Holy Spirit should expose us to the reality of our sin. In the same way that worship is a response to who God is and what he has done, confession is a response to the reality that we are sinners in need of grace.¹²¹ The act of confession in worship is a continual reminder that we cannot properly worship God apart from his grace.¹²² The confession, followed by the assurance, helps the congregation to form a proper identity as those who have been put to death and made alive again in Jesus Christ, which has restored the possibility of being in relationship with

¹¹⁷ Erickson, 536.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 525.

¹¹⁹ Goldsworthy, 23. See also Guiver, 195-96; and Hille, 250.

¹²⁰ Van Dyk, locations 450-51. See also Peterson, 251.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, locations 544-46.

¹²² *Ibid.*, locations 484-85.

God.¹²³

Today, there is a tendency to talk too much about the faith of an individual and not enough about the object of our faith.¹²⁴ Removing ourselves and our feelings from the center, God should remain the subject and object of our worship,¹²⁵ “for [his] is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, forever and ever.” As Dawn has written, “We lose our reason for being if we do not constantly remember that God has called us to be his people and that our ability to respond to that call in worship and life is totally the gift of God’s grace.”¹²⁶ Worship has never been a human invention but rather an invitation and gift from God and our response to all that he is and all that he has done.¹²⁷

How We Ought to Respond to God

Following the address of “Our Father in Heaven,” the Lord’s Prayer continues with “hallowed be your name.” Thus, our desire in worship should be to show obeisance to God, that is, to ensure that his name be hallowed in our words and actions. According to J. I. Packer, “Whatever God has revealed to us about himself, about his mighty deeds or about his will for our lives always requires an appropriate response from us,”¹²⁸ and the worship that is pleasing to God is “the willing self-offering of his people, in obedience to his will.”¹²⁹ Thus, “[b]ecause God is great, he ought to be worshiped reverently.”¹³⁰

¹²³ Ibid., locations 447-49.

¹²⁴ Horton, *Putting Amazing Back into Grace*, 147 of 313.

¹²⁵ Dawn, 80.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 76. See also Packer, 84.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 243. See also Peterson, 26.

¹²⁸ Packer, 125. See also Peterson, 25.

¹²⁹ Peterson, 236.

¹³⁰ Horton, *Putting Amazing Back into Grace*, 18 of 313.

Our worship should continually proclaim and enact what God has done.¹³¹ To speak God’s word back to him is the highest form of speech to which human beings can attain.¹³² Thus, our best worship is responding to God with his own words, as Van Dyk explains,

God has chosen, in mysterious divine wisdom, this collection of documents that comprise our Bible to be the means by which we are formed to be the people of faith. God has chosen, in mysterious divine wisdom, this Bible to be one of the means by which Christ is presented to us in our gathered worship. God has chosen, in mysterious divine wisdom, this Bible to be the means of our comfort, judgment, instruction, hope, lament, and vision. It would be a great folly for us to fill our worship service with words—mountains of words—that do not find their source in this God-appointed well.¹³³

To pray and worship through Scripture prevents us from “[becoming] the victims of our own emptiness.”¹³⁴

Our worship music should also be true to human experience,¹³⁵ for we pray, “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” Praise that only expresses feelings of joy and happiness—to the neglect of sin, pain, and suffering—are only a fraction of the biblical picture of proper worship to God. When a worship service only includes music that is happy and upbeat, we overlook the realities of life in a world filled with damaged people. Moreover, we risk losing a segment of Christian believers who are faced with the darkest realities of life in a damaged world when we fail to affirm and validate their experiences. Our worship should include a recognition of the brokenness in us and in the world in order for God’s grace to bear its truest potency and for God to be understood as

¹³¹ Webber, *Who Gets to Narrate the World?*, locations 623.

¹³² Griffiths, 178.

¹³³ Van Dyk, locations 878-82. Refer to fn. 20.

¹³⁴ Bonhoeffer, 84-85.

¹³⁵ Dawn, 176.

the one who “give[s] us today our daily bread.”¹³⁶ A holistic understanding of human life and the Christian faith includes the sorrows and griefs of life, and these should be brought before God in prayer and worship.¹³⁷ Goldsworthy adds, “The redemptive story is as much about God’s provision for people’s bodies as for their souls. Indeed, the Hebrew view of humanity, which is consistent with the New Testament view, is that we are essentially physical beings into which God has breathed the breath of life.”¹³⁸

