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SINGING THE SELF:
EXPLORING THE ROLE OF CONGREGATIONAL
SONG IN IDENTITY FORMATION

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SINGING THE SELF:
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I dedicate this dissertation to my family:
my wife, Melanie, and our sons, Ellis and Beckett.
You have shaped me more than anyone.

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PREFACE

The irony of pursuing a research project on identity formation is that one can experience a form of identity crisis along the way. It is by God's grace, the love of resilient wife, and the company of dear friends that not only this dissertation is achieved, but also my renewed self-identity as a son of God, husband, dad, and professor.

My wife, Melanie, whose maiden name is North, has been an emotional and spiritual compass throughout the journey. Her counsel and care has kept my footsteps going in the right direction towards Christ, for our family.

My parents' wealth of support and encouragements aided me through my seasons of spiritual poverty. My father, Phuc Do, has provided financially and cared generously for me along the journey, as a supporter and fellow doctoral student in our race to be the first "Dr. Do." My love for the Lord, his Church, and commitment to the cause of Christ is due to the example of my mother and stepfather, Uyen and Bruce Lok. Thank you to my supportive in-laws Rob and Katheryn Patterson, who cared for my family through a long season.

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To God be the glory.

Kha Do

Louisville, Kentucky

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit. (2 Cor 3:18)¹

We become what we behold.² There is an inextricable connection between worship and identity. Yet, according to Kevin Vanhoozer, “The human race is suffering from a collective identity crisis.”³ Especially among young people, there is a growing mental health crisis today.⁴ At the same time, a growing body of research shows a strong correlation between religious activity and mental health support.⁵ Christians need not

¹ All Scripture references are from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

² Or as G. K. Beale has said, “We resemble what we revere.” G. K. Beale, *We Become What We Worship: A Biblical Theology of Idolatry* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2008).

³ Kevin Vanhoozer, “Human Being, Individual and Social,” in *Cambridge Companion to Christian Doctrine*, ed. C. Gunton, Cambridge Companions to Religion (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 158.

⁴ A recent report by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention indicates alarming numbers of teens experiencing mental health challenges, especially teen girls. Nearly 3 in 5 US teen girls felt persistently sad or hopeless, and nearly 1 in 3 seriously considered attempting suicide—up nearly 60 percent from a decade ago. Travis Mitchell, “Most US Teens See Anxiety and Depression as a Major Problem among Their Peers,” *Pew Research Center’s Social & Demographic Trends Project*, February 20, 2019, <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2019/02/20/most-u-s-teens-see-anxiety-and-depression-as-a-major-problem-among-their-peers/>.

⁵ See Travis Mitchell, “Religion’s Relationship to Happiness, Civic Engagement and Health Around the World,” *Pew Research Center’s Religion & Public Life Project*, January 31, 2019, <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2019/01/31/religions-relationship-to-happiness-civic-engagement-and-health-around-the-world/>; “How Does Religion/Spirituality Impact LGBTQ+ Youth Mental Health?” *Springtide Research Institute*, December 6, 2022, <https://www.springtideresearch.org/post/how-does-religion-spirituality-impact-lgbq-youth-mental-health/>; Harold G. Koenig, *Faith and Mental Health: Religious Resources for Healing* (West Conshohocken, PA: Templeton, 2009); Harold G. Koenig, Faten Al-Zaben, and Tyler J. VanderWeele, “Religion and Psychiatry: Recent Developments in Research” *BJPsych Advances* 26, no. 5 (2020): 262–72; Jeff Levin, “Religion and Mental Health: Theory and Research,” *International Journal of Applied Psychoanalytic Studies* 7, no. 2 (2010): 102–15.

lament a loss of traditional sources of identity, nor fret over the modern crisis; rather, they can recognize that identity has always been formed by competing *narratives*, and the Christian narrative that forms Christian identity is the gospel.

One of the ways Christians present the gospel narrative is in song. In Psalm 40, David writes, “He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God. Many will see and fear and put their trust in the Lord” (Ps 40:3). Those who witness and rehearse their salvation in song “put their trust in the Lord.” Songs are a grace from God, especially for those who suffer. In the New Testament, the apostle Paul offered this profound hope to suffering Christians: they will be *like* Christ (2 Cor 3:18; see also 1 John 2:3). But do believers in today’s contemporary church, singing the most popular modern congregational songs, long for the same promise? Do worship practices in evangelical churches reflect a concern for identity formation within parishioners?

Identity is a growing concern in contemporary society, yet this issue is seldom reflected in the songs that most Christians sing. Churches today have more new songs than ever to sing that declare the worth and works of God.⁶ Some, however, have observed that the quality of these songs has been exchanged for quantity.⁷ Through research, this dissertation explores fundamental identity themes in a core repertory of contemporary worship songs used in corporate worship to understand how songs are shaping the identity of Christians.

Contrary to the biblical example and in contrast to previous generations, today

⁶ Mike Tapper, along with a team of researchers from Southern Wesleyan University, analyzed the top 100 Christian Copyright Licensing International (CCLI) songs between 1995–2019, and found that while new songs experienced steeper rises in popularity, their life-curves of usage diminished significantly compared to songs written thirty years ago. See “Worship at the Speed of Sound,” *Worship Leader*, April 20, 2022, <https://worshipleader.com/culture/worship-at-the-speed-of-sound/>. Daniel Silliman suggests that some factors not included could be the cultural changes influencing how a society consumes music and changes in the industry. Daniel Silliman, “We’ve No Less Days to Sing God’s Praise, but New Worship Songs Only Last a Few Years,” *Christianity Today*, November 22, 2021.

⁷ According to the editorial team at *Worship Leader*, Tapper concludes in his study that the church should view congregational songs written and sung by worship artists as resources, and as such they should remain as “tools we use, not tools that use us” (“Worship at the Speed of Sound,” 11).

most churches seldom sing songs of lament.⁸ While the opening portion of Psalm 40 rejoices in God’s past deliverance, the latter portion is a petition.⁹ In the current cultural tide, many people are not “putting their trust in the Lord” or crying out to God in their need, but instead, they are abandoning their faith and faith traditions altogether.¹⁰

Scholars and those observing these trends have noted the importance of self-identity questions.¹¹ Modernity has fundamentally changed how identity is formed. In the past, much of one’s identity was received; now, however, it must be achieved (marked by the term *self-identity*). Thus, given the present challenges, the question arises whether the practices of the Christian faith can mean much to the modern individual.

The modern impulse towards self-making forms a primary impetus for my research. Rather than receiving their unique identity as a gift from God for his glory and purposes, Christians can degenerate into viewing their identity on their own terms—self-made and self-reliant. Furthermore, many churches view corporate worship as distinct from the work of counselors, ministers, and those involved in soul care; yet all of these efforts should be committed to the same goal: image-bearers conforming to the image of Christ. Similarly, they are confronted by the same challenge—sin, which distorts human

⁸ See Ann Marie Ahrens, “Suffering, Soul Care, and Community: The Place of Corporate Lament in Evangelical Worship” (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2017). The search for lament in Christian worship sparked a movement to present old hymns with modern styles of music. A few scholars have tracked the Retuned Hymn Movement that was popular among Gen X and Millennials. See Bruce Benedict, “Refurbished Hymns in an Age of Vintage Faith: Millennials and the Retuned Hymn Movement,” *Liturgy* 32, no. 1 (January 2017): 54–61; and Greg Scheer, “Retune My Heart To Sing,” *The Hymn*, 65, no. 4 (Autumn 2014): 19–27.

⁹ David cries, “Evils have encompassed me beyond number; my iniquities have overtaken me, and I cannot see; they are more than the hairs of my head; my heart fails me” (Ps 40:12).

¹⁰ Pew Research Center, “Chapter 2: Religious Switching and Inter-marriage,” in America’s Changing Religious Landscape report, May 12, 2015, <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2015/05/12/chapter-2-religious-switching-and-intermarriage/>.

¹¹ Researcher David Kinnaman is the CEO of Barna Group and has researched the increasing secularization of North America in his books *UnChristian* and *You Lost Me*. In his latest book, *Faith for Exiles*, Kinnaman and his coauthors refer to the new modern religious climate as “digital Babylon, where questions of identity are answered by technology instead of religion. Whereas previous generations look to their local community for access to their identity, screens are now a gateway to a plethora of identity-forming tools and communities.” David Kinnaman, Mark Matlock, and Aly Hawkins, *Faith for Exiles: Five Ways for a New Generation to Follow Jesus in Digital Babylon* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2019), 46.

identity. With hopes that Christian worship would further engage in the sacred task of soul care, this dissertation considers identity formation and locates it at the intersection between worship and other disciplines of practical theology, such as counseling, that are vital to Christian identity formation.

Thesis

This dissertation evaluates aspects of identity formation research, drawn from the social sciences, and interprets the findings from a Christian theological perspective. The aspects considered include reflexivity, relationships, emotions, and status. I argue that liturgical practices provide believers, individually and corporately, an avenue for identity-formation within the context of worship, for in worship Christians rehearse the past and hope for the future with a redemptive lens. In worship gatherings, worshipers offer prayers, which recite and confess the past, give thanks for the present, and intercede for the future. These articulations in Christian worship shape identity.

Most importantly, this dissertation argues that the practice of singing in Christian gatherings, particularly, is both an embodied and aesthetic ritual, simultaneously explaining and forming self-identity.¹² Specifically, I evaluate how Contemporary Worship Music (CWM) shapes self-identity in evangelical churches, identifying areas of strength and weakness in popular congregational songs regarding notions of identity. My findings present important implications for church worship leaders and other discipleship ministries.

Methodology

This dissertation (1) evaluates the key themes of identity formation theory

¹² W. David O. Taylor writes, “The worship that the Father seeks, that the Son exemplifies, and that the Spirit makes possible is worship that is embodied and aesthetically mediated rather than disembodied, otherworldly, and ethereal.” W. David O. Taylor, *Glimpses of the New Creation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2019), 94.

through a close reading of works examining the cultural influences of identity from a theological framework; (2) given these findings, it explores the opportunities for self-identity formation in the liturgy of Christian worship; and (3) it analyzes these themes of identity—as articulated in song lyrics—in an identified core repertory of the most-used contemporary congregational worship songs in evangelical churches from 2005 to 2020.¹³

This work aims to address the importance of a theological anthropology. Contemporary conversations on identity formation often lack a biblical understanding of God and human relations, both teleologically and experientially. John Webster writes,

Christian theology will only be worthy of the title “Christian” if it allows itself to be led all along the line by the witness of Holy Scripture, and if it modestly and humbly, and yet also with courage and astonishment, tries to indicate what it finds there. The essential task of Christian dogmatics, whether in postmodernity, modernity or premodernity, is one of patient, respectful attentiveness to the biblical testimony, allowing itself to be shaped by the hope which is there expressed, and quietly letting that hope disturb, shatter and remake human thought and action.¹⁴

In the subsequent chapters, I interact with contemporary systems of understanding self-identity, and adapt John David Trentham’s Inverse-Consistency Protocol to identify patterns within the body of research that are both inconsistent (inverse) and consistent with a Christian understanding of identity development, with the goal of appropriation.¹⁵ In my adaptation of Trentham’s Inverse, I will (1) present a close reading of the proposed paradigms; (2) discern ways it reflects and deflects theological insights; and (3) appropriate the propositions with a redemptive view of identity.¹⁶

¹³ This data provided by CCLI represents the reporting of individual congregations regarding songs used in their church services.

¹⁴ John Webster, “Eschatology, Anthropology, and Postmodernity,” *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 2, no. 1 (March 2000): 14.

¹⁵ The principle of inverse consistency addresses the following paradox: “The fallen mind is blind to the truth of the gospel and human redemption totally, due to inherited sin; *and* the fallen mind grasps various truths of reality and human development accurately, due to the inherited image.” John David Trentham, “Reading the Social Sciences Theologically (Parts 1 and 2): Engaging and Appropriating Models of Human Development,” *Christian Education Journal* 16, no. 3 (October 2019): 477.

¹⁶ For Trentham’s interpretive steps on engaging with social sciences see Trentham, “Reading

Chapters 2 and 3 explore the influences of late modernity by engaging with the work of Anthony Giddens and Charles Taylor, and these chapters utilize Jeremy Pierre’s paradigm from his book *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life* as a dialoguing companion.¹⁷

Subsequently, I apply the same methodological approach and hermeneutical tool in chapters 4 and 5 in turn, with the works of Erik Erikson, and James Marcia. In each chapter, I also briefly discuss the role of liturgies and identify practices that shape self-identity. The final portion of chapters 3, 4 and 5 explores CWM, since song texts offer insight into how the practice of congregational singing contributes to identity formation—how corporate singing nurtures personal character and develops the community.¹⁸

Liturgical Studies: A Bridge for Interdisciplinary Studies

For the purposes of this dissertation, liturgical studies provide a bridge to a practical theological investigation, which considers how Christian practices play a role in the formation of selfhood. James K. A. Smith, in his Cultural Liturgies trilogy, has brought clarity to how worship shapes identity through the imagination. Building on Smith’s general approach to formation, Monique Ingall’s research on contemporary worship in *Singing the Congregation* demonstrates the various “imagined communities” formed by CWM.¹⁹ This dissertation builds upon the insights of both scholars.

Though liturgical study as a discipline of history is as old as the early Christian

Social Sciences Theologically,” 488–93.

¹⁷ See Jeremy Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life: Connecting Christ to Human Experience* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth, 2016).

¹⁸ These categories are attributed to Marva Dawn who suggests that the vitality of Christian worship must contribute to growth in these three areas: relationship to God, personal character, and community. See Marva Dawn, “Beyond the Worship Wars,” *Christian Century* 114, no. 18 (1997): 550.

¹⁹ Monique M. Ingalls, *Singing the Congregation: How Contemporary Worship Music Forms Evangelical Community* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 208.

church,²⁰ the Liturgical Renewal Movement of the late-nineteenth and early-to mid-twentieth centuries has yielded fruitful, renewed interests in the field. The movement, fueled by the quest to understand how ancient patterns might inform modern practices,²¹ was reflected in this way by mainline Protestant churches in the 1970s.²² Stephanie Perdeu, president of the Liturgical Conference, describes the movement in this way:

The pace of liturgical reform contributed to the need for (1) the liturgical formation of the Protestants who would be using these revised hymnals, prayer books, and orders for worship and (2) the formation of the presiders who would be praying and leading them. Protestants looked to Roman Catholic colleagues for guidance and instruction, and together they entered a new era of ecumenical concern for liturgical formation.²³

The ecumenical values of the movement spurred many cross-pollinating paths for research and inquiry. At the height of the movement, scholars like Theodore Jennings saw the potential for dialogue between disciplines.²⁴ A necessity for dialogue between ritual studies and liturgical theology was imminent. “Ritual activity,” Jennings suggests, “may actually be correlated to the most basic features of a community’s self-understanding.”²⁵ Applied to Christian practices, it has offered insights to the formation of identity.

Among the areas of important interests in liturgical studies is language. Aiden Kavanagh describes it this way: “Language is correlative with human society rather as

²⁰ Second- and third-century historical accounts, such as Justin Martyr’s *First Apology*, and the *Didache*, detail early church gatherings.

²¹ Stephanie Perdeu, “Fruits of the Liturgical Renewal Movement: Introduction,” *Liturgy* 36, no. 3 (October 2021): 1–4.

²² Perdeu, “Fruits of Liturgical Renewal Movement,” 1.

²³ Perdeu, “Fruits of Liturgical Renewal Movement,” 1.

²⁴ Theodore Jennings lists four influences for the development of liturgical theology in the West: (1) the work of Karl Barth; (2) the accessibility of contemporary and classical Orthodox theology, namely the work of Alexander Schmemmann and John Meyendorf; (3) Ecumenicalism; (4) and the influence of liberation theologian on worship. Theodore W. Jennings, “Ritual Studies and Liturgical Theology: An Invitation to Dialogue,” *Journal of Ritual Studies* 1, no. 1 (1987): 36–37.

²⁵ Jennings, “Ritual Studies and Liturgical Theology,” 48.

liturgy is correlative with Church; in each, language and liturgy are both constitutive and constituted as enterprises of the first order.”²⁶ He suggests that examining liturgies in the same manner as poems, what it “means” and how it “works” in and from its social context, is the basis of liturgical studies.

There is growing interest in the relationship between worship forms and spiritual formation. Liturgical theology, which has maintained prominence in liturgical church worship, has received renewed attention even in non-liturgical traditions. The work of Christopher Ellis and others demonstrate that there is much to be gained from applying liturgical theology to evangelical worship.²⁷ But how do the particular elements interact with identity in evangelical worship? This study takes it a step further to investigate how *what* is sung in worship forms self-identity.

Why Discuss Liturgy?

Every week churches gather to worship and much of the time assembled is devoted to corporate singing. Recent literature on worship has largely focused on the role of theology in corporate worship,²⁸ as well as the practical measures of service planning

²⁶ Aidan Kavanagh, *On Liturgical Theology* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1981), 4.

²⁷ See Christopher J. Ellis, *Gathering: A Theology and Spirituality of Worship in the Free Church Tradition* (London: SCM, 2004); R. Scott Connell, *Baptists and Worship: Sitting beneath the Gospel’s Joyful Sound*, Monographs in Baptist History 14 (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2020); Mike Cosper, *Rhythms of Grace: How the Church’s Worship Tells the Story of the Gospel* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013); and Jonathan Gibson and Mark Earney, eds., *Reformation Worship: Liturgies from the Past for the Present* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth, 2018).

²⁸ These contributors include the following: G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004); Jeremy Begbie and Steven R. Guthrie, *Resonant Witness: Conversations between Music and Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011); Harold M. Best, *Unceasing Worship: Biblical Perspectives on Worship and the Arts* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003); Daniel I. Block, *For the Glory of God: Recovering a Biblical Theology of Worship* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014); Matt Boswell, ed., *Doxology and Theology: How the Gospel Forms the Worship Leader* (Nashville: B&H, 2013); D. A. Carson, ed., *Worship by the Book* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002); Ellis, *Gathering*; Michael A. Horton, *Better Way: Rediscovering the Drama of God-Centered Worship* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002); J. Ryan Lister, *The Presence of God: Its Place in the Storyline of Scripture and the Story of Our Lives* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015); Allen P. Ross, *Recalling the Hope of Glory: Biblical Worship from the Garden to the New Creation* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2006); Philip Ryken, Derek Thomas Graham, and J. Ligon Duncan III, eds., *Give Praise to God: A Vision for Reforming Worship; Celebrating the Legacy of James Montgomery Boice* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2003); and John D. Witvliet, ed., *Worship Seeking Understanding: Windows into Christian Practice* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003).

and song leading.²⁹ While the evaluation of CWM has gained recent attention in worship studies, few have devoted attention to its formative role within the Protestant church.³⁰ It is the primary interest of this dissertation to investigate the formative language of CWM as it relates to the emotional and social development of identity.

Songs shape identity.³¹ As John Witvliet puts it, “We are what we sing.”³²

Witvliet explains three mechanisms that allow music to shape identity. First, songs shape the imagination through the text and narrative of the songs.³³ Second, the physicality of

²⁹ These contributors include Boswell, *Doxology and Theology*; Best, *Unceasing Worship*; Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Worship: Letting the Gospel Shape Our Practice* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009); Constance M. Cherry, *The Worship Architect: A Blueprint for Designing Culturally Relevant and Biblically Faithful Services* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010); Matt Merker, *Corporate Worship: How the Church Gathers as God’s People, Building Healthy Churches* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2021); David Peterson, *Engaging with God: A Biblical Theology of Worship* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993); Lester Ruth, ed., *Flow: The Ancient Way to Do Contemporary Worship* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2020); and Greg Scheer, *The Art of Worship: A Musician’s Guide to Leading Modern Worship* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006).

³⁰ Noteworthy contributors include Joshua K. Busman, “(Re)Sounding Passion—Listening to American Evangelical Worship Music, 1997–2015” (PhD diss., University of North Carolina, 2015); Charles E. Fromm, “Textual Communities and New Song in the Multimedia Age: The Routinization of Charisma in the Jesus Movement” (PhD diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, 2006); Maren Haynes, “‘Punk Rock Calvinists Who Hate the Modern Worship Movement’: Ritual, Power, and White Masculinity in Mars Hill Church’s Worship Music” (PhD diss., University of Washington, 2017); Monique Marie Ingalls, Carolyn Landau, and Thomas Wagner, *Christian Congregational Music: Performance, Identity, and Experience* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2013); Anna E. Nekola, “Between This World and the Next: The Musical ‘Worship Wars’ and Evangelical Identity in the United States, 1960–2005” (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2008); Andy Park, Lester Ruth, and Cindy Rethmeier, *Worshiping with the Anaheim Vineyard: The Emergence of Contemporary Worship* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017); Lester Ruth and Swee Hong Lim, *Lovin’ On Jesus: A Concise History of Contemporary Worship* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2017); Lester Ruth and Swee Hong Lim, *A History of Contemporary Praise and Worship: Understanding the Ideas That Reshaped the Protestant Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2021); Greg Scheer, “Shout to the Lord: Praise and Worship from Jesus People to Gen X,” in *New Songs of Celebration Render: Congregational Song in the Twenty-First Century*, edited by C. Michael Hawn, 175–205 (Chicago: GIA, 2013); Robert Woods and Brian Walrath, eds. *The Message in the Music: Studying Contemporary Praise and Worship* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2007); and Matthew David Westerholm, “‘The Hour is Coming and Is Now Here’: The Doctrine of Inaugurated Eschatology in Contemporary Evangelical Worship Music” (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2016).

³¹ Identity formation as rooted in embodied practices is represented expansively across Christian theological literature; most notably, see James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation*, Cultural Liturgies, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009); Ingalls, *Singing the Congregation*; Byron Anderson, *Worship and Christian Identity: Practicing Ourselves*, Virgil Michel (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2003). Richard Lintz, *Identity and Idolatry: The Image of God and Its Inversion*, New Studies in Biblical Theology 36 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2015).

³² Witvliet, *Worship Seeking Understanding*, 231.

³³ Witvliet writes, “The more our minds are impressed by the pictorial language of the texts we

singing imparts music with a power.³⁴ Third, songs shape the affections.³⁵ He cites John Calvin's argument: "singing has great strength and power to move and to set our hearts on fire in order that we may call on God and praise him with a more vehement and more ardent zeal."³⁶ This dissertation considers the first and third aspects of Witvliet's appraisal of music's power to influence identity by turning to the works of Christian philosopher James K. A. Smith, and also considers the social aspects of music with the insights of Ingalls, an ethnomusicologist worship scholar.

Smith has contributed significant thought and discussion to the formative role of liturgical practices.³⁷ His book *Desiring the Kingdom* claims that liturgies shape identity.³⁸ He criticizes the cognitive-based anthropology that many institutions operate under and presents a liturgical anthropology which he develops through discussions on the interplay between the imagination and liturgy. While Christian institutions, and in particular, Christian higher education, have made significant efforts to invest in human thinking, it has neglected the role of human emotions and behavior in human understanding. Rituals enact visions of the good, offering a particular vision of reality and the moral good. Worship, by Smith's definition, is an embodied practice that shapes

sing, the more the images in these texts shape our souls" (*Worship Seeking Understanding*, 236).

³⁴ He writes, "Part of music's power derives from its physicality. Music requires breath. One thing that distinguishes song from speech is the sustained breath it requires. At our birth, God breathed into us the breath of life. In our singing, we return that breath to the giver." Witvliet, *Worship Seeking Understanding*, 236.

³⁵ He explains, "The music we sing shapes the affections of our souls. It gives emotional content to the text. It interprets the text. Each of music's building blocks—melody, rhythm, harmony—has power and force. Poorly chosen music can trivialize a text. Well-crafted music can make even a banal text tolerable." Witvliet, *Worship Seeking Understanding*, 237.

³⁶ John Calvin, preface to *The Form of Prayers and Ecclesiastical Songs*, in Ioannis Calvini Opera Selecta, ed. Peter Barth, Wilhelm Niesel, and Dora Scheuner (Munich: C. Kaiser, 1952), 2:15, quoted in Witvliet, *Worship Seeking Understanding*, 237.

³⁷ See Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*; and Smith, *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2016).

³⁸ Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 25.

the Christian imagination.³⁹ In this, Smith emphasizes that human beings are both thinking *and* worshiping beings. In his later companion text, *You Are What You Love*, Smith summarizes that identity is more connected to desire than beliefs, and individuals become what they worship.⁴⁰

How exactly does worship shape individual identity? Smith's third installment in his Cultural Liturgies Series, *Imagining the Kingdom: How Worship Works*, provides more insights. Enlisting the help of two French philosophers, Smith explores two aspects of worship that transforms identity, which he calls the incarnate significant and the sanctified perception. Formation, he argues, begins in the imagination.⁴¹ Smith's contention is that many Christians enter into corporate worship with expectations of self-affirmation rather than a desire to be remade by God, in order that they might be sent to remake the world according to God's desires. Smith argues,

Christian worship is not some religious silo for our private refueling that replenishes our "inner" life; [rather] worship is the space in which we learn to take the right things for granted precisely so we can bear witness to the world that is to come and, in the power of the Spirit's transformational labor to make and remake God's world in accord with his desires for creation.⁴²

How is Christian imagination informed? Not through propositional knowledge, but rather it is through aesthetic knowing—in stories, images and metaphors.⁴³

Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology provides Smith, given his idea of incarnate significance, with an opportunity to explore the role of the body in worship and Christian formation. For Smith, the bodily basis for worship warrants the necessity for

³⁹ James K. A. Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom: How Worship Works*, Cultural Liturgies, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 13, 52.

⁴⁰ Smith says, "The question isn't whether you will love something as ultimate; the question is what you will love as ultimate. And you are what you love." Smith, *You Are What You Love*, 10.

⁴¹ Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 13.

⁴² Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 2.

⁴³ Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 126.

narrative and aesthetics in worship.⁴⁴ Pierre Bourdieu provides Smith with language from the social sciences as to how to train the body through “habits.” Smith summarizes,

Our being-in-the-world is characterized by inclinations that propel us to all sorts of action “without thinking.” Thus one of the core contributions of Bourdieu’s “theory of practice *as practice*” (*LP 52*) is to recognize the centrality of habitus, of habituated inclinations that spawn meaningful action.⁴⁵

Armed with Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology for kinesthetic perception and Bourdieu’s “logic of practice,” Smith can present the role of the liturgy as a means for Christians to habituate themselves:

Our identity and love are shaped “liturgically” precisely because liturgies are those rituals and practices that constitute the embodied stories of a body politic. If liturgies are “rituals of ultimate concern” that form identity, that inculcate particular visions of the good life, and that do so in a way that means to trump other ritual formations, they do so because they are those story-laden practices that are absorbed into our imaginative epicenter of action and behavior.⁴⁶

Christian worship “re-stories” the world.⁴⁷ The social body through the most mundane means ritualizes from a distance. Criticizing the Evangelical church’s anathema to repetition, Smith argues that it is through repeated performed narratives that liturgies “conscript” individuals.⁴⁸ Performed narratives recruit the imagination through the body.⁴⁹ This is how Christian formation takes place. He writes, “Christian formation is a conversion of the imagination effected by the Spirit, who recruits our most fundamental desires by a kind of narrative enchantment—by inviting us narrative animals into a story

⁴⁴ Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 20.

⁴⁵ Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990), 52, quoted in Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 79–80. He concludes that “habit is the embodied know-how (the ‘practical sense’) that is ‘carried’ in a community of practice.”

⁴⁶ Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 109.

⁴⁷ Smith emphasizes that the “sending of Christian worship” (missions) should not be reduced to moral formation, but rather it is to participate in the drama of worship. Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 153.

⁴⁸ Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 109.

⁴⁹ Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 19.

that seeps into our bones and becomes the orienting background of our being-in-the-world.”⁵⁰ While Smith is compelling in his argument that liturgies must address formation, he does not address *how* to integrate worldview propositions into his liturgical anthropology in particular contexts of Christian worship. Must liturgies draw distinctive lines between worldview perception and practice? Though Smith is critical of “worldviews” as overly cognitive, he applauds the paradigm to the degree that it can serve as an “incubator for the imagination.”⁵¹ Smith’s insights leave careful readers with the opportunity to imagine specific forms in worship that serve as bridges between these two models. This dissertation takes Smith up on his invitation, discussing the role of the liturgy, and specifically congregational song, as both the narrative and aesthetic aspect of worship in formation.⁵²

Scholarship exploring patterns in Christian liturgies reveal that most contain the common elements of: call to worship, adoration, confession, lament, assurance, thanksgiving, petition, instruction, charge, benediction.⁵³ By discussing them through the lens of identity, this study shows how elements in worship services function as “performed narratives” of redemptive realities.⁵⁴ However, Smith contends that in order to become a people who *desire* the kingdom, Christians must not only *know* this good, they must *imagine* the good.⁵⁵ Towards that aim, liturgies must engage the “aesthetic” register with metaphor and poetry.⁵⁶ Through singing, Christians feel their way toward

⁵⁰ Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 14–15.

⁵¹ Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 178.

⁵² Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 20, 126.

⁵³ See Chapell, *Christ-Centered Worship*, 98–99; Connell, *Baptists and Worship*, 10–11, 22.

⁵⁴ Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 19.

⁵⁵ Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 199.

⁵⁶ Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 10. Liturgies “work” by means of story and includes metaphor and poetry, 133.

their identity. To that end, this dissertation turns to the role of congregational songs.

Why Discuss Contemporary Worship Music (CWM)?

Recent scholarly engagement with CWM, and its impact on Protestant worship, has sparked my interest for this dissertation.⁵⁷ Robert Woods and Brian Walrath, in their 2007 book *The Message in the Music: Studying Contemporary Praise and Worship*, offer varying perspectives of CWM from scholarly voices.⁵⁸ Woods and Walrath established a core repertory of the Christian Copyright Licensing International (CCLI) Top 25 most-used songs within a fifteen-year period for scholarly analysis. For example, Janell Williams Paris's chapter, "I Could Sing of Your Love Forever: American Romance in Contemporary Worship Music," observes that CWM's emotional vocabulary is largely influenced by American romantic notions of love, which is often applied to God.⁵⁹ Of particular interest to this project is Wendy Porter's chapter, "Trading My Sorrows: Worshiping God in the Darkness—The Expression of Pain and Suffering in Contemporary Worship Music."⁶⁰ Porter concludes that the majority of CWM is sparse in lament or suffering.

Matthew Westerholm expresses similar concerns regarding CWM in his dissertation, "'The Hour is Coming and is Now Here': The Doctrine of Inaugurated Eschatology in Contemporary Evangelical Worship Music," and argues that

⁵⁷ Lester Ruth and Lim Swee Hong trace the origins of modern worship music and its liturgical impact to two streams of ideas: (1) Praise & Worship, which viewed praise as a way of experiencing God's presence; and (2) Contemporary Worship, a theological movement that sought to bridge the gap between the church and contemporary culture. Ruth and Hong, *History of Contemporary Praise and Worship*, 3; see also Ruth and Hong, *Lovin' On Jesus*.

⁵⁸ See Woods and Walrath, *Message in the Music*.

⁵⁹ Jenell Williams Paris, "I Could Sing of Your Love Forever: American Romance in Contemporary Worship Music," in Woods and Walrath, *Message in the Music*, 43–53.

⁶⁰ Wendy J. Porter, "Trading My Sorrows: Worshiping God in the Darkness—The Expression of Pain and Suffering in Contemporary Worship Music," in Woods and Walrath, *Message in the Music*, 76–91.

congregational songs shape congregational self-identity by presenting a particular eschatology. He evaluates how the doctrine of inaugurated eschatology is portrayed in a core repertory of the most sung congregational worship songs from 2000 to 2015, and compares CWM to the eschatological themes in historic American hymnody of the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries.⁶¹ Westerholm concludes that CWM underrepresents “not yet” elements of inaugurated eschatology, in favor of an over-realized eschatology that emphasizes the “already” aspects of inaugurated eschatology.⁶²

Another significant voice is that of Ingalls, whose work explores the formative role CWM has had in shaping the Evangelical Christian identity.⁶³ Concerned with questions of authority and dynamics of a genre of music to create community, Ingalls explores the ritual act of worship and the social formation of religious communities. In *Singing the Congregation*, she argues that CWM “shapes the activities that evangelicals define as ‘worship’ and how these musically centered collective performances have brought into being a set of distinct social constellations that participants often experience as being integrally connected.”⁶⁴ Synthesizing Michael Bergunder’s “model of religious discursive networks” and Birgit Meyer’s idea of “aesthetic formations,”⁶⁵ *Singing the Congregation* describes evangelical Christianity as a “discursive network that is

⁶¹ Westerholm, “The Hour is Coming,” 3.

⁶² Westerholm, “The Hour is Coming,” 127–70. Glenn Packiam, in his recently published book *Worship and the World to Come*, adapted from his doctoral dissertation, similarly investigates how eschatological hope is encoded in contemporary worship songs. See Glenn Packiam, *Worship and the World to Come: Exploring Christian Hope in Contemporary Worship*, Dynamics of Christian Worship (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2020). Packiam’s methodology differs from Westerholm’s use of CCLI top-rated songs in favor of ethnographic and discourse analysis as his methodology. His focus is on the experience of hope in Contemporary worship. He concludes that much of the repertoire relies on the experience of immediacy and intimacy, to the neglect of a future orientation and narrative.

⁶³ See Ingalls, *Singing the Congregation*.

⁶⁴ Ingalls, *Singing the Congregation*, 207.

⁶⁵ See Michael Bergunder, *The South Indian Pentecostal Movement in the Twentieth Century* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007); and Birgit Meyer, “Introduction: From Imagined Communities to Aesthetic Formations: Religious Mediations, Sensational Forms, and Style of Binding,” in *Aesthetic Formations: Media, Religion, and the Senses*, ed. Birgit Meyer (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 1–28.

articulated through concrete, embodied practices”—specifically musical practices.⁶⁶ Using field research, Ingalls identifies five modes of congregating through CWM—the concert, conference, church, public, and online.⁶⁷ Each of these modes reflect evangelical use of congregational singing to form Christian identity.

The power of CWM to transform individuals into a corporate identity is due in part by what is sung, but perhaps more profoundly, *how* it is sung.⁶⁸ She writes, “The contemporary worship music repertory is meaningful and affective because it spills over the bounds of church services, thoroughly pervading evangelical public ritual and the devotional practices of everyday life.”⁶⁹ The process or performance of music making, she argues, causes people to inhabit new realities through religious ideas, values, and practices.⁷⁰ Her work carries implications for religious traditions in late modernity.

This dissertation draws on the same methodology of Woods and Walrath to establish a “core repertory” of the most sung congregational songs across a fifteen-year period. By assessing the data provided by CCLI, I evaluate the theme of identity formation in the twenty-five most-used songs between 2005 and 2020. Various methods have been employed to study CWM. Glenn Packiam, in his study of the Evangelical theology of hope, uses ethnographic methods and field study to collect data from specific congregations.⁷¹ Using a method known as “free recall,” he surveyed specific songs

⁶⁶ Ingalls, *Singing the Congregation*, 15–16.

⁶⁷ Ingalls, *Singing the Congregation*, 4.

⁶⁸ Ingalls, *Singing the Congregation*, 216. She writes, “‘Music Making Congregations’ . . . points to both a social process and to its resulting product: it refers to the process whereby participatory musical performances shape evangelical social groupings (music making congregations) and to the communities that are formed through participants’ embodied musical practices (music-making congregations)” (5).

⁶⁹ Ingalls, *Singing the Congregation*, 2. She writes, “Singing provides an embodied way of performing [a particular] identity [provided by the narrative of CWM], identifying with the divinely purposed roles and actions in the song lyrics of worship, love, surrender, and belief” (66).

⁷⁰ Ingalls, *Singing the Congregation*, 216.

⁷¹ See Packiam, *Worship and the World to Come*.

which people associate with the “experience of hope.”⁷²

The interests of this dissertation pertain to the larger movement of CWM, present and future. The analytical methodology of a core repertory has been employed in several studies of American sacred music genres since its establishment in 1984 by music scholar Richard Crawford in *The Core Repertory of Early American Psalmody*.⁷³ The CCLI data constitutes songs, reported by individual churches, that are actually used in congregational worship during a particular timeframe. While this data does not fully represent individual communities, it should reflect general patterns of CWM used in churches within the larger evangelical movement. Using this data, I explore Ingalls’s claim regarding CWM as a ritual act of worship that forms individual and corporate identity.

Significance of the Study

In the context of Christian gatherings, songs evoke narrative and aesthetic powers that form identity by orienting one’s imagination.⁷⁴ Smith has presented a broad perspective for liturgical practices and its role in forming identity. Similarly, Ingalls’s investigation necessitates a serious consideration for how CWM forms the identity of congregations and worshipers. This dissertation seeks to investigate specifically what aspects of self-identity are being shaped in worship through congregational singing, and

⁷² Packiam, *Worship and the World to Come*, 111.

⁷³ Richard Crawford, *The Core Repertory of Early American Psalmody*, Recent Researches in American Music 11/12 (Madison, WI: A-R Editions, 1984). Other “core repertory” studies include the following: Sandra Sizer, *Gospel Hymns and Social Religion: The Rhetoric of Nineteenth-Century Revivalism* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1978); Fred Kimball Graham, “*With One Heart and One Voice*”: *A Core Repertory of Hymn Tunes Published for Use in the Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States, 1808–1878*, Drew Studies in Liturgy 12 (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow, 2004); David W. Music, *A Selection of Shape-Note Folk Hymns: From Southern United States Tune Books, 1816–61*, Recent Researches in American Music 52 (Middleton, WI: A-R Editions, 2005); and Warren Fields, “Hymns and Gospel Songs in the Core Repertory of Southern Baptist Congregations as Reflected in Five Hymnals Published from 1940 to 2008” (presentation at the Colloquium on Baptist Church Music, Baylor University, Waco, Texas, September 24–25, 2009).

⁷⁴ Songs tell stories, and the quality of a story is not in the quantity of words, as Smith suggests, but in the feeling *among* words, resonances, and assonances. Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 160.

how that might influence worship planners seeking to disciple individuals towards Christ-like wholeness.

Towards that aim, it develops a taxonomy of identity-related themes from recent scholarship on the topic of identity formation. “Relationships,” “Emotions,” and “Status” may provide helpful categories for understanding identity formation in modern songs in today’s churches, if they are understood from a biblical paradigm. These lenses not only offer ways to assess particular visions of one’s identity, and how it is formed in the liturgy, but also useful implications for worship planners and soul care providers.

Summary of Chapters

This introductory chapter provides context and articulates the thesis of the dissertation, pertaining to the role of congregational songs in self-identity. This chapter delineates the methodology, explains the role of liturgies, and also engages the contributions of recent CWM scholarship, namely Ingalls.

Chapter 2 engages the works of Anthony Giddens and investigates the influences of modernity in the formation of self-identity; it evaluates the concept of reflexivity—both its opportunities and limitations, and presents an alternative vision of reflexivity. To counterbalance Giddens’s self-authenticating view of the “reflexive self,” I argue that identity requires external sources, transmitted through rites and rituals.⁷⁵ This necessitates the role for Christian gatherings, liturgies, and congregational singing. Through dialogue with Jeremy Pierre’s paradigm of the dynamic heart, faith provides a biblical basis for how self-identity is both received and shaped.⁷⁶

Chapter 3 examines the role of relationships for identity formation, summarizing Charles Taylor’s reflections of selfhood in modernity found in his book

⁷⁵ Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991).

⁷⁶ See Pierre, *Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*.

Sources of the Self.⁷⁷ Articulations of the self-image and social image must be assembled through a redemptive relationship with the ideal—the image of the invisible God revealed in Christ. These issues are discussed within the context of a liturgy and the role that the *call to worship/adoration* (relationship with God) and *passing of the peace* (relationship with others) have in practicing these relationships in worship. Portrayals of relationships are examined in CWM in three categories—the Supernatural (God), the social (the church), and self. This chapter demonstrates that the most sung texts in Christian gatherings favor songs that focus on one’s relationship with God, with few songs that point to one’s corporate identity. Even rarer are songs that address the individual’s relationship with the self.

Chapter 4 examines the role of emotions in identity formation, beginning with a survey of Erik Erikson’s human development and psychosocial identity theory.⁷⁸ Erikson’s theory of human development posits an emotional journey of individuals through *conflict* and *resolution*. Through each stage, a crisis catalyzes a progression of the self. The emotional resolution fosters virtues essential for the maturation of their identity. However, Erickson overestimates the human ability to consistently integrate godly virtues, for not all sorrow leads to godliness. The Scriptures distinguish repentance as an essential component to godly sorrow; and repentance as virtue is rooted in an understanding of the ministry of Jesus Christ. Therefore, articulations of conflict and resolution emotions as shapers of identity must be understood and articulated in the context of Christ’s redemptive work. Liturgically, I discuss the necessity of *confession of*

⁷⁷ See Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989).

⁷⁸ See Erik H. Erikson, ed., *Adulthood: Essays* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1978); Erikson, *Childhood and Society*, 2nd ed. (New York: W. W. Norton, 1963); Erikson, *Identity: Youth and Crisis* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1968); Erikson, *Identity and the Life Cycle* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1980); Erikson, *Insight and Responsibility: Lectures on the Ethical Implication of Psychoanalytic Insight* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1964); Erikson, *Toys and Reasons: Stages in the Ritualization of Experience* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1977).

sin (conflict) and the *assurance* (resolution) for identity. Using this taxonomy, emotions are examined in CWM. It finds that the most popular songs sung in churches lean disproportionately towards emotions of resolution to the neglect of conflict emotions.

Chapter 5 builds on Erikson and explores identity status in identity formation. It focuses on the work of psychologist James Marcia and the various stages of identity formation. For Marcia, identity achievement is reached when *exploration* and *commitment* are both present in the life of the individual.⁷⁹ The Scriptures present the redemptive journey in similar fashion. However, not all paths lead to the same virtuous commitments, as some paths lead to death. The Word of Christ is necessary for salvation and sanctification; and it is the ministry of the Spirit of truth that guides, helps and comforts. Thus, articulations of identity exploration and commitment in the context of Christian worship and formation is guided by Spirit and truth. Individuals reach “achieved status” when they experience a crisis, or period of exploration, and then form a commitment a life choice. The chapter advances this insight by discussing these concepts in the lament (exploration) and the dedication (commitment) of a liturgy. Portrayals of commitment and exploration elements are examined in CWM, finding that most songs of CWM utilize the language of commitment, to the neglect of exploration language.

Chapter 6 concludes the dissertation by summarizing the study and implications for Christians and church leaders. Given its interdisciplinary approach, it suggests several areas for further study related to the intersection of worship and practical theology, including counseling.

⁷⁹ See James E. Marcia, “Development and Validation of Ego-Identity Status,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 3 (1966): 551–58.

CHAPTER 2

IDENTITY FORMATION IN LATE MODERNITY

This dissertation seeks to explore the relationship between the embodied practice of corporate singing and self-identity. “Change is the only constant in life,” said the Greek philosopher Heraclitus.¹ If this was true in earlier times the rate of perpetual change has accelerated in the modern age. Indeed, even self-transformation is changed. The scholarship on the influences of modern life and identity is wide-ranging and as complex as modernity itself. Attempts to locate how identity is shaped differ. On one hand, some emphasize that modern identity is entirely a self-constructed project. These voices place an emphasis on the self’s reflexive relationship to culture and traditions, viewing identity as an untethered self-making project. David Swanson summarizes his observations of the current climate:

According to our culture, we should know who we are: we are bearers and creatures of our own light. We are little gods unto ourselves. We know what is best for us. We know what is true for us . . . our own “heroic being” with our happiness as our only purpose.²

In response, Christian thinkers have doubled down against the notion of autonomous self-making, arguing that identity cannot be found within.³ By abandoning the self-identity

¹ Joshua J. Mark, “Heraclitus of Ephesus,” *World History Encyclopedia*, July 14, 2010, https://www.worldhistory.org/Heraclitus_of_Ephesos/.

² David D. Swanson, *Learning to Be You: How Our True Identity in Christ Sets Us Free* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012), 19.

³ See Sara Barratt, “Why Christian Teens Have an Identity Crisis,” *Gospel Coalition*, July 12, 2022, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/teens-identity-crisis/>; David Powlison, “Brother, Where Is Your Identity?,” *Gospel Coalition*, November 19, 2015, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/brother-where-is-your-identity/>; Brian Rosner, “You Won’t Find Yourself Within,” *Desiring God*, August 3, 2022, <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/you-wont-find-yourself-within>.

project, one can discover true contentment in his or her collective identity in Christ.

This chapter argues for a more comprehensive view, where the reflexive project of selfhood does not transcend traditional, social and cultural boundaries, and tradition and cultural meaning provide a compass to navigate and reform self-identity. For Christians, the dynamism of a liturgy accomplishes these things.

To better understand the current predicament, this chapter first engages with theories of social change and self-identity through critical readings of social theorist Anthony Giddens and other contemporary sociologists. These ideas are assessed for their insights and shortcomings from a theologically informed perspective. In this light, I explore the role of the liturgy for self-identity formation. I conclude that congregational songs invite worshipers into both a reflexive and receptive identity project.

Anthony Giddens and *Modernity and Self-Identity*

The projects of sociologist Anthony Giddens include a range of sociological movements, and encompass the varieties of structuralism, functionalism, systems theory, ethnomethodology, phenomenological sociology, and symbolic interactionism.⁴ He is among the most cited and influential contemporary modern social theorists.⁵ It is Giddens's contention that the contours of modernity have recently ushered in a new psychology of self and self-identity. In this new world, the local and the global continuously interplay, fracturing and unifying time and space in an unprecedented manner that weakens the role of tradition. In its place is the reflexive project: "the process whereby self-identity is constituted by the reflexive ordering of self-narratives."⁶ In

⁴ David Held and John B. Thompson, *Social Theory of Modern Societies: Anthony Giddens and His Critics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 19.

⁵ Stjepan Meštrović refers to Giddens as the "high priest" of postmodernity. See Stjepan Meštrović, *Anthony Giddens: The Last Modernist* (London: Routledge, 1998), 2.

⁶ Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991), 244.

Modernity and Self-Identity, Giddens builds his work on a critical reinterpretation of the classical theories of Max Weber, Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud, and Erik Erikson, and he gleans from the clinical insights of sociologists and psychologists such as Judith Wallerstein, Sandra Blakeslee, and Janette Rainwater, to marshal evidence for reflexivity in the modern age.⁷ The following surveys his argument in *Modernity and Self-Identity* with considerations as to how it intersects theological and worship matters.

Reflexivity and Self-Identity

In late modernity, Rose Coser argues that “self-identity is negotiated through . . . processes of self-exploration.”⁸ This occurs when individuals reflect about themselves, their choices, the pasts and their futures.⁹ In this context, Giddens understands self-identity as “the self as reflexively understood by the individual in terms of his or her biography.”¹⁰ He argues that while reflexivity is not a new phenomenon, it takes an unprecedented and expanded role when it encounters the dynamism of modernity and its “post-traditional” setting. Whereas cultural customs and traditions once shaped selfhood, he states, “Modernity is a post-traditional order, but one in which the sureties of tradition and habit have been replaced by the certitude of rational knowledge.”¹¹ Though Giddens can accept that tradition and cultural customs can play a part in self-identity, he claims that their mandates have lost their hold. Instead, where globalizing tendencies of institutions are transforming everyday life, social practices are constantly examined and reformed. The modern life is marked by a multiplicity of

⁷ For Giddens, the nature of the academic disciplines of sociology and psychology are directly bound up in the reflexivity of the self, especially therapy and counseling (*Modernity and Self-Identity*, 33).

⁸ Rose Laub Coser, review of *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*, by Anthony Giddens, *Social Forces* 71, no. 1 (1992): 229–30.

⁹ See Coser, review of *Modernity and Self-Identity*, 229–30.

¹⁰ Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, 244.

¹¹ Anthony Giddens, *Runaway World: How Globalization Is Reshaping Our Lives* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 2.

choices and social reflexivity is a key feature.¹² Lifestyles, life plans, relationships, and even the body are confronted with a complex diversity of options.¹³ Risk and chance are important earmarks of modern life, such that “life is no longer lived as fate—as relatively fixed and determined” by tradition and social customs.⁵

The implication of such unprecedented reflexivity means that the self is not passive, determined by external influences; it is self-forged.¹⁴ Reflexivity is a project for every individual today, a process of self-construction whereby the individual is solely responsible.¹⁵ As Giddens puts it, “We are not what we are, but what we make of ourselves.”¹⁶

The Shape of Modernity

How did contemporary society arrive here? Giddens explores the influence of modernity on self-identity by suggesting that it is due to the contours of modernity that allow for reflexive self-awareness and the opportunity to transcend culture in the making of identity.¹⁷ Structural changes in a modern society, thanks to globalization and technology, have upheaved the role of tradition, family, and institutions in identity.¹⁸ For

¹² Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, 2.

¹³ Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, 80. Giddens points out that the term *lifestyle* has little applicability to traditional cultures since it implies choice within a plurality of possible options. Lifestyles, he states, “are routinized practices, the routines incorporated into habits of dress, eating, modes of acting and favored milieux for encountering others; but the routines followed are reflexively open to change in the light of the mobile nature of self-identity.”

¹⁴ Giddens, *Runaway World*, 2.

¹⁵ Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, 75.

¹⁶ Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, 75.

¹⁷ “Modernity” as he describes, is his shorthand for the “industrialized world.” Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, 15. He goes on to associate modernity with three distinct parts: (1) a certain set of attitudes towards the world, the idea of the world as open to transformation, by human intervention; (2) a complex system of economic institutions, especially industrial production and market economy; (3) a certain range of political institutions, including the nation-state and mass democracy.” Anthony Giddens and Christopher Pierson, *Conversations with Anthony Giddens: Making Sense of Modernity* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), 27.

¹⁸ Giddens distinguishes traditions from religion. It does not refer to any particular body of beliefs and practices; rather it is the manner in which those beliefs and practices are organized, especially in relation to time. Tradition is deeply connected to ritual—a meaningful routine, rather than empty habit. He

Giddens, the dynamism of modernity is influenced by three factors. The first is what he refers to as *time and space separation*.¹⁹ In other words, the standardization and globalization of time, along with technological advancements, grant people unprecedented accessibility.

Second, globalization has dis-embedded social systems from local communities.²⁰ He points to two mechanisms for this: (1) *symbolic tokens* (such as currency); and (2) *expert systems* (from lawmakers to therapists).²¹ These mechanisms and the de-localization of systems create new patterns and practices across space and time. Both the transformation of time and space, and dis-embedding mechanisms propel society towards the third dynamism, reflexivity.²² These changes offer a unique opportunity for reflexive self-awareness and an unprecedented opportunity to construct self-identity without the restrictions of tradition and culture, which rigidly limits the options for one's self-understanding.²³ In Giddens's words, we live in a world "where the past has lost its hold . . . [and] preexisting habits are only a limited guide to action."²⁴

states, "Tradition contributes in basic fashion, ontological security in so far as it sustains trust in the continuity of the past, present, and future, and connects such trust routinised social practices." Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991), 36.

¹⁹ Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, 16.

²⁰ He defines "symbolic tokens" as "media of exchange which have standard value, and thus are interchangeable across a plurality of contexts"; and "Expert Systems" are people and institutions that "bracket time and space through deploying modes of technical knowledge which have validity independent of the practitioners and clients who make use of them." Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, 18.

²¹ Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, 18.

²² Ulrich Beck distinguishes reflexivity from reflection. Whereas reflection concerns knowing, reflexivity is un-knowing. See discussion in Ulrich Beck, *World at Risk* (Cambridge: Polity, 2009), 122; and Ulrich Beck, Anthony Giddens, and Scott Lash, *Reflexive Modernization: Politics, Tradition, and Aesthetics in Modern Social Order* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994), 175–76.

²³ Matthew Adams, "The Reflexive Self and Culture: A Critique," *British Journal of Sociology*, 54, no. 2 (June 2003): 221–38. Giddens's views are widely shared by other modern social theorists. See Ulrich Beck, *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity* (London: Sage, 1992); Beck, Giddens, and Lash, *Reflexive Modernization*; Manuel Castells, *The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 1997).

²⁴ Anthony Giddens, "Living in a Post-Traditional Society," in Beck, Giddens, and Lash, *Reflexive Modernization*, 92–93.

Tradition and Therapy

In the modern setting, therapy substitutes what traditions once provided in the search for self-identity. In Giddens's view, transitions in the lives of individuals have historically been ritualized in traditional cultures where changes in identity are staked.²⁵ Traditions provide a necessary template for identity. However, in the modern setting, identity must be explored and constructed.²⁶ For Giddens, tradition in the modern era is viewed similar to nature, offering an external framework for decisions, but now one must *decide about tradition*: what to keep and what to discard.²⁷ When it comes to the existential questions of life, he writes, "We can no longer answer these questions through tradition . . . but can draw on tradition to do so."²⁸ Traditions are needed in that they have provided continuity and form to everyday life; but now, traditions must be justified in a detraditionalizing society.²⁹ Giddens summarizes,

The reflexivity of modern social life consists in the fact that social practices are constantly examined and reformed in the light of incoming information about those very practices, thus constitutively altering their character . . . only in the era of modernity is the revision of convention radicalized to apply (in principle) to all aspects of human life.³⁰

Since all of life is open to reflection, Giddens observes that a preoccupation with uncertainty and risk management characterizes modern life.³¹ For their ailments, modern individuals turn to the assistance of counseling and therapy. Therapy represents

²⁵ These were in the shape of "rites of passage." Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, 33.

²⁶ Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, 33.

²⁷ Anthony Giddens, *Beyond Left and Right: The Future of Radical Politics* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994), 49. He continues in his comparison of nature and tradition, envisioning synthetic versions of them in the post-traditional society: "Nature has come to an end in a parallel way to tradition. . . . To confront the problem of the humanization of nature means beginning from the existence of plastic nature—nature as incorporated within a post-traditional order" (102).

²⁸ Giddens, *Beyond Left and Right*, 217.

²⁹ Giddens, *Runaway World*, 63.

³⁰ Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, 38–39.

³¹ Giddens is concerned with the key existential question of self-identity, which is bound up in the individual's biography of themselves, supplied by the individual. See Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, 54.

an exemplary form of reflexivity.³² Formerly, during “fateful moments,” people sought solace from the church; now they turn to the nearest therapist.³³ By Giddens’s assessment, in a traditional society the self is passive. For example, he concedes that religious fundamentalism can provide clear-cut answers as to what to do.³⁴ This is different from the process of therapy, which is not “done” to a person, or something that “happens to them; rather it is an experience which involves the individual and the therapist simply serves as a catalyst who can accelerate what has to be a process of self-therapy.”³⁵ Counselling and therapy, including “self-therapy,” are necessary for self-actualization and the reconstruction of self-identity.³⁶

This trajectory reverses the point of reference for the development of the self from external systems to internal ones. The authentic self is achieved with personal integrity. Giddens writes,

Mastery, in other words, substitutes for morality; to be able to control one’s life circumstances, colonise the future with some degree of success and live within the parameters of internally referential systems can, in many circumstances, allow the social and natural framework of things to seem a secure grounding for life activities.³⁷

Critics have converged on the topic of “reflexive traditions.” Some view it as providing new, dynamic forms of development of religion within the context of modernity.³⁸ Others view reinvented traditions as “synthetic traditions,” created as

³² As a phenomenon of control, therapy can become an internally referential system. In his words, “Mastery . . . substitutes for morality; to be able to control one’s life circumstances, colonize the future.” Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, 202.

³³ Borrowing from Phillip Rieff, Giddens adds, “By means of therapy, a person aims to become ‘the sane self in a mad world, the integrated personality in the age of nuclear fission, the quiet answer to loud explosions.’” Philip Rieff, *The Triumph of the Therapeutic: Uses of Faith after Freud* (London: Penguin, 1966), 34, quoted in *Modernity and Self-Identity*, 179.

³⁴ “Transition points which have major implications not just for one circumstance but self-identity.” Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, 143.

³⁵ Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, 71.

³⁶ Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, 143.

³⁷ Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, 202.

³⁸ Philip A. Mellor, “Reflexive Traditions: Anthony Giddens, High Modernity, and the

rational, planned substitutes.³⁹ In a post-tradition society, individuals innovate the rules for their own self-identity project. Giddens summarizes: “The self today is for everyone a reflexive project—a more or less continuous interrogation of past, present and future.”⁴⁰ In other words, individual identity is no longer fixed, or bound to culturally assigned identity positions. Giddens’s vision of contemporary society suggests that individual identity is no longer *received*, rather it is *achieved*. He argues, “We have no choice but to choose how to be and how to act.”⁴¹

Reason, Emotions, and the Body

Reflexivity extends to what Giddens refers to as the *emancipation of emotions* and mastering of the body.⁴² Central to Giddens’s formulation of selfhood is a “teleology of self-mastering” and a “rationally-induced future-oriented project.”⁴³ Revised rituals and regimens provide a means of moving towards that future vision of the self. It is through purposeful decision-making that self is reformed. It is important to be aware that at the heart of Giddens’s social analysis is the rational and self-actualizing individual.

For Giddens, an emotional acceptance of the reality of the external world is necessary for a secure human existence. In modernity, emotions are internally referential. Driving principles are developed around authenticity and personal integrity.⁴⁴ Emotions are also emancipatory, necessary for social bonds.⁴⁵ First, they exist as a network of

Contours of Contemporary Religiosity,” *Religious Studies* 29, no. 1 (March 1993): 111–27.

³⁹ Meštrović, *Anthony Giddens*, 3.

⁴⁰ Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, 30.

⁴¹ Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, 75.

⁴² Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, 62, 77.

⁴³ Adams, “Reflexive Self and Culture,” 226.

⁴⁴ Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, 80.

⁴⁵ Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, 64.

characteristics that make up a basic security system. Motivations, trust, and security can be understood in relation to social relationships beginning in early life between children and their caretakers.⁴⁶ Navigating these emotions results in “tensions,”⁴⁷ and understanding how they integrate into the narrative, which the individual sustains, is a process of reflexivity.⁴⁸ Secondly, they can be organized and reframed through the help of expert systems like counseling and therapy or through the individual’s self-imposed regimens and self-mastery.⁴⁹ Emotions are learned and contextualized.⁵⁰ Giddens refers to a “democracy of the emotions,” where autonomy and solidarity are based on the development of personal relationships through discussion and the interchange of views, rather than by arbitrary power of one sort or another.⁵¹

In modernity, the body is not merely passive, but is an action system through which reflexive attention offers control.⁵² Controlled breathing, exercise, dieting, and even dress reflect an awareness of the body and offer a means of self-monitoring and self-constructing.⁵³ Giddens summarizes how the body has become part of the reflexivity project:

Body regimens and the organisations of sensuality in high modernity become open to continuous reflexive attention, against the backdrop of plurality of choice. Both life-planning and the adoption of lifestyle options become (in principle) integrated

⁴⁶ Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, 64.

⁴⁷ Here Giddