Sensing Worship: An Autoethnography of Liturgy and Affect

By

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Writing a dissertation amid job searching and a global health crisis was a challenge in many ways. But physical isolation, online worship, and diminished social life made me feel more strongly about the importance of affect and bodies in worship. This dissertation is just a beginning, a small contribution to the field and work I look forward to continuing as my career unfolds.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments ..... **iii**

List of Figures ..... **vi**

Chapter 1 ..... **1**

I. Affect Theory 2

A. Historical Background: The Two Camps of Affect Theory 5

B. Contemporary Affect Theory 14

C. Affect Theory and the Study of Religion 17

II. Methods 19

A. CMR and Reflexivity 22

III. Limitations and Future Research 27

IV. Turning Toward Liturgy 28

Chapter 2 ..... **32**

I. How Worship Feels: Mind and Body 38

A. A Theory of Embodied Meaning 40

B. Juxtaposed and Beside 44

II. How Worship Feels: Learning the Liturgy 50

A. Subjects and Performances 54

B. Vibrant Matter 57

Chapter 3 ..... **67**

I. How Worship Feels: Objects and Impressions 70

A. Emotional Display: Attachment and Detachment 75

B. Actions and Reactions 79

C. Objects and Emotions 81

II. How Worship Feels: Sensing Sound and Silence 85

A. Liturgical Units and Deep Structures 88

B. Finding Meaning in the Silence 90

C. Finding Intimacy, Vulnerability, Expectancy, and Encounter 94

Chapter 4 ..... **97**

I. How Worship Feels: Energy 101

A. What Does “Us” Feel Like? 103

B. Worship as an Energized Sensate “Form” 106

C. A Liturgical Process Theology? ... 107
II. How Worship Feels: Power ... 110
A. Eschatological Power ... 115
B. Liturgy as Eschatological Art ... 117
Chapter 5 ... 120
I. Good Worship ... 121
II. For Better or For Worse: Affect Influencing Worship Practices ... 124
A. Good worship avoids mind-body dualism and recognizes the important role the body plays in learning liturgy. ... 124
B. Good worship considers "things" as actants. ... 127
C. Good worship pays attention to the relationships between things, one "beside" another. 131
D. Good worship considers how energy flows. ... 134
E. Good worship understands that affect is powerful and persuasive. ... 138
F. Good worship is continuous and eschatological. ... 142
G. Good worship is experiential. ... 146
III. Imagining post-pandemic, good worship ... 148
Bibliography ... 151

List of Figures

Figure 1 12
Figure 2 13
Figure 3 113
Figure 4 145

Chapter 1

Introduction

I have long intuited that some worshiping communities have a "certain energy" and others do not. I sense it is not only a liturgical style or even a liturgical quality (in the sense of "good" or "well done" liturgy) that compels people to go to church. Rather, it is the way worship feels. What is this energy? And how do we harness it? How can we be more intentional about generating it? Can we be intentional about creating it? In what ways can we best shape this energy?

In my efforts to understand and articulate something about what I call the energy of worship, I discovered the field of affect theory, a fresh and generative framework for the study of worship. Liturgical theologians often gesture toward an unnamable or mysterious dimension of worship[1] and attribute this dimension to the "holy." I do not intend to dismiss the presence and/or action of the Spirit, the holy, within a worshiping community. However, I think explicitly human elements—social, embodied, and non-representational—are generated within worship that cannot be named with precision but nonetheless govern worship in real and noticeable ways. In other words, an affective element to worship, habitual and generated by the assembly, lies between the concrete and tangible elements of worship and our encounter with the holy. Affect theory provides a framework with which to fill in this gap. But irony haunts a theory that

[1] For instance, see Aidan Kavanagh's discussion of encounter in *On Liturgical Theology: The Hale Memorial Lectures of Seabury-Western Theological Seminary, 1981* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1992); or Gordon Lathrop's writing about juxtaposition in *Holy Things: A Liturgical Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993).

attempts to explain social, embodied, non-representational realities through language alone. The problem with the turn to affect in the humanities and social sciences is a habitual lack of attention to lived experience. This project seeks to privilege lived human experience, to ground affect theory in actual bodies and practices. Each chapter includes short vignettes intended to tell the story of a particular worshiping community and gesture toward the affective elements of the liturgy.

I am contributing to the way that affect theory has been used to study religious practices through the integration of affect theory and practical theological methods. At the same time, I am expanding the horizons of my own disciplines, homiletics and liturgics. This interdisciplinary work gives us tools with which to think about the social, embodied, and non-representational elements of worship and preaching with a new level of theoretical depth and nuance. Through this weaving together of theory, practice, and theology, I hope to uncover ways in which affective dimensions govern the liturgy of white, mainline, Protestant churches and suggest ways an intentional, affective praxis could transform worshiping communities.

I. Affect Theory

Donovan Schaefer's book, *Religious Affects: Animality, Evolution, and Power* introduced me to affect theory.[2] I found Schaefer's suggestion that religion may not be predicated on language to be both encouraging and confounding. Schaefer's approach encourages a search for meaning in the non-linguistic elements of worship and a multi-sensory approach to worship planning and performance. It also questions the dominance of language and explores power

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[2] Donovan O. Schaefer, *Religious Affects: Animality, Evolution, and Power* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015), Kindle.

outside of language, as if we could, somehow, disentangle the complicated relationship between affect, language, and power. In chapter four, I will return to Schaefer in detail. As an introduction, I offer his description of the field of affect theory.

> [Affect theory is] a collection of texts trying to understand where bodies go by studying experiential and pre-experiential shapes that do not take linguistic form. What unites these undertakings—however much they may diverge—are a pair of performative questions diagramming affect as the space where power operates outside of language: What do affects do? What do we do for affects?[3]

We often use language to give shape to non-material realities. The challenge is, of course, that experience does not have shape in the same way that a material object does; experience lacks clear form and boundaries. Affect theory tries to understand the shape of experience and the shape of pre-conscious knowing, because affect theory suggests there is still something left to explore, some reality of living and being that we have yet to adequately name or understand. Some power, some "thing" moves us and drives us. This power is within us, swirls around us, moves through us. This power has a complicated relationship with language; it exists outside of language, but is studied through language.

Affect theory describes power in a way similar to the way theologians describe God—with frequency and vagary. Both fields invest in a thick description of things that by their very nature cannot be defined. Often times, what cannot be described in the church is attributed to the "holy." Affect theory helps liturgical theology by pushing it to consider how the nonverbal, affective elements of worship—the mysterious, unnamable things—are a product of the gathered community. That is to say, affect is an object of worship and is socially constructed.

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[3] Ruth Leys, *The Ascent of Affect: Genealogy and Critique* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017), introduction, Kindle.

In an article about the social construction of emotions, sociologist Doyle McCarthy writes:

> emotions and the identities they disclose are preeminently cultural phenomena, for they can only be grasped within the cultural systems and social worlds in which they are experienced and known, the political and religious systems, the various discourses, the collective practices, and the forms of selfhood that prevail. For it is in and through these cultural systems that emotions have come into being *as something,* that is, as objects of our experiences that *mean* something, and as a differentiated system of signs with which the self engages.[4]

It is in this manner that I utilize the term "social construction." The affective and the numinous share many qualities. Both are non-representational, meaning they can be experienced before or beyond conscious thought[5]. Both can be described, but not exhaustively captured, by language. Both can be a force which compels us to behave or respond in particular ways. In worship we encounter the power of the Holy Spirit, and we come up against a socially constructed, affective force that compels us. This dissertation explores that force and asks: in the context of worship, what do affects do? What do we do for affects?

Gaining a broad understanding of the field of affect theory can be an arduous task. Like affect itself, the discipline lacks clear form and boundaries. It is interdisciplinary and its attempts to define or provide a dominant descriptor seem to have a splintering effect within the field. Historian Ruth Leys' recent book, *The Ascent of Affect*, offers one perspective on the emergence of contemporary affect theory and the general factions into which it divides. The following

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[4] Doyle E. McCarthy, "The Social Construction of Emotions: New Directions from Culture Theory" (1994). *Sociology Faculty Publications*, no. 4 (1994): 276, https://fordham.bepress.com/soc_facultypubs/4.

[5] For more on non-representational theory see Nigel Thrift, *Non-Representational Theory: Space, Politics, Affect*, (Abingdon, Oxfordshire: Routledge, 2008).

section offers a brief overview of Leys' genealogy and conclusions as a way of situating the current study of religion and affect.

A. Historical Background: The Two Camps of Affect Theory

Scientists of emotion generally fall into two camps: cognitivists and non-cognitivists. Cognitivists focus on the intentionality of emotions. They postulate that "emotions are directed at cognitively apprehended objects and are sensitive to 'reasons.'"[6] For example, if you see a snake on the sidewalk, you judge it to be dangerous because you have learned about the dangers of snakes. Then you feel afraid; your heart beats faster. The snake is the object of fear. The emotion is directed toward the snake. One of the significant challenges for cognitive theorists is the apparent existence of emotion in animals or human infants, neither of which cognitively apprehend objects. A small child may display fear of the snake even though they cannot yet comprehend what a snake is. They have not yet learned about snakes.

Non-cognitivists, influenced by Darwin and William James, focus on the automatic, physiological processes of emotion but struggle to explain the meaning. In our example of the snake, the non-cognitivists would say we are evolutionarily programmed to be afraid of the snake. We see the snake, our heart beats faster, and then we name that sensation fear. The snake triggered the fear, but the fear is not connected to the snake. The fear is connected to our physiological response to the snake. This divide between cognitivists and non-cognitivists might also be described as the "problem of intentionality" or the "mind-body problem."[7]

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[6] Schaefer, *Religious Affects,* ch. 1.

[7] A related divide between culturists (the belief that emotion is culturally situated) and universalists (the belief that there are basic, universal emotions) would also emerge in the study of emotion.

Leys describes current emotion theory as exhibiting "pervasive" anti-intentionalism;[8] emotions as automated processes, unattached to objects. This anti-intentionalism falls into the non-cognitivist camp of affect theory and can be traced back to the 1960s and the work of Silvan Tomkins. Tomkins is most well-known for his basic emotions theory (BET). He claims that humans have a set of universal, pan-cultural, inherited, and adaptive basic emotions. Influenced by Darwin and cybernetics, Tomkins imagines that basic emotions operate as a kind of closed-loop system; an object triggers an emotion, setting off a series of physiological changes in the body. Affect is an uncontrolled, visceral response to an external stimulus.

Tomkins also theorizes that each emotion can be triggered by many different objects and, as such, are inherently detached from them. Cognition and meaning, therefore, are detached from feeling. For example, a baby may cry for several reasons: hunger, discomfort, fatigue. The baby doesn't know why it is crying. One (or many) of these things simply sets off a physiological chain of responses which results in tears. Another case for objectless emotion can be made by pointing toward depression or anxiety—states of emotion that seem to be disconnected from particular stimuli. According to Tomkins and those who would follow in his academic lineage, emotions are passive; a force or an event emerges within us. We experience them as coming from the body and as being out of our control. Subsequently, we may choose to conceal or attempt to ignore emotions, though they impact us nonetheless.

Tomkins' experimental approach focuses on the face as the place where emotions are made visible. In many of his often-cited experiments, participants were shown a series of still photos and asked to identify the displayed emotion based on a pre-fabricated list of options—described in the literature as "forced-choice options." The methods raise questions about the

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[8] Leys, *Ascent of Affect,* ch. 1.

nature of the emotion and the capacity of experimentation to help us understand emotion. The face expresses emotion, but how does one determine whether or not the display is appropriately matched to the felt sensation? Can a photograph, a moment in time, capture emotion? Can a posed expression convey authenticity? Are innate emotional expressions different from posed expressions? Are facial displays of emotion culturally influenced so that the way people express emotion would change if observed? This list of questions touches on some of the concerns regarding the reliability and validity of Tomkins' experimental approach.

Building on Tomkins' experiments and concerns, psychologist Paul Eckman developed a neuro-cultural theory of emotions. Eckman observed that emotion and the display of emotion varied across cultures. He wanted to find a way to reconcile this observation with Tomkins' basic emotions theory, to explain how emotions can be both universal and cultural. Using similar experimental methods as Tomkins, Eckman came to the conclusion that a person conforms their emotional display according to cultural norms, but it was also "possible to identify the pan-cultural or universal, involuntary signs of emotion behind the culturally determined display rules and even outright dissimulations ("lies") that mask the truth. " For example, a fake smile will be distinguishable from a genuine smile, and a face will betray us if we tell a lie. The questions raised above, in regard to Tomkins' work, apply to Eckman. Eckman's experiments are also challenged by issues related to the feeling of emotion verses the display of emotion and the effects of culture on both emotion and display.

Despite problems with their methods and conclusions, the anti-intentionalist paradigm that emerges from Tomkins and Eckman pervades contemporary affect theory. What appealed to subsequent scholars about this perspective? Leys argues that the attraction lies in its "stress on

the play or slippage between stimulus and response."[9] In other words, the Tomkins paradigm is not concrete and allows—perhaps stresses—the possibility that emotions are prone to error; emotion can be attached to the wrong object. The play and slippage of emotion is what happens when a toddler asks for a snack and then has a meltdown after receiving it. The toddler's emotions are more likely connected to hunger, stress, or fatigue than to the snack itself. Even as adults, our emotions can manifest in confusing ways that don't neatly correspond to objects or experience. This mysterious, theoretical gap between the object and the response will later be explored by many contemporary affect theorists.

Additionally, Tomkins was ultimately concerned with the influence of affect on ideology: "In short, Tomkins treated beliefs, including our political, literary, scientific, and religious ones, as essentially affective phenomena defined in non-intentional, non-cognitive terms."[10] We are emotionally hard-wired for belief; we are inherently propelled toward certain politics and religions. No doubt emotions impact beliefs, but Tomkins takes an extreme position on this. For Tomkins, religion or other ideologies are pre-determined by social conditioning at a young age. We come across ideas in life that are like trip-wires, triggering an affective response which leads to the enactment of a pre-determined ideological posture. While not taking such an extreme position, contemporary scholars of emotions find the intuitive sense that affect influences ideology and behavior appealing, and they want to understand the mechanisms of this connection.

Lastly, I suspect that contemporary affect theory is drawn to the anti-intentionalist paradigm because there is something about the idea that the body cannot lie, that there is an

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[9] Leys, *Ascent of Affect*, ch.1.
[10] Leys, *Ascent of Affect*, ch. 1.

inerrant truth to discover. That appeals to western academic culture. We want emotion to be more comprehensible, less fickle, less suspect. So, the study of emotion, particularly from this anti-intentionalist paradigm, presents something of a paradox: the interest in the "play" or "slippage" and a western academic tendency toward pinning it down. In other words, academics are drawn toward emotion for its ambiguity and then seek to make it quantifiable. It is a struggle to say something about emotion while also respecting its complexity and unknowability.

Another approach to the study of emotion, the intentionalist paradigm, also described as the cognitive theory of emotion, claims that emotions involve the cognition of objects and the question of meaning. Emotions are intentional states. Leys traces this paradigm back to the work of Richard Lazarus and Alan J. Fridlund, who emphasize the role of context and appraisal in the study of emotion. While Tomkins and Eckman seem to be most concerned with uncovering physiological systems and connecting them to emotional display, Lazarus and Fridlund focus on the relationship between emotions and objects and the role of perception on emotional impact. Lazarus heavily critiqued the methods and conclusions of the Tomkins/Eckman paradigm and suggested an alternative research paradigm for the study of emotion. Richard Lazarus's appraisal theory claims that emotions are intentional states.

In Lazarus's early work, he wrote about "subception" (from the words subconscious perception). In a series of experiments, he aimed to prove that humans were able to perceive and appraise objects and act according to that appraisal nearly instantaneously and subconsciously. Emotion involves evaluation of a stimuli and quick, intuitive judgements. Meaning is created when things are seen and appraised. Emotion and appraisal are separate but simultaneous.[11] As a

[11] This subject/object divide will be a point of critique for later affect theorists. There is some irony in the critique because *the dichotomy persists though the emphasis shifts from the mind to*

way of demonstrating his appraisal theory, Lazarus and his colleagues designed experiments in which they measured student responses to watching stressful film clips. His analysis of the responses focused on how the same clip elicited different kinds of responses in different individuals. Stress responses differed according to a person's situation, needs, personality, and other cultural factors. "Lazarus's central finding in these experiments was that what mattered in stress was the consciously or unconsciously cognized meaning of the situation for the individual."[12]

Alan Fridlund, building on the work of Lazarus, contributed to the field with what is described as a behavioral, ecological view of emotion. Fridlund emphasizes the social, flexible, contextual nature of emotional displays. He attempts to avoid the dualism between felt, (authentic) displays and false (inauthentic) displays, as he suggests that facial displays of emotion are intentional, communicative signals—strategic and performative.

Some of the experiments providing justification for Fridlund's theory studied animal and human behavior in the presence of an audience. Eckman used similar kinds of studies, comparing facial expressions when the subject was alone versus the subject being in front of others. His conclusions differed radically from Fridlund's. Eckman interpreted the results using a dualistic approach, while Fridlund sought a more complex theoretical understanding. Additionally,

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the body. Leys writes, "What seems wrong or confused about this is the sharpness of the dichotomy, which operates at once with a highly intellectualist or rationalist concept of meaning and an unexamined assumption that everything that is not 'meaning' in this limited sense belongs to the body. This too is a false dichotomy, one that—in spite of a professed hostility to dualism—threads its way throughout much of the new literature on affect." Leys, *Ascent of Affect*, ch. 7.

[12] Leys, *Ascent of Affect*, ch. 3.

Fridlund seemed less interested in defining emotion than in articulating how it functions. His work is descriptive and attempts to capture emotions as they are presented in everyday life.[13]

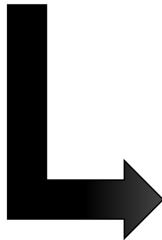
Though they differ in significant ways, each of these scholars share a belief in the differentiation of emotions and a commitment to understanding the distinct processes associated with each emotion. Their work is plagued by the problem of proof and complexity. And yet, many scholars in a contemporary turn to affect will pick up these early strands of emotion theory. Before moving on to contemporary affect theory, I offer the figures below as a summary of the two camps out of which the discipline has grown.

[13] Leys, *Ascent of Affect*, ch. 5.

Non-cognitivist/Anti-intentionalist paradigm
(Emotion as an automated process)

Silvan Tomkins' Affect Theory Program

- Influenced by Darwinism and cybernetics
- Basic Emotion Theory (BET)
  - A set number of universal emotions exist
  - Affect operates blindly and is therefore prone to error
- Beliefs (political, religious, scientific, etc) are affective phenomena
- Affects have inherent knowledge of or relation to the object which triggers them



Paul Ekman's Neurocultural Theory of Emotions

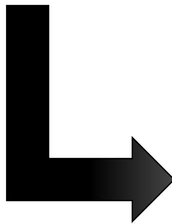
- Wants to reconcile universalists (the BET) with culturists (people who believe emotion and the display of emotion is culturally influenced)
- Distinguishes between
  - genuine, spontaneous, universal involuntary expressions and expressions we make to conform to cultural norms for facial behavior/display
- Argues that each basic emotion has a distinct physiology

Figure 1

Cognitivist/Intentionalism Paradigm
(Emotion as a choice)

Alan J. Fridlund's Behavioral Ecology View

- Rethinks the "expression of emotions" by emphasizing the instrumental, cognitive, social-strategic dimensions of facial display
- Face = intentional, communicative signal
    - Linking emotional display and social motive



Richard Lazarus' Appraisal Theory

- Emotion = cognition of objects and questions of meaning
- Emotions, like stress, are not objective "out there" or predetermined
- Stress results from appraisal of the meaning of stimulus which is to say stress results from interpretation

Figure 2

In her last chapter, Leys turns to the contemporary interest in the study of affect. She asks an important question: why are so many people interested in the affect? She concludes, "What motivates these scholars is the desire to contest a certain account of how, in their view, political argument and rationality have been thought to operate."[14] The "certain account" to which she refers overemphasizes the role of reason and rationality. This also describes my interest in looking at worship through the lens of affect theory. The white, mainline, Protestant church has overemphasized the role of reason and rationality, and I would like to provide an account in that context of the ways emotion governs the worshiping community.

[14] Leys, *Ascent of Affect*, ch. 7.

B. Contemporary Affect Theory[15]

In the 1990s the humanities and social sciences began to pay more attention to the study of affect and question the impact of affect on their individual fields of study. Donovan Schaefer, whose work and definition of affect theory I referenced earlier, wrote this about contemporary affect theory in a Duke University Blogpress:

> Affect theory is an approach to culture, history, and politics that focuses on nonlinguistic forces, or affects. Affects make us what we are, but they are neither under our "conscious" control nor even necessarily within our awareness—and they can only sometimes be captured in language. Affect theory can be linked to other conversations happening in the humanities—including Michel Foucault's "analytics of power," new attention being paid to animals, the study of secularism, and my home field of religious studies. Affect theory helps us understand power by encouraging us to think of power as theater.[16]

In his book, *Religious Affects*, Schaefer picks up where Leys stops, developing a "dual genealogy" of contemporary affect theory. One strand develops from Brian Massumi's 1995 essay, "The Autonomy of Affect."[17] The other builds on the work of Eve Kosofsky and Adam Frank in *Shame and Its Sisters: A Silvan Tomkins Reader.*[18] The latter is a phenomenological approach and falls in the anti-intentionalist lineage of Tomkins. Massumi's affect theory is a version of the materialist shift. Despite different orientations, both strands of contemporary affect

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[15] One of the primary avenues for publication in the field of affect study is the *Emotion Review* journal. The journal was established in 2009, which indicates the infancy of contemporary affect theory as well as the resurgence in interest of the study of emotion.

[16] Donovan Schaefer, "It's Not What You Think: Affect Theory and Power Take to the Stage," *Duke University BlogPress*, *Duke University Press*, February 15, 2016, https://dukeupress.wordpress.com/2016/02/15/its-not-what-you-think-affect-theory-and-power-take-to-the-stage/.

[17] Brian Massumi, "The Autonomy of Affect," *Cultural Critique* 31 (1995): 83, http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/1354446 (accessed December 15, 2017).

[18] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Adam Frank, eds., *Shame and Its Sisters: A Silvan Tomkins Reader* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press Books, 1995).

theory are fundamentally bound together by shared anti-intentionalist claims and the belief that affect is independent of signification and meaning.[19]

A primary point of divergence between the contemporary affect theorists is the distinction (or lack thereof) between affect and emotion. In conjunction with those who resist the strict distinction between affect and emotion, especially feminist scholar Sara Ahmed, this project primarily uses affect as an umbrella term that includes emotions as well as mood and attitude, all of which are influenced by physiology, behavior, and feelings.[20]

In the second chapter, I draw on the work of Ahmed, who chooses to use emotion and affect synonymously. Ahmed argues, "This analytic distinction between sensation or affect and emotion risks cutting emotions off from the lived experiences of being and having a body."[21] Making a distinction between emotion and affect is like separating an egg white and egg yolk. "We have to separate the yolk from the white because they are not separate. And sometimes we 'do do' what we 'can do' because separating these elements, not only by treating them as separable but by modifying their existing relation, or how they exist in relation, allows us to do other things that we might not otherwise be able to do. That we can separate them does not mean they are separate."[22]

In that case, I will follow suit and use the terms affect and emotion interchangeably and with reference to embodied experience in mind. (Many affect theorists, in an attempt to place attention on the body, often fall into the same dualist trap that they attempt to overcome; rather

[19] Leys, *Ascent of Affect*, ch. 7.
[20] James J. Gross, "The Future's So Bright, I Gotta Wear Shades," *Emotion Review* 2, no. 3 (2010): 213, https://doi.org/10.1177/1754073910361982.
[21] Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), 230.
[22] Ahmed, *Politics of Emotion*, 230.

than overemphasize reason and emotion, they overemphasize the body as an automated, mechanical system. Emotion theorists who avoid the distinction between emotion and affect tend to do better in avoiding this trap).

In addition to the challenge of defining the object of study, the study of affect presents conceptual and empirical challenges. Scholars attempt to name the material reality of affect by equating it with a force or an encounter. Affect is a thing that passes between bodies, through some, sticking to others. Affect exists and changes in what theorists call the "in between space" or the "bloom space." Affect alludes capture, boundaries, or distinction. In an introductory text, scholars Melissa Gregg and Gregory Seigworth put it this way:

> Cast forward by its open-ended in-between-ness, affect is integral to a body's perpetual *becoming* (always becoming otherwise, however subtly, than what it already is), pulled beyond its seeming surface-boundedness by way of its relation to, indeed its composition through, the forces of encounter. With affect, a body is as much outside itself as in itself—webbed in its relations—until ultimately such firm distinctions cease to matter.[23]

Despite the challenges, affect theory abounds with opportunity for further study. At the end of their introductory remarks, Gregg and Seigworth describe the varied approaches and aims of affect theorists. Looking at the aims or endpoints of these different orientations, we can begin to see the places of intersection between affect and the study of religion. These aims include: understanding embodiment; exploring the boundaries between the living and the non-living; moving beyond gendered and cultural limitations; analyzing the relationship between material (bodies and otherwise) and power; focusing attention on aesthetic encounters; and destabilizing the notion of the self-contained, autonomous individual.[24]

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[23] See Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth, eds., *The Affect Theory Reader* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press Books, 2010), 6–9.
[24] Gregg and Seigworth, *The Affect Theory Reader*, 6–9.

C. Affect Theory and the Study of Religion

The relationship between affect, emotion, and religion became more formal with the start of a new workgroup in the American Academy of Religion.[25] The Religion, Affect, and Emotion group began to meet in 2013. According to their website, "The unit serves as a meeting point for conversations on the affective, noncognitive, and passional dimensions of religion coming from diverse fields, including anthropology, comparative religion, psychology, decolonial theory, gender and sexuality studies, cultural studies, philosophy, and theology."[26]

The stated purpose of the workgroup reflects the diverse and interdisciplinary nature of the study of religion and affect. Some of the work at the intersection of religion and affect theory focuses on negative emotions (such as fear) and American evangelical church culture.[27] While it is important to understand the politics of fear in American religious and political culture, affects are also shaping mainline Protestant worship in significant ways, though the affective displays are usually more subtle.

One of the most comprehensive and accessible resources for delving into the intersection of affect theory and religion is an article by religious scholar Jenna Supp-Montgomerie titled, "Affect and the Study of Religion." In this succinct article, Supp-Montgomerie surveys the field of affect and religion, identifying and summarizing the dominant scholarship as well as naming some of the common theoretical ground within the diverse field. She defines affect as "the social

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[25] While in the last decade some scholars made the explicit turn to affect theory, many voices had already explored emotion and affect, particularly feminist and post-colonial scholars as well as scholars in practical theology and religion, psychology, and culture.
[26] "Religion, Affect, and Emotion Unit," American Academy of Religion, https://papers.aarweb.org/content/religion-affect-and-emotion-unit (accessed December 16, 2017).
[27] See Jason C. Bivins, *Religion of Fear: The Politics of Horror in Conservative Evangelicalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

energy through which subjects, meanings, and cultures are produced, organized, and undone."[28] Affect theorists claim that we come into existence through affect, through an embodied, dynamic experience with the world around us. Through this claim, affect theory wants to escape a mind-body dualism and contend with the Cartesian notion, "I think, therefore I am." We cannot think ourselves into existence. Language and cognition are not the primary means by which reality is created. Affect plays a significant role in creating our reality, our experience of the world. It also helps us to organize our social webs. Our emotions and appraisals cause us to align with or identify with certain people, things, and/or situations. Just as affect can produce and organize, it can undo. Our reality and social webs can disintegrate or be deconstructed. Lived experience is never static. The way we move in the world and the energies that move through us are always in flux.

Supp-Montgomerie identifies three elements of affect theory that are being used in religious study: focus not on the individual as the bearer of emotion but on the social lives that emerge between bodies and things, attention to materiality, and emphasis on non-representational creative energy. In short, scholars of religious affect are interested in understanding the social, embodied, and non-representational nature of religion.

The use of "energy" in the definition above as well as the exploration of the non-representational attracted me to affect theory as a framework for studying preaching and worship. I fall in line with affect theorists as they attempt to name and explore the energy that exists in community and impacts the way communities organize.[29] As I stated at the outset, I

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[28] Jenna Supp-Montgomerie, "Affect and the Study of Religion," *Religion Compass* 9, no. 10 (November): 336, http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/rec3.12166.
[29] This social aspect is in contrast to thinking of emotion or affect as a feeling or process that comes from or is bound by an individual body.

believe that energy, what Supp-Montgomerie refers to as the non-representational, is a critical component of worship. Writing about the energy of worship and/or the non-representational elements of worship certainly presents a challenge. The sociality and materiality of worship are easier to see and describe. But I suspect that the social and embodied nature of worship provide a good starting place in the study of liturgy and affect, and that perhaps, the energy of worship is produced, organized, or undone by the social and material. These core aspects of affect theory—the social, embodied and non-representational—provide the theoretical framework for my project on the affective dimensions of preaching and worship.

II. Methods

I write as a practical theologian; I write about people's experience of worship. Practical theology, at its best, locates knowledge in a diversity of places: in the body, in practices, in congregational study, in imagination.[30] In practical theology, practice constitutes theological material. Practical theologian Tom Beaudoin writes,

> This means that practice 'signifies' (that is, it bears/carries or indicates/points-to) some essential relation to theos. This signifying can take place 'directly' or 'indirectly' in relation to God-related material, such as experience-concepts that point toward God, such as Jesus, sacrament, Spirit, anthropology, grace, sin, saints, virtue, mercy or incarnation. In short, practical theologies render practice as divine material.[31]

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[30] See Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore, "Discipling: Academic Theology and Practical Knowledge," in *Christian Practical Wisdom: What It Is, Why It Matters*, Dorothy C. Bass, et al., (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2016), 175-231.

[31] Tom Beaudoin, "Why Does Practice Matter Theologically," in *Conundrums in Practical Theology,* eds. Joyce Ann Mercer and Bonnie Miller-McLemore, Theology in Practice, vol. 2 (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 8-32.

In this vein, I treat experience of worship as theology itself and put this theology in conversation with the academic discipline of liturgical theology.[32] The primary source of wisdom in this dissertation is bodily experience and this experience is the primary theological content.

I am also influenced by practical theology to study the church in a specific, local context. As practical theologian Eileen Campbell-Reed states, "Practical theology is nothing without a context. Whatever tries to be without context will be neither practical nor theology."[33] I use a single case study approach to my research. My intention is not to generalize, saying that this one church represents all churches. Yet, I do think we can learn something about affect from this particular context, and that this knowledge may help us understand a broader social phenomena, affect circulating and governing a gathered group of people and things. In the use of a single case study, I also intend to demonstrate how a scholar or pastor might attend to affect in their own congregational context. Psychologist Hans Eysenck (who originally regarded the single case study approach as ineffective but later changed his mind) wrote, "sometimes we simply have to keep our eyes open and look carefully at individual cases—not in the hope of proving anything, but rather in the hope of learning something!"[34] Through a single case study, I hope to learn something about affect's impact on the church's worship.

My approach is interdisciplinary, drawing from the field of affect theory as a tool for understanding worship. Practical theologian Joyce Ann-Mercer, astutely claims,

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[32] See Bonnie Miller McLemore's four distinct enterprises of practical theology in *Christian Theology in Practice: Discovering a Discipline* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2012), ch. 4.
[33] Eileen Campbell-Reed, "The Power and Dangers of a Single Case Study," in *Conundrums,* 38.
[34] Hans Eysenck, "Introduction," in Eysenck (ed.), *Case Studies in Behaviour Therapy*, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1976), 9, quoted in Bent Flyvbjerg, "Five Misunderstandings About Case-Study Research," *Qualitative Inquiry*, 12.2, (April 2006): 224.

“Interdisciplinarity is constitutive of practical theology.”[35] In order to make sense of doing an analysis of something as complex as human experience, one has to draw from the knowledge and approaches of multiple disciplines. Mercer goes on to describe the advantages and disadvantages of an interdisciplinary approach. In my own work on affect and worship, interdisciplinarity allows me to transcend some of the boundaries and limitations of both affect theory and liturgical theology. It allows me to borrow from and play with ideas from a variety of scholars. The challenge for me has been a perpetual awareness that I am an amateur affect theorist, that I do not have an exhaustive understanding of the discipline. This dissertation employs what Mercer calls “improvisational expertise.” “Expertise,” Mercer writes, “involves high attunement to persons and contexts, employing skills of listening and observing the particular context or case before us to discern what types of knowledge will be helpful in its analysis… It includes the ability to find, selectively engage, and play with unconventional combinations of theory from diverse fields….”[36] I selectively engage authors from liturgical theology, affect theory, philosophy, and literature.

I utilize a method called analytic autoethnography, a sub-genre of autoethnography. Ethnographer Leon Anderson writes, “Put most simply, *analytic autoethnography* refers to ethnographic work in which the researcher is (1) a full member in the research group or setting, (2) visible as such a member in the researcher’s published texts, and (3) committed to an analytic research agenda focused on improving theoretical understandings of broader social phenomena.”[37] I am an opportunistic complete member researcher (CMR) meaning I was already

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[35] Joyce Ann Mercer, “Interdisciplinarity as a Practical Theological Conundrum,” in *Conundrums,* 163.
[36] Mercer, “Interdisciplinarity as a Practical Theological Conundrum,” 174.
[37] Leon Anderson, “Analytic Autoethnography,” *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 35, no. 4, (August 2006): 375.

in the group before I decided to study and analyze the group. This dissertation utilizes personal experience and tells stories about my time at St. Mark's, a large, predominately white, Episcopal congregation in Tennessee.[38] My experience, stories, and interpretation are the starting place. From there, I move toward analysis and an understanding of a broader social phenomena. My agenda is to learn something about emotion within a white, mainline church and to use these insights in the service of worship.[39]

Anderson identifies five key features of analytic autoethnography. "(1) complete member researcher (CMR) status, (2) analytic reflexivity, (3) narrative visibility of the researcher's self, (4) dialogue with informants beyond the self, and (5) commitment to theoretical analysis." In introducing the methodology, I address the first and second features. The remaining three will be evident in the body of the dissertation.

A. CMR and Reflexivity

As mentioned above, a key component of autoethnography is reflexivity, "the interrogative processes that enable us to understand all our meaning-making, even in the most abstract spheres, as relational, provisional, embodied and located."[40] While not exhaustive, the following provides some insight into my interrogative process.

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[38]The name of the congregation has been changed for the sake of anonymity.
[39] Liturgical theologian Bruce Morrill uses this same methodology in his book on worship and healing in the Roman Catholic church, writing about his own pastoral encounters and systematically analyzing them. Bruce T. Morrill, *Divine Worship and Human Healing: Liturgical Theology at the Margins of Life and Death* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2009). Another example of autoethnography in the study of worship is Armand Leon van Ommen, *Suffering in Worship: Anglican Liturgy in Relation to Stories of Suffering People* (Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxfordshire: Routledge, 2019).
[40] Walton, *Writing Methods in Theological Reflection* (London: SCM Press, 2014), xvi.

One of the primary influences on my research is my love for the church. As frustrating, even maddening, as it can be, I believe the church has the capacity to transform the world. I also believe that out of all the church's activities, the church's worship is the most significant vector for initiating positive and meaningful change in participants and communities. Worship is the summit and fount.[41] I am not ignorant to the ways the church, throughout history, has caused significant harm to individuals and communities. But the church, at its best, is a place that cultivates love, inclusion, and deep meaning that helps people lead better lives. My deep love for the church engenders my criticism of it. I believe in the church reformed and always reforming.[42] My relationship to the church impacts the way I write and think about the church.

My church experience is primarily within the white, mainline, Protestant church. I grew up in the Presbyterian church, flirted with the Baptist church in college, returned to the Presbyterian church post-college, and in the course of my PhD program, began participating in an Episcopal congregation. I initially attended to hear the exceptional choir and something (which I will explore later) drew me in and caused me to keep attending. It is this church that provided the case study material for this dissertation.

The church is predominantly white and located in an affluent suburb of the city. The congregation is large, and while there is some theological diversity, the church as a whole would identify as conservative. In some ways, I felt comfortable at this church. The liturgy is familiar. The people look like me and act like me. In some ways, I felt out of place. I come from a middle

[41] Second Vatican Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum concilium* (4 December 1963), no. 10, in *The Sixteen Documents of Vatican II,* ed. Marianne L. Trouve (Boston: Pauline Books, 1999).
[42] "Ecclesia Reformata, Semper Reformanda," Presbytery Mission Agency, accessed March 16, 2021, https://www.presbyterianmission.org/what-we-believe/ecclesia-reformata/.

class socio-economic status. Most members of the church locate themselves in the upper class and some within the top 1%. My ideology and theology fall far to the left of most of the congregants and all of the clergy.

The most significant thing we share in common was demeanor, what some may call a "flat affect." I am not emotive. Though I am moved by the liturgy, I do not often show it, save a quiet tear here and there, at a funeral, or in the dark of the Easter vigil. In this way, I fit right into the culture of St. Mark's.

At some point while I was attending this church, I went on a journey of personal transformation in which I sought to understand emotion. I began to realize that I feel things deeply. I began to work on noticing, naming, and allowing emotions to move through me. One day, I told a wise confidant that I was feeling sad. She asked me to locate that sadness in my body, to describe how sadness feels. In that moment, this dissertation was born. I desired to know how the Church body feels, where that emotion is located, and how it moves through the space. I want to know how we describe it. And I want to believe that the church feels deeply, even if it is not emotive.

My methodology and style are inspired by two scholars. The first is homiletician and practical theologian Dale Andrews. I am informed by Andrews's "trilectic," the weaving together of theory, theology, and practice and, as stated above, I am motivated by the formation of a more informed worshiping "praxis"—a "result of critical awareness of dominant values, sound theological reflection, critical engagement with historical contexts and the human sciences, and a deliberate or strategic teleological focus."[43] Andrews' methods come from his location as a scholar in the Western tradition and his experience in the black church. He wanted

[43] Andrews and Smith, *Black Practical Theology*, ch. 1.

to meld the apprenticeship model of the church with the pedagogy of academy. He understood experience and practice to be key sources of theological knowledge and pushed the predominately white academy to understand the diversity and wealth of experience coming from the black church tradition. One example of this kind of scholarship is his previously cited, co-edited book, "Black Practical Theology." The project grounds itself in black experience. Each section brings the voices of scholars and practitioners into conversation around a particular problem found in the context of contemporary black life. From this work, I am inspired to be attentive to both practice and scholarship in addressing what I understand to be a problem in the context of the white, mainline church—a lack of attention paid to the affective elements of worship.

This project is also inspired by anthropologist and affect theorist Kathleen Stewart. Stewart's book *Ordinary Affects*[44] provides a stunning example of the ways stories can be profoundly theoretical. Stewart studies affect in "ordinary" life. The writing itself aims to affect the reader; Stewart strings together vignettes of varying length. Sometimes the stories make clear sense; other times they confuse. Sometimes one story leads naturally to the next; other times they seem to jump around. Stewart calls this book an experiment and intends the writing to be, "a point of impact, curiosity, and encounter."[45]

For example, between a section titled "RV Freedom" and one titled "Home is Where the Heart Is," Stewart writes about "Mainstreaming."

> The objects of mass desire enact the dream of sheer circulation itself—travel, instant communication, movies, catalogues, the lure of new lifestyles patched together from commodities gathered into scenes of a possible life. The experience of being "in the mainstream" is a concrete sensory experience of literally being in tune with a "something" that's happening.

[44] Kathleen Stewart, *Ordinary Affects* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007).
[45] Stewart, *Ordinary Affects*, 5.

> But nothing too heavy or sustained.
>
> It's being in tune without getting involved. A light contact zone that rests on a thin layer of shared public experiences.
>
> A fantasy that life can be somehow seamless and that we're in the know, in the loop, not duped. That nothing will happen to us, and nothing we do will have real consequences—nothing that can't be fixed, anyway.
>
> The experience of being "in the mainstream" is like a flotation device.
>
> But its very surge to enter life lite leaves in its wake a vague sense of all the circuits that give things a charge.[46]

I appreciate the clever and playful placement of "mainstreaming" between "freedom" and "home." This seems to place the reader conceptually between fluidity and fixity. Movement in the writing mimics the movement or circulation of objects she describes. The writing is paradoxically specific and vague. Specific images, "objects of mass desire," help the reader know what kind of "mainstream" Stewart refers to. The image of the flotation device helps the reader understand the experience of being at the whims of various surges. But the overall argument is illusive and open to interpretation. She alludes that the freedom of RV culture is rather attached to objects of materialism. So it is perhaps not as free as we initially perceive it to be? We attach and attune to objects and this fixation helps us construct some sense of home. All this is both about a way of life and a broad metaphor for the rhythms of life. She makes the reader do a lot of work! Her writing about affect is affective. The benefit of this work is the example it provides of practical reasoning and wisdom; theoretical knowledge is discovered in lived experience and observation of bodies. A strength and limitation of the work lies in its open-ended, vague style. The interpretation is left to the reader, and so the conclusions to which one arrives may vary and may contradict the author's intent.

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[46] Stewart, *Ordinary Affects*, 51–52.

Emulating Stewart's storytelling style, each chapter of this project includes stories about worship and worshiping people. The stories are not superfluous. The stories I write are the theory and lived theology upon which the rest of the project is built.

III. Limitations and Future Research

The practical theological methods utilized in my dissertation are both a strength and a limitation. I wrote from an autobiographical standpoint and limited the scope of my research to a single case study which happened to align with my own identity: a white, mainline, Protestant church. This allowed me to be focused in my work and creative in my writing. However, it also meant that my exploration of affect was limited to one cultural context. I may have found different conclusions if I had broadened the scope of my work. Emotion certainly looks different in other cultural contexts.[47]

In the future, affect should be considered in a variety of contexts, a variety of worshiping communities. I can imagine partnering with communities across cultural and sociological contexts to expand my understanding of affect through ethnography. Ethnography helps affect theory to stay grounded in the experiences of actual people. This seems important for a theory about bodies.

Another related limitation of my work was its lack of engagement with critical race theory. As I state at the beginning of chapter two, matters of race and class are entangled with matters of worship, embodiment, and affect. Future research on affect and research could unpack these relationships.

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[47] For further insight into the use of single case studies see Eileen R. Campbell-Reed, "The Power and Danger of a Single Case Study in Practical Theological Research," in *Conundrums,* 33–59.

Finally, this dissertation was finished during a global pandemic which moved most worship experiences online. In some ways, the experience of online worship reinforced my conclusions on the importance of affect and the ways affect is generated through bodies and relationships. In some ways, the pandemic challenges my conclusions. Online worship, despite being differently embodied and lacking in physical connection, can still be good worship. For example, liturgical scholar Teresa Berger talks about the bodily freedom she experiences while worshiping at home: standing with the Gospel reading and dancing the Gloria. She describes staying focused on liturgy by keeping her body busy, watering (nurturing) plants in her home. Online worship, she states, is "differently embodied" and "extends way beyond humans gathering in a sanctuary."[48] Online worship is a gift and a challenge. Future scholars will be studying pandemic worship for a long time, and I think the study of affect will be an important aspect of that endeavor.

IV. Turning Toward Liturgy

This dissertation explores how worship feels. I want to know how people experience worship, and I want to understand *how*—in what way or manner—these experiences are generated. In a musical score, a composer often marks the music with a symbol, word, or phrase to indicate *how* a piece of music is to be performed. Score markings can be a specific number to dictate tempo or, like John Tavener's "Song of Athene," marked to be sung "with resplendent joy in the Resurrection." Score markings acknowledge that the musical performance depends on

[48] "Theologian Teresa Berger on the power of digital worship in our times," Yale News, last modified June 23, 2020, https://news.yale.edu/2020/06/23/theologian-teresa-berger-power-digital-worship-our-times.See also Teresa Berger, *@Worship: Liturgical Practices in Digital Worlds* (London and New York: Routledge, 2018).

something beyond, beneath, or between the notes on the page. The intention of composer and performer, spaces between notes, the intensities of the sounds, the quality of tone, the movement of sound waves between bodies—these elements of music affect us. Worship consists of these same affective elements but lacks the kind of signaling that musical scores give to performers.

In some musical genres, the absence of language compels us to consider the ways intent, energy, bodies, emotions, and other non-linguistic dimensions of lived experience contribute to the creation of meaningful events and encounters. However, in worship events in the white, mainline, Protestant church—events which ostensibly privilege language and cognition—it may be difficult to identify and easy to disregard affective dimensions of experience. The goal of this project is to better understand and articulate the affective praxis[49] of worshiping communities by exploring the social, embodied, and non-representational dimensions of the church's meaning-making process.

In this first chapter, I provided a brief introduction to affect theory by way of historical background, a look at contemporary affect theory, and affect theory within the study of religion. I have described my practical theological methods and asked how the study of affect might lead to a more effective worship praxis. Chapters two through four are framed around the categories identified by Supp-Montgomerie; Supp-Montgomerie writes that affect is embodied, social, and non-representational. I write about how worship is embodied, social, and non-representational.

In chapter two, "How Worship is Embodied," I examine the mind-body dualism that pervades the church and its worshiping communities and ask how this dualism might make us

[49] The word praxis is used here to "denote a kind of reflexive ecology encompassing religious practices and theology that is informed by theory and guided by values and ultimate purpose(s)." Dale P. Andrews and Robert London Smith Jr., *Black Practical Theology* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2015), ch. 1, Kindle.

suspect of emotion. I describe an alternative way of thinking through philosopher Mark Johnson's theory of embodied meaning and affect theorist Eve Sedgwick's concept of beside. I use both these thinkers to push liturgical theology away from dualistic models and toward an affective understanding of how one thing in worship relates to another. I then describe how affect flows and travels between bodies and things, creating one body out of many. I introduce the reader to Jane Bennett's work on the agency of matter and the creation of assemblage. In short, chapter two describes how bodies become a Body, how individuals come together to form a community.

Chapter three, "How Worship is Social," describes the spaces and objects within the body. I begin with an exploration of the silence in the liturgy. I ask what contributes to a "felt atmosphere." I describe silence as a liturgical unit for analysis and utilize Rachel Muers' work on silence to reflect theologically on the role of silence in the liturgy. I connect this to affect by describing how silence creates intimacy and vulnerability and suggest that these feelings are a reaction to an encounter with God. I then turn to the work of Sara Ahmed to explore affect and objects in the liturgy. I explore emotions attached to objects in the liturgy and how emotions circulate through the assembly. All of this points toward the way contact with other people and things shape the worshiping community.

In chapter four, "How Worship is Non-Representational," I describe the energy and power of worship. First, I describe the way the assemblage, the "us," feels. I write about the energy of worship, about worship as an energized sensate form. I use Marjorie Suchocki's basic model of process theology as a way to understand how worship is relational, continuous, and eschatological. I posit that the strength of the assemblage, the efficacy of worship, depends on its relationships. I then turn to an analysis of power in the worshiping community, the feeling of

being drawn in. The power of worship lies both in its creation of agency and meaning and through an experience of God. I explore the eschatological power of worship and reflect on Don Saliers's notion of liturgy as an eschatological art.

In the concluding chapter, I return to key insights from each chapter from the perspective of practical theology. Here I engage in more normative explorations—moving beyond the description of "what affects do," and "what we do for affects," to identifying core issues for practical theologians of Christian liturgy. How can the embodied, social, and non-representational affects constructed in worship be best inhabited? What affective strategies or tactics can help to ensure that liturgical affects are redemptive, eschatologically persuasive, and effectual? Are there tactics of affective resistance that are called for? Strategies to promote affective redemption? While not definitive, I hope to indicate some key issues and directions for thought going forward, as we strive to understand how affect helps us achieve good worship. I end with a vision of good worship.

Chapter 2

How Worship is Embodied

Like a live wire, the subject channels what's going on around it in the process of its own self-composition. Formed by the coagulation of intensities, surfaces, sensations, perceptions, and expressions, it's a thing composed of encounters and the spaces and events it traverses or inhabits.

— Kathleen Stewart, *Ordinary Affects*

In the introduction to his essay, "Rediscovering the Body," Mark Johnson writes, "Judging from mainstream Anglo-American philosophy, thirty years ago people did not have bodies. But today, it seems like almost everybody has one. They're a dime a dozen. It is as if a great embodiment tsunami swept over the philosophical landscape and deposited incarnate minds as it receded."[50] Despite this philosophical landscape of incarnate minds, many white, mainline, Protestant, worshiping communities continue the struggle to acknowledge and understand the body. They sometimes revile the body and often ignore it, preferencing reason over emotion and language over movement.[51] In some sense, it seems redundant or asinine to write about the worshiping body, as if we could worship without bodies. Yet, scholars persist in writing about the body at worship.

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[50] Mark Johnson, "What Makes a Body," *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 22, no. 3 (2008): 159.
[51] See Marcia W. Mount Shoop, *Let the Bones Dance: Embodiment and the Body of Christ* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010).

Writing about embodiment serves as a crucial reminder that the Word and words of worship, though prominent, are not the only technology of worship. Professor of Psychology Alexis Abernethy argues that the word remains prominent in most Protestant churches despite that fact that we come to worship with our whole selves, we are embodied. She asks how embodiment, "shape[s] our experience and understanding of worship." [52] The article describes many technologies that aid in the spiritual transformation of worship goers and aims to understand emotion as one of these technologies. While her qualitative research showed emotion plays a role in how people perceive worship, many people also point to cognitive dimensions of worship as being impactful. According to Abernethy, this demonstrates the integration of an upper and lower body dimensions of lived experience.[53]

She goes on to write, "The next step in our research sought to explore the concept of embodiment as one way of understanding this multidimensional process of engagement and exploring God's incarnational presence." She describes worship as a performative act and uses song as an example of worship being fully embodied. Using the language of online and offline experience (this is describing a level of engagement and revelation), Abernethy describes a method similar to Dale Andrews' encounter-recounter[54] in which the worship leaders experience the revelation of God in their preparation for worship and then seek to help the congregation re-create the encounter. Ultimately, Abernethy makes a case for worship that is attuned to God, self, and cultural context. This is embodied worship.

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[52] Alexis D. Abernethy, "Exploring the Role of Embodiment in Worship," *Fuller Magazine*, 2019. https://fullerstudio.fuller.edu/exploring-the-role-of-embodiment-in-worship/.
[53] She is drawing from the language of Muir here but the result does continue to perpetuate a divide between emotion and reason that undercuts her argument for unity of the mind and body.
[54] Dale Andrews, "Teaching Black Preaching: Encounter and Re-Encounter," *African American Pulpit* (Fall, 2008), 8–12.

Another reason scholars persist in writing about the body is because of the connection between the body (metaphorical and literal) to the sacramental life of the church. Dominican theologian J.M.R. Tillard writes about the communal relationship between faith and works, concluding that our salvation is tied up in unity with our siblings in Christ. The sacrifice of faith is a communal response to Christ's ultimate sacrifice. Tillard's purpose is to "demonstrate what the 'flesh of the church' is."[55] In short, he demonstrates that the "flesh of the church" is communion. The body of Christ is relationship—relationship with Christ (who is one with God). This relationship with Christ, enabled by the Spirit of Christ, necessitates relationship with others. "One cannot be 'in Christ' without being part of his body, therefore essentially joined to the other members of the body."[56]

Another seminal work on bodies and sacraments is Louis-Marie Chauvet's *Symbol and Sacraments.* Chauvet analyzes Thomas Aquinas's thought on sacrament in order to point to the problems that much of Western thought reads into sacramental theology. The general problem is that Western thought is caught up in a metaphysics that values effect over cause and views process as existing merely for the sake of its end. Thus, the sacraments are seen to cause their effects. This perspective gets rid of any dynamics of human-divine and human-human relationality in the process of sacrament. It instrumentalizes sacrament and is blind to intersubjectivity. Chauvet is trying to protect God's otherness and distinctiveness. Which God? The God for humanity. The human encounter with God is happening not on some non-bodily dimension but is always-already personal. Our encounters with the spiritual are bodily. Spirituality, personality, thought, all are happening in the body! Language itself cannot exist in

[55] J-M-R Tillard, *Flesh of the Church, Flesh of Christ: At the Source of the Ecclesiology of Communion* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2001), 135.
[56] Tillard, *Flesh of the Church,* 24.

an un-embodied way. Chauvet's work is hermeneutical because it is about how people are constructing meaning.[57]

In contrast to these thinkers concerned with meaning created in the body and bodies, an interdisciplinary team of scholars writes about ritual as a way to frame actions in *Ritual and Its Consequences: An Essay of the Limits of Sincerity*. They want to explore the doing of ritual and not try to uncover some deeper or hidden meaning of ritual. They contrast ritual orientation to sincere orientations of framing action. "Ritual orientations stress the performative, repetitive, subjunctive, anti-discursive, and social. Sincere orientations, on the other hand, tend to privilege the indicative, unique, discursive, and private."[58] The goal of these writers is to unpack the way mind-body dualism has impacted ritual (both in religious and non-religious settings), creating this spectrum of ritual to sincerity as well as understanding how ritual creates boundaries, helps us move across boundaries, and deal with ambiguity.[59]

Dealing with ambiguity is also a theme of Shawn Copeland's work on the body. A Womanist theologian, Copeland writes about bodies, with particular regard to race and gender. Copeland develops a theological anthropology that attends to how flesh relates to spirit and to how individual bodies relate to the social body (black female bodies in relationship to the Body of Christ). Copeland sees the body as (1) a site for divine revelation; (2) shaping a relational and social human existence; (3) God's creativity manifest in gender, race, and sexuality; (4) a site for

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[57] Louis-Marie Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1995).
[58] Adam B. Seligman, *Ritual and Its Consequences: An Essay On the Limits of Sincerity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 115.
[59] For another perspective on ritual and ambiguity see Susan A. Ross, *Extravagant Affections: A Feminist Sacramental Theology* (New York: Continuum, 1998).

the practice of solidarity; and (5) transformed into the Body of Christ through the Eucharist.[60] An emphasis throughout the text is the naming and re-membering of the suffering of black bodies. "In raising the aching memory of slavery, this work interrogates memory and history for the sake of freedom."[61] This text is therefore very much about bodies and affect. It draws us into the narrative and invites us into empathy and solidarity with others' suffering.

With similar liberative intent, religious scholar Mayra Rivera also writes about the flesh. Her book, "*Poetics of the Flesh,* elaborates a view of corporeality woven by its carnal relations to the world—spiritual, organic, social—describing the folds of body and flesh, flesh and world, body and word."[62] Part one looks at different understandings of the body and the flesh in ancient Christian texts: the writings of Tertullian, the Pauline letters, and the Gospel of John. She argues for two contrasting strands of conceptualization of the flesh, a "semantic view" which emphasizes a distinction between spirit and flesh and a "carnal view" which emphasizes salvation through the flesh. She continues to follow this carnal view, tracing it through the work of twentieth century phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty. In the final part, Rivera looks at the relations of flesh to the world through the histories of colonial politics, racialization, and gender,[63] becomings of the socio-material world. Rivera writes about the body in order to liberate it from harmful theologies and worldviews, conceptualizations that degrade or subjugate the flesh.

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[60] M. Shawn Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom: Body, Race, and Being*, Innovations (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010), 2.
[61] Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom*, 3.
[62] Mayra Rivera, *Poetics of the Flesh* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 10.
[63] For a thorough treatment of the ways gender impacts liturgy and liturgical history see Teresa Berger, *Gender Differences and the Making of Liturgical History: Lifting a Veil On Liturgy's Past*, Liturgy, Worship, and Society (Farnham, Surrey, England: Ashgate, 2011).

At the heart of all these projects on the body is a desire to understand how bodies shape our knowledge and experience. Additionally, these authors want to escape the mind-body dualism so pervasive in Western tradition and move us toward a reality in which all bodies find liberation from oppressive systems.[64] In this chapter, I write about the body as well, but with a primary emphasis on affect. I look at the troubling mind-body or emotion-reason dualism as well as the binary structures that pervade writings about and experiences of worship. I also describe bodies in worship at St. Mark's. Affect does not ignore the reality of individual bodies and experiences. But Supp-Montgomerie reminds us that "while the body surfaces in discussions of affect, it does not bring coherent subjectivity with it."[65] And so, I turn to critical theorists Eve Sedgwick and Jane Bennet to think about how these bodies work collectively. I persist in writing about the body because I am convinced that emotions govern our worship and that emotions are located in the body.

[64] Because mind-body dualism pervades Western life, I suggest that when we think about how worship is embodied, we also think about how worship is affective or emotional. It surprised me that when I started this project and told people I was writing about worship and emotion, some assumed I was writing about the Black or Pentecostal church. As a result, I concluded that worship, embodiment, and affect are tangled up in ideas about race and class as well. Based on observation and experience, I perceive an underlying assumption in Western culture that worshiping communities made up of marginalized people tend to be governed by bodies and emotions, while white, mainline worshiping communities tend to be governed by mind and reason. It should be clear by now that I disagree with this assumption, even as, for reasons of time and space, I am limiting the scope of my work to certain white, mainline churches. An example of an ethnographic study that focuses on the dynamics of race, class, and bodies is Mary McClintock Fulkerson, *Places of Redemption: Theology for a Worldly Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). Chelsea Yarborough also writes about the intersection of race and worship in "Prophetic or Problematic: Exploring the Potential of Just Multicultural Worship," *Proceedings of the North American Academy of Liturgy* (2017): 165–178.
[65] Supp-Montgomerie, "Affect and Religion," 340.

I. How Worship Feels: Mind and Body

The Counting Body

One day before worship, I was talking to a four-year-old about numbers. She said she already knew what the numbers four and five looked like. I feel fairly certain she does not. She told me she imagined them. I asked, "In your mind?" Rolling her eyes, she declared, "No! In my body."

Not Emotional

After church on a Sunday morning, a white, middle-aged, middle-class man told me, "I'm not an emotional person but that anthem made my cry."

The four-year-old could not fathom a distinction between mind and body. The man could not fathom mind and body as anything but distinct. Neither can be imagined making the comments of the other. A person could interpret the qualifying statement, "I'm not an emotional person," in several ways. By saying, "I'm not an emotional person," the man could convey that, in contrast to "emotional," he is a "reasonable" person? If so, he would be well in line with prevailing church culture and its tendency to be suspicious of emotion, perpetuating mind-body dualism.

The statement "I'm not an emotional person, but that anthem made me cry," could implicate this anthem and his behavioral response as out of the ordinary. The tears shed marked an extraordinary liturgical moment, perhaps implying that it is okay to cry, but only every once in a while—and certainly not without reason.

A third interpretation might be that the man had an affective experience that words, particularly emotional or feeling words, could not accurately convey. He cried, but did not feel sad. He does not have a way to articulate this experience of crying during worship because his emotional and intellectual framework defines crying as associated with an emotion that he did not feel at the time.

I suspect this man has a complicated relationship to his emotions, particularly as they are experienced or demonstrated in the context of worship. In white, mainline contexts, it seems common to offer a "caution" when referring to emotions and preaching/worship. For example, Jana Childers, in her Macleod Lectures, names three ways the body participates in preaching: movement, emotion, and gesture. Regarding emotion, she fleshes out how emotions can elaborate and complement thinking or reason. Childers adds that "emotions can be just as easily misused as used."[66] Emotion, when misused, can be propagandistic, manipulative, or coercive. Something about this caution unsettles me. On one hand, it perpetuates mind-body dualism by assuming a disconnect between emotion and reason. But something else makes me uneasy. The "caution" seems to be about emotional "manipulation." Or, to use the example above, the warning is about manipulation, coercion, and/or the potential for propaganda.

I do think we, as emotional human beings, have the potential to be manipulated and coerced. Perhaps emotion plays a stronger role than reason in manipulation and coercion. But I am not sure it is accurate to blame manipulation and coercion on our emotional pliability. Would it not be equally valid to say our reason is manipulated and coerced?

This raises a number of questions. What would be the difference between the manipulation of emotion or reason? Is one worse than the other? You can internalize harmful

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[66] Jana Childers, *The Princeton Seminary Bulletin* 27, no. 3 (2006): 230.

theology through both emotion and reason. Are we only concerned with manipulation when people (leaders and congregants) are emotive? Is there something inherently wrong or manipulative about trying to make someone feel a particular way? What about thinking a particular way?

These questions challenge presumptions and concerns about emotion in worship. But even these questions perpetuate a mind/body, reason/emotion dualism. As a first step toward the integration of mind and body, reason and emotion, I turn to the work of philosopher Mark Johnson. While not an affect theorist, Johnson draws from cognitive neuroscience and emotion studies that align him well with the field.

A. A Theory of Embodied Meaning

After being diagnosed with multiple sclerosis, poet and essayist Nancy Mairs wrote a collection of essays on how she "copes" with her illness. In one essay, she writes about an invitation she received to speak on coping and how she found her voice as a writer. Her essay explores the intimate connection between her failing body and her voice. She concludes, "I've 'found' my voice, then, just where it ought to have been, in the body-warmed breath escaping my lungs and throat…No body, no voice; no voice, no body. That's what I know in my bones."[67] We do in fact know things in our bones—in our bodies. Mark Johnson seeks to theorize this reality in his work concerning mind and body. In *The Meaning of the Body: Aesthetics of Human Understanding*, Johnson constructs a theory of embodied meaning. "What we call 'mind' and what we call 'body' are not two things, but rather aspects of one organic process, so that all our

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[67] Nancy Mairs, "Carnal Acts," in Katie Conboy, Nadia Medina, and Sarah Stanbury, eds., *Writing On the Body: Female Embodiment and Feminist Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 308.

meaning, thought, and language emerge from the aesthetic dimensions of this embodied activity."[68]

The first part of Johnson's thesis is relatively clear: the mind and body are parts of a whole system. It is this total system, not one part, that allows humans to create meaning, thoughts, and language. This concept of unity builds on American pragmatist John Dewey's principle of continuity. According to Dewey, the idea of continuity is "not self-explanatory. But its meaning excludes complete rupture on one side and mere repetition of identities on the other."[69] Continuity excludes the possibility of an outside force being able to change an object primarily because no object exists. "There is no ontological difference between body and mind, organism and surroundings, lower and higher functions of an organism."[70] For example, consider the process of child development. It unfolds in logical stages—making sounds comes before speaking individual words, two- or three-word combinations before speaking in complete sentences. In a neurotypical child, the process of development has no major gaps or leaps and proceeds logically; a child who is only exposed to the English language will not suddenly be influenced by or start speaking Spanish.

What I find helpful about this theory of embodiment as it is influenced by the principle of continuity is its acknowledgement of the existence of higher and lower levels of human activity. Humans have the capacity for complex activity like abstract thought and the creation of complex systems of language. As we begin to think about embodied worship, we cannot ignore the value

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[68] Mark Johnson, *The Meaning of the Body: Aesthetics of Human Understanding*, Reprint ed. (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 2008), 1.
[69] John Dewey, *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry. Vol. 12 of The Later Works, 1925–1953,* ed. by Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1991), 24.
[70] Larry A. Hickman, Matthew Caleb Flamm, and Krzysztof Piotr Skowroński, eds., *The Continuing Relevance of John Dewey: Reflections On Aesthetics, Morality, Science, and Society* (New York, NY: Rodopi, 2011), 114.

of words. The body and mind are part of one organic process. No body, no mind. No mind, no body.

Johnson's thesis goes further than the claim that mind and body together create meaning. He claims that meaning emerges from the body. "All our meaning, thought, and language emerge from the aesthetic dimensions of this embodied activity."[71] Johnson is critical of any narrow concept of aesthetics, such as equating aesthetics to the study of art. Johnson defines aesthetics broadly as "the study of everything that goes into the human capacity to make and experience meaning."[72] Johnson's aesthetic dimensions include quality, images, patterns of sensorimotor processes, and emotions.

Each aesthetic dimension illuminates Johnson's argument and demonstrates the ways in which higher-level meaning-making emerges from lower-level, subconscious, bodily activity.[73] Rather than explicate each aesthetic dimension, I will quote Johnson at length regarding one aesthetic dimension, emotion. From this single example which Johnson uses to conclude his argument, one can get a sense of how Johnson argues for the fundamental importance of aesthetic dimensions.

> If you are skeptical about the claim that emotion is an essential aspect of meaning, just consider this: ask yourself what your experience of "being skeptical about Johnson's claim for the central role of emotions in meaning" really amounts to. As William James pointed out long ago, and Charles Sanders Peirce before him, one's experience of doubt is a fully embodied experience of hesitation, withholding of assent, felt bodily tension, and general bodily restriction. Such felt bodily experiences are not merely accompaniments of doubt; rather, they are your doubt. The whole meaning of the situation you find yourself in is doubtful. Doubt retards or stops the harmonious flow of

[71] Johnson, *Meaning of the Body*, 1.
[72] Johnson, *Meaning of the Body*, x.
[73] The language of "lower-level" and "higher-level" comes from Johnson. I use this because I think his point that the body is critical in creating meaning and his theory that the mind and body operate as one, unified whole is important to my work. However, there is a significant degree to which this language also perpetuates a mind-body dualism and a hierarchical way of understanding the relationship between body and mind.

> experience that preceded the doubt. You feel the restriction and tension in your diaphragm, your breathing, and perhaps in your gut. The meaning of doubt is precisely this bodily experience of holding back assent and feeling a blockage of the free flow of experience toward new thoughts, feelings, and experiences.[74]

Doubt is neither an external force entering into the stream of consciousness nor is it a feeling generated in the mind. What we identify as doubt emerges from the body, from a felt sensation.

Another important feature of Johnson's theory of embodied meaning is the relational nature of meaning: "Human meaning concerns the character and significance of a person's interactions with their environments. The meaning of a specific aspect or dimension of some ongoing experience is that aspect's connections to other parts of past, present, or future (possible) experiences."[75] The experience of doubt, described above, emerged from the body as the body interacted with and responded to its surrounding environment. Our relationship with the environment has an immediate and subconscious effect on the body. For example, we subconsciously take in our spatial surroundings and move so that we do not run into walls; we move out of the way of a dangerous, oncoming object. We subconsciously and consistently interact with the space and the people around us. Over time, our bodies form patterns based on these interactions. These patterns are a primary source for our capability to move continuously from lower-level to higher-level activity.

Building on the previous example of child development we can see this movement from lower- to higher-level activity. From birth we have an awareness of movement and space. This bodily awareness helps us function and, literally, move through life. It also forms the basis for a higher-level cognitive functioning: humans have created an entire system of orientational

[74] Johnson, *Meaning of the Body*, 53–54.
[75] Johnson, *Meaning of the Body*, 10.

metaphors. Johnson partners with linguist George Lakoff to unpack this system. In their book *Metaphors We Live By,* Johnson and Lakoff describe the ways in which we understand one thing in relation to another. They write, "Orientational metaphors give a concept a spatial orientation; for example, HAPPY IS UP. The fact that the concept happy is oriented up leads to English expressions like 'I'm feeling up today.'"[76]

Lakoff and Johnson's work, which precedes Johnson's *Meaning of the Body* by many years, describes many metaphors with which we conceptualize our bodily existence. In his later writing, Johnson builds on this earlier work by providing a philosophical and scientific basis for understanding metaphor and how metaphor emerges from aesthetic experience. Happy is up. Sad is down. That boosted my spirits, I fell into a depression. Health is up. Sickness is down. He's at the peak of health. He fell ill. More is up. Less is down. My income rose. Her income fell. Rational is up. Emotion is down. We put our feelings aside and had a high-level intellectual discussion. He couldn't rise above his emotions.[77]

It is no wonder the four-year-old cannot conceive of the mind apart from the body. Given what we know about connection between reason and emotion, how is it possible that the man in worship still claims, "I'm not an emotional person," and scholars still elevate certain reason (a particular type of knowledge) and worry about emotional manipulation?

B. Juxtaposed and Beside

Attitudes toward reason and emotion are rooted in both history and theology. The earliest days of the church in America were marked by conflict between revivalism and evangelicalism,

[76] George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 2003), Kindle Locations 279–82.
[77] Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, ch. 4.

and those who opposed these new forms of religion. It was a conflict between fervent display and order, spontaneity and conformity.[78] In the nineteenth century, the Episcopalians found conflict within the denomination between the "High Churchman" and the evangelicals. At its core was the issue of salvation. Inspired by the popular religion of the Great Awakening, evangelicals emphasized a born-again experience and heartfelt faith while the High Church emphasized the role of sacraments and church structure.[79] Twentieth century liturgical reform raised issues of inculturation of the liturgy and participation in the liturgy, providing plenty of fodder for the emotion/reason or mind/body debate.[80]

Liturgical theology may inadvertently perpetuate a dualism through its use of binary thinking. Take as an example Lutheran theologian Gordon Lathrop's concept of juxtaposition. Lathrop's liturgical theology not only describes particular elements of worship, it describes the relationship between elements. He writes, "The thesis operative here is this: Meaning occurs through structure, by one thing set next to another."[81] The "deepest tension" in the ordo, the most central juxtaposition, is expressed in the invitation to communion: "Holy things for holy people, One is holy, One is Lord, Jesus Christ to the Glory of God." All the other couplings in the liturgy correspond to this juxtaposition of holy people, holy things, and holy God. Word and sacrament are central things and create meaning[82] as they are juxtaposed, one next to the other: "The word

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[78] See Isaac Rhys, *The Transformation of Virginia, 1740–1790* (Durham, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2012).
[79] Diana Hochstedt Butler, *Standing Against the Whirlwind: Evangelical Episcopalians in Nineteenth-Century America* (Cary, NC: Oxford University Press, Incorporated, 1995).
[80] Anscar Chupuncgo, *Inculturation: Sacramentals, Religiosity, and Catechesis* (Collegeville: MN: Liturgical Press, 1992). See also Annibale Bugnini, *The Reform of the Liturgy, 1948–1975* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1990).
[81] Lathrop, *Holy Things,* 43.
[82] "I think that what I mean by 'meaning' is found in those structures that help us order our world and find a communal way to walk in the midst of that world before God and with each other and

is not just talk; drink the cup with this community and hear what the cup says of God and the hope for God's world."[83] Yet, Lathrop's juxtapositions deal with more than the central things juxtaposed: for example, in prayer we juxtapose praise and beseeching. In prayer we praise God for all God is and all God does, but we also pray for that which is broken, the Kingdom yet to come.

This theology of juxtaposition, one thing next to another, focuses on relationships between objects, not simply the things themselves: the old in relationship to the new, seven days in relationship to the eighth day, the Word and table, praise and beseeching, teaching and bath, year and Pascha. This focus on the in-between, the meaning created in relationships, is highly consistent with the emphasis of affect theorists this dissertation has explored. Juxtaposition points towards something beyond or between the representational elements; it attempts to name an energy that happens as bodies come into contact with one another—a liturgy in motion. With the exception of praise and beseeching, each juxtaposition sets a more concrete idea with a more conceptual one, creating layers of meaning.

In affect theory, we find an additional way to think about the relationship of things, the structure of things—a way that doesn't rely on binary patterns. Affect theorist Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick writes about the traps of binary thinking: "A lot of voices tell us to think nondualistically, and even what to think in that fashion. Fewer are able to transmit how to go about it, the cognitive and even affective habits and practices involved, which are less than

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all of our fellow creatures. Such 'order' is not by any means just rational. And it is always in danger of becoming too sure of itself, too closed. Thus the need for Coyote! Or, better, thus the truth that if we draw a circle that excludes others, Jesus Christ is always on the other side of the circle" (Gordon W. Lathrop, emailed to Allie Utley, November 18, 2014).

[83] Lathrop, *Holy Things*, 110.

amenable to being couched in prescriptive forms."[84] I don't think there is anything inherently wrong with dualistic or binary concepts. I suspect they are inescapable; things are naturally paired in life and liturgy. It makes sense that Lathrop puts Word and Sacrament next to one another, it is biblical and sensical. Additionally, Lathrop is not so concerned with the objects themselves but with the action and reactions that occur as the objects are set in motion within the event of the liturgy. That said, I think it is helpful to look at the concept of juxtaposition through the lens of affect theory and a concept introduced by Sedgwick called "beside." This concept designates an affective space between representations. As we will see, this idea does not eliminate the pairings of Lathrop's theology. To some extent, it makes his theology more amenable to a broader group of Christians, especially free church, non-sacramental traditions. Affect theorists do not rely on the pairings of things because they find their home in the juxtaposition itself—in this space of energy or intensity between the representations.[85]

Sedgwick, a scholar in the field of gender studies, queer theory, critical theory, and affect, proposes an alternative to the binary pairings of Lathrop in the concept of "beside." To describe things as beside one another speaks to the relationship of one thing to another and to the larger structure created by groups of things, but does not limit the number of things or the order of things.

> Beside is an interesting preposition also because there's nothing very dualistic about it; a number of elements may lie alongside one another, though not an infinity of them. Beside

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[84] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 1.

[85] Lathrop also attends to the space between objects but significant differences lie between the way he understands the space and the way affect theorists understand the space. The obvious difference between juxstsaposition and beside is the number of things that can reside in the space. Another difference has to do with the way the space between objects comes to be. Affect theorists would argue that with the in-between space, the relationships constitute the obejcts themselves. Lathrop starts with the pairing of objects therefore implying that objects constitute the in-between space.

> permits a spacious agnosticism about several of the linear logics that enforce dualistic thinking: noncontradiction or the law of the excluded middle, cause versus effect, subject versus object. Its interest does not, however, depend on a fantasy of metonymically egalitarian or even pacific relations, as any child knows who's shared a bed with siblings. Beside comprises a wide range of desiring, identifying, representing, repelling, paralleling, differentiating, rivaling, leaning, twisting, mimicking, withdrawing, attracting, aggressing, warping, and other relations.[86]

In addition to being an alternative to binary thinking, Sedgewick introduces "beside" as an alternative to "behind or beyond." Instead of interpreting relationships according to what comes before or what lies beneath the surface, "beside" attends to the realities and possibilities that can emerge when one thing encounters another. "Beside," writes Sedewick, "seems to offer some useful resistance to the ease with which beneath and beyond turn from spatial descriptors into implicit narratives of, respectively, origin and telos."[87]

Liturgical scholar Rebecca Spurrier also uses this concept to illuminate what is happening in the liturgy of the church. In *The Disabled Church: Human Difference and the Art of Communal Worship*," Spurrier writes about the weekday liturgy of a church in Atlanta. During the week, this church provides services and activities for people living with psychiatric disability.

Chapter one invites the reader to "loiter with intent" at the liturgical centers of Sacred Family. Spurrier describes the disability communities' access to and relationship with church spaces such as the garden, smoking circle, and art studios, concluding that these spaces, which are connected to the sanctuary, are "the lifeblood of its work and imagination."[88] The liturgy of

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[86] Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling,* 8.
[87] Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling,* 8.
[88] Rebecca F. Spurrier, *The Disabled Church: Human Difference and the Art of Communal Worship* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2019), 37.

Sacred Family unfolds throughout the week as people of different ability gather to eat, play, and worship. Chapter two pays particular attention to the types of engagement between participants of Sacred Family: arts of gesture and touch, arts of silence and imagination, and arts of jokes and laughter. The liturgy at Sacred family is shaped by relationships: one person next to another and traditional practices next to improvised art forms.

Spurrier uses "beside" because it allows her to talk about the community coming together, which she describes as an art, in a way that does not erase differences within the community but recognizes the many ways people participate in the community. Spurrier argues that the weekday programs are liturgy. The weekday liturgy is an art form that makes room for difference. "Sacred Family's art forms evoke the liturgical possibilities of beside…They involve individual abilities but are not premised on a similar capacity in each individual…Through a theological lens, I might identify God as the One beside us, who makes room for the smaller configurations of persons that improvise the access that good liturgy requires."[89]

Spurrier uses "beside" to write about the art of the liturgy because she is interested in the possibilities that come to fruition when we create space for people to come together in the liturgy. In the entirety of the book, she talks about what can emerge when we make space for difference. She draws from Sedgewick in the spatial dimension of her analysis and the emphasis on concrete possibility. Spurrier's focus on one thing beside another is concrete and focused on representation while I am more interested in the affective element of Sedgewick's work, the feelings and energies created in the moment that different things come together. In the second part of this chapter, I look at the things in worship—one thing beside another—and think about the larger structure created as we gather to worship God.

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[89] Spurrier, *The Disabled Church*, 73.

II. How Worship Feels: Learning the Liturgy

Learning the Liturgy

The choristers sing with the adult choir every other week. They wear the same robes, process and recess, sing all the same sixteenth century Anglican psalms and anthems. No one tells them the music is difficult, so they just learn it without a second thought. One week, the music director tells the kids that they need to start kneeling during communion. When the time comes, all the kids pull their kneelers from underneath their chairs. The kneelers are probably a foot long and eight inches deep. The youngest chorister, a tall, lanky second grader, tries to figure out how to maintain his balance. He looks around. He adjusts. He struggles. By the end of the long prayer, he is perched on the kneeler like a rabbit; hands and knees on the apparatus, back arched, head down.

Communion

I have attended church since I was an infant. I have taken communion regularly since I can remember. I have graduated from seminary where I learned the history and theology of the Eucharist. I started attending the Episcopal church in my first year of a PhD program in homiletics and liturgy. It took me three months to get up the courage to follow my fellow pew-sitters down the aisle, kneel at the altar, and receive the bread and cup. The process was so unfamiliar to me. I had never knelt before. I didn't know if I was supposed to hold out my hands for the wafer or stick out my tongue. I can't drink wine. I'm allergic. I didn't know how to appropriately decline. When you circle back around the church and file into the pew again, I think you are supposed to kneel and pray but I'm not sure. I finally figured everything out and

then I stopped sitting in the pews because I joined the choir. On my first Sunday, someone told me I was wearing the wrong kind of shoes.

Whiteness

A professor in the school of education told me her family visited St. Mark's once. They sat in the balcony. During a quiet moment in worship, their young child leaned over the edge, looking out over the congregation and asked, "Why is everyone here white?"

Each of these vignettes describes how worship is embodied at St Mark's. We look at the bodies of the church because, as liturgical theologian Khalia J. Williams writes, "the entirety of one's being is conditioned by the realities of bodily experiences within time and space."[90]

Looking at the bodies of St Mark's, we can see a homogeneity to this embodied worshiping community. Indeed, most people are white. They are alike in other ways as well. The community appears to be made up of affluent individuals. People wear formal clothes made from quality fabrics. They adorn themselves with matching accessories: watches, jewelry, and bags. Attire changes with the season, and I'm not talking about the weather: people wear the latest in fashion trends. The clergy don uniform black and clerical collars. Most people are relatively thin—perhaps an attestation to access to healthy food and fitness, perhaps an attestation to the value of thinness in the community.

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[90] Khalia J. Williams, "Love Your Flesh: The Power and Protest of Embodied Worship," *Liturgy* 35, no. 1 (2020): 3.

The parking lot fills early on Sunday morning with clean, well-maintained cars, sporting the latest in vehicle technology and comfort features. The church building itself is also well-maintained. Staff, including security guards, discretely do their work amongst the worshipers. Traveling art exhibits enhance the off-white walls. On special occasions, food and drink are served. The whiteness of the congregation becomes especially visible in contrast to the people of color serving hors d'oeuvres and wine. I suspect that there may also be homogeneity in the way people vote.

There are, of course, exceptions. But as a whole, this is what St. Mark's looks like. These are the subjects of worship. This is a description of material things—what I can see. It is also a description of performance, a display of values and social status. The performances continue in the actions of the worship service, performances learned over time.

The people gather in silence; they don't speak to one another much as they wait for worship to begin. Some people appear to pray. Organ music plays. There is fidgeting and rustling of paper. Some greet one another in whispers and gentle hugs. Sound and movement remain coordinated and prescribed throughout worship. People stand, sit, and kneel at appointed times. Guided by ushers, they file forward for communion in an orderly, coordinated fashion. The bodies at worship convey a sense of poise and control. This poise and control are examples of what political theologian Johann Baptist Metz would call "bourgeois values," values resulting from a "society based on economic exchange and technical reason."[91]

Liturgical theologian Bruce Morrill rehearses Metz's critique of white, middle class culture (the context of St. Mark's) in *Anemnesis as Dangerous Memory: Political and Liturgical*

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[91] Bruce T. Morrill, *Anamnesis as Dangerous Memory: Political and Liturgical Theology in Dialogue* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2000), 57.

Theology in Dialogue. Among other things, Metz decries privatization, the loss of authority and power of tradition, market and technical reason. I think Metz would also decry the inhibition of emotional display. What is needed, according to Metz, is a move from an evolutionary world view to "dangerous memory." This is the dangerous memory of suffering. "The definite memory of suffering, therefore, is dangerous in its capacities both (1) to render a critique of the evolutionary world view and (2) to stimulate human imagination for social-political action."[92]

Morrill writes, "Metz's study of critical theory has led to his awareness of how the instrumental reason pervasive in modern society has resulted in not only an impoverishment in the expressing range and capacities of language but also a restrictedness or abandonment of a wider range of epistemological capacities."[93] In post-enlightenment middle-class culture, intuitive and artful forms of knowing are deemed irrational and individual. The lack of epistemological capacity limits liturgical and spiritual imagination and inhibits our understanding and participation in the pursuit of freedom and justice for all of human life.

For Metz, emotion is a critical element of the life in Christ. Suffering connects us to one another and to Christ. Suffering compels and motivates us. Suffering provokes a sense of urgency which leads to solidarity with the poor and oppressed and actions which aim to alleviate the source of suffering. Morrill puts Metz's political theology in dialogue with Alexander Schmemann's liturgical theology. In conclusion, Morrill suggests a theoretical framework for explaining memory that takes into account both worship and ethics. The purpose of memory is to transform the practice and perspectives of believers. "Anamnesis as dangerous memory," is not merely remembering that is intellectual or rational. Anamnesis is a comprehensive, full body

[92] Morrill, *Anamnesis as Dangerous Memory*, 30.
[93] Morrill, *Anamnesis as Dangerous Memory*, 57.

knowledge of and participation in the mystery of God, known to us through the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. For Metz and Morrill, we learn and know about God through our actions and proximity to others, our senses and emotions. We know through our doing and our feeling or, as Johnson theorizes, we make meaning in the body.

At St. Mark's, the practice of the liturgy reflects the "bourgeois ideal of moderation in feeling."[94] Emotional display is scarce. Congregations such as this one have been described as having a "flat" affect. By "flat" affect, I think people mean to say the congregation is not *discernibly* emotive. This is true. However, meaning is still being made through the body. Lack of emotional display does not equate a lack of affect. Affect is by definition and nature always in existence, always flowing and changing. Affect may be flat at times, but it cannot be that way all the time. Affect and/or emotion pulses through the space, forming the body, individual and corporate.[95]

A. Subjects and Performances

Supp-Montgomerie describes a fluidity important to the study of affect, writing: "Affect refuses this distinction between the fixed and the active, the social and the personal. Affect points instead to the lived processes that create the structures around us and, in fact, the 'us'—both in its personal and social forms—that inhabits those structures. Thus, the sociality of affect does not forgo the daily lives of bodies, subjects, and their performances."[96] I can describe the

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[94] Morrill, *Anamnesis as Dangerous Memory*, 50.
[95] In the second chapter, I also write about how bodies are formed and shaped by affect. In this chapter, formation has the same meaning and functions in much the same way. In the current chapter I am adding to the concept by exploring how it applies to corporeal, material realities such as an actual body.
[96] Jenna Supp-Montgomerie, "Affect and the Study of Religion," *Religion Compass* 9, no. 10 (November): 340, http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/rec3.12166.

way a room feels and attribute that to the way affect flows between bodies and things. But it is also important to describe individual subjects and ritual actions because the personal and the lived processes feed into and off of affect. Affect governs our behavior, our performances. The way we feel, the way we sense a space, impacts us and others.

It is especially important not to "forgo the daily lives of bodies, subjects, and their performances" when describing a church like St. Mark's because non-emotive worshiping communities that participate in highly programmed ritual tend to take the body for granted. The second grader struggling to find his balance on the communion kneeler illustrates how complicated our worship movements can be. The newcomer who doesn't know how to participate in worship draws attention to what we think is easy and "normal." [97]In the same way that pain creates an awareness of the surface of skin, kids or visitors to church can create awareness of our ritual actions, the processes that create our worship.

In my observation, for adults and long-time members of St. Mark's, ritual movements have been learned and practiced to the point that they became rote. Though I was hesitant to come forward for communion my first few months of attending St. Mark's, after years of participating in worship, my performance became automatic or unthinking. In a section about "stranger danger," Ahmed writes, "The most immediate of our bodily reactions can thus be treated as pedagogy: we learn about ideas by learning how they become quick and unthinking. Somewhat ironically, perhaps, there is nothing more mediated than immediacy."[98] What Ahmed argues about bodily reactions we can argue about ritual behavior. The bodily movements of the worshiping body are both immediate and heavily mediated.

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[97] Here I am referring back to the stories with which I began the chapter.
[98] Ahmed, *Politics of Emotion*, Afterword.

Here Chauvet can help us understand how the body is heavily mediated:

> The I-body exists only as a woven, inhabited, spoken by this triple body of culture, tradition, and nature. This is what is implied by the concept of *corporality*: one's own physical body certainly, but *as the place where* the triple body – social, ancestral, and cosmic—which makes up the subject is symbolically joined, in an original manner for each one of us according to the different forms of our desires. The selfhood of the subject as corporality thus occurs at the juncture of "being-in-the-world" (Heidegger's *in-der-Welt-sein*), the 'being-with' (Heidegger's *Mit-sein*), and "historicity." Each one of us is what he or she is only to the extent that each one "retains" in one's self and "extends" to others this triple of body of which each is, as it were, a living memory.[99]

The body is mediated by the triple body: social, ancestral, and cosmic. Chauvet does emphasize the role of language more than affect theorists. Many affect theorists argue that we can have an immediate experience. Chauvet argues against any notion or tendency to think that humans can have immediate experiences of things, that somehow there are dimensions to human living outside of the order of language. This is the debate that has raged since the study of emotion began, the intentionalist vs the anti-intentionalist paradigm I outlined in the introductory chapter.

Ritual action, *both immediate and heavily mediated* is pedagogical, it teaches us our religion. The triple body makes us into believers. The social body of St. Mark's, its cultural context, teaches values like caring for the least of these and working for the common good of all people. It also teaches behavioral norms like poise, order, and control. The traditional body, through scriptures, teaches about the way of Christ and our apostolic lineage. We learn how to be disciples. The cosmic body teaches that God is with us and that ordinary things like bread and water can become extraordinary.[100] In our body, our corporeal experience, we come to know ourselves and our world. We come to know ourselves as part of the whole Body of Christ and as

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[99] Louis-Marie Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1995), 150.
[100] Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament,* 152.

one who evokes the whole. “Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it” (1 Corinthians 12:27, NRSV).

The way our bodies look and move impacts how we encounter the world and how the world encounters us. Ritual also shapes who we are, how we behave, and our encounters. In church, bodies come together and form a unified whole. But that whole does not eliminate the differences within the body. In fact, the ways we are different (and the ways we are alike) impact how the collective body looks and feels. The next section explores how affect pulsates through body and bodies, how affect impacts our processes and structures.

B. Vibrant Matter

Before getting to the larger structures, I want to describe one other type of body in worship—the things of worship. As a scholar, I value work that pushes us beyond the snares of binary thinking, helping us to overcome the mind-body dualism so entrenched in the history and theology of Christian worship. Affect helps us move away from these traps and trenches. Political theorist Jane Bennett’s theory of “things” is one tool for thinking about worship through a non-binary framework.

Following the lineage of Spinoza and Deleuze, Bennett challenges readers to rethink the distinction between life and matter. In the preface, Bennett writes, “I will turn the figures of ‘life’ and ‘matter’ around and around, worrying them until they start to seem strange, in something like the way a common word when repeated can become a foreign, nonsense sound. In the space created by this estrangement, a vital materiality can start to take shape.”[101]

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[101] Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), preface.

As a vital materialist, Bennett writes about "things," emphasizing their existence outside of our human understanding of them of use for them. Things are actants and operators, what in human terms we call agents.[102] Things have power—"Thing-Power: the curious ability of inanimate things to animate, to act, to produce effects dramatic and subtle."[103] Vital materialists do not deny the differences between humans and things (they describe humans in terms of their richness and complexity) but they insist that the human is not the ontological center of existence or at the top of some hierarchical structure. The "ethical task at hand," Bennett writes, "is to cultivate the ability to discern nonhuman vitality, to become perceptually open to it."[104]

She tells stories, from life and literature, to demonstrate the concept of "thing-power." She writes about stumbling upon a collection of things in the gutter, a glove, pollen, rat, cap, stick, and the way these "objects appeared as things, that is, as vivid entities not entirely reducible to the contexts in which (human) subjects set them, never entirely exhausted by their semiotics."[105] Quoting author Robert Sullivan, she describes the liveliness of hills of garbage. She introduces the reader to the notion of "deodand," a law from England in the 1200s. When a crime was done, the thing – the knife or gun—must be surrendered to the authorities as compensation for the crime committed. "Deodand:" "that which must be given to God." Bennett

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[102] Bennett writes, "Actant, recall, is Bruno Latour's term for a source of action; an actant can be human or not, or, most likely, a combination of both…. An actant is neither an object nor a subject but an 'intervener,' akin to the Deleuzean 'quasi-causal operator.' An operator is that which, by virtue of its particular location in an assemblage and the fortuity of being in the right place at the right time, makes the difference, makes things happen, becomes the decisive force catalyzing an event." Bennett, *Vibrant Matter,* 9.
[103] Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, 5.
[104] Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, 14.
[105] Bennett, *Virbant Matter*, 5.

writes that these weapons have efficacy, "a power that is less masterful than agency but more active than recalcitrance."[106]

An intentional playfulness and naivete in Bennett's writing helps the reader be open to this radical idea of vibrant materiality. More than once, Bennett writes about vibrant matter being a childlike concept, a return to the natural wonder of the world around us and an inclination toward seeing life and capacity in seemingly inanimate objects. All bodies, not just humans, can act and be acted upon. Bennett offers up an invitation to consider things, how they come together, how they are political, their force, and their impact on an individual and a collective.

What are the things of St. Mark's? The most important things revolve around the sacraments. Babies, and the occasional adult, are baptized by *water,* head positioned just above the small marble *font* as the priest gently pours the blessed water from a delicate *seashell.* The person's head is anointed with *oil* and the family receives a lit *candle*. The people receive *communion* every week. They file down the wide *aisle*, flanked by long fixed wooden *pews*. They kneel at the *altar* on worn red cushions and receive a small round *wafer* and sip of port *wine*. The lay eucharistic minister wipes the cup with a white *cloth* between communicants. These things are all "vibrant matter," animating worship, acting on and transforming our lives through their ritual use.

Christian worship depends on things. In worship we encounter bodies, water, bread, and wine. As they are inhabited by the Word, these ordinary things take on a special quality; they become holy. But it is not only the holy things, the sacramental things, that carry meaning in the space. Other things of worship include the substantial pulpit on one side of the altar, the smaller lectern on the other; the large cross hanging from the baldacchino, and another made from

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[106] Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, 9.

telephone poles processed down the aisle by twelve men on Good Friday. There are prayer books, hymnals, pencils, giving cards, prayer cards, welcome bags for new visitors, bulletins, and microphones.

All the things of worship have agency and vibrancy. Both Chauvet and Bennet argue fiercely against a utilitarian conceptualize of things. Things are layered with meaning as bodies engage and consume these ordinary materials. Chauvet writes about these things of worship as symbols, mediators of Christian identity: "These words, gestures, objects, people, transport us immediately into the world of Christianity to which they belong; each one of them, because it belongs to the order of Christianity, immediately 'symbolizes' our relationship with Christianity."[107] The symbols of the assembly initiate us into a specific cultural realm. The liturgy is not one thing alone, but things juxtaposed and set in motion. Things become symbols as they are set in relationship with other things. Chauvet also emphasizes that elements become symbols when they represent the whole, and thus, "every symbolic element brings with itself the entire socio-cultural system to which it belongs."[108] A symbol is part of the whole and evokes the whole.

Liturgical theology understandably focuses on the sacramental things of worship: the water, the book, the bread and wine. Some have focused more broadly on space.[109] Scholars discuss how ordinary, inanimate objects take on meaning and take on life through the power of the Spirit. Liturgical theologian Alexander Schmemann talks about the material nature of worship in the opening material of his book, *For the Life of the World*. "The purpose of this

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[107] Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament,* 112.
[108] Chauvet, *Symbol and sacrament*, 115.
[109] For instance see Jeanne Halgren Kilde, *Sacred Power, Sacred Space: An Introduction to Christian Architecture and Worship* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2008).

book," writes Schmemann, "is a humble one. It is to remind its readers that in Christ, life—life in all its totality—was returned to man (sic), given again as sacrament and communion, made Eucharist. And it is to show—be it only partially and superficially—the meaning of this for our mission in the world."[110]

Schmemann's emphasis is our present material reality; he wants to demonstrate that God is "all in all." To this end, Schmemann begins his book by talking about food, a material at the center of life for all living things and a material at the center of the liturgy. The opening chapter describes the food, the material of this world, as a gift from God. As we partake in food, as we live in creation, we are in communion with God. "And, Man (sic) is a hungry being. But he is hungry for God. Behind all the hunger of our life is God. All desire is finally a desire for Him."[111] Schmemann holds that in the fall, humanity has lost awareness of God's presence in all things. Throughout the book Schmemann critiques those he believes perpetuate this loss: secularists and spiritualists. The purpose of the opening chapter is to broaden the readers' grasp of Eucharist, of communion with God. The table is not merely a place and moment isolated in the rubrics or practice of the church. All of life is sacramental. In all of life we commune with God and neighbor.

Schmemann makes an astute and important contribution to the way we think about the sacramentality of the world, the way we think about God in the world. But I wonder what he would think about affect theorist Jane Bennett's insistence on the life and vitality of a dead rat, a piece of garbage, or a rock. While Schmemann considers our communion with God, I want to consider how we are in communion with each other and with the things of worship: the capacity

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[110] Alexander Schmemann, *For the Life of the World: Sacraments and Orthodoxy* (Yonkers, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1997), 20.
[111] Schmemann, *For the Life of the World*, 14.

of bodies, human and otherwise, impresses us and shapes us into something different and new. Though decidedly not theistic, Bennet's work helps us to explore the force of things. How is it that things—like water, wine and bread, books, pews, and pulpits—form us to be a people who can be "life for the world"?

Though Bennett does not attribute this life-force of things to a divine being, the concepts of *Vibrant Matter* show some similarity to the way liturgical theologians like Schmemann talk about the sacramental elements in worship. Bennett pushes the field of liturgical theology in her concept of assemblage: "Assemblages are ad hoc groupings of diverse elements, of vibrant materials of all sorts. Assemblages are living, throbbing confederations that are able to function despite the persistent presence of energies that confound them from within."[112] An assemblage is always in flux, matter comes and goes, affecting the whole in various ways; its life and force ebbs and flows.

Bennett describes the electric grid as an assemblage. At the time of writing, I live in California where we frequently experience power outages during fire season. There are two types of outages. One is a rolling blackout required by the electric company due to high demand, usually a result of extreme heat. The other is a public safety shut off. These are usually longer, more extensive, and occur when there is a "red flag warning"—the conditions are right for wildfires. The latter type of outage engenders political outrage. Many believe that the private utility values profit over spending money on infrastructure, and would sooner shut off power than fix problems leading to a potential fire.

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[112] Bennett develops her concept of assemblage based on Spinoza's concept of "affective" bodies and Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's "assemblage." Spinoza's work claims that all bodies are made of the same matter and are inherently social, affected by other bodies. Bennet is describing the way these affective bodies come together to form an assemblage. Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, 23–24.

The former power outage is also political, though less controversial. When there is too much demand, some lose power but not others; some areas of the county hold higher priority. When states face outages, they can borrow, buy, and wheel-and-deal power from nearby governments. The electric grid is an assemblage of massive proportion. Bennett writes, "To the vital materialist, the electrical grid is better understood as a volatile mix of coal, sweat, electromagnetic fields, computer programs, electron streams, profit motives, heat, lifestyles, nuclear fuel, plastic, fantasies of mastery, static, legislation, water, economic theory, wire, and wood—to name just some of the actants."[113]

Each actant in the assemblage has force and the assemblage itself also has force. An assemblage is a body of many bodies—a new creation. The worshiping body—theologically we might say the body of Christ—is an assemblage and has agency. In the remainder of the dissertation, I largely refer to St Mark's as an assemblage. More typical language would be that of assembly. Lathrop clarifies that term: "church will be understood here primarily as assembly. Church will be seen as a gathering of people to do those central things that identify them as Christian…the concrete meeting for worship."[114] The assembly has a strong center and an open door, permeable boundaries. Lathrop describes a Eucharistic ecclesiology in which we find meaning as one comes beside another. The most basic symbol of the assembly is the people gathered. I use assemblage rather than assembly to talk about the church, because I am less interested in the marks of the church, the representations of the church, and the meaning created by them and more interested in the feeling of the church, the non-representational energies and powers that create, dissolve, and govern the church. We write about the same elements and how

[113] Bennett, *Vibrant Matter,* 25.
[114] Gordon Lathrop, *Holy People: A Liturgical Ecclesiology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 2006), 6.

they come into contact with one another but our emphasis is different. I try, as Stewart suggests, to "slow the quick jump to representational thinking and evaluative critique long enough to find ways of approaching the complex and uncertain objects that fascinate because they literally hit us or exert a pull on us."[115]

We gather to worship the living God, and in doing so we form a body that goes out into the world with force, to bring change, to do the work of the Kingdom, to usher in a new reality. I am not talking in metaphor here. The body of Christ is an actual, material reality. The body of Christ is assembled in and by the liturgy – it is the "assembly of God" (Qahal YHWH). As the "assemblage" of God, it consists of many materials: silence, emotions, movements, pews, pulpits, books, water, food, and people. The body of Christ forms, moves, and communicates. In the body of Christ, the process and structure of worship is made manifest.

Lutheran theologian Craig Nessan, makes a similar argument for the realness of the body of Christ. Nessan states that, in the context of the New Testament, the "body of Christ" refers to three different things: God incarnate, in the person of Jesus; the words of institution, God present in the bread and wine; and the church as the body of Christ. We often think of the third referent as a metaphor. Substantiated by the writing of Bonhoeffer, Jenson, and Hauerwas, Nessan argues for a "sacramental realism" in our understanding of the body of Christ.[116]

Nessan goes on to describe how we become the Body through our participation in the acts of worship, and in particular, through Word and Sacrament. The focus lies in how God's divine spirit and revelation transform us. In my writing about the Body of Christ, I am also

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[115] Stewart, *Ordinary Affects*, 4.
[116] Craig L. Nessan, "What If the Church Really Is the Body of Christ?" *Dialog: A Journal of Theology* 51, no. 1 (2012): 44.

claiming a realism. However, I am less focused on the sacraments and the divinity of the body as I am the body itself—how it forms, moves, and flows. I am attentive to the force of the body.

Lastly, Nessan describes what he believes is the character of the church as the body of Christ: the church is one, holy, catholic, and apostolic. "One" signifies the work of peace-making and reconciliation. "Holy" signifies the liberative, justice-seeking work of the church. "Catholic" signifies the church's care for creation. "Apostolic" signifies the defense of human dignity.[117] Nessan writes, "These marks of character come to expression in ethical commitments and deeds that correspond to the way of Jesus Christ."[118] What is helpful about these marks is that they point toward the behavior of the church, and therefore help us understand how the church is embodied. The trouble with Nessan's description of the characteristics of the church is that it is broad and vague. When we write about the embodiment of the church, it is difficult to make universal claims. I want to affirm his argument about how real the Body is, but stress that each manifestation of the Body looks and feels different.

The Body manifest in the community of St. Mark's Episcopal church is both assembly and assemblage—both a representation of the eschatological gathering of the Body of Christ, and an assemblage of people and things—and the affects that fill the ways that they are "beside" one another. What kind of assemblage do we want the church to be? What message do we want the assemblage to communicate? What impression can the assemblage make on the world? I argue that an understanding—or at least an exploration—of affect is critical to answering these important questions. We have to understand that reason and emotion are connected in order to neither fear nor elevate one over the other. We have to understand how we learn and experience

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[117] Nessan, "Body of Christ," 47–50.
[118] Nessan, "Body of Christ," 51.

the liturgy through bodily process. We have to analyze all these elements of worship as they encounter one another and ask how these encounters change us. We have to ask: how does worship feel? In the next chapter I will begin to answer this question by analyzing some of the feelings within the assemblage. In the fourth chapter, I will ask how the assemblage as a whole feels.

Chapter 3

How Worship is Social

Is there anyone who has not, at least once, walked into a room and "felt the atmosphere"?

— Kathleen Stewart, *Ordinary Affects*

In the previous chapter, I wrote about the unity between mind and body and Mark Johnson's theory on how we make meaning through the body. His theory of embodied meaning supports the claim of affect theorists that the individual is constituted by affect: "affect is not the state of a body but the waves of energy that move through and among bodies in constant ebb and flow; affect calls us into being, marks our dissolution, links us, and separates us."[119] This understanding is foundational for my work on affect and worship, because it makes the case for the primacy of affect and moves us away from the mind-body dualism so prevalent in Western thought. This foundation argues for attending to affect or emotion in worship. If affect is a primary means by which we make meaning, and reason and emotion are inherently connected, then affect must impact our worship. An exploration of affect in worship helps us unpack how meaning is made and how affect or emotion can be carefully and intentionally used to engage participants of worship.

[119] Supp-Montgomery, "Affect and Religion," 337.

Having set this foundation, I introduced the concepts of “beside” and “assemblage.” These ideas help us begin to understand the ways affects not only constitute us as individuals but also impact our relationships to people and things, one beside another, beside another. In an assemblage, individual bodies come together and become something greater than the sum of their parts. This chapter builds on that by looking for affect within the assemblage, attending to the *sociality* of affect by thinking about the felt relationships within the assemblage and the felt atmosphere of worship.

In *The Transmission of Affect*, feminist philosopher and psychoanalytic theorist Teresa Brennan explores the way affect travels between bodies. The author’s emphasis is not on defining affect or sorting out the differences between affect, emotion, mood, sentiment, etc. Rather, Brennan aims to flesh out the ways in which affects are energetic, material, and physiological.[120] Regarding the way affect moves, she writes,

> I am using the term “transmission of affect” to capture a process that is social in origin but biological and physical in effect. The origin of transmitted affects is social in that these affects do not only arise within a particular person but also come from without. They come via an interaction with other people and an environment. But they have a physiological impact. By the transmission of affect, I mean simply that the emotions or affects of one person, and the enhancing or depressing energies these affects entail, can enter into another.[121]

Of particular interest for my work on affect in worship is Brennan’s description of chemical and nervous entrainment, “the olfactory and rhythmic means whereby one person’s affects can be linked to another.”[122] Drawing from both cognitive neuroscience and

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[120] Stewart, *Ordinary Affects*, 17–18.
[121] Teresa Brennan, *The Transmission of Affect* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2014), 3.
[122] Brennan, *Transmission of Affect,* 49.

psychoanalysis, Brennan suggests that unconscious smell as well as rhythmic attunement contribute to the felt atmosphere.[123]

I want to emphasize here the notion that one person's being and presence in worship has an impact upon another and all the bodies together—our smells, sounds, and sights literally travel through the room. Each person's participation in worship impacts the feel of the room for all participants in a tangible way. Brennan's work enables me to use the word tangible here, because she sheds light on the biological and physical impact of one body upon another. Liturgical scholars and church folk may be more attuned to the language of "spirit," to reading the "spirit of the room." The shortfall of this mystical or spiritual understanding is that it often fails to recognize the way the feeling of worship is socially constructed. As the priests enter into worship, they carry and transmit an affective energy. The pace and tone of their words flow out into the assembly. People become attuned to it or resist it. As the choir sings, their breath and sound enter into the assembly, into every body.

Moving forward, I look at the transmission of affect in worship. In the first section, I look at some of objects of worship, how emotion circulates and attaches to objects, and how this impacts the assemblage. This is an example of the felt relationship in worship. In the second section, I explore silence in worship. In doing so, I provide an example of how we attend to the felt atmosphere of worship.

[123] Here Brennan references research on hormones and pheromones. While the research in these areas does suggest some kind of olfactory entrainment exists, it seems the field has yet to identify and explain exactly the makeup or function of pheromones.

I. How Worship Feels: Objects and Impressions

The Offering and the Cross

The offering has been collected and the choir has offered the choral anthem. After a brief moment of silence, the organist begins to play, borrowing a chord structure or melody from the choral anthem. The organist builds on the musical motif, as the offering plates are swiftly carried forward by well-groomed ushers. The ushers make their way to the altar rail, and the organist weaves his way into the introduction to the sung doxology. The plates are stacked and passed to the priest, who bows, turns, and proceeds up the steps to the table, over which hangs a large, empty cross. The plates are once again passed, this time to the celebrant. The celebrant turns toward the cross and table, lifting the plates high as the organist and choir begin to sing, "Praise God from whom all blessing flow." The timing is impeccable; the organist and priest are in sync. The energy and attention of the assembly are gathered in this moment, sensually directed toward the offering lifted high.

The Recession and the Cross

Several people at church talk about the impact of "the box," a moment near the end of worship. After a spoken benediction, the organist begins an introduction to the final hymn. It is almost always loud and often a fanfare of sorts. The priests and lay eucharist ministers line up in front of and facing the table. The acolytes stand front and center with candles and cross. The choir comes from behind the baldacchino and forms a "box" around the table. We sing the first verse of the hymn facing the altar (away from the congregation). And together, we all bow before turning and processing down the aisle and out of the nave.

These moments in the liturgy are effective and affective; they engage worshipers in full, conscious, active participation in worship, and affect plays an important role in this achievement. My sense is that, in these moments, all of the energy of the assembly, all the senses of the assembly, become gathered and focused such that people engage in a more intense way than other moments in the worship. Both moments feel like a culmination of the worship experience. Theologically and/or practically, the oblation and the processional would not be identified as climatic or central moments of worship at St. Mark's Episcopal Church. Preaching and Eucharist would be identified as such. And yet, these moments—the oblation and the processional—stand out as especially meaningful for the people gathered.

As affect, this makes sense. In these moments of the liturgy, the energy, the movement, the sights and sounds all work in concert to bring the assembly's thoughts and feelings into focus. But focused on what? In my observation, the proximity of people to the cross, the direction of the liturgical action toward the cross, and the words spoken about the cross signify this focus on the cross, a symbol of Christ crucified. Not everyone is thinking the same thing about the cross, not everyone would even see that symbol with the same degree of emotion, but as a gathered assembly focused on a central act and symbol of their common faith, the energy grows and the people are sent into the world shaped by the liturgy, by their response, and by the energy of like-minded worshippers.

As a way of understanding St. Mark's affection and focus on the symbol of the cross, I turn toward the work of feminist writer and scholar Sara Ahmed. Ahmed offers a rich perspective on the way emotion functions as a social reality in community as it circulates and attaches to objects. Ahmed's analysis uses lived experience as a "text," or case study, and demonstrates how emotions work in different cultural contexts. Ahmed avoids landing squarely

into either the intentionalist or anti-intentionalist paradigms of affect theorists past. As was mentioned in the introductory chapter, Ahmed uses the terms affect and emotion synonymously. Additionally, Ahmed denies a sharp distinction between sensation, perception, and thought, arguing that these cannot be "'experienced' as distinct realms of human 'experience.'"[124] From the opening statement of intent to the refusal to parse out precise definitions and sharp distinctions, she demonstrates a commitment to exploring emotions not in strictly theoretical terms, but in lived experiences.

A close reading of the entire book is beyond the scope of this project, but a few examples will suffice to demonstrate Ahmed's point that emotions, as they circulate between objects and people, shape individuals and communities. St. Mark's Episcopal Church, like the "texts" Ahmed uses, is a group gathered and a group in which emotions circulate, forming a body or identity. Ahmed's more dramatic and even extreme examples may at first seem disconnected from the formal worship at St. Mark's, but her point (and mine) is that emotions circulate throughout varied groups regardless of ideology or practice.

Ahmed describes the ways in which certain bodies or objects become signifiers of emotion; bodies and objects are signs that press in on us (make an impression). In our judgement or evaluation of the object and emotion, we are drawn toward or away from the others. In our encounter with another, we can experience an attunement or a tension. For example, we may be drawn toward someone that looks like us, because their experience resonates with ours. We can relate to this person and are drawn in; we want to be around them. If someone is unlike us, and especially if we have been taught through experience or culture to fear them, we will feel tension in our bodies and a sense that we need to withdraw. You can imagine then, how these sensations

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[124] Ahmed, *Politics of Emotion*, 6.

of attunement or tension can cause communities to form or not form. Emotions, as they circulate and attach, work to form selves and community. Emotions are not simply *in* us,—they "shape our surfaces."[125]

Early in the book, Ahmed writes about pain, an effective starting place because it describes an experience all readers can relate to. It is a relatively simple and concrete example, devoid of politics. Ahmed argues that pain is "crucial to the forming of the individual body as both a material and lived entity."[126]

> It is through the intensification of pain sensations that bodies and worlds materialize and take shape, or that the effect of boundary, surface and fixity is produced. To say that feelings are crucial to the forming of surfaces and borders is to suggest that what "makes" those borders also unmakes them. In other words, what separates us from others also connects us to others. This paradox is clear if we think of the skin surface itself, as that which appears to contain us, but as where others *impress* upon us. This contradictory function of skin begins to make sense if we unlearn the assumption that the skin is simply already there, and begin to think of the skin as a surface that is felt only in the event of being "impressed upon" in the encounters we have with others.[127]

In short, we have a new awareness of our bodies when our bodies, the skin in particular, press upon another or are "impressed upon." When pain is inflicted on the body, we become more aware of the shape and contours of the body. For example, when your shoulder clips the edge of a doorway or your knee catches the corner of a table, you experience a heightened awareness of the surface of your body and how your body moves in a space. As we learn from that experience, at least for a time, we will be more cautious, moving away from the object which harmed us. So the experience of pain changes our bodies, inside and out. Pain can be more significant and longer lasting than injuring oneself in the living room. We also experience more

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[125] Ahmed, *Politics of Emotion*, 1.
[126] Ahmed, *Politics of Emotion*, 24.
[127] Ahmed, *Politics of Emotion*, 24.

dramatic physical pain and emotional pain. Other emotions, like joy or fear, work in the same way, heightening our awareness and drawing us toward or away from other people and objects.

Ahmed also writes about the fear and hate that shape individuals and communities in our contemporary cultural context. Fear illustrates how emotions circulate in communities: "An object of fear (the stranger's body as a phobic object of instance) becomes shared over time, such that the object, in moving around, can generate fear in the bodies of those who apprehend it. Fear does then 'in effect' move around through being directed toward objects."[128] Feelings directed toward objects, then, also become directive—feelings govern our thoughts and actions. For example, a person growing up in a white community and watching biased news coverage may learn to fear a Black man. This learning, conscious or not, may cause someone to cross a street to avoid contact with a "stranger" or may unjustly call the police on someone they perceive to be a threat.

This governance of behavior occurs at both an individual and collective level. Emotion changes communities. Ahmed begins the chapter titled "The Organization of Hate" with an excerpt from the website of the Aryan Nation in which the group describes "depths of love" embedded in the "soul and spirit" of the organization. They profess it is love, not hate, that brings them together and motivates their actions.[129] Ahmed describes the ways hate works to form the collective body of the Aryan Nation whose narrative is: "Because we love, we hate, and this hate is what brings us together."[130]

Ahmed understands emotions to be 'political' in two ways which are important for how they shape communities: 1) they lead to the formation or understanding of boundaries, and 2)

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[128] Ahmed, *Politics of Emotion*, 219.
[129] Ahmed, *Politics of Emotion*, 42.
[130] Ahmed, *Politics of Emotion,* 43.

they begin to govern behavior. In the example of the Aryan Nation, the love they feel for one another, for whiteness, creates in them a desire to be around other white people. This criteria for belonging creates a concrete boundary for who is in the community and who is on the outside of the community. The love, and subsequent hatred, governs behavior as they work to keep their boundaries firm and insulate or protect their community from the threat of the perceived other. Though the emotion at St. Mark's is more subdued, it similarly creates boundaries and governs the behavior of the participants. The assemblage is shaped by affect. Ahmed writes, "Emotions shape the very surfaces of bodies, which take shape through the repetition of actions over time, as well as through orientations toward and away from others. Indeed, attending to emotions might show us how all actions are reactions, in the sense that what we do is shaped by the contact we have with others." To say emotions shape us is another way of saying emotions create boundaries. The contact we have with others within and beyond these boundaries governs our behavior, "what we do." This next section looks at the emotions, encounters, and objects in the assemblage. In examining these relationships within the assemblage, we understand better how worship is social, how it is shaped by encounter.

A. Emotional Display: Attachment and Detachment

The corporate body at worship (as well as the individuals with which it is comprised) is shaped by the way emotions circulates. To begin to unpack how encounters with emotions shape this particular worshiping assemblage, Ahmed invites us to ask these questions: In what ways do emotions circulate? Which emotions circulate? And to what objects do these emotions attach? As emotions attach to objects, to whom or to what are people drawn? And from whom or what do

people withdraw? What contact is shaping these inclinations, these actions and reactions? Exploring these elements uncovers ways in which worship is social and governed by affect.

A person or community can be governed by affect or emotion but not be emotive. This is the case at the church in Nashville where people tended not to emote. This can make it difficult to determine how or what emotions circulate in this space. I did sense solemnity as a dominant emotion of this congregation. People display solemn reverence for their tradition, the Bible, the clergy, the cross, and for a particular style of worship.

The lack of emotiveness relates to the display of solemnity, a quiet and serious reverence which defines the style of worship. It is ironic, and perhaps significant, that the primary emotion circulating in the community is displayed through the control of other emotions. Solemnity is displayed in stillness and quietness as well as in coordinated actions—moving your body at the appointed times and in the appointed ways. I posit that the circulation of solemnity is tangled up in the hierarchical structures of the church and the value of authority. I suspect it also contributes to the homogeneity of the worshiping body. One wonders if the dominance of the feeling of solemnity circulating through worship, as well as the subsequent coordination of behavior and values, corresponds with the congregational make-up of wealthy, white, conservative people who self-select into this corporate body.

Contentment also circulates this church—or at least a display of content. One person said of the church community, "People like to pretend everything is okay." Again, we see in this circulation, the suppression or control of other emotional displays. Emotions other than contentment exist amongst individuals. People feel sad, lonely, angry. But in this worshiping body, emotional displays that coordinate with these feelings are not as common as the feelings themselves. The man who told me, "I'm not emotional, but that anthem made me cry,"

represents what feels to me like a community norm at St. Mark's; the community values having control over their emotions. This shapes worship and shapes the people who worship. The energy exerted in controlling emotion circulates. People learn to suppress the display of emotion or become detached from feelings all together.

The display of emotion, suppressed or not, has an impact on our contact with others, the way we impress others or are impressed upon. Contact with others leads us to be drawn in toward or propelled away from others – to attach, or detach. This takes us back to the introduction and the discussion of innate emotions versus display of emotion and distinctions between emotion and affect. If a person feels elation or despair but feels constrained to display contentment, how does this impact others? They may give off a surface impression of contentment, but the circulating emotion may impress others with a different meaning. Based on my experience of St. Mark's, I believe that the display of (socially appropriate) emotion that does not represent actual emotion creates emotional detachment from self and from others. In worship, this might take any number of forms. In a church where emotions of "victorious Christianity" or visible displays of joy or ecstasy are expected, emotions of shame or sadness may become detached. For example, a worshipper detaches from feelings of grief in order to fit into the expected atmosphere of a Christmas Eve service. If worshippers are expected to display respect and grief but they experience relief or deliverance, these emotions may feel detached and marginalized in worship. Expressing an emotion inconsistent with what one feels is one way to impact the circulation of emotion. Another way to impact our encounter with others is to hold back on the outward expression of emotions: swallowing tears, remaining still when feeling moved, dismissing anger.

Holding back an outward expression of emotion may be a result of wanting to suppress the emotion itself or another version of the disconnect between a felt emotion and displayed emotion. Sometimes I felt sad at church and felt an urge to cry. I did not display that emotion because I did not want people to know what I was feeling, or because I was afraid that the emotion might overwhelm me. Often, during the climax of the Easter Vigil when the lights came back on and the organ and bells played a joyful introduction to the first Alleluia hymn, I felt a lot of sensation in my body, but my outward expression hardly changed. I cannot say what I was feeling in that moment except to say the sensation was intense. In both these instances, whether or not I was connected to or identifying my emotions, affect theory claims that the emotions still saturated the space, impacting the felt atmosphere. Just as my connection to my own sensation and emotion comes and goes, other peoples' attention to the felt atmosphere can wax and wane.

If we think of emotions as an affective force that circulates in the assemblage, impacting others as it flows and sticks, it is reasonable to assume that these examples of both socially expected and socially detached emotions are key elements in the circulation of emotions and, therefore, the felt relationships that constitute the social dimension within the assemblage. There will always be a certain amount of emotional detachment within those relationships. Such detachment might be altogether necessary. Creating distance between one's emotions and the emotions of a powerful social group can be motivated by the need for safety or emotional health. If Ahmed's theory is correct, that emotions circulate, it is a fair assumption that the *display* of emotion would influence that circulation in worship. And the social construction of appropriate emotional display will make various dynamics of emotional attachment *and detachment* a significant part of that circulation.

Norms of emotional display guide and shape behavior and emotional circulation. The social circulation of emotion takes on rhythms of attachment and detachment. In order to belong in this worshiping community, I felt like I must also remain attached to certain norms of emotional display: not emoting too much, suppressing verbal and bodily responses to worship, showing reverence to the cross and clergy. Some people, like me will be drawn in by this behavioral norm, and some will be repelled. A rhythm of circulation is created in which people emotionally attach and detach, feel into and with the social unit, or feel outside and beyond the social unit. Within the boundary, the ways emotions are expressed or suppressed impact the feeling of the assemblage, the felt relationship between members.

B. Actions and Reactions

In worship we experience emotional encounters toward God and toward one another, like a moving anthem or a climactic moment in the Easter vigil, that cause us to act and react emotionally (and otherwise). These encounters are often framed theologically as being encounters with God. They are also profoundly affective in nature. Theologian Miroslav Volf, for instance, writes about how worship is a response of adoration to an encounter with God. Like Ahmed, Volf is conveying how emotions *function*—what they do. In this case, Volf reflects a concept Ahmed also asserts—that our actions are reactions to our encounters with others and the world around us—but Volf puts that concept squarely within how emotions lead to our actions and reactions in worship and beyond.

According to Volf, worship is constituted by a "rhythm of both adoration and action."[131] This emotional response of adoration comes as a result of encounter with God who created persons to be in fellowship with God and with others. "The centre of Christian life consists in personal *fellowship* of human beings with the Son of God through faith. Adoration is a time when this personal fellowship, which determines the whole life of Christians their relation to themselves, to their neighbours and nature, is nurtured, either privately or corporately."[132] The whole of Christian life, according to Volf, is determined by the feeling of adoration which arises from the encounter with God.

Volf says that the character and actions of God necessitate adoration, and that adoration is a deep feeling of gratitude. Like Ahmed, Volf is conveying to the reader how emotions *function*—what they *do*. In deep feelings of adoration and gratitude, the worshiping assembly identifies with God and as the body of God. This identification moves us toward action.

> First, by aligning with God's character and purposes in adoration one aligns oneself also with God's projects in the world. By praising God who renews the face of the earth and redeems the peoples one affirms at the same time one's desire to be a cooperator with God in the world. *Adoration is the well-spring of action.* Second, in adoration a person names and celebrates the context of meaning that gives significance to his or her action in the world and indicates the highest value that gives that action binding direction.[133]

With Volf's perspective in mind, encounter with God and subsequent feelings of adoration lead us toward certain forms of action and give our actions new meaning. These actions take different shapes within the liturgy. For example, our adoration of God, our identification with God, leads us to realize the ways we fall short so we confess our sins. In this

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[131] Miroslav Volf, "Worship as Adoration and Action: Reflections on a Christian Way of Being-in-the World," in *Worship: Adoration and Action*, ed. D.A. Carson (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Pub, 2002), 207.
[132] Volf, "Worship as Adoration and Action," 207.
[133] Volf, "Worship as Adoration and Action," 210.

instance, adoration as God-encounter leads to a reaction—confession. This expands and occurs outside of Sunday morning worship—in forms of humility, freedom from guilt, or the desire to care for others. Emotional encounter with God, then, has an emotional and behavioral directionality—a reactive life in and beyond worship. These emotions bind us to God. They form us. They shape our behavior. They are part of how the church feels deeply.

Emotional encounters in worship can be profound emotional encounters with one another as well, encounters that lead to new forms of (re)action. One of the most sincere encounters I had at St. Mark's was at service of healing prayer. These services tended to be small and intimate. Even if I did not go forward for prayer, it felt important to me to attend these services, to hold space and to witness people's suffering. In these prayer services, I encountered the suffering of others, felt deep empathy, and was led to pray on behalf of others. Homiletician John McClure writes about this kind of encounter in his book on liturgy and communicative ethics. The movement or action of these intercessory prayers is twofold. We move toward God and toward one another: "In other words practices of intercession, understood theologically, involve a kind of attunement between human empathy and divine empathy."[134] Empathy attunes us to God and one another and moves us to act on behalf of or in accordance with God's desires for the well-being of all. In the encounters, we feel something. The felt-relationships of the assembly impact our actions and the meaning we assign to those actions. The way we move in and understand the assemblage is directly impacted by our encounters with God and others and these impacts are felt, they are affective. Worship is inescapably social.

C. Objects and Emotions

[134] John McClure, McClure, *Speaking Together and with God: Liturgy and Communicative Ethics* (Washington D.C.: Lexington Books/Fortress Academic, 2018), 70.

Objects impact the feeling of the assemblage as well. Circulating emotions can stick to objects or be directed toward objects. Like Ahmed, liturgical theologian Don Saliers addresses the ways in which affections take on or are directed to a particular object. Saliers writes specifically about religion: "The particularity of Christian affections has to do with the objects toward which they are directed… the essential feature of the order among Christian emotions is that they take God and the acts of God's as their object and their ground."[135] I am not convinced of a distinction between Christian affections and affect in general, but I do think Saliers makes an important point about what makes the ritual actions of the church distinctly Christian: the object of affection in Christian worship is God in the person of Jesus Christ.

Christ is symbolized in many objects of Christian worship, most notably the bread, but also in light and water. After worshipping for several years at St. Mark's, it is my experience that one of the central objects of attachment in worship would be the cross; the spoken words and actions of worship indicate its significance. In the vignettes above, we can imagine the way the energy of worship—the sounds and movement—is directed toward the large wooden cross hanging front and center in the sanctuary. Jesus's death on the cross and its redemptive power weave through the sermon content and interpretation of scripture.

It would be reasonable to think that individuals at St. Mark's form some kind of emotional attachment to the cross; its prominence is undeniable. However, it would be presumptuous to think everyone forms the same kind of attachment to the cross. At various points in the liturgy, individuals mark themselves with the sign of the cross. I refrain from doing so, because I have a tenuous attachment to the cross. I do not know what to think of the

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[135] Don E. Saliers, *The Soul in Paraphrase: Prayer and the Religious Affections* (White Sulpher Springs, WV: OSL Publications, 2011), 10.

atonement theology so often attached to the cross in this particular community. At the same time, I am emotionally moved by the liturgical moments in which we reverence the cross. Even as I am perplexed by it, I have formed some kind of attachment to it. It is hard not to in the worshiping community of St. Mark's because the cross so dominates the liturgy. In light of my reading of Ahmed, I am led to ask: In what ways or toward what ends does attachment to this particular object—the cross—shape this community's beliefs and self-understanding? How does this object attachment impact the felt relationships in the assembly?

The cross itself has layers of meaning. Liturgical scholar Gail Ramshaw gives an overview of the history of the cross in *Treasures Old and New: Images in the Lectionary*. In the Greco-Roman world crucifixion was used as an instrument of torture and execution. It was shameful to be crucified on a cross. Christians in the early centuries would not have marked anyone with the sign of the cross. The earliest depictions of the cross disguise the cross, entwining it with vines into a tree of life or placing Jesus, in the orans position, in front of the cross. In the fourth century, the cross became a symbol of victory in war. Constantine made it into an icon of power. He used in the context of battle. He outlawed crucifixion. The cross became a logo for supremacy and an instrument of redemption. Helena, mother of Constantine, sponsored an archeological dig and claimed to find the true cross. Then people started wearing the cross and venerating the cross on Good Friday. In the middle ages, the crucifix became important, often showcased with grotesque detail. Twentieth- century interest in enculturation led to the cross being depicted in new ways. That means people around the world took the image of the cross and made it their own. They depict Jesus with the same color skin as them. They depict suffering as they know suffering. They adorn the cross with their own cultural elements. In the Gospel of Mark, the cross is the sign of the hidden messiah. In Matthew, the cross fulfills

all of Jewish expectations. In Luke, the cross is the locus of God's forgiveness. In John, the cross is the throne from which the Son of God reigns. The cross can symbolize Jesus's death as a sacrifice for our sin, Jesus executed because of his passion for social justice, and a God who suffers with all who suffer.[136]

Given its many theological layers of meaning, the cross could shape the affective life of a community in various ways. At St. Mark's people bow before the cross, signifying the cross's position of power and reverence. The theology espoused is often atonement focused, Jesus sacrificed for our sins. The meaning attached to the cross at St. Mark's seems most akin to the fourth century which saw the cross as a sign of power and victory. The meaning is intensified by the affective energy directed toward the cross through the synchrony of movement and music. Based on my observation, conversations, and knowledge of the assemblage, I would argue that the emotions circulating and attaching to the cross contribute to the formation of a people who value self-sacrifice and redemptive suffering. Emotions of humility, self-abnegation, guilt, and relief (at forgiveness) are all present and active. Because values govern behavior and behaviors impact our encounters with others, emotions circulating and attaching to the cross influence the felt relationships in the assemblage.

In the first half of this chapter, I have considered how affect functions within the assemblage, how the felt relationships (felt through emotional circulation, attachment, and encounters) shape the assemblage and members of it. It is typical in congregational study to study the symbolic and semiotic aspects of church life as primary to understanding a congregation's identity and sense of mission. In a congregational study, however, a pastor might

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[136] Gail Ramshaw, *Treasures Old and New: Images in the Lectionary* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2002), 119–29.

conduct formal interviews with people to learn more about the particular feelings associated with the cross. Further linkages could be made between these emotions and how the formation of the assemblage impacts congregants as they go out into the world, the way they continue to manifest the body of Christ. How does the community formed through shared emotional attachment to particular sacred objects continue to influence the lives of the people once they are no longer present together in the space? In other words, how does shared affect in worship impact their individual lives outside of worship?

The felt relationships in worship contribute in a significant manner to the way worship feels, the felt atmosphere. The atmosphere of worship is dynamic, always changing. So, in the next section, I explore moments of silence in worship as an example of a felt atmosphere. Silence is a salient example in a chapter on the social nature of worship because silence feels different in community than in isolation. The moments of silence I will unpack are profoundly social.

II. How Worship Feels: Sensing Sound and Silence

The funeral

When a young man dies tragically, the whole church shows up for the funeral. People gather in the sanctuary. The stillness of the space, a dense, quiet energy, binds the grieving body together. The priest processes down the aisle and speaks, "'I am Resurrection and I am Life,' says the Lord. Whoever has faith in me shall have life, even though he die and everyone who has life, and has committed himself to me in faith, shall not die forever."[137] *These words have been heard before. But to hear them in motion, to hear them born into the aisles of the church, is to be*

[137] *The Book of Common Prayer and Administration of the Sacraments and Other Rites and Ceremonies of the Church: Together with the Psalter or Psalms of David According to the Use of the Episcopal Church* (New York: Church Hymnal Corp., 1979), 491.

reminded that the very Word of God in the person of Jesus Christ enters into humanity. Words alone do not create the powerful experience. An energy is created as words interact with and become entangled in the body: scripture read by a walking body, words delivered in the midst of the corporate body, the corporate body holding onto the hope found in the Word become Flesh. All of this—the Word, words, body, bodies—wrapped in a palpable silence.

Easter Vigil

The assembly disparately moves from the courtyard into the dark sanctuary. In the sanctuary, candles are lit, and people settle in for the service of readings and music. Papers shuffle, people fidget, babies fuss. Folks attend (more or less) to readings, responses, and prayer for nearly an hour. As the hour passes, just before the baptisms occur, a subtle shift in the tenor of worship occurs. As the choir sings, a hush falls over the space. The congregation is quiet but not still. A slight sway indicates people are captured by the lilt of sung melodies. The music ends, a brief moment of silence, then the listeners exhale all at once.

The Chapel

The leaders of the Sunday assembly gather in the chapel adjacent to the sanctuary for prayer. People chatter and laugh as a way to pass the time and, I imagine, because they enjoy one another's company. The priest enters the space and attempts to quiet the boisterous energy. The attempt fails. A second attempt succeeds, and he takes a moment of privilege to admonish the assembly; he doesn't consider the noise conducive to mindful and holy worship. The group falls silent this week and for weeks to come. This silence does not feel holy or good to me. It does feel intense. My body is tense. I feel uneasy. I want to flee the space.

One of the main reasons that I attend worship at a particular church is because it makes me feel a particular way; something about the "felt atmosphere" draws and compels me. While the style and perceived quality of the liturgy contribute to the feeling of worship, something deeper and more elusive makes me feel like I belong or like I am at home/connected to what's happening/wanting to come back. A "quality" or "ethos" of worship is created by the people gathered and the ways in which they participate. In short, the "felt atmosphere" of worship is constructed.[138] Worship is a social event and affect constitutes or draws together the worshiping body.

How a room feels depends on the people and things gathered, the composition of the assemblage at any given moment. Worship can feel different every week. Worship can feel different in different moments. Rather than try to explicate all the ways worship feels, this section provides an example of one kind of feeling, the way worship feels in moments of ritual silence. Moments of silence, in particular, help demonstrate how to attend to affect in worship.

By definition, silence is the absence of sound. When we speak of silence, we are not describing an objective reality, because it is not possible to experience the absence of sound. In our homes, the wood creaks and appliances hum. Even in the wilderness, winds rustle, birds chirp, animals creep, and reptiles slither. A person may engage in silence by abstaining from speech, but the heart still beats and breath still moves. Silence, it seems, is more than or deeper than or bigger than the absence of sound. Or perhaps silence is neutral, a foundation upon which noise and sound are layered. Liturgical theologian Mark Searle describes the liturgy as floating

[138] See introduction for a more detailed explanation of how I use the term, "socially constructed." I am not using a critical theorist approach, rather, I am pointing toward the ways worship is a product of the gathered community.

on a "sea of silence." He writes, "Such silence is not the absence of noise; it is the depth dimension of all that is said and seen and done."[139]

A. Liturgical Units and Deep Structures

In worship, silence holds a transitional or in-between kind of space and time. It occurs between liturgical moments, between phrases, between breaths, between people. In thinking of liturgical silence and how to approach an analysis, I am reminded of anthropologist Kathleen Stewart's description of still life: "A still life is a state of calm, a lull in the action. But it is also a machine hidden in the woods that distills spirits into potency through a process of slow condensation… A still life is a static state filled with vibratory motion, or resonance. A quivering in the stability of a category or a trajectory, it gives the ordinary the charge of an unfolding."[140] Moments of silence in the liturgy are like a still life—moments of potency, motion, or resonance. I study the moments of silence in terms of what liturgical scholar Robert Taft referred to as a "liturgical unit," recognizing that each moment is shaped by history and only understood in motion.[141] What are the deep structures within the liturgical unit of silence? What gives these moments of silence form and meaning?

To describe a structure is to name the parts of something and how they fit together. To structure something is to create a system or pattern for organizing parts into a whole. For a long time, liturgical scholars studied the structure of worship through analysis and comparison of documents: complete contemporary and historical orders of worship. In the late 1970s, Taft

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[139] Mark Searle, Barbara Searle, and Anne Y. Koester, *Called to Participate: Theological, Ritual, and Social Perspectives* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2006), 58.
[140] Kathleen Stewart, *Ordinary Affects* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), 1.
[141] Robert Taft, "Structural Analysis of Liturgical Units: An Essay in Methodology," *Worship* 52, no. 4 (July 1978): 314–29.

suggested a method of liturgical analysis that took into account the "present" of the liturgy and encouraged the study of smaller units rather than entire liturgies.[142] While Taft still relied on historical documents for understanding liturgy, he planted seeds for later scholars. Eventually, liturgical scholarship would recognize the importance of context and performance in the study of worshiping communities.[143]

I, like Taft, am executing an analysis of small units of the liturgy (in this case, units of silence). I also consider the liturgy in motion in its present configuration. Taft's method borrows from Lévi-Strauss's structuralism. But Taft writes, "There are, however, some differences. The structuralist is seeking meaning; I am seeking primarily the structure itself."[144] I contend that the meaning and "the structure itself" are inextricably connected and I seek to understand both. I also recognize that meaning and structure both rely upon and create a context. Worship does not happen on paper but in a particular time and place; the elements, how they fit together, and the way we pattern and organize worship all depend on context.

When Taft talks about deep structure, he is referring to things in common. While I suspect there is some commonality to the way we experience liturgical silence, when I ask about the deep structures of liturgical silence, "deep" means things that are unseen, things non-linguistic, things far from the surface. In this way, I am using affect theory to build on Taft's concept. I am doing an analysis on one unit of the assemblage, a unit marked by ritual silence. Here I mean silence that occurs in the ritual space of worship. This could include silent prayer (or silence during prayer), moments of reflection, or more spontaneous silences like the silence

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142 For Taft this means considering the tradition in addition to uncovering the historical past.
143 For instance, see Kevin W. Irwin, *Context and Text: A Method for Liturgical Theology*, revised ed. (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2018) or Lawrence A. Hoffman, *Beyond the Text: A Holistic Approach to Liturgy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987).
144 Taft, "Structural Analysis," 315.

between words or notes of music. I chose to use silence as an example of attending to the felt atmosphere, because I think ritual silence depends on community. Being silent together feels different than being silent alone.[145] I also use silence because, as the vignettes above convey, silence in worship can be objectively or demonstrably the same but feel different. This indicates the primacy of the affective dimension in units of silence.

B. Finding Meaning in the Silence

What is being felt in the silence of worship? I am sensing the presence of others—I see them, hear them, and smell them. I am also sensing my own judgement of the presence of others. I am sensing my own reaction, my own internal response and change to external stimuli. Indeed, the social, affective energy impacts the biological and physical matter. In the silence, part of what creates and maintains structure and meaning are the chemical and energetic emissions of the people gathered. We feel silence. We hear silence. The distinction may be unnecessary because to hear is to feel and to interpret vibrations passing from one person to another. In *Keeping God's Silence: Towards a Theological Ethics of Communication*, theologian Rachel Muers writes about silence and listening. Muers points us to the ways that moments of silence compel or move us. Muers's central claim is that "listening can rightly be spoken of as active, creative, politically and ethically significant, in some respects thinkable as prior to speech within a communicative relationship—and, as we practice and experience it, a reflection of the

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[145] When I am alone, I can not feel the emotions and presence of others, there is no shared energy. I experienced this astutely when I tried to do yoga alone for the first time. It was cumbersome and boring compared to going to a yoga class. In community, I feed off the energy of others; for better or for worse, I am not attending to other people but I can sense their presence.

communicative activity of God."[146] Listening cannot be fully or rightly understood as absence of or opposite to speech. Rather, listening enables speech. Muers depends on the work of theologian Nelle Morton and philosopher Gemma Corradi Fiumara to substantiate her claim.[147]

Morton explores what it means to be "heard to speech." As is often true, a story best captures the meaning of this concept. Morton tells of a small workshop she conducted in Illinois. Toward the end of their time together, a woman who had been reserved and quiet before began to share her pain. As words emerged from the depths of body and her pain became visible, other women gathered around her and sat with her—in silence. As she finished speaking, she said to the group, "You heard me. You heard me all the way. I have a strange feeling you heard me before I started. You heard me to my own story. You heard me to my own speech."[148] Just as it can be painful to be silenced, it can be moving to be heard. The woman sharing depended on the group of women around her to create a space for her and to enter into a state of deep listening. In the same way, the service of healing prayer at St. Mark's often depends on people willing to create a space and deeply listen to those who come forward for prayer.

Fiumara also focuses on listening, what she describes as the "other half of communication." Fiumara posits that we live in the midst of a cacophony of competing voices, and as people compete for power within this discursive environment, the possibility of non-coercive speech or listening becomes lost. Speech concerns itself with power; listening with strength. In her analysis of Fiumara, Muers writes,

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[146] Rachel Muers, *Keeping God's Silence: Towards a Theological Ethics of Communication* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub., 2004), 49.
[147] Nelle Morton, *The Journey Is Home*, Reprint ed. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1985) and Gemma Corradi Fiumara, *The Other Side of Language: a Philosophy of Listening* (New York: Routledge, 1995).
[148] Morton, *The Journey Is Home,* 205.

> The most important risk taken in listening, however, is not the risk of being "defeated" by some more powerful speaker, but the risk, shared with the one who is listened to, of allowing unpredictable creativity. The listener's silence requires willingness to "make space" for the new, the unexpected, and the undeveloped thought.[149]

In a discursive environment that both speaks and listens, opposing ideas can coexist and new ideas can be generated. This hope created in the practice of listening opens a door for Muers to appropriate Fiumara's philosophy in developing a theological ethics of communication.

Muers develops her ethic around Bonhoeffer's three-fold Christology: Christ incarnate, crucified, and resurrected. Each nature of Christ embodies a particular type of silence: the silence of unknowability, the silence of the cross, and the silence of the resurrection. In the resurrection of Christ exists the ultimate silence and absence of God. In this penultimate time between the finality of the resurrection and the resurrection yet to come, God patiently waits, creating space for creation to participate in the reconciling work of God. God keeps silence. As God listens deeply to God's own creation, new life and unexpected life can come into being. God is both the one who hears and the one who is heard:

> Listening can be described as the act of "giving time" to allow the other's own possibilities for new speech to emerge—possibilities that are themselves in some sense given in and through the act of listening. The idea that God is patient, or that God "waits for" creation could, it would seem, allow the silence of God that grants responsibility to the world to be understood as coterminous with God's salvific action.[150]

Muers not only suggests that God keeps silence, she also suggests that humanity is invited to participate in keeping God's silence. When a person listens to another, when they "keep God's silence," they enter a space of unknown possibility. "The listener acts for the sake of a future 'healing,' the nature of which is radically unknowable… The keeping of silence is what allows unexpected or unexplored possibilities to emerge as well as allowing the listener

[149] Muers, *Keeping God's Silence,* 58.
[150] Muers, *Keeping God's Silence,* 95.

herself to be changed."[151] By risking entrance into the unknown, the listener lets go of control, and sets aside the values of autonomy and privacy. In a different way than Brennan, Muers also writes about community, resisting the concept of the individual as a self-contained, autonomous being. In worship, many bodies come together for the sake of listening because, "To keep silence together is not merely for each to keep her own silence; it is to keep one another's silence, which in turn only makes sense if it is also a keeping of God's silence, a sign and enactment of the silence in which God hears the whole of creation."[152]

Silence is rife with feelings of expectation. Silence in community is doing something affectively. Silence in worship has a structure and a purpose. In the silence we encounter one another and are moved to respond to this encounter. In ritual silence, we find ourselves in the presence of God, who is listening to the assembly; in ritual silence we are being invited to offer a response to God, to "speak." We speak to God and to the world, we speak against the powers of evil, we speak healing and wholeness, we speak in word and in deed. This ritual silence is social because we feel it in community and we respond in community, as the Body of Christ.

When you walk into a room, you feel the atmosphere. I have experienced silence as boring, unsettling, scary, peaceful, and a whole host of other emotions. The particular assemblage (the things, people, time, movement, etc.) impacts the way silence feels. We can be intentional in cultivating worship so that silence impacts worshipers in a particular way. In the next section, I will argue that in the silences of worship, we cultivate feelings of intimacy, vulnerability, expectancy, and encounter.

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[151] Muers, *Keeping God's Silence,* 59.
[152] Muers, *Keeping God's Silence,* 153.

C. Finding Intimacy, Vulnerability, Expectancy, and Encounter

In the silence of worship, perhaps we come to what liturgical theologian Aidan Kavanagh names the edge of chaos: "The liturgical assembly's stance in faith is vertiginous, on the edge of chaos."[153] Here Kavanagh is writing about the intimacy of the liturgy, of the church standing before God who is both "object and source" of faith. He adds that only grace and charitability enable the church to come to the edge of chaos and to "come away whole from such an encounter, and even this is with wounds which are as deep as they are salutary."[154]

I wonder if the moments of silence in the liturgy feel especially chaotic for participants aa they often do for me Liturgical scholar Ruth Duck writes about the importance of silence as an element of worship and as a mode of participation. Silence provides moments for contemplation and prayer. "Silence," she writes, "makes it possible for people to reflect on and respond to what is happening in worship, to join their individual prayers to the corporate confession or intercession, and to contemplate the nonverbal aspects of worship. Providing a few moments of complete silence…can make room for the congregation to listen for the Spirit's voice."[155] She also warns that silence can provoke anxiety when leaders do not provide clear direction or purpose for the silence. She goes on to advise leaders to learn to read the silence, to gauge when people engage the silence verses when they feel restless.

I agree with Duck on the importance of silence as a form of congregational participation. However, Duck, like Muers, seems to emphasize the cognitive benefits of silence. Silence gives us time to reflect, to listen, and to contemplate. I want to add that silence gives us space to feel.

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[153] Aidan Kavanagh, *On Liturgical Theology* (Collegeville. MN: The Liturgical Press, 1984), 75.
[154] Kavanagh, *On Liturgical Theology*, 75.
[155] Ruth C. Duck, *Worship for the Whole People of God: Vital Worship for the 21st Century* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2013), 21.

And for that reason, silence may make persons like me anxious, no matter the degree of instruction or guidance provided. I suggest that what makes silence a rich (and sometimes unsettling) element of worship is that in silence, we allow space for feeling.

Pastoral theologian Elaine Ramshaw writes about the role of ritual in pastoral care. In her writing she intends to bridge a gap between ritual theorists and pastoral counselors. She claims presiding over worship is an act of pastoral care and that ritual plays an important role in caring for the needs of the worshiping community. The ultimate aim of worship is to glorify God, but God, in the person of Christ, shows us that the glory of God is not separated from human need. In ritual practices, we bond both with God and with the gathered community. Being invested in the psychological needs of the individual, Ramshaw also addresses emotion in worship:

> [A]n important pastoral goal in ritual practice would be to let ritual encompass a range of human emotional response at the same time that it reaffirms the basic attitudes of faith. This can be achieved without subjunctivizing. Ritual should not impute feelings, but it can allow symbolic room for feelings, by making recourse to a wider range of traditional models for speaking with God.[156]

Silence is one way we create symbolic room for feelings. For instance, based on my own experience of silence at St. Mark's, an anxiety can arise. Central to this anxious silence are feelings of intimacy and vulnerability that give rise to feelings of expectancy and encounter. We are like Elijah, waiting for the Lord, experiencing the "sound of sheer silence" (1 Kings 19:12, *NRSV*). When I am no longer hidden behind words and doings, I am laid bare in the silence. In silence and through emotion, I "speak" to God; I am led to the edge of chaos in which I become open to encounter both the other and God. In silent intimacy and vulnerability, feelings of expectancy arise, and an encounter (that might be different for each person) presses in on us all,

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[156] Elaine Ramshaw, *Ritual and Pastoral Care* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1987), 32.

makes an impression on us as a social gathering. Sights, smells, and sounds enter us. All of this compels us or, at the very least, creates space and time for us to respond emotionally together. In this way, silence as a deep structure shapes the social dimensions of affect—we are being heard (to use Muers' language) each of us, and all of us together, into various forms of, not only speech, but affective response.

In this chapter I have explored some of the key dynamics through which the assemblage feels itself socially, describing the ways that emotions circulate within some of the felt relationships within the assemblage and the felt atmosphere of worship. I used the object of the cross as a way to illustrate how emotions circulate in worship, attaching to people and objects, impacting us and shaping us. In addition to making meaning in worship, we feel worship in our bodies. We have a felt relationship to the people, words, and objects in worship. These felt relationships and emotions create an overall atmosphere. The assemblage feels a particular way according to the felt relationships within it. The parts impact the whole. I wrote about silence as one example of how we can analyze the felt atmosphere. In writing about felt relationships and felt atmosphere, I demonstrate how worship is social. Our experience of worship depends on our encounters with the things of worship.

Chapter 4

How Worship is Nonrepresentational: Energy and Power

Power is a thing of the senses.

— Kathleen Stewart, *Ordinary Affects*

Kavanagh writes that the assembly encounters the Holy One in the liturgy and is changed as a result of this encounter, and the assembly then adjusts to the change.[157] This is the movement of worship. I have suggested that in worship, we are equally changed and required to adjust on account of our encounter with others in the room. Worship is social. The social is affective. Our *sense* of worship is determined by the people around us. What governs worship, what moves and drives and compels us, is determined by our contact with others. Moments of silence create a “still life” canvas for analysis, helping us to see how energies and affects are at work.. Silence-born encounter, then, is another deep structure of worship.

Such encounter goes hand in hand with expression, not only expressive speech, as Muers and Duck have pointed out, but also emotional expression. American philosopher John Smith writes about experience in his book, *Experience and God*. He describes experience as the “many-sided product of complex encounters between what there is and a being capable of undergoing, enduring, taking note of, responding to, and expressing it.”[158] By understanding experience as a

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[157] Kavanagh, *On Liturgical Theology*, 77.
[158] John Edwin Smith, *Experience and God* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1995), 23.

product, something that occurs through process and in time, one can avoid thinking of it either as subjective or as located entirely in one's mind. An experience is first of all an encounter. Smith goes on to write that experience demands expression in language or some other symbolic form, but "it does not follow that everything encountered actually does find expression or that all of what does find expression has been adequately expressed."[159] Encounter, or experience, and expression go together.

Everything encountered does not find expression. Some expressions are inadequate in describing an encounter. For instance, expression is complicated in the life of St. Mark's. We can talk about the circulation of emotions that occurs through the encounters, the relationships, and the atmosphere of the assemblage, but many of these experiences cannot be fully captured and explained in the language available to us. This chapter goes further down this path of naming things in worship that cannot be named.

While there are not many people publishing works on affect and worship, we have seen that scholars of worship are interested in emotion. For example, in an edition of the journal *Liturgy* (which focused on emotion), Don Saliers re-examines his seminal work on worship and emotion; liturgical scholar Nathan Myrick writes about music, emotion, and relationship; and liturgical theologian Ed Phillips considers how emotions manifest in online worship.[160] Additionally, scholars write about the non-representational aspects of worship, but with different

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[159] Smith, *Experience and God*, 41.

[160] See Don E. Saliers, "With Kindled Affections: Worship and Emotion," *Liturgy* 36.1 (January 2, 2021): 4–10, https://doi.org/10.1080/0458063X.2020.1865022.; Nathan Myrick, "Music, Emotion, and Relationship in Christian Worship," *Liturgy* 36.1 (January 2, 2021): 27–31, https://doi.org/10.1080/0458063X.2020.1865030.; L. Edward Phillips, "Emotions Online," *Liturgy* 36.1 (January 2, 2021): 49–54, https://doi.org/10.1080/0458063X.2021.1865036.

terminology. Lester Ruth writes about "flow."[161] Marcia McFee, drawing from the field of kinesiology, writes about "Primal Patterns," energies that naturally find resonance in different bodies, our natural rhythms of life.[162] Margaret Mary Kelleher, O.S.U., writes about the processual nature of worship:

> First, there is a dynamism within ritual action, a movement or rhythm, high and low points. Secondly, the symbolic components are dynamic, have histories in connection with one or more rituals. Finally, ritual is processual because it participates in the life and history of the social body which enacts it; it may change as the social body changes or it may promote change in that body.[163]

The liturgy is always in motion, in flux, never fixed. While I write about affect, Kelleher writes about dynamisms. I argue we are exploring the same thing: the way worship feels, how these feelings are generated by the community gathered (both past and present), and how feelings shape and move us.

What Kelleher calls dynamism is similar to what affect theory calls intensity. This term comes from affect theorist Brian Massumi whose "Autonomy of Affect" is foundational in the contemporary study of affect and is especially pertinent for thinking about the non-representational qualities of affect.[164] Massumi's article is organized into four parts. The first section analyzes an experiment conducted in which participants' physiological and emotional responses to a film were recorded. The second experiment measured brain activity and response time. Participants were asked to push a button and the researchers measured the time between the

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[161] Lester Ruth, *Flow: The Ancient Way to Do Contemporary Worship* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2020), 1.
[162] Marcia McFee, "Primal Patterns: Ritual Dynamics, Ritual Resonance, Polyrhythmic Strategies and the Formation of Christian Disciples." ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2005.

[163] Margaret Mary Kelleher, O. S. U, "The Liturgical Body: Symbol and Ritual," in *Bodies of Worship: Explorations in Theory and Practice*, ed. Bruce T. Morrill (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1990), 55.
[164] Brian Massumi, "The Autonomy of Affect," *Cultural critique*, no. 31 (1995): 83–109.

decision to press the button and the actual push of the button and found that there was a half second gap between decision and action. The third section is built around an Oliver Sack's story. In this vignette, the author discusses how people with cognitive deficits responded to Ronald Reagan's political speech. The last section recounts how emotions affect the stock market. Each section, each study and story, intends to demonstrate how affect impacts our perception of the world and our behavior.

The most significant contribution Massumi makes here is the idea that affect can be outside of conscious knowing (anti-intentionalism). Affect lies outside the realm of representation; it escapes or comes before expression. Massumi uses the word "intensity." Affect is an intensity. Intensity envelops the past and opens to the future but doesn't have a present.[165] Intensity is

> a nonconscious, never-to-conscious autonomic remainder. It is outside expectation and adaptation as disconnected from meaningful sequencing, from narration, as it is from vital function. It is narratively de-localized, spreading over the generalized body surface like a lateral backwash from the function—meaning interloops traveling the vertical path between head and heart.[166]

Massumi makes a sharp distinction between affect and emotion. Emotion is an example of what Massumi calls a "qualification." Emotion is qualified intensity. Systems of representation, like words and images, qualify our experience. Massumi writes, "The relationship between the levels of intensity and qualification is not one of conformity or correspondence, but of resonation or interference, amplification or dampen."[167] In other words, affect can add to our experience or be redundant. As I stated in the introduction, I do not agree with Massumi's insistence on seeing complete separation of emotion and affect. This denies the way meaning is

[165] Massumi, "The Autonomy of Affect," 91.
[166] Massumi, "The Autonomy of Affect," 85.
[167] Massumi, "The Autonomy of Affect," 86.

created by both mind and body working together. Massumi also argues that intensity cannot be directed toward practical ends.[168] He bases all these arguments in his appropriation of the scientific study of emotion. I am not convinced by his application and cannot fathom a sensation (like an intensity) that we cannot make sense of or channel; we cannot help but make meaning and use of our experiences, the sensations we feel.

However, I do agree with Massumi that there are intensities that enfold our past experience and future expectation, that pulsate through our worlds, and do not fit squarely into our systems of representation. These intensities present themselves in worship in ways that govern and form the assemblage. This chapter explores energy and power. Energy and power lie somewhere between Massumi's concepts of intensity and qualification: non-representational in that we feel them more than we understand them and not quite qualifiable because our words and images cannot capture them.

I. How Worship Feels: Energy

Easter Sunday

The pews are filled end to end. The sanctuary is adorned in gold linens and Easter lilies. Music is loud: full choir, brass, timpani, and organ. Volume and acoustics mean the hymns are a bit slower than usual. Sound fills the space. The procession goes on longer than a typical Sunday. Extra musicians, lay eucharistic ministers, acolytes, and priests (all to accommodate the crowd) create a line of people that far surpasses a Sunday in ordinary time. When the procession starts, most people look to their bulletins, but as the song continues, they seem to have lost interest in trying to sing along. They look around the sanctuary, wave to people they recognize.

[168] Massumi, "The Autonomy of Affect," 86.

The priest speaks the opening words, "Alleluia, Christ is Risen." The enthusiasm and volume of the delivery matches the energy of the preceding hymn. The congregation's response does not match the intensity. It is scattered and lacks the confidence of the musicians and priests. Pauses between pieces of liturgy are longer than usual. It takes time for so many people to settle. People come and go from the service. Few people sing when the time comes to give a response or participate in a hymn.

As the priest begins his sermon, stillness and quiet finally settle into the sanctuary. The sermon declares, boldly, that Jesus is risen and "this changes everything." It isn't clear how things change, what changes, or how the change impacts our lives. (I wonder what about the sermon delivery or content impacts the congregation and why and how they seem to be listening so intently.)

After the sermon, the congregation mumbles through an affirmation of faith. Again, I feel a disconnect between the energy of the congregation and the clergy; the congregation does not respond with the degree of enthusiasm or confidence that the leaders present. Prayers come next and also have spoken responses. The one line responses to the prayers are more coordinated and more audible. People are invited to speak prayers out loud. No one ever does. I think it's against the "rules."

On a typical Sunday, passing the peace takes some time and folks move about the sanctuary, walking down pew lengths to greet the next person, some even filling the aisle. But on Easter, people simply turn in circles and politely great those around them. This is followed by endless announcements.

As always, the liturgy culminates in the Eucharistic rite. People fidget and chat during communion. Usually, people kneel after they receive, but on this day, many sit and wait for the

next thing. After a person near them kneels, others do the same. Communion takes a tedious twenty-six minutes. Then, one last hymn. Finally, the service ends, and the congregation bursts into a flurry of noise and movement. The organ postlude is loud. People talk over it.

A. What Does "Us" Feel Like?

The assemblage of Easter Sunday unsettles me because it feels so different than other Sundays. The energy or "felt atmosphere" is foreign, I cannot make sense of the assemblage. Other congregants report an enjoyment of the Easter worship energy. In conversation with congregants, I determine, that through not universal, it is not uncommon for people to experience Easter Sunday as feeling different from other Sundays. Each worship service has a particular feeling to it—a sensation, which I am describing as energy. Each worship service, each worshiping community, has an energy, and this energy is one non-representational element of worship.

We feel and interpret energy in various ways. We can describe the way the energy makes us feel (joyful or unsettled); we understand the energy in relationship to the way it makes us feel. But without our sensing of it, energy could not be named or described. Language is ultimately inadequate in its attempt to capture or explain sensation. We sense the energy, though the energy itself cannot be seen, smelled, tasted, or touched. The energy cannot be contained or represented. Energy is non-representational.

Energy is generated by the affective, embodied, and social elements I have described in previous chapters. Bodies, things, and moments come together to form an assemblage. Within the assemblage, affect circulates, binding some bodies together and repelling others. The affect moves in, around, and through the bodies and things, sometimes sticking, always making an

impression. Affect is a thing like energy is a vibration. The assemblage is saturated by affect. The assemblage wouldn't exist without affect to bind it together. This new creation, the melding of bodies through affect, is a force of its own and possesses its own energy. The energy changes as the assemblage changes. So, what is different about the assemblage on Easter at St. Mark's?

There is a difference in the people gathered. First, more people gather than usual. Second, many of the people gathered do not attend worship regularly. Both of these factors change how the group participates or engages in worship. It is reasonable to assume the number and type of people gathered changes the assemblage as a whole and therefore changes how it functions and feels. I can only speculate on how the changes take place. I posit that more people, more "things" in the assembly, generate more energy: the sound waves increase, the smells multiply, feelings abound.

And yet, if people do not actively participate in the liturgy (either because they do not wish to or because they do not know how to do it) the flow of energy can be blocked or become stuck. For example, what happens to the music when the brass and choir emit robust waves of sound that float into the congregation only to be swallowed, stifled by those who listen but do not sing? How do the clergy muster a genuine, effective pronouncement of the good news of Easter when the congregation doesn't respond in kind?

The assembly on Easter Sunday is large and multifaceted but does not, in my observation, work in concert. The lack of coherence allows for an easy dissipation of energy both in the space and as the assembly moves out into the world. An assemblage communicates and functions as a whole. When the individual elements do not gel or effectively play off one another, the assemblage struggles to communicate a coherent message and function. The lack of coherence

allows for an effortless dissipation of energy both in the space and as the assembly moves out into the world.

In chapter three, I used Ahmed's work to write about how emotion circulates. I focused on objects of attachment. I also showed how rhythms of emotional attachment and detachment occur in relation to the social construction of appropriate emotional displays in worship. Here, I am thinking about how affects may become inhibited or stuck without any attachment to an object. Here, affect is like a motorcycle trying to weave through cars in rush hour traffic. It keeps going, but the movement is different when traffic is stopped. In non-rush hour traffic, the moment is straight and steady, while in rush hour the speed changes and the motorcycle juts and weaves between moving and stilled cars.

While Ahmed uses emotion and affect interchangeably, when I write about energy, I lean more toward Massumi who claims affect lies completely outside of the realm of representation. Energy exists outside of symbols of representation like words and gestures. That I feel unsettled and others feel joy points toward the inability to pin down or describe the energy that moves through a worship space, disrupting, attaching to this or that, detaching from this or that, on its way elsewhere perhaps. And yet, I am in the process of doing just that. We do have tools for naming energy, tools like language and gesture. But we recognize the ultimate inadequacy of the tools.

Energy is an intensity, a vitality, and ultimately a force in our lives. In short, energy is measurable, strong, and kinetic. Here we narrow our scope and try to speak about a socially-constructible, palpable energy in worship that lies outside of the realm of language and belief. We might call this the presence of God, the Spirit in our midst. But to say only that misses

another significant reality—that we, as we come and go from the assemblage of worship, impact how worship feels. Worship is spirit and affect.

B. Worship as an Energized Sensate "Form"

The affect I have described above is the subject of inquiry in affect theorist Donovan Schaefer's work. Schaefer opens his book with a straightforward question: is it possible for an animal to have religion?[169] He describes the ritualistic behavior of apes coming across the stunning phenomena of a waterfall in the mountains. Is this responsive behavior, this seeming display of awe, religion? It is a question about the meaning-making capacity of non-human animals. It is also a question about the connection between meaning and ritualistic behavior.[170]

Schaefer makes the bold claim that religion is not predicated on human language:

> What if religion is not only about language, books, or belief? In what ways is religion—for humans and other animals—about the way things feel, the things we want, the way our bodies are guided through thickly textured, magnetized worlds? Or the way our bodies flow into relationships—loving or hostile—with other bodies? How is religion made up of clustered material forms, aspects of our embodied life, such as other bodies, food, community, labor, movement, music, sex, natural landscapes, architecture, and objects? How is religion defined by the depths of our bodies—our individual and species histories that we know only by their long shadows but that shape the contours of our everyday experience? How is religion something that puts us in continuity with other animal bodies, rather than something that sets us apart? How is religion something that carries us on its back rather than something that we think, choose, or command?[171]

The description of Easter Sunday demonstrates that religion is not only about language, books, or belief. These things remain continuous Sunday after Sunday, but the feel of worship changes

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[169] Donovan O. Schaefer, *Religious Affects: Animality, Evolution, and Power* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015), intro, Kindle.

[170] I am using the term ritual as it is defined by anthropologist Roy Rappaport: "the performance of more less invariable sequences of formal acts and utterances not entirely encoded by the performances." In *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 27.

[171] Schaefer, *Religious Affects*, chap. 1, Kindle.

according to the makeup of the assemblage. Thus, the feel of worship is a significant part of worship and therefore religion.

Worship is one of the "thickly textured, magnetized worlds," we occupy and through which we move. In some services, we are guided through worship with ease. Other times things feel stilted or unsettling. Sometimes worship flows. Sometimes it does not. We can fall in love with worship or be appalled by it. Our love, distaste, or other affective response may be impacted by language, books, and beliefs, but how do we know we are opposed to such representations except for a feeling?

I have only begun to identity the "clustered material forms" and "embodied life" that constitute worship but, I hope, have made clear that these forms and lives impact worship and worshipers in significant ways. The assemblage, the material, life, and affect together create our experience of religion. Experience defines religion in ways language, books, and belief cannot.

Finally, there is a continuity to worship that stretches beyond measure constituted by the One, Holy, Apostolic Church. There is a continuity to the assembly week after week, even on Easter Sunday. There is a continuity to worship across geographies and generations. The liturgy generates an energy that carries us throughout time and space. Worship is a "thing of the senses." The assemblage of worship is an energized, sensate form.

C. A Liturgical Process Theology?

Looking for the affective elements of worship has led us to thinking about the continuity of worship, its energy, the relationship between its components, and the experience of the worshiper. In the vignettes and reflection, I am suggesting something like a process liturgical theology.

According to process theologian Bruce Epperly, process theology endeavors to describe the "dynamic interplay of permanence and flux, evident in the universe and our own lives."[172] Based on the philosophical writings of Alfred North Whitehead and Charles Hartshorne, process theology is a way of "interpreting Christian faith in our pluralistic, postmodern, scientifically, and technologically adventurous world."[173] Leaders in the field of process theology include John B. Cobb, David Ray Griffin, and Marjorie Suchocki.

Process theology emphasizes the relational and fluctuating nature of theology. We understand religion and God in relationship and the relationship is constantly changing. Suchocki likens the study of God—the nature of God—to the experience of looking through a kaleidoscope. We see patterns and colors shift; the existing components reconfigure to create a new pattern. Process theology is a new expression of a long-standing salvation narrative.[174]

Suchocki describes a basic process model in which units of energy go through the creative process of becoming. This process of becoming is similar to the concept of assemblage, but assemblage describes the coming together of a particular body, while "becoming" describes a process of coming into existence and into relationship with God and one another. In short, process theology describes an existential reality, while assemblage describes an embodied reality. The two work together to help us understand how, in worship, energy and bodies form a union, creating something new out of familiar and historical patterns and thoughts.

Another emphasis of process theology is experience. We understand God through our experience of God. Suchocki writes, "If God is presence, wisdom, and power for us in our

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[172] Bruce Gordon Epperly, *Process Theology: A Guide for the Perplexed* (New York, NY: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2013), Kindle Chap 1.
[173] Epperly, Process Theology, chap. 1.
[174] Marjorie Suchocki, *God, Christ, Church: A Practical Guide to Process Theology*, new rev. ed. (New York: Crossroad, 1989), 4–5.

human experience, then God is presence, wisdom, and power internally and everlastingly. But if the ground for saying God is presence, wisdom, and power rests in our human experience, then we are understanding God's inner nature through our own experience."[175] That is not to say that religion is only a matter of personal belief, subjectively existing within a person. Religion is relational. God is relational. God, in Godself is even relationship: God is triune, at once one and three. "To exist is to be in relation, and internal relations presuppose external relations: the many become one, and are increased by one. Relationships signify strength of being."[176]

To understand the triune nature of worship, the spiritual nature of worship, we also have to understand the relational and experiential nature of worship. The relational and experiential nature of worship naturally includes an analysis of the social and embodied elements of worship. Relation and experience happen in community and with things. God is mediated through Christ and known in the water, the bread and wine, the assembly, and the Word. Suchocki writes, "That which makes the congregation a community rather than a crowd is a shared identity in Christ, mediated through baptism and through symbol systems that convey not just the intellectual understanding of what God has done for us in Christ, but the emotional nuances and implications of this."[177] The community comes together through Christ and forms an energy—a force. The strength of this force, the efficacy of worship depends on its relationships. Affect undergirds and animates every step of the process.

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[175] Suchocki, *God, Christ, Church,* 213.
[176] Suchocki, *God, Christ, Church*, 214.
[177] Marjorie Suchocki, *The Whispered Word: A Theology of Preaching* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 1999), 33.

II. How Worship Feels: Power

My first visit to St. Mark's was on a Sunday evening during Advent—a "silent night" service. The liturgy was from the Book of Common Worship, a service of healing and wholeness. I was drawn in by the ambiance: low lights, soothing music, and a sense of calm. The female priest seemed warm and welcoming. I was moved by the people filing forward to prayer stations where someone would lay hands on them and anoint them with oil. I wanted to go back, but I already attended a church on Sunday mornings, a Presbyterian church—I'm Presbyterian.

But I kept wanting to go back. So, one day after the new year, I went back on a Sunday morning. I didn't find the service to be particularly welcoming. It didn't give off the same warmth that the evening prayer service had exuded. In fact, I'm not sure anyone greeted me or sent even a smile in my direction. I found that everything the church represented offended my progressive, Presbyterian sensibilities: conservativism, hierarchy, rigidity, maleness, straightness, whiteness, wealth, and privilege. And yet, I wanted to go back.

I persistently showed up to this place in which I felt deep discomfort. I felt insecure almost every time I entered the building. I wondered if I was doing the liturgy "right." I wondered if I belonged even though I voted Democrat, drove a Prius, and shopped second-hand stores. I did not feel an attunement with this assemblage and yet, I wanted to go back. The church at worship compelled me to participate. It was powerful.

In the first chapter of *Religious Affects: Animality, Evolution, and Power*, Schaefer writes: "Affect theory in all its forms is designed to profile the operations of power outside of language and the autonomous, reasoning human subject. Affect theory asks: what if power was

not a symbol system, but something enfolding and exceeding language in the ways it plays across bodies—a 'thing of the senses,' in Stewart's phrase?"[178]

Worship has affect. Worship has energy. Worship has power. And power is also a "thing of the senses."[179] Worship, power, and affect have a circuitous and complex relationship. Power is another non-representational element of worship.

We understand power in general and in context. We know what it means to have power over someone or something. We comprehend that our lights are powered by electricity. However, it is difficult to grasp the concept of power "outside of language and the autonomous reasoning human subject."

In the context of Schaefer's affect theory, the word "power" functions as a noun: power is a "thing" that impacts action. For example, we can have the power to do something, meaning we have the capacity to act in a particular way. I have the power to vote. Power might also be understood as a "thing" one entity can bestow upon or withhold from another. The U.S. government gives me the power to vote and has the power to prevent non-citizens from voting. In either case, power has the capacity to influence behavior.

So, power is a thing—a capacity or ability—that compels, drives, convicts, motivates, invests, draws in, and repulses. Schaefer writes about power the way Ahmed writes about affect. One might wonder if the terms are interchangeable. Affect could be said to compel, drive, convict, etc. Yet we have to understand the difference between power and affect in order understand the relationship between the two.

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[178] Schaefer, *Religious Affects*, chap. 1.
[179] Stewart, *Ordinary Affects,* 84.

What do power and affect have in common? As stated above, affect and power function in similar ways, and as Schaefer will argue, seem to function outside of language. In that sense they are non-representational, or to put it another way, they are both an "asignifying energy."[180] Affect theorist Brian Massumi uses the terms "intensity" and "potential."[181] This means they don't have an inherent form or shape. They are nearly impossible to define. And yet, they can form individuals and communities alike; both affect and power impact our sense of reality, our lived experience. Both have a sticky relationship to subjects and objects and bodies. Affect and power can draw us toward or away from—attach or detach us from—other things and people.

How do we differentiate affect and power? Affect has a broader meaning. As we read in the first chapter, affect can be synonymous with the term "emotion." Or, as psychologist James Gross suggests, affect can be considered an umbrella term, encompassing many related concepts.[182]

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[180] Supp-Montgomerie, *Affect*, 342.
[181] Schaefer, *Religious Affects*, chap. 1.
[182] James J. Gross, "The Future's So Bright, I Gotta Wear Shades," *Emotion Review* 2, no. 3 (April): 213, http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1754073910361982.

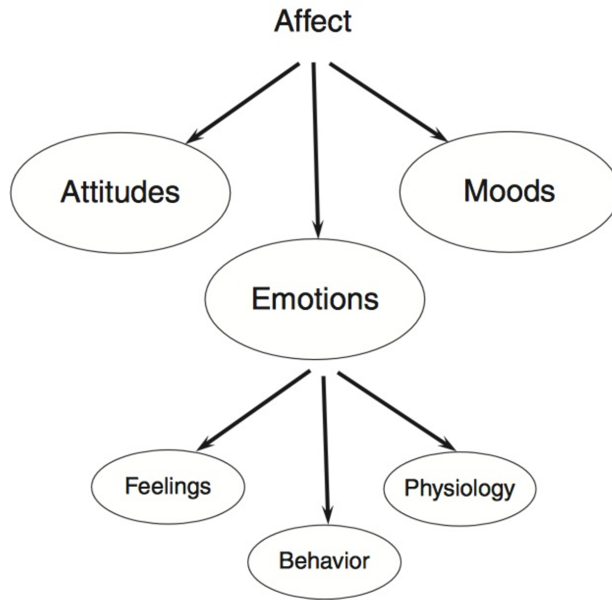

Figure 3

Power is a more specific concept, hard to define, and yet you know it when you experience it. If you look up "power" in a thesaurus, you see the following listed: control, ability, nation, strength, right, drive, and fuel.[183] You can follow all the derivatives of those words as well. While they all point toward a definition of power, none seem synonymous; there is no other word for power.

Another difference: physiology plays a significant role in affect. Though biology (a subset of physiology) impacts who is imbued with power within a society, power doesn't generate a physiological response or change. The experience of power may, however, generate an affective response. Affect can generate power and power can generate affect. Affects can have power, but power cannot have affect. They are both responsive but in a different way.

[183] *Merriam-Webster, s.v.*, "power," accessed January 25, 2021, https://www.merriam-webster.com/thesaurus/power.

When I think deeply about my experience at St. Mark's and ponder what may have generated the sense of power, I can point toward many things St. Mark's represents. I named some of the representable qualities of St. Mark's that do not resonate with me: conservativism, hierarchy, rigidity, maleness, straightness, whiteness, wealth, and privilege. But that is not the whole picture. If it were, I do not think I would have gone back time and time again. Other qualities attracted me: polish, perfection, and order began the list. All these qualities, positive and negative, are represented in the people and things of the church—represented by the assemblage. But something else pulses through the assemblage, a power outside of representation: power produced, shaped, and undone by affect.

Attending closely to my own experience of the depths of affective power at St. Marks, it is powerful when I cry in worship, when I feel an emotional connection to music. It is powerful when I engage in rituals over and over until they become automatic and second nature. It is powerful to learn the liturgy. It is powerful when the assembly falls silent, whether in shame or awe. It is powerful when the assembly draws its attention to the cross as the music swells and the offering is lifted. It is powerful when the assembly comes together to bow down in reverence to the cross. And finally, it is powerful to experience the pomp and circumstance of Easter Sunday—though for some, this power can be undone by a feeling of unsettledness.

In all of these instances, "power" signifies the harnessing of energy–-the effective ability to attach (my) emotions to certain liturgical objects, silences, musical pieces, etc. In those instances, energy is socially constructed in such a way that, for some (many perhaps), the rushing motorcycle of energy doesn't just pass through the liturgical gathering but is stopped, held up, grafted onto liturgical elements in ways that are aimed in particular, theologically oriented directions and toward certain theologically significant emotions.

A. Eschatological Power

Part of what drew me back to St Mark's over and over again, part of the power of worship, was the sense that it meant something and that the assemblage was somehow initiating positive change in the world. I felt that my presence and ideology might make a difference in that more conservative space; that through my relationships with people and the church, I might be able to overcome or ease the divisiveness so prevalent in contemporary American culture. And I feel certain that participating in ancient liturgies, connecting to generations past and the promise of God's future, makes me a better, more centered person by helping me find hope and perspective.

St. Mark's infused me with a sense of agency and meaning—aimed in a certain direction and toward a certain end. That is the power of the church, the *one* becoming an assemblage, the *one* becoming many, and the whole moving Godward. Suchocki connects power to eschatology, the in-breaking of God's Kingdom on earth, the fulfillment of God's promise, and most importantly, God's justice for all people. God is power and God's power is for us: "Power is related to the societal problem of justice. Justice is the well-being of society: a society has well-being when its members find that the society helps them develop their humanity, through which each member enriches the other."[184] In God we have hope that justice can be achieved, that God's Kingdom on earth can be fulfilled.

Suchocki writes that the Kingdom of God has two dimensions, our life here on earth and our life in the eternal Kingdom, or a temporal and eternal dimension. Both are social: "To live in love is to live a societal existence, mindful of the needs of all, creating communities of justice.

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[184] Suchocki, *God, Christ, Church,* 79.

To participate in God is to know judgement and eternity in solidarity with all creation in the righteousness of God."[185] If the Kingdom is social, and sociality is a key element of affect theory, then the Kingdom of God must have an affective dimension. This is another key place where liturgical theology, affect theory, and process theology come together. Yes, the Spirit is present and at work in the church's liturgy! But the only way we know that is through our experience, through our sense of it. The power of the Spirit lies in our ability to perceive it and participate in it. In Suchocki's words, we "feel the vibrancy of the Kingdom's reality."[186]

Duck writes about this concept in the terms of worship as rehearsal.[187] She states, "Worship is rehearsal when the gathered church is changed and prepared to take its part in God's drama of transforming life in this world….Worship as rehearsal is an act of participation in God's Kingdom."[188] This means that, in worship, we experience God and God's liberating power. This also means that, in worship, we practice—we repeat patterns of behavior—justice and hospitality. The rehearsal of God's Kingdom here on earth does not mean that we do not acknowledge our suffering and our challenges. Rather, it means that we can be honest about these things, hope for and work toward the transforming of suffering into joy and meeting our challenges with resources.[189] This rehearsal is largely affective in nature— a harnessing and shaping of affect in a particular eschatological direction. This rehearsal is no less than a liturgical circulation of emotion that arrests, molds, and persuades non-representable affects on behalf of the Kingdom of God.

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[185] Suchocki, *God, Christ, Church,* 163.
[186] Suchocki, *God, Christ, Church,* 175.
[187] Rehearsal is one of five theological emphasis in understanding worship identified by Duck. The other four are worship as ritual, worship as revelation, worship as response to God, and worship as relationship. Duck, *Worship*, 7–14.
[188] Duck, *Worship*, 14.
[189] Duck, *Worship*, 15.

When I attend church at St. Mark's, I am drawn in by their rehearsal of the Kingdom, by an eschatological power.[190] In the temporal dimension, my presence and my relationships were a step toward justice. In the eternal dimension, the liturgy offered peace, hope, and connection. People are drawn to worship in particular places because it makes them feel like they have agency, and it creates meaning in broken parts of their lives. They feel a sense of power and want to participate in it, be infused by it, impact it.

B. Liturgy as Eschatological Art

Liturgical theologian Don Saliers has addressed the role of affect in worship in several writings.[191] Saliers addresses gratitude, fear, joy, suffering, and love. He relates feelings (e.g., gratitude and fear) to liturgical action (e.g., giving thanks and repentance). Saliers wants to "defend the importance of religious affections against those holding them in ill repute and to provide a way of distinguishing deep emotions which define the Christian life and mere sentiment of from passing enthusiasms."[192] Saliers looks for points of connection between the self, the world, and God. Given the embodied, social, and non-representational nature of affect, it makes sense that Saliers' would turn to affect in order to make connections.

Saliers' makes some astute points and succeeds in defending the importance of emotion. However, his persistent concern in distinguishing deep emotion from other emotions limits the reach of his scholarship. I do not see sufficient evidence or reason to be concerned with such

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[190] In process theology, God draws us toward Godself. Suchocki writes, "The aims of God pull the world toward complexity and harmony so that in its own way the world might be reflective of God. The aims of God pull the world toward the image of God." Suchocki, *God, Christ, Church*, 54.
[191] See Don E. Saliers, *Worship Come to Its Senses* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996); or *Soul in Paraphrase: Prayer and the Religious Affections* (New York: Seabury Press, 1980).
[192] Saliers, *Soul in Paraphrase*, 5.

distinction. While we assuredly experience some emotions in deeper or more intense ways than others, it is problematic to judge the realness, depth, or intensity of another's feeling. Even fleeting feelings shape us and impact the atmosphere of worship. Saliers' understanding of emotion is not unrelated to Schmemann who was similarly concerned about individualistic, inner feelings permeating liturgical spaces. We have seen from the rehearsal of various affect theorists that this presumption that feelings or emotions are merely temporary states that come from within individuals and are subsequently expressed is not the whole story of how emotions function in our social lives. Despite the limitations, Saliers is on to something important as he explores religious affections.

In *Worship As Theology*, Saliers makes the point that worship is both theological and anthropological. Worship is both about God and embodied, taking place in a particular social context. God is a mediated presence. God comes to us in things and as particular things. Saliers also makes the case for thinking about worship as eschatological art. In worship, we are receptive to God and the inbreaking of God's Kingdom. In worship, we bring our whole selves to God:

> To speak and sing in such language that we mean far more than can be said; To break bread together and feast on more than we can know; To wash and be washed, body and feet, and thus belong to far more than the living empirical world; To sing and sound more than the ear can fully take in of the glory of creation; To bring all of life to a place where it is held in the light of One who knows us; To bring joy and heartbreak to a place of ordered Word and sacramental action only to receive healing and a greater hope than we could imagine: This is the transformative art of the assembly.[193]

[193] Don E. Saliers, *Worship as Theology: Foretaste of Glory Divine* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), 201.

The phrase “more than” captures my attention. In this descriptor, Saliers acknowledges power outside of symbolic representation. There is something else, something outside of our words, actions, and symbols that animates worship and binds the assembly.

The Spirit flows through worship, enabling rituals to be “more than.” But God, in the Spirit, is always with us. The gift of worship is that in these affective practices, our eyes are opened, our hearts are opened. God is revealed to us “more than” times when we are not engaged in ritual behavior. Affect is what allows us to sing and speak in ways that exceed language and representation. Affect helps us connect to the Kingdom in which our spirits are filled with the bread of life and our sins are forgiven. Affect is how we know God and how we know we are known by God. The energy and power of affect transforms worship and worshippers alike.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

In this dissertation, I have given an introduction to the field of affect theory and how it intersects with and contributes to the study and practice of the liturgy. I used a single case study to learn something about how affect governs worship in a white, mainline church. I conclude that affect saturates, undergirds, and impacts everything we do in worship. Through affect, bodies are bound together to become an assemblage or, in theological language, the Body of Christ. Affect saturates the spaces and objects within the Body. Affect, by way of energy and power, becomes both a force within the assembly and a force of the assembly.

My purpose in exploring the affective dimensions of worship is three-fold. First, I want to encourage liturgical theologians to think more about the relational and embodied aspects of worship. Second, I want churches to see the beauty and power of affect in worship, to appreciate what moves us. Third, I want to help worship leaders use affect effectively in the planning and execution of worship.

In conclusion, I want to look at the logical implications of what I have described and explored in this study regarding "Good Worship."

I. Good Worship

In 2014, the journal *Liturgy* published an issue addressing the question: what is good worship?[194] The contributing authors addressed the question in a myriad of ways. Amidst the varied approaches and conclusions, I identified several common themes.

First is the notion that good worship has something to do with spirit and truth. John 4:23–24 (NRSV) says, "The hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." According to biblical scholar Marianne Meye Thompson, worship "in spirit and truth" is worship that is centered on God in Christ and connected to the "eschatological assertion" that the hour is coming when Jesus will return to the Father.[195] Another biblical perspective comes from scholar Warren Carter who draws an imperial connection: like the emperor, God the Father is a giver of benefactions and therefore worthy of worship.[196] When we worship, we hope to worship "in spirit and in truth."

It is noteworthy that this phrase from the gospel of John appears more than once in the journal issue on good worship. The phrase as it appears in the journal is not being used either in biblical context or in reference to empire. Rather, worship in spirit and truth refers to a broader hope for and reality of worship, one that is non-representational, and I argue, driven by affect. The truth of God in Christ, present to us through the Spirit, is a reality and force that is beyond or prior to language. Worship in spirit and truth has a power outside of language. How do we know

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[194] Byron Anderson, ed., "Good Worship," *Liturgy* 29, no. 2.
[195] Marianne Meye Thompson, *John: A Commentary*, The New Testament Library (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2015), 104–5.
[196] Warren Carter, *John and Empire: Initial Explorations* (New York: T & T Clark, 2008), 244–45.

when worship is truth-full and spirit-filled? We sense it. It is a "know it when you see it" kind of sentiment.

Another common thread in the journal issue is the idea that relationship, intimacy, and vulnerability are key elements to good worship. Referencing Geoffrey Wainwright, Anita Monro writes, "Worship is fundamentally about the relationship between creature and Creator."[197] Neichelle R. Guidry identifies radical compassion and the risk of intimacy as key elements of good worship.[198] Again, these authors value non-representational elements of worship. As they write about relationships, they describe the space between people and things, the power between two represented realities. Writing about intimacy and vulnerability, they describe affects that circulate and attach. Good worship is about the gathered assembly as they interact with and are impacted by the individual things and people of worship and the assemblage as a whole.

A final theme relates to how good worship is conducted: good worship participates in, or enacts, the grand narrative of Christ incarnate, crucified, and risen from the dead. In the words of Heidi Miller, "Good worship is a response to God's work in the world. God who initiates, calls for our response, a creating response. Said another way, good worship, in our response as created, is to be re-creative. Good worship re-creates, offering growth toward what God intended."[199] Participation, response, worship as expression, as creating and re-creating, these dimensions all point toward worship as a multifaceted, multivalent event in which something

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[197] Anita Monro, "Experiencing Good Worship?" *Liturgy* 29, no. 2 (January): 10, http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0458063x.2014.867135.
[198] Neichelle R. Guidry Jones, "Good Worship," *Liturgy* 29, no. 2 (January): 37–41, http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0458063x.2014.867140.
[199] Heidi Miller, "And God Saw that It Was Very Good: Toward a Theology of Good Worship," *Liturgy* 29, no. 2 (January): 33, http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0458063x.2014.867139.

formative and new happens. This process of undoing and becoming is exactly what is being described by affect theorists talking about religion.

Notably, some authors cautioned against the use of affect or emotion in liturgical planning and execution as a means of evaluation. Monro states, "The nature of good worship is neither governed by the evaluation of the emotional experience produced, nor by the production experience manufactured. It is governed by its reenactment of the grand narrative of the story of the relationship between the Creator and Creation in all its fullness."[200] Implicit in this statement is a suspicion of affect and an encouragement to disallow "the evaluation of the emotional experience produced" from the normative consideration of "the nature of good worship."

It is my argument, however, that because affect saturates all we do, including worship, we must consider it in our evaluation of worship. It is compelling and necessary to evaluate the emotional experience produced in worship.[201] The presumption that emotional outcomes are not valid criteria for planning and executing worship can be challenged and corrected because all worship is manufactured to some degree. The way worship feels is crucial to whether or not it is done "in spirit and truth" and with a form of intimacy that corresponds to its eschatological energy and the inherent power to move people in that direction. Feeling is subjective. In one moment of worship, you can intend for people to feel one way and people may feel that or a variety of other things. This subjectivity is a part of why we struggle to evaluate emotion in worship. I suggest that if we can set aside our fear or suspicion of emotion in worship and more explicitly name the ways affect governs worship, worshiping communities will be able to

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[200] Monro, "Experiencing Good Worship?" 11.

[201] Later in this chapter, I will address the issue of emotional manipulation or coercion in worship. I will argue against coercive worship while also considering how we can use emotion to persuade.

uncover what makes worship powerful (or not) and use this new understanding to worship in more impactful ways.

II. For Better or For Worse: Affect Influencing Worship Practices

Understanding affect helps us develop and maintain good worshiping practices. Based on my work in the preceding chapters, I want to argue here that there are at least seven ways attention to affect contributes to good worship. In doing so, I will reflect on the meaningful ways that affect governs worship. I will also answer the question posed in Chapter One: In the context of worship, "What do affects do?"

A. Good worship avoids mind-body dualism and recognizes the important role the body plays in learning liturgy.

Attending to affect requires attending to the way worship feels. Feeling is known in the body. Though we think we can ignore or dismiss it, it remains a factor, so good worship attends to the body. More so, good worship attends to the body in a way that doesn't perpetuate a mind-body or emotion-reason dualism. Johnson and Lakoff write, "The mind is inherently embodied. Thought is mostly unconscious. Abstract concepts are largely metaphorical."[202] We create meaning through the body and the way it relates to the world. In Christian worship, the body takes center stage; we worship a God incarnate. We claim meaning and salvation come to us through the flesh. We cannot ignore those implications for worship practice.

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[202] George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Cognitive Unconscious and the Embodied Mind: How the Embodied Mind Creates Philosophy* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1999), 3.

All bodies feel. We take in the world around us through sensation, and we respond with emotion. When we come to worship, we can feel happiness, joy, pain, sorrow, anxiety, shame, and many other things both subtle and strong. Good worship recognizes this and finds ways to welcome our whole selves. Our encounters with the spiritual are bodily. Language itself cannot exist in an un-embodied way.[203] God became human, took on flesh, and experienced affect just as we do. We are known by God through affect just as we know God through affect.

Good worship helps us feel deeply and express our feelings. This is not new behavior; examples abound in scripture. In the Psalms, we read about experiences of deep gratitude but also experiences of great anguish: "I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint. My heart has turned to wax; it has melted within me" (Ps. 22:14, NRSV). The prophets demonstrate love and also anger, frustration, and despair. In Jeremiah, we read a heartbreaking response to the suffering of a people, "My anguish, my anguish! I writhe in pain! Oh, the walls of my heart!" (Jer. 4:18, NRSV).

The scriptures are also full of examples of people taking time to attend to their bodies. Jesus retreats from the crowds to be in prayer. Moses climbs mountains to be in the presence of God. Mary anoints the feet of Jesus. Jesus washes the feet of his disciples. People are fed. People receive healing. These are bodily activities and examples of worship. From them we learn that good worship incorporates time and practices that help us attend to our bodies. Both baptism and eucharist focus on bodies—that alone should make this a valued practice. Mindfulness practices or silence incorporated in worship enable a recognition of feelings and sensations, elevating their significance and enhancing the worship experience. Worship leaders pause after a poignant

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[203] See Louis-Marie Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2018).

sermon or song, take time to breathe before or after prayer, sing extra rounds of a chorus to allow people to enter the rhythm and dance, or use other opportunities present in their own traditions.[204]

In the Episcopal church, worship includes bodily activities: people sit, stand, kneel, eat, sing. These things often happen without thinking, without intention, without understanding—especially when we discount the significance of the body and the power of affect. Meaning emerges from these bodily activities regardless of our understanding and expression. Taking the time to notice, express, and respond to our bodily experiences in worship shapes the meaning in ways that help us behave and speak more like the Body of Christ so that we can impact the world around us in ways that reflect the Kingdom of God, so that we behave in ways that result in the inclusion and well-being of all people.

Most importantly, we learn about God through our bodies and the ways they feel in relation to God. Ritual action is pedagogical especially as it is practiced over time. Patterns of bodily engagement shape us.

In *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of habit,* James K.A. Smith writes about the habitual love shapes us over time. Smith argues, "In short, if you are what you love, and love is a habit, then discipleship is a rehabituation of your loves."[205] In a chapter on pedagogy, Smith

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[204] If meaning emerges from the body, then the way we talk about the body also matters. Good worship avoids language that devalues the body; rethinking and pushing back against texts like, "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak," (Matt. 26:41), or "For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please" (Gal. 5:17). Scriptures like these and theologies related to them must be treated carefully so they do not perpetuate an unhelpful or harmful dualistic way of thinking that sets the mind and reason above body and emotion.
[205] James K A. Smith, *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Brazos Press, a division of Baker Publishing Group, 2016), 19.

describes the Catechesis of the Good Shepard, a Montessori style Sunday school class that takes place every week at St. Mark's. In this method of learning, children *play* church—they engage with miniature replicas of the things found in the sanctuary—and through this play, they learn, in their bodies, something about God. "It is a pedagogy that is rooted in the conviction that we pray before we know, we worship before we 'worldview.'"[206] The children are being shaped and learning about God in this play as well as in their participation in the church's liturgy, as are the adults.

At St. Mark's, people come to the table every week and kneel at the rail to receive a wafer and a sip of wine. If the relation to God is shaped hierarchically, kneeling might signal or communicate to a congregant that they are to submit to the priest or the cross below which they find themselves. If the relation is shaped penitentially, kneeling could signal or communicate our unworthiness in the presence of God or clerical power. If the relation is shaped by mystery and desire, the liturgical words and practices could help express feelings of being overwhelmed by God's grace, of being brought to our knees by an experience of sacrificial love. A person who is formed by the latter, who can connect a bodily activity with a message of God's grace and love and our worthiness to receive, goes into the world in a posture of humility, able to give and receive grace.

B. Good worship considers "things" as actants.

It is more than human bodies that impact the way worship feels. Things impact the way worship feels. Here, "things" recalls chapter two and Bennett's notion of vibrant matter. Bennett refuses a distinction between the categories of life and matter, arguing for the agency of "things."

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[206] Smith, *You Are What You Love*, 143.

Things have power. Things are powered, in part, by affect as it circulates, sometimes becoming attached to things in significant, meaning-making ways. Good worship attends to things and how affect circulates between and attaches to them, both the sacramental and seemingly mundane. Things play an active role in the narrative of our Christian faith. In attending to things, we discover they hold meaning. They can be sources of conflict, containers of memory, vehicles for transformation, signs of hope.

At St. Mark's, a large cross hangs over the table at the front center of the nave. At another church, the dominant visual is a font and net. And at another, a table stretches the entire length of the worship space. Each of these objects communicates something about the worship and the beliefs of that community. These objects generate and attract emotions. Objects can illicit feelings of awe, shame, or fear. Objects can make us feel comforted, satisfied, or held.

It is not only the dominant objects about which we need to be mindful (and practically speaking, there may not be many churches can do to change these objects). I know of two small churches that decided to merge. They devoted an entire meeting deciding where to put the piano in relationship to the font. The difference in opinions regarding the placement of the piano was a matter of mere feet. It was a fierce battle, and it was not about the piano. The piano was an object that held many emotions regarding the merger and the new congregational identity. Similar battles have been fought in churches over flags, books, screens, fonts, or flowers.

Good worship attends to objects and people's feelings regarding objects. As we see in the examples above, objects can often be a source of conflict. The conflict is not about objects so much as it is about feelings elicited from change, feelings of fear and uncertainty—feelings that have clustered around certain things. Liturgical scholar Marcia McFee suggests that the source of fear has to do with the threat of losing our connection to God. She writes,

> I believe that the intensity of anger over worship change is an unarticulated fear of losing God. …But this is a gut reaction most likely anchored in the reptilian “fight or flight” part of the brain, and it is often difficult to articulate reasoning from this place. We simply react. We simply call that which feels threatening “not holy” or “not reverent.”[207]

If our experience of God is connected to objects in worship, it is no wonder that our emotions attach to objects as well and that objects become a source of conflict.

Conflict can be a source of pain but can also be a source of reconciliation and growth. Noticing affect in worship and the way it flows in the space, the way it attaches to certain things, can help us ascertain sources of conflict and subsequently, the theological, moral, spiritual, social, and institutional values of a worshiping community. We can then analyze whether or not these values are what we want our community to reflect. In the case of St. Mark’s, how might affect be used to attach our energy to the table rather than the cross? Or, how might affect be used to connect the two objects, so that we see the sacrificial image of the cross in the light of the abundance and love of the table?

When we attend to affect and the agency of objects, we discover places of conflict and places of potential reconciliation and growth. In objects of worship, we also find lodged the congregation’s feelings of nostalgia and hope.

The worship space that has the long table across the front of the space also has a towering rock wall (representing the mountain range in which the church is nestled). On Christmas Eve, the wall glows with candle lights—almost like stars in the sky above the mountains. People who do not attend church visit on Christmas Eve to see the candle-lit wall, to sing Silent Night, and to lift their candles high as the church proclaims that God is with us. They come because their

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[207] McFee, *Think like a Filmmaker: Sensory-Rich Worship Design for Unforgettable Messages*, (Truckee, CA: Trokay Press, 2016), 250.

family has been coming for generations. The space and the objects within it hold memories of loved ones. It is tradition.

The church attaches additional meaning to these objects—meaning that is steeped in affect. Jesus, God with us, is the light of the world:

> In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it(John 1:1-5; NRSV).

The church finds hope in the objects—in the light.

Feelings of nostalgia and hope circulate and attach, creating an affective experience.[208] The objects of worship take on new meanings and retain old ones. The people who come for a sense of nostalgia also feel the hope. The people who come needing light in the darkness feel the warmth of the nostalgia. These objects impact us and the feeling of worship.

In his book, *Holy Things*, Lathrop writes,

> The Sunday meeting of Christians, no matter what the denominational tradition, has focused around certain things: primarily a book, a water pool, bread and wine on a table; and secondarily fire, oil, clothing, a chair, images, musical instruments. These things are

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[208] My focus here is on affect and so I write about nostalgia rather than memory (which is more broad). Nostalgia captures precisely what I am seeing in participants of the liturgy—positive feelings toward and longing for the past. Other kinds of memory, including sacramental memory also wind through worship. One scholar of memory and liturgy argues against nostalgia as memory. "Nostalgia disregards the context of the memory and therefore could be said to be a projection of memory rather than memory itself. Nostalgia selects the parts of the memory that suit the emotional needs of people and projects that selection into the present as if the idea perfect context could be established." Peter Atkins, *Memory and Liturgy: The Place of Memory in the Composition and Practice of Liturgy* (Aldershot, Hants, England: Ashgate, 2004), 76. I strongly disagree with this perspective. It seems as if nostalgia is disregarded precisely because it is connected to emotion, as if memory is not connected to emotion. The premise of the argument, that nostalgia is a projection of memory rather than memory, does not hold sway. Memory itself is a projection, the recalling and reconfiguring of complex holdings in the brain. Both memory and nostalgia are connected to emotion and neither can disregard or bracket off context.

> not static but take on meaning in action as they are used, especially as they are intentionally juxtaposed.[209]

Bennett and Lathrop agree that things are not static. Bennett helps us see that things can act and be acted upon, things have agency, outside of our human use of them. Lathrop describes how we add layers of meaning to things as we use them in worship. Both scholars emphasize the relationships between things. It matters how things are arranged and how they do or do not come into contact with another. That leads us to the third principle of good worship.

C. Good worship pays attention to the relationships between things, one "beside" another.

When we attend to the way worship feels in our bodies and how things impact these feelings, we begin to notice relationships between things, one thing beside another. Things, people, affect come together and form what Bennett calls an assemblage. Within the assemblage, we notice one thing beside another—an "interesting preposition," writes Sedgwick, "because there's nothing very dualistic about it; a number of elements may lie alongside one another, though not an infinity of them."[210] Sedgwick introduces the concept of "beside" as a non-dualistic way to think about a spatial relationship between things. We attend to the arrangement of things, one beside another, because it is in the in-between that energy and affect lies. We think about besideness in worship rather than above or below because besideness moves us away from hierarchical structures. We also think about besideness because it moves us away from dualistic structures. To attend to relationships in this way, one thing beside another, is to attend to the spatial dimension of worship: what things, people, texts, etc., are in the space and how are they arranged?

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[209] Lathrop, *Holy Things*, introduction.
[210] Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*, 8.

In good worship, we feel an intensity between things; elements of worship feel tethered, creating a tension. Tension between things creates structure but not one that is fixed or rigid. Tension is fluid and dynamic. Tension can create a boundary. Tension can be easily broken. Theologically, it is important that the elements of the liturgy be broken. Our ritual, rhetoric, and patterns are broken; we recognize they are incomplete, insufficient, and we leave room for new life and new meaning. This idea of brokenness comes from Paul Tillich's broken myth and is utilized extensively in Lathrop's *Holy Things*. Lathrop writes,

> In a broken myth the terms of the myth and its power to evoke our own experience of the world remain, but the coherent language of the myth is seen as insufficient and its power to hold and create as equivocal. The myth is both true and at the same time wrong, capable of truth only by reference to a new thing, beyond its own terms. Such a break is present in the deep intention of the words and ritual practices of the liturgy: the old is maintained; yet, by means of juxtaposition and metaphor, the old is made to speak the new.[211]

In the space between things, we feel an affective energy. Because of this, how we put one thing beside another requires deep intention. Sometimes we put one thing next to another because they thematically belong together such as the Word and table. Other times we put one thing next to another because they are contrasting, like singing a song of praise before offering our confession—God's omnipotence next to our fallibility. Affect is a crucial part of what "breaks" open our ritual practices. Something is reminiscent of an emotional wound during the sermon (Word) and we hold it care-fully during the celebration of the table. Someone feels wrapped in God's reconciling love in praise, and we intentionally make that into holding environment for feelings of conflict and anger in confession.

Brokenness creates opportunities for newness, a space for God to break in. Brokenness also creates accessibility. Good worship requires a "center accessible, the circle large, the

[211] Lathrop, *Holy Things*, chap. 1.

periphery permeable."[212] If the tension created by one thing next to another is so tight as to be immutable, the assembly cannot feel welcoming and cannot be transformative. We put one thing next to another with care and intentionality. Good worship places one thing beside another in a way that creates connections, permeable boundaries, and space for newness to enter it.

Good worship also understands that one thing impacts another as it comes alongside and as all those things combine to form a whole. Someone once asked me for a compilation of worship resources: songs, prayers, litanies, confessions, etc. I told them that you could have all the best liturgical resources in the world and still have ineffective worship; how you put things together matters.

This runs true for written elements of worship, the people, and the things. You could have a sanctuary full of diverse people, but how they arrange themselves and the space between groups will impact the way worship feels. An almost empty sanctuary can feel full because of the way people interact with one another—smiling, waving, greeting one another, and welcoming visitors. The dynamic relationship between worship leaders and congregants also impacts the way worship feels. Though the way connection occurs and the desired level of connection varies, congregants want to feel connected to their pastors.[213] They want to feel some kind of synergy or relationship to clergy.

The relationships created in worship, one thing beside another, are not stagnant. People and things come and go, affect circulates and sticks: all of which impact how the assemblage feels and interacts. The assemblage is at the same time stable and fluid. The assemblage's energy

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[212] Lathrop, *Holy Things*, chap. 5.

[213] See John S. McClure, *Listening to Listeners: Homiletical Case Studies* (St. Louise, MO: Chalice Press, 2004.)

changes and flows. The assemblage is not a force that acts upon us as we passively experience it. It is a mutual engagement in which we also impact that assemblage. The relationships within the assemblage can and do change. Attending to these relationships allows us to be intentional in shaping them. Relationship building is a skill that can be taught and practiced.

Good worship "breaks" the liturgy by placing it beside the gathered emotions in our midst. Good worship invites us to interact with one another and the liturgy, perhaps through verbal instruction or maybe notes in a bulletin (two small things). Good worship gives people opportunities to practice being in relationship with others, a skill that can be utilized outside of the walls of the church building—the body of Christ in the world. Good worship attends to relationships within the body and the relationship of the whole body to the world.

D. Good worship considers how energy flows.

All the relationships within an assemblage have their own energy and like an electric grid, the whole assemblage in and of itself also generates an energy. Energy flows within the assemblage and energy flows from the assemblage outward. Individuals and things in worship feel a particular way and, as they come together, create a collective feeling. Good worship attends to the way the assemblage as a whole feels, the way the collective "us" feels. What is the atmosphere of worship? How do we influence the way the room feels, the way energy flows from one element to the next, how energy is directed or attached to objects, and the connections between leaders and congregants? We attend to the energy of worship because we can shape and direct it and because the energy shapes and direct us. In attending to energy, we seek a feeling of harmony.

In a process theology relational model and a process doctrine of God, harmony becomes an important goal. This is not harmony in a strictly musical sense, the layering of notes, creating dissonance or consonance, driving cultural sonic expectations. This is also not harmony in the sense of combining elements into a pleasing, unified whole. It is not a totality. In process theology, harmony has more to do with attunement to God. It is the joining together of our human reality, actual experience, and the multitude of possibilities laid out for us by the Creator. Harmony encapsulates all experience and possibility, the good and the bad. In harmony, we co-labor with God, working for the common good for all of creation. According to Suchocki, God's relation to humanity occurs through "God's feelings of the world, integrated with God's vision of harmonized possibilities…. God's harmony is shaped to the situation of the world, and made available to the world as a real possibility for its future…the harmony of God holds the world together."[214] Harmonious worship reveals God to us as God moves toward us and pulls us collectively toward God.

In a book about worshiping bodies and a chapter about liturgical music, theologian Bruce Morrill does seem to argue for a view of music that functions affectively in a way that leans toward feeling our way in worship toward this kind of attunement to God. Morrill argues that churches sometimes forget about the importance of hearing in worship—in its deepest sense. He draws on the scholarship of auditory neurophysiologist Alfred A. Tomatis in order to demonstrate how important the ear is to our experiences: how the ear processes vibrations (sound), how the brainstem connects the ear to the rest of the body, and how the ear is key to our vertical posture as human beings.[215] He goes on to describe the process of musical entrainment,

[214] Suchocki, *God, Christ, Church*, 41–43.
[215] Bruce Morrill, *Bodies of Worship*, 164.

when “the entire body engages in the process of listening. One’s breathing and heartbeat enter into a synchrony with the more powerful pace, rhythm, and pulse of the vibrations in music, with the ear translating these impulses to the brain, thereby effecting one’s consciousness as well.”[216] In moments of musical entrainment, many bodies can synchronize into one Body. Tomatis also researched the impact our own voices have in energizing our own body. Sound connects us to ourselves as well as others.

In a similar way, in chapter three, we learned from Theresa Brennan that we can also experience chemical entrainment; our bodies can share and exchange smells with other bodies, changing us as we encounter another. In chapter two, we learned from Sara Ahmed that emotions too travel from person to person. All of these entrainments energize the individuals and the assemblage. Harmonious worship is something like musical, chemical, and olfactory entrainment, taking all of the physical realities and future possibilities and synchronizing them into present moment, energizing us, and attuning us to God. Harmonious worship, theologically understood, holds us together and moves us Godward.

The harmony of God, manifest in the body of Christ at worship, generates intensities and feelings. This energy in worship is malleable. The most practical elements of worship impact the energy—allowing it to flow and entrain or preventing its passing from one element to the next, one person to another. Good worship attends to this energy. For example, saying “Christ is Risen” in a hushed, quiet voice in a service built around the disciples as they sequestered themselves away in fear in a room together with doubting Thomas attunes a congregation to one set of divine possibilities. Shouting “Christ is Risen” on Easter morning attunes to yet another set of possibilities. Music can help us attune to different realities in our lives and the biblical text.

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[216] Bruce Morrill, *Bodies of Worship*, 165.

Somber tones and minor keys carry us through Holy Week. Loud and upbeat hymns greet us on Easter morning. Good worship feels these things out and is intentional and reflective about choices made.

Good worship will also attend to the energy individuals bring into the worshiping space. Are people sad? Are they excited? Are they bored? How are people participating in worship? Their energy is going to interact with the energy of the music, the other people, and the liturgy. All of this energy needs to work together. When it does, our whole selves are taken up into the flow of the liturgy.

Harmonious worship is enjoyable, even as it names and feels the real suffering of humanity. We need to share suffering with each other; even negative experiences can take on meaning and purpose in the company of others. Participating in a service to mourn the losses of 9/11 or Covid 19 helps us frame our suffering in ways that make meaning. We experience joy in worship, not in a superficial, likable sense but as deep, abiding joy. We experience an undercurrent of joy that flows no matter what we feel in a given moment. The shape of our liturgy, the words, the lessons all reinforce God's sovereignty in every circumstance. Worship together reminds us of that foundation. Knowing those around us have struggled and prevailed enables us to do the same. We walk with each other as we worship with each other so that joy is, in fact, possible.

Being in the flesh with each other allows us to experience a joy that comes from the deep knowledge of God with us, in the flesh. This is the kind of joy that allowed hymnist Horatio Spafford to write "it is well with my soul" in the midst of personal tragedy.[217] Joy actually may

[217] Spafford, having lost his fortune in the 1871 Chicago fires and a son to scarlet fever, decided to sail his family to England for respite. His wife and daughters sailed ahead of him. The ship

teach us to cope with suffering. It calls us to hold compassion for the suffering, desire to work for the common good, and take our incarnational gifts and serve others. These patterns of social action and interaction born and developed by harmonious worship focus us on the collective good. As we confess our sins, take up an offering, study the Word of God, and commune together, we are enabled to go into the world to be the hands and feet of Christ. We create harmony when we are in tune with God and when we are in tune with the way worship feels both in our individual bodies and the collective body. This attunement can be manifest in the energy of worship. We want the energy to flow, to carry us both heavenward and out into the world.

E. Good worship understands that affect is powerful and persuasive.

Good worship understands that people, things, and assemblages can and do wield power. We cannot be ignorant of the power dynamics in our worship services; power is too easily abused and misused. And because power is a "thing of the sense," power analysis attends to affect.

As you have seen so far in the dissertation and probably know anecdotally, amongst white, mainline churches, there is a good bit of habitual warning about the intentional use of emotion in worship. We don't want to manipulate or coerce our congregations. The warning is well-intentioned, but what have we seen or experienced in worship that urges us to use caution? A few things come to mind when I think about emotional manipulation and coercion in worship.

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wrecked and Spafford tragically lost four daughters. He set off to England himself and as he was passing over the spot where his beloved perished, he was filled with hope and the lyrics to "It is Well" were conceived. See Randy Petersen, *Be Still, My Soul: The Inspiring Stories Behind 175 of the Most-Loved Hymns* (Carol Stream, Illinois: Tyndale House, 2014), 153.

First, Bivins and others have made us aware of the role of fear in extremist religion—fear of others, fear of contamination, fear of damnation. In *Religion of Fear*, Bivins looks at the intersection of sociopolitical conservativism and evangelical Protestantism and makes a case for how fear shapes religio-political cultures. The book aims to "interpret the construction and the use of fear in conservative American evangelicalism."[218] The manipulation of fear is at the center of coercive religion or using threat or force to compel people to believe or behave in particular ways. We do need to caution against coercion of any kind in worship. Using threat or force is an abuse of power and has no place in Christian worship.[219]

Emotional persuasion is a different use of emotion and, I suggest, does have a place in worship; it is a manner of persuasion. To persuade is to skillfully govern something, someone, or some situation. We control elements of worship through sets of liturgies and books, through councils and committees, through standards and practices. I find it suspect that we fear or caution against manipulation through emotion but not manipulation through logic or protocol or other means. This indicates that our fear is about emotion in particular.

An example of worship persuading emotions is the worship series that sometimes occurs in retreat-type settings. There is a pattern to worship that culminates in a mountain-top experience. We see similar types of persuasion in weekly worship, too: using songs to make people feel a particular way, using images to elicit emotions. If a church uses screens, different color schemes are said to generate different moods like calmness or agitation. We can persuade with emotions in worship just as we can persuade with reason or logic. Both can be used for ill or

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[218] Jason Bivins, *Religion of Fear: The Politics of Horror in Conservative Evangelicalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 11.
[219] This is not to say that fear itself is inherently bad and has no place in religion. Fear is a basic emotion that promotes health and safety in individuals and community.

good. For years, mainline congregations persuaded people's understanding of racial and gender representations with the use of scripture, justifying slavery, and the subjugation of women. Persuasion through emotions is a tool worship leader have at their disposal. I encourage the intentional and effective use of emotion in worship. We can skillfully govern emotion in worship without falling into the realm of coercion.

Process thought describes a God that responds to the world in sympathy and compassion. God experiences joy when we experience joy, God weeps when we weep. God knows humanity and cares for humanity. God relates to us. God intends for the world to be the best version of creation, but God does not wholly control creation. Rather, in the midst of possibilities, God persuades us to choose what is best, what is most oriented toward justice and compassion:

> Process theology's understanding of divine love is in harmony with the insight, which we can gain both from psychologists and from our own experience, that if we truly love others we do not seek to control them. We do not seek to pressure them with promises and threats involving extrinsic rewards and punishments. Instead, we try to persuade them to actualize those possibilities which they themselves will find intrinsically rewarding.[220]

God's persuasive love is creative, seeking to do something new in the world. God's persuasive love is also responsive, a sympathetic reaction to human existence both past and present. In good worship, we feel the persuasive power of God's love, and we give our powers over to that. In harmony with God, we seek to create something new and to be responsive to the human condition. With God, we promote the collective good and an enjoyment of life. But, "to promote the greatest good, one must be informed by, and so relativized by, the feelings of others."[221] Being in harmony with God and responsive to the human condition requires us to

[220] John B. Cobb and David R. Griffin, *Process Theology: An Introductory Exposition* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1976), 53–54.
[221] Cobb and Griffin, *Process Theology*, 47.

embrace the whole range of feelings experienced, the joy as well as the pain and sorrow. The entirety of the human condition is taken up and redeemed by God and we are part of this creative work. We labor with God to achieve God's purpose for creation.

When we use affect to persuade, we do so in the creative service of God. The ultimate goal, according to process theologians, "is to experience a widening, and not a dissolving, of self, such that the well-being of others and one's own well-being are intimately connected in the moment by moment and long-term process of self-actualization."[222] The goal of our persuasion is connection with others and well-being for all. The way we use affect is informed by the feelings of others. Good worship is mindful of the many embodied affects, particularly those of the marginalized. Religious scholar Georgia Frank writes about emotions in early Christianity and asks an important question: "How do we make people feel Christian?"

Frank recognizes the importance of affect in Christian storytelling and formation. Persuasion is not just about making people feel a certain feeling at a particular time, it's much grander. In the study of emotion, rhetoric, and preaching, Frank states she began to be interested in what it means to feel Christian,

> not just feel like a certain emotion and not just profess a certain set of beliefs. I think that's what feeling any religion sometimes is defined as: if you can say what you believe, you are feeling it. I was really interested in how you bring these folks together and without demanding a certain feeling, but by what techniques do you make them feel that to become this new identity requires having a slightly different way of thinking about one's emotional life.[223]

Faith is immersive and knowledge of God is experiential. For this reason, affect is an important part of Christian formation, and persuasion is an important tool. We feel our way

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[222] Epperly. *Process Theology*, chap. 1.
[223] Annette Richards, host, "Shaping Emotions in Late Ancient Christianity with Georgia Frank," *The Humanities Pod* (podcast), February 11, 2021, https://societyhumanities.as.cornell.edu/pod-s01-e03.

through worship, through faith, through the biblical narrative. The story of God in which we participate does not live in a book or in history. The stories are alive in us, in our bodies. Faith invites us to feel our way through a multidimensional, richly complex, and mysterious narrative: God bringing order out of chaos, breathing life into dust, leading captives into freedom, calling wandering children home, giving bread to the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, raising the dead to life.

F. Good worship is continuous and eschatological.

Worship is relational in nature, it connects. Worship draws together an ancient history and a hope-filled future. Suchocki writes, "The richness of the present is the degree to which it incorporates its past in a positive movement into the future."[224] We worship with the saints of the church and remember the life and death of Jesus. We also believe that the real presence of Christ comes to us anew as we celebrate the liturgy. God is manifest in our ritual actions. Finally, we look forward to a time when Christ will come again, and the Kingdom of God will be fully realized: "He will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away" (Rev. 21:4, NRSV). In worship, we set the past beside the present and beside the future. In worship, we draw together memory and hope, what Morrill describes as a dialectic of the faith. He writes, "Believers live within the eschatological dialectic of faith in this world as they remember the Christ whom they imitate and watch for his glorious and dangerous return."[225] This statement on memory and hope in the Christian life implies the importance of affect.

[224] Suchhocki, *God, Christ, Church,* 31.
[225] Bruce T. Morrill, *Anamnesis as Dangerous Memory: Political and Liturgical Theology in Dialogue* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2000), 212.

First, the dialectic implies an energy or tension that results from one thing being set beside another. Faith means living in bodies that feel (empathy, pain, suffering, yearning, hope, etc.) in the "betweenness" of this world and the next. And faith means our present is impacted affectively by memories of the past, so we also live in the betweenness of the past and the present—that is, we live into the way that our feelings of our past intersect with present fears, longings, and hopes—one thing beside another, impacting the whole. This dialectic creates the energy and power of worship.

Memory lives in our bodies and can bring about a whole host of emotions: nostalgia, joy, and pain. Morrill reminds us that remembering is an activity that impacts the future. Acts of memory precipitate moments of decision. The past holds power. Memory impacts behavior.[226] Hope is also manifest in the body, in feelings of frustration, anticipation, suffering, and wanting. Our desire (another affect) for the future also impacts our present. As such, the future also holds power.[227]

Good worship recognizes the power of the space of worship in which the energy of the past, present, and future is held. Good worship facilitates memory and hope through rituals. Good rituals draw from what is good and right about past practices, recognizing the richness of ancient rituals while also reaching forward toward justice—letting go of or altering harmful practices and adding practices that can help bring healing and wholeness in our current context. Lathrop writes, "Authentic continuity requires responsible change."[228]

Among the complicated, beautiful, and troubling aspects of the ancient liturgy are the Words of Institution. The language is passed down to us from biblical times. It has been scrutinized and

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[226] Morrill, *Dangerous Memory*, chap. 4.
[227] Suchocki, *God, Christ, Church,* 36.
[228] Lathrop, *Holy Things*, introduction.

refined by many. It carries an old and profound energy that connects us to the saints of old. It has also been argued that this the sacrificial and violent language of Jesus's body broken for us can be harmful to survivors of abuse. Mennonite theologian Hilary Jerome Scarcella writes, "Sacrificing the body to unjust trauma is an important part of Jesus's message that needs to be carefully framed so that it is not misunderstood."[229] Scarcella proposes two alternatives to more traditional Words of Institution. The first eliminates the language of body and blood and the second frames it in a way that allows for a more nuanced understanding.

[229] Quoted in Janie Beck Kreider, "#WeAreMenno: A New Mennonite Communion Liturgy Addresses Concerns of Sexual Abuse Survivors," *Mennonite Church USA*, 26 Aug. 2015, www.mennoniteusa.org/news/wearemenno-a-new-mennonite-communion-liturgy-addresses-concerns-of-sexual-abuse-survivors/.

***Minister's Manual* Words of Institution**
For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

In the same way he took the cup also after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of me."

For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Alternative Liturgy 1 (removing the words "body" and "blood")
Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread and when he had given thanks, he broke it (*break the bread*) and said, "When you share bread together, remember me."
Jesus took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant. When you drink it together, remember me."

Alternative Liturgy 2 (with framing words)
Anticipating that he would be killed for offering life and liberation; anticipating that his crucifixion would be an attempt to silence and discourage his followers, to erase his name from their lips; anticipating that those who had him crucified expected to demonstrate their strength by taking control of his body and the divine energy pulsing in the blood of his veins;

… anticipating this, on the night when he was betrayed Jesus took a loaf of bread and when he had given thanks, he broke it *(break the bread in two parts)* and said, "This is my body for you. When you share bread together, remember me." *(bring the two parts of the bread back together)*
In the same way, he took the cup also after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; when you drink it together, remember me."

In choosing to entrust his body to those who loved him, Jesus denied crucifixion the ability to destroy him fully. In giving the energy of his veins to many Jesus denied crucifixion the ability to drain that energy from the world. The presence of his body and the energy in his veins lives on in the relationships of those who share bread and cup together. The one who was crucified lives, and the life he offers abounds. The powers of destruction failed to erase Christ's message of love, for as often as you share this bread and cup you proclaim that message until he comes.

Figure 4

In both alterative liturgies we see an example of authentic continuity and responsible change. The affective energy of the saints continues to speak through the alternative liturgies while they also seek reconciliation and healing for survivors of abuse. These liturgies are effective, affective, continuous, and eschatological.

G. Good worship is experiential.

We have seen how affect, bodies, and things ebb and flow in worship. It creates an immersive, sensual experience of worship. Epperly writes, "Humankind is not the experiential center of the universe nor is humankind alone in a mechanistic and meaningless world as existentialists suggest; rather, humans are part of a multi-leveled experiential universe, throbbing with emotion and creativity."[230] Good worship echoes this reality. It is a multi-leveled experiential event, throbbing with emotion and creativity. In good worship, we experience what it is like to be in our bodies, a part of a bigger body, and we experience God. I think of experiential worship as being the opposite of consumeristic worship. Consumerism allows and even encourages mindless participation, while experiential worship encourages full, active, and conscious participation.

"Full, active, conscious participation," is a term that comes from the liturgical renewal movement and emphasizes worship as the work of the people (rather than the work of the clergy).[231] "In participatory worship," writes Ruth Duck, "people are engaged whether silent, speaking, moving, or still."[232] Duck outlines Presbyterian liturgist Craig Douglas Erickson's six forms of liturgical participation. The first is lay leadership and simply refers to lay leaders participating in the leadership of spoken elements of worship such as reading scripture or prayers. The second is interiorized verbal participation. This is when congregants know parts of the liturgy by heart. The third type of participation is silent engagement. Silent engagement can

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[230] Epperly, *Process Theology*, chap. 1.

[231] Vatican II, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *The Liturgy Documents: Volume One* (Chicago, IL: Liturgy Training Publications, 1991), §14.

[232] Duck, *Worship for the Whole People of God*, 23.

happen through actions like taking communion, listening, or silent prayer. The fourth way a congregation participates is through the five senses (noted as especially important is movement). The fifth mode of participation is spontaneous involvement, unscripted responses or prayers lifted. The last is prophetic verbal participation. This includes any kind of spoken moment that refers to the contemporary situation. It could be a prayer, a sermon, or a minute for mission.

Each of these types of participation encourages people to experience worship in a fuller, more meaningful way. Congregants will experience worship differently as they participate differently. Good worship offers many ways to experience worship and ensures that experiences are multidimensional.

At the time of writing, most worship experiences are being hosted on online platforms due to a global health crisis. One of the significant challenges of online worship is creating worship that we experience and participate in rather than simply watch or consume. In practice, how do we create experiential worship, whether in-person or online?

Good worship has layers of sense and meaning. It layers senses, taking advantage of sight, smell, touch, hearing, and taste. It layers meaning through rich symbols, metaphor, good theology, and enriching biblical interpretation. McFee writes, "Layering is how we experience everyday life. We combine sensory experiences to create moments."[233] I recently held my own ordination service online. One of the elements that was received well was the thanksgiving for baptism. This part of the service included a short prayer and a video which layered the sound of flowing water, the visual of a watercolor painting, and a meditative song. I was worried that people would feel like they were simply watching worship the way they watch a music video.

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[233] McFee, *Think Like a Filmmaker*, 21.

However, people reported being immersed in and moved by the video. This experiential worship moment was facilitated by the layering sensual experience and meanings.

In creating this video, I incorporated many different combinations of words, images, music, and timing. I played with it until it felt right. Sometimes experiential worship requires experimenting. Good worship is playful. It tries new things and new combinations of things, seeking to provoke a bodily response from participants.

A Concluding Thought:

The second part of the question "What do affects do?" is "What do we do for affects?" It's a confusing question with a simple answer. We attend. We show up to worship. We come to worship because it makes us feel something—for better for worse.

III. Imagining post-pandemic, good worship

People gather in the pews and sit near one another. They kneel or sit in silence, not because they are bored or don't know what to say to one another but because they are attending to the prelude music. The organ plays a buoyant anthem in a major key. It is a festival day, and the musician wants to start the service with an energy fitting of the occasion. Before the sound of the organ fades into the rafters, the people stand for the opening hymn. No one has to introduce it or invite people to stand, they know from experience this is what to do and those new to the assembly get swept up in the corporate action.

The processional hymn carries the energy of the service, sweeping it through the congregation as the priest and choir, robed in garments fitting the ceremony, file forward in time to the music. The words of the music, the colors of the banners and garments, the sounds, the

movement all layer together to create a moving experience. People allow themselves to be swept up into experience, so much so that they when the priest says, "Alleluia, Christ is risen," the people response with a matched energy and tone that, "The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia." There is a bit of extra oomph in their spirit as they sing out, "Alleluia."

This gathering rite culminates in the singing of the Gloria. Most people know this song by heart, because it is sung every week. The participation is joyous and full. The Gloria concludes with a stunning descant line, and the priest allows this to linger in the air, allows the sounds to completely dissipate, leaves room for silence before moving to the next part of the liturgy.

Silence is necessary, because the next part of worship is quiet, requiring careful listening to many words. It is Pentecost, so the reading is done in multiple languages. Instead of taking turns reading and translating it all into English, everyone speaks at once. The point is not to understand a biblical narrative but to experience a Pentecostal moment. This stands in contrast to the gospel reading in which a single voice tells us that Jesus came and stood amongst his disciples and said, "Peace be with you." The sermon helps unpack the experience and contrast and serves as a bridge between the Word and the table. The words help us transition, but the energy of the pastors also signals a shift. We are about to celebrate.

But first, we boldly say what we believe and pray for the needs of the world. People feel the freedom to assume a posture of prayer, to kneel or stand with arms outstretched. Some people cry because the world is hurting, and it's okay to cry in church. Some people feel peace. Some people feel joy. Some people feel anger. Worship holds space for all of it.

The offertory music and movement help the congregation move toward the table. Some days the eucharist is celebrated in a solemn manner, but on this day, when we celebrate the birth

of the church, the occasion feels more exuberant. The words of the doxology echo through the nave. We praise God through our offering and song as the priest holds the offering high.

There is a harmony between the words, actions, and music during the eucharist. The organ is too loud to underscore the prayers, but it waits, ready to joyfully interject as the people sing, "Holy, Holy, Holy." With great anticipation, the priest invites the people to come forward for communion. They do, passing the font on their way to the table. The choir sings an anthem that reminds the church that, they too, are anointed by the Spirit and called to be the Body of Christ for a broken world.

People kneel at the altar rail, humbled by the love and mercy of God. They kneel, not so they will be small, not so they will be positioned below the priest, but because it feels like the right thing to do, because the love of God brings us to our knees, because it moves us. The people encounter God in the eucharist, and it brings us to the edge of chaos, changes us.

The post-communion prayer begins, and the people pause after the words, "We thank you," because we want to take a moment to feel our gratitude. People stand to be blessed. The priest holds out hands in blessing, and the congregation holds out hands in reception.

As the service concludes, not just the clergy feel tired. The whole people of God need a nap, because they have participated in the liturgy in a full, conscious, active way. The assemblage has come together and exerted a force that propels the body into the world to do the work of God. People worship and live in mind and body, fully aware of the gift and responsibility of affect.

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