When we participate in the liturgy, our worship practices “guid[e] us into the true ends of human life . . . [because] the liturgy sets before us paradigms of exemplary conduct and involves us in a symbolic world that shapes us deeply.”¹³⁹ While the Church prays for the immediate needs of the world, it anticipates the coming of God’s kingdom, for the Lord’s Prayer reads, “Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.” Although God’s kingdom has not fully come, it is still revealed in part among the members of the body of Christ.¹⁴⁰ “In the praise, thanksgiving, and intercessions of the church, we anticipate the healing of the whole creation, celebrate any sign of its appearance among us, and ask God to manifest that healing in the world now, and to empower us to be agents of that healing.”¹⁴¹

That we pray “your kingdom come” reflects the overarching purpose of prayer and worship. Like nearly all Christian practices, prayer and worship are eschatologically inclined. As we pray “your kingdom come,” we are anticipating God’s saving purposes and his righteous judgment. The former cannot be expected without the latter. In order for

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 87.

¹³⁷ Van Dyk, locations 1168-70.

¹³⁸ Goldsworthy, 97.

¹³⁹ Van Dyk, locations 1655-57. Refer to chart on p. 45.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, locations 1211-13.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, locations 1218-22.

all things to be redeemed and reconciled, all should be judged either for their rebellion or for their guiltlessness and acquittal.¹⁴² “Worship, in short, re-enacts or dramatizes God's intent for human flourishing. Worship gives us an opportunity to ‘practice’ patterns of eternity,”¹⁴³ and “the way to be relevant to the world is to more deeply embody the final ends of human life that are embedded in and revealed through our worship life.”¹⁴⁴

Finally, although many Protestant evangelicals may be uncomfortable with the practice, our response to God may even include silence. As Pope Benedict XVI has written, “[W]herever God’s word is translated into human words there remains a surplus of the unspoken and the unspeakable which calls us to silence—into a silence that in the end lets the unutterable become song and also calls on the voices of the cosmos for help so that the unspoken may become audible.”¹⁴⁵ Silence is an opportunity for God to comfort, challenge, instruct, warn, or console the congregation,¹⁴⁶ and “[w]e need the channel of silence to transport us from the busy harbors of our own tensions out to the ocean of God’s infinite being.”¹⁴⁷

The Ten Commandments

(1) You shall have no other gods but me.

(2) You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything is in heaven above, or that is in the earth below, or that is in the water under the earth.

You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.

(3) You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.

¹⁴² Goldsworthy, 93.

¹⁴³ Van Dyk, locations 1562-66.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., locations 1637-38.

¹⁴⁵ Quoted in Begbie, *Resounding Truth*, 267.

¹⁴⁶ Van Dyk, locations 1242-45. See also Bonhoeffer, 79-80.

¹⁴⁷ Dawn, 266.

(4)Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

(5)Honor your father and mother, that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.

(6)You shall not murder.

(7)You shall not commit adultery.

(8)You shall not steal.

(9)You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

(10)You shall not covet your neighbor's house, you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor's.¹⁴⁸

Throughout Scripture, worship and covenant were in close relationship as the faith community was exhorted to remember God and bring glory to him by obeying what he has commanded.¹⁴⁹ The responsibilities God has given are repeated numerous times in the Bible by means of covenants and commandments, the Ten Commandments being the most prominent. While most of our planned worship takes place within the confines of a church building, the fundamental principles behind the Ten Commandments—the third component of catechesis—help us to bring our worship into the world in the form of service toward God and others. The Decalogue is first articulated in the book of Exodus, the centerpiece of the Pentateuch, which is a story of utmost importance to the Israelite people. God's covenant with Israel served as the foundation for their worship practices and interactions with one another, and as a component of catechesis, the Decalogue provides important instruction for how the faith community today ought to live.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁸ "The Catechism," in *An Anglican Prayer Book* (Philadelphia, PA: Preservation Press of the Prayer Book Society of the U.S.A., 2008), 123-24.

¹⁴⁹ Peterson, 284.

¹⁵⁰ Packer, 91.

Our Relationship with God

According to Jewish tradition, the first of the ten “words” in the Decalogue was God’s self-identification in Ex. 20:2, which summarized the meaning of the Exodus event and provided the context in which the following covenant would be rendered. Hence, obedience to the forthcoming commandments would be the proper response for those whom God had saved, for only he is to receive our worship, according to the first commandment.¹⁵¹ The Ten Commandments were the fundamental covenant obligations of Israel’s vertical relationship with God and the horizontal relationship with one’s neighbor,¹⁵² and they can be summarized by two responsibilities: (a) to worship God alone in the way God has prescribed and (b) to act with justice toward one’s neighbor.¹⁵³ When the Church loses sight of its purpose, namely, to love God and to love one’s neighbor, worship loses its meaning.¹⁵⁴ Thus, as a part of nurturing Christian character, along with honoring God, catechesis should emphasize caring for those overlooked and under distress in society.¹⁵⁵

The Ten Commandments provide God’s design for how he created people to live, especially when they are in right relationship to him.¹⁵⁶ For instance, God established the Sabbath as a day of rest for humankind, according to the fourth commandment, and as a day dedicated to the Lord.¹⁵⁷ God has designed this manner of living for us so our lives

¹⁵¹ John Barton, *The Pentateuch* (New York: Oxford University Press Inc., 2001), 111-12. See also *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, Augmented 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 83, 110-11.

¹⁵² *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, 110.

¹⁵³ Barton, 110-11. See also Gordon D. Fee, *How to Read the Bible Book by Book* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 40.

¹⁵⁴ Dawn, 281.

¹⁵⁵ Webber, *Who Gets to Narrate the World?*, locations 428-29.

¹⁵⁶ Horton, *Christless Christianity*, 102.

¹⁵⁷ Barton, 112-13. See also *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, 111.

may be in accord with the beliefs we proclaim and with how God has created us.¹⁵⁸ As Peterson explains, “A genuine relationship with God will involve ongoing expressions of submission to his character and will, in the form of personal and corporate acts of obedience, faith, hope and love.”¹⁵⁹

Worship involves both specific acts of adoration and submission along with a life of service to God and to one another.¹⁶⁰ Having been inserted through the gospel into God’s story, we are guided by the law to live the lives of love to which we have been called, and the call to love God and to love our neighbors should never fall out of focus.¹⁶¹ “The way of the Lord, in simplest terms, is the way of loving God and neighbor—the double commandment of love given in Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18, which, Jesus explained, summarizes all the commandments of God (Mark 12:29-31).”¹⁶² When we live in the way God has designed, we deepen our communion with God.¹⁶³

Our Relationships with One Another and the Role of the Church in the World

The gospel that we profess has inherent implications for our worship as it forms our daily lives.¹⁶⁴ Only the grace of Jesus Christ has made possible our relationships with one another,¹⁶⁵ for sin has had a viral effect in our world,¹⁶⁶ corrupting both our connection with God and with creation, in addition to our relationships with others.¹⁶⁷ Sin

¹⁵⁸ Packer, 91, 118.

¹⁵⁹ Peterson, 195.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 69-70.

¹⁶¹ Packer, 92. See also Horton, *Christless Christianity*, 129, 134.

¹⁶² Ibid., 63.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 133.

¹⁶⁴ Packer, 99-100.

¹⁶⁵ Bonhoeffer, 21.

¹⁶⁶ Van Dyk, locations 510.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., locations 441-42.

leads us to disgrace our parents, to murder, to be unfaithful, to steal, to lie, and to covet. Thus, to obey the Ten Commandments, especially as they are interpreted in the teachings of Jesus Christ, preserves our relationships with one another and allows the ministry of the Church to be heeded.¹⁶⁸ The Church is both a place and people who have been formed by the gospel and reenter the world proclaiming their means of justification as those who have been justified and made new in Jesus Christ.¹⁶⁹

Simply stated, true worship is a life-orientation.¹⁷⁰ Humility before God is demonstrated through one's entire manner of living.¹⁷¹ Peterson explains,

From Romans 12-15 it is clear that acceptable worship involves effective ministry to one another within the body of Christ, maintaining love and forgiveness towards those outside the Christian community, expressing right relationships with ruling authorities, living expectantly in the light of Christ's imminent return, and demonstrating love especially towards those with different opinions within the congregation of Christ's people.¹⁷²

That we have been called to offer our whole selves as "living sacrifices" demonstrates that our worship includes relationships and responsibilities outside of the elements of our worship services.¹⁷³ When the people of God gather, our worship involves both our reverent response to God as we honor his name, according to the third commandment, and our ministry to one another beyond the walls of the church building.¹⁷⁴ Worship is the service individuals perform for God and for one another when they have grasped the meaning of the gospel and its implications.¹⁷⁵

¹⁶⁸ John H. Walton, *Old Testament*, IVP Bible Background Commentary (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 96-97. See also Barton, 113; *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, 111.

¹⁶⁹ Horton, *Christless Christianity*, 231-33.

¹⁷⁰ Peterson, 18.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 73.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 178.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 187; cf. Romans 12:1.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 221.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 242.

If we become more familiar with the full depth and richness of our worship, perhaps as our faith in God is strengthened, the implications of the gospel, in terms of ethics and service, will become more clear.¹⁷⁶ The call of the Church is to minister to others in both body and soul, and this begins with church leaders ministering to their congregation who, in turn, carry this ministry to nonbelievers in the world.¹⁷⁷ Whether working or ministering, Christians should take seriously this world, this life, and the next because God takes seriously this world, this life, and the next for the sake of his glory.¹⁷⁸ When the Church worships, it senses its call and responsibility for the world outside its walls. When God is the subject of our worship, the Church is given the courage to proclaim its faith both in word and deed to the rest of the world.¹⁷⁹

As the design for how God created people to live, the Ten Commandments demonstrate that we are responsible for our relationships with others, our horizontal responsibilities, which leads us to consider our ethics.¹⁸⁰ The primary task of Christian ethics, according to Karl Barth, is to point to the covenant which God has formed with his people by adhering to the obligations of the covenant.¹⁸¹ When we have been firmly grounded in God's established order through the covenant, "we are enabled to live more fully in the world that God has made and with the God who made it."¹⁸² Van Dyk confesses, "Our solidarity with the suffering is our burden to bear, but it is also our true vocation."¹⁸³

¹⁷⁶ Guiver, 51.

¹⁷⁷ Horton, *Christless Christianity*, 208.

¹⁷⁸ Horton, *Putting Amazing Back into Grace*, 16 of 313. See also White, 55.

¹⁷⁹ Dawn, 160-62.

¹⁸⁰ Horton, *Christless Christianity*, 102.

¹⁸¹ Van Dyk, locations 1599-600.

¹⁸² Begbie, *Resounding Truth*, 94.

¹⁸³ Van Dyk, locations 1190-91.

The worship in which we participate should lead us to wrestle with what role the Church should play in today's culture and how we can effectively proclaim the truth of the gospel. To start, as it has been addressed in the previous chapter, the Church can only be effective when we are able to articulate "who we are, what we believe, and what difference that can make."¹⁸⁴ The Church should return to a deeper understanding of itself as God's covenant community, which he has been forming through the grace of Jesus Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit. When the Church understands itself in this way, believers are equipped to minister to their neighbors in the world.¹⁸⁵ The greatest gift a congregation has to offer is the real formation which the Christian faith makes possible, and the people of God have no greater method of evangelism than fulfilling what they have been called to be. Likewise, Dawn quotes Stanley Hauerwas and William Willimon, who have contended that the Church influences the world "by being the church, that is, by being something the world is not and can never be."¹⁸⁶

The best way the Church can reach those outside itself is to offer its deepest resources, which can only be found when its ontological identity is preserved and rehearsed in faithful worship.¹⁸⁷ When our worship is substantial, it grounds individuals in the community of faith and develops in them a character of altruism, by "not only build[ing] awareness of the world's needs under God's cosmic care but also challeng[ing] and empower[ing] participants to join in God's purposes for responding to those needs as agents of his care."¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁴ Dawn, 295.

¹⁸⁵ Horton, *Christless Christianity*, 256.

¹⁸⁶ Dawn, 292-93.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 282.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 294.

The unity of the body of Christ is best expressed in the activity of its members in worship and in the activity of God's people in the world, which extends from their worship.¹⁸⁹ God's activity in the world, since it has never been restricted to the confines of the Church, can be seen most clearly in the Church's activity in the surrounding world.¹⁹⁰ As the Church, we have been called to perform good works in order to demonstrate the "fruit of the faith." We function as ambassadors of Christ's kingdom, working to prepare the world for Christ's coming.¹⁹¹

Although the Church is immersed in culture, it is not our task to be its preservers, for secular culture has enough participants of its own for the task. Rather, the task of the people of God is to preserve the differentness that distinguishes them while witnessing to God's holiness.¹⁹² God has called his people to be set apart as a priesthood, both serving in the world and for the world as intercessors.¹⁹³ The Church has the unique role of being formed by and portraying the biblical picture of God in its worship so that all of humanity may be restored to what it has been created to be.¹⁹⁴ The Church acts as an embassy of the triune God in this passing age, proclaiming God's saving acts as witnesses to the reality that God is at work within his creation.¹⁹⁵

Regardless of whether we are aware of it, our corporate worship informs and shapes our ethics.¹⁹⁶ Our worship practices should not anesthetize us to the brokenness of

¹⁸⁹ Van Dyk, locations 791-93.

¹⁹⁰ Guiver, 172.

¹⁹¹ Horton, *Putting Amazing Back into Grace*, 231 of 313.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, 173. See also Cameron, 59; Guiver, 42; and Peterson, 245, 268.

¹⁹³ Van Dyk, locations 1205; cf. Exodus 19:6 and 1 Peter 2:9.

¹⁹⁴ Dawn, 103.

¹⁹⁵ Horton, *Christless Christianity*, 105. See also Webber, *Who Gets to Narrate the World?*, locations 246-48.

¹⁹⁶ Van Dyk, locations 1592-93.

the world,¹⁹⁷ for the Church should be prepared to engage a messy world of damaged image bearers, and its members should be discerning in order to avoid compromises that endanger its calling.¹⁹⁸ The Church lives at a “crossroads,” according to George Guiver, because through our worship practices we live in heaven and exercise our citizenship there; meanwhile we are also inhabitants in this world, although we are not of it.¹⁹⁹ Those who participate in proper worship will be formed to look for Christ in all things, and this should lead to a passion for social justice.²⁰⁰

How we understand people as human beings made in the image of God deeply implicates how we minister to them.²⁰¹ That all human beings have been made in the image of God “requires us to recognize the dignity of all human beings, regardless of who they are, what they believe, or what they do.”²⁰² The greatest dignity we can offer another individual is to see them as a human being who bears God’s image, for though they have been damaged by sin, they are qualified as recipients of God’s grace as his children and have the same need for the restoration of the image they bear.²⁰³ “If we are not seeing the needy and oppressed, if we edit them out,” Guiver warns, “then there are things we are not understanding about what worship is.”²⁰⁴

The Word of God often moves from what God has done and what we believe to how we ought to respond faithfully in worship to how we ought to minister to one

¹⁹⁷ Begbie, *Resounding Truth*, 260.

¹⁹⁸ Guiver, 42. See also Peterson, 245.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 172. See also Begbie, *Theology, Music and Time*, 151.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 215.

²⁰¹ Erickson, 485.

²⁰² Horton, *Putting Amazing Back into Grace*, 29 of 313.

²⁰³ Bonhoeffer, 105-06.

²⁰⁴ Guiver, 216.

another.²⁰⁵ In practical terms, the closing moments of our worship should make the connection between the worship service and how we are to live the rest of our lives.²⁰⁶ Regardless of what style a worship service may follow, the ending should connect ethically, morally, and spiritually with the rest of life.²⁰⁷ As mentioned above, the Church has a relatively narrow calling—although with global significance—compared to individual believers who have as many responsibilities as they have relationships.²⁰⁸ No matter what our calling may be, our work is a ministry to the community for the glory of God.²⁰⁹

The Ten Commandments should be foundational to the worship practices and the life of the faith community today. By setting a people apart for himself, God has given the law so that we might maintain the proper conditions for him to dwell among us. In the same way, as the inheritors of the longstanding Judeo-Christian tradition, evangelicals should adhere to the law God has given, as interpreted through Jesus Christ. For believers in the twenty-first century, the Ten Commandments are still to be considered God's principal design for our worship practices and the daily life of Christian believers. God has spoken and acted first, revealing himself through the giving of the law and his activity in history, and we are to worship him in response through the means which he has designed.

²⁰⁵ Horton, *Christless Christianity*, 210.

²⁰⁶ Van Dyk, locations 1542-46.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, locations 1553-60.

²⁰⁸ Horton, *Christless Christianity*, 216.

²⁰⁹ Horton, *Putting Amazing Back into Grace*, 232 of 313.

CHAPTER FOUR
CONCLUSION: A HOPEFUL DIRECTION

The liturgy is the embodiment of the patterns of the kingdom of God in summary fashion. Liturgy thus might be described as a “window” of the kingdom. Or, put slightly differently, we might say that in the liturgy our actions—our prayers, praise, confession, offering, passing of the peace of Christ, openness to the Word of God—become transparent to the patterns of the kingdom. In those typical patterns, actions, and words, we encounter God and find our “real life,” our “final ends,” our ultimate goals. Just as the ending of the liturgy might recap and provide meaning to the whole service, liturgy as a whole can be seen as relating to the whole of life as its “end” or goal.¹
- Leanne Van Dyk

The solution to developing theologically-informed ways of worshiping God and preserving the faith is not likely to be found in a mere programmatic shift in churches. Rather, it seems a paradigm shift is needed for many churches.² If we are going to set a course for faithful worship renewal and find innovative ways to minister to today’s generation, we must start at the root of our understanding. As this project has argued, one possible beginning for the solution is catechesis.³ Once we are immersed in the language of Scripture, grounded in tradition, and have a good grasp of culture, we should be able to engage the world and develop practices through which we can worship faithfully.⁴ Churches have an unprecedented opportunity to offer the deepest meaning of human existence to a generation that is dissatisfied with individualism and self-absorption,⁵ but we can only worship rightly and, through our worship, share a biblical understanding when we have been schooled by Scripture to see God for who he truly is.⁶

The current trend of dumbing down worship to attract people to the church is

¹ Leanne Van Dyk, *A More Profound Alleluia* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), Kindle e-book, locations 1582-86.

² Michael Horton, *Christless Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2008), Kindle e-book, 209.

³ George Guiver, *Vision upon Vision* (Norwich, UK: Canterbury Press, 2009), 201.

⁴ Jeremy S. Begbie, *Resounding Truth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2007), 188. See also Guiver, 199.

⁵ Marva J. Dawn, *Reaching Out without Dumbing Down* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), Kindle e-book, 134.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 90.

inherently fatal to the Christian faith. If our worship aims only at good feelings and happiness, avoiding a faith that is deeply rooted in orthodox belief, then our churches do not provide a foundation on which to stand nor a hope to which believers may cling when true tragedies occur in life. Without at least a basic knowledge of the doctrines of Christianity, individuals will be ravaged by whatever suffering they may face.⁷ For those churches that continue to lay aside the symbols of the Christian faith which have been preserved for centuries, there will be far too little substance remaining in the faith as it is passed on to the next generation.⁸

Churches that embrace this paradigm shift will have returned to “the heart of the matter,” according to George Guiver, which is “an awareness of God’s centrality, informed by the growth in a feel for the life-giving nature of the tradition, a sense of the Church, the Body which Christ loved and for which he died (Ephesians 5.25, 29-33)—a sense of being set within something infinitely larger than our small horizons.”⁹ Our worship should reorient us, turning us away from how we would otherwise live, and worship can only successfully reorient us when we keep God at the center, as both subject and object.¹⁰

Although there will be challenges ahead, the reciprocal relationship of catechesis and faithful worship should prepare us to meet our greatest obstacles. Guiver admonishes, “Where worship is really happening there will be human mess,”¹¹ and in the face of “human mess,” worship should provide for its participants what the world cannot.

⁷ Ibid., 280.

⁸ Ibid., 152.

⁹ Guiver, 224-25.

¹⁰ Ibid., 188.

¹¹ Ibid., 48.

Faithful worship that educates believers will also provide participants with new thoughts about God and insights into his character. The result should be the transformation of the spiritual and moral character of worshipers as they are grounded in sound doctrine.¹²

Faithful worship should teach us to be sensitive to what is holy, to find places where we can experience the presence of God in community and be formed according to his character.¹³ Most importantly, faithful worship will demonstrate to the surrounding culture what it means to live beneath the cross and in the presence of the risen Christ around whom we gather.¹⁴

By its nature, the formation that Christians need will equip them for life.¹⁵

Therefore, we must always ask how our worship practices are forming what we believe about God and what kind of character is being nurtured in individual believers, for the actions performed during a worship service will deeply influence our thoughts and actions.¹⁶ As a response to who God is and what he has done, worship calls us to live faithfully in our everyday lives,¹⁷ for “there is no difference between worship and life.”¹⁸ When we have been faithful in our practices, the growth of our character will be evident in the way we live our everyday lives.¹⁹

Although worship is deeply concerned with right beliefs about God, it is more than simply recalling the events of salvation history and proclaiming God’s Word back to

¹² Dawn, 249.

¹³ Ibid., 267. See also David Peterson, *Engaging with God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 30.

¹⁴ Ibid., 254.

¹⁵ Guiver, 227.

¹⁶ Dawn, 119.

¹⁷ Van Dyk, locations 1411-13.

¹⁸ Dawn, 106.

¹⁹ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, Inc., 1954), 88.

him.²⁰ Worship calls the people of God to spiritual responsibility and demands that we show love and minister to those both inside and outside the community of faith.²¹

According to Charles Cameron, “[O]ur service is grounded in worship.”²² While forming us to be more complete human beings through the restoration of the image of God in us, worship equips us to serve and “can be the means for social renewal.”²³

Human beings are privileged among the many creatures which God has created. Rabbi Akiba writes, “Beloved is humanity since they were created in God’s image; greater still is the love, that God made it known to humanity that they were created in the image.”²⁴ Not only has God given us his image to bear, but he has revealed to us that we are his image bearers. While we have been given an unprecedented privilege as human beings, we also have great responsibility in properly bearing the image of God. Though we may stumble and tarnish the image that we bear, God has provided salvation and healing for us in Jesus Christ. Those in ministry should remember that human beings have ineffable value because they bear the image of God. Thus, no individual in need can rightfully be turned away. Rather, our worship and service to God demand that we serve and protect the image of God in others.

The Church is a collective group of tarnished image bearers who are being restored and remade by the grace of Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. In this way, the Church represents the future reconciliation of all things with the creator,

²⁰ Peter H. Sedgwick, “Thy Kingdom Come: Worship and Social Responsibility Today,” *Modern Believing* 40, no. 3 (1999): 21.

²¹ Peterson, 178.

²² Charles Cameron, “An Introduction to ‘Theological Anthropology,’” *Evangel* 23, no. 2 (2005): 59. See also Guiver, 227.

²³ Sedgwick, 28.

²⁴ Quoted in Craig S. Keener, *New Testament*, IVP Bible Background Commentary (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 740.

acting now as a safe haven for those who seek redemption. Although the Church is comprised of fallen and damaged human beings, God offers forgiveness and sustains his people in order that his love and glory might be made manifest in the world through them.²⁵ Every action of the Church in worship must reflect this understanding, as Van Dyk has written,

By God's intent and purpose, Christ is the head of the church, and the Holy Spirit is the source of its vitality. It is faith in this God that we proclaim doxologically in the ecumenical creeds. It is this very God who has chosen us to be a royal priesthood in the world—which priesthood we rehearse in our communal prayers and exercise in society. The object of the church's corporate priesthood is the whole world . . . In our prayer we bless God, and in our priesthood, God works in us, through us, and sometimes in spite of us to bless God's creation, all against the horizon of God's ultimate sovereign rule, the eschatological consummation in which that blessing shall reach its completion.²⁶

Christians have a hope that affirms we already participate in the future when God will conquer evil.²⁷ The eschatological perspective of the Christian faith places the hope of the believer “in the power of God over all that would hurt or destroy[,] . . . in God's ultimate purposes and goals for the restoration of creation, [and in the] assurance that God will usher in the new heavens and the new earth.”²⁸ Thus, our ministry should always have an eschatological bent, for the purpose of our gatherings and our service is “to prepare the saints to meet their Lord.”²⁹

Therefore, our worship should have an eye toward the future that transcends the anthropocentrism of our surrounding culture which has become consumed by the now. As

²⁵ Van Dyk, locations 1470-71.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, locations 1248-52.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, locations 1299-300.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, locations 1296-99.

²⁹ Peterson, 209.

Christians, we believe in a hope that is “like an injection of the future into the present,”³⁰ although we do not look forward in the mindset of escapism. Rather, the Church looks to transform the current state of the world in light of what has been foretold.³¹ The Church is called to demonstrate faith, hope, and love in all aspects of life in the world,³² and the image of God is restored when the Church worships and faithfully engages its social responsibility.³³ When Christians gather, they minister to one another, looking to give rather than receive, in order that they may recall God’s promises and encourage godly living in the present age.³⁴

Although the future looks bleak for a culture enamored by the self, the Church must cling to the hope given in Scripture through theologically-informed praxis, while calling the world to embrace the same hope. While the endless exploration for meaningful worship practices continues,³⁵ the gospel story that unfolded centuries ago, forever changing the world, remains the same, and it must be faithfully proclaimed today. In the end, as we continue to develop worship practices that preserve the gospel message in our ever-evolving context,³⁶

Holy Scripture must always be allowed to have the last word. To put it bluntly, our God is a speaking God who has used particular Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek words, arranged in sentences and paragraphs in documents of canonical status, to open his mind to us and tell us things—specifically, to tell us of his covenant love for the lost, and to explain to us what he has done, is doing, and will do to re-create and reorder his lapsed

³⁰ Begbie, *Resounding Truth*, 263-64.

³¹ Cameron, 60.

³² Peterson, 250.

³³ Sedgwick, 28.

³⁴ Peterson, 249-50.

³⁵ Guiver, 200.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 9. See also James F. White, *A Brief History of Christian Worship* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1993), Kindle e-book, 178-79.

world, with ourselves as part of it.³⁷

The goal of this project has been to set forth a hopeful direction for worship reforms in Protestant evangelical churches by using the three parts of catechesis as a primer for our thinking in regard to theology and practices. Catechesis is not a sure solution, but rather it provides a possible direction for beginning worship reforms in today's Protestant evangelical churches. Catechetical instruction has traditionally been used to preserve the mystery of the Christian faith, and it can provide the same vital service today. Where mystery has been lost in worship practices that gratify an individual's immediate needs, proper catechesis should guide individuals to develop worship practices that lead worshipers to be in awe of God, to respond with reverence, and to serve one another. Now, as we take steps forward, let our focus always be on bringing glory to the God who has revealed himself to us in his glorious mystery and who deserves our utmost praise.

³⁷ J. I. Packer, *Grounded in the Gospel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2010), 79.

Bibliography

- Saint Augustine. *Confessions*. Trans. Henry Chadwick. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1992.
- “Barna Studies the Research, Offers a Year-in-Review Perspective.” Barna Group. Accessed February 17, 2012. Last modified 2009. <http://www.barna.org/barna-update/article/12-faithspirituality/325-barna-studies-the-research-offers-a-year-in-review-perspective>.
- Barton, John, and John Muddiman, eds. *The Pentateuch*, Oxford Bible Commentary. New York: Oxford University Press Inc., 2001.
- Begbie, Jeremy S. *Resounding Truth: Christian Wisdom in the World of Music*. Engaging Culture. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2007.
- . *Theology, Music and Time*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *Life Together: The Classic Exploration of Christian Community*. New York, NY: Harper & Row Publishers, Inc., 1954.
- Bromiley, Geoffrey W., ed. *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*. Vol. 4. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979.
- Cameron, Charles. “An Introduction to ‘Theological Anthropology’.” *Evangel* 23, no. 2 (2005): 53-61. *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCOhost (accessed November 6, 2011).
- “The Catechism.” In *An Anglican Prayer Book*, 121-31. Philadelphia, PA: Preservation Press of the Prayer Book Society of the U.S.A., 2008.
- Cherry, Constance M. *The Worship Architect: A Blueprint for Designing Culturally Relevant and Biblically Faithful Services*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2010.
- Dawn, Marva J. *Reaching Out without Dumbing Down: A Theology of Worship for This Urgent Time*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995. Kindle e-book.
- Erickson, Millard J. *Christian Theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998. Kindle e-book.
- Fee, Gordon D., and Douglas Stuart. “Exodus.” *How to Read the Bible Book by Book*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002.
- Goldsworthy, Graeme. *Prayer and the Knowledge of God: What the Whole Bible Teaches*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003.

- Griffiths, Paul J. *Intellectual Appetite: A Theological Grammar*. Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2009.
- Guiver, George. *Vision upon Vision: Processes of Change and Renewal in Christian Worship*. Norwich, UK: Canterbury Press, 2009.
- Hansen, Collin. "Why Johnny Can't Read the Bible." *Christianity Today*, May 24, 2010. http://christianitytoday.com/ct/article_print.html?id=87842.
- Hille, Rolf. "Worship--the Source and Standard of Theology." *Evangelical Review Of Theology* 33, no. 3 (2009): 246-261. *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCOhost (accessed November 6, 2011).
- Horton, Michael. *Christless Christianity: The Alternative Gospel of the American Church*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2008. Kindle e-book.
- . *Putting Amazing Back into Grace*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2002. Apple iBook.
- Keener, Craig S. *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993.
- Lewis, C. S. *Mere Christianity*. New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 1952.
- The New Oxford Annotated Bible (N.O.A.B.)*. Ed. Michael D. Coogan, et al. Augmented Third Edition ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007. New Revised Standard Version.
- Packer, J. I., and Gary A. Parrett. *Grounded in the Gospel: Building Believers the Old-Fashioned Way*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2010.
- Peterson, David. *Engaging with God: A Biblical Theology of Worship*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992.
- Pinckaers, Servais. "The Natural Desire To See God." *Nova Et Vetera (English Edition)* 8.3 (2010): 627-646. *Academic Search Complete*. Web. 7 Dec. 2011.
- Reiss, Moshe. "Adam: Created In The Image And Likeness Of God." *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 39.3 (2011): 181-186. *ATLA Religion Database*. Web. 6 Dec. 2011.
- Schuele, Andreas. "Uniquely Human: The Ethics Of The Imago Dei In Genesis 1-11." *Toronto Journal Of Theology* 27.1 (2011): 5-16. *Academic Search Complete*. Web. 7 Dec. 2011.
- Sedgwick, Peter H. "Thy Kingdom Come: Worship and Social Responsibility Today." *Modern Believing* 40, no. 3 (1999): 20-29. *ATLASerials, Religion Collection*,

EBSCOhost (accessed November 6, 2011).

Van Dyk, Leeanne. *A More Profound Alleluia: Theology and Worship in Harmony*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005. Kindle e-book.

Walton, John H., Victor H. Matthews, and Mark W. Chavalas. *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000.

Webber, Robert E. *The Divine Embrace: Recovering the Passionate Spiritual Life*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2006.

—. *Who Gets to Narrate the World?: Contending for the Christian Story in an Age of Rivals*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008. Kindle e-book.

White, James F. *A Brief History of Christian Worship*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1993. Kindle e-book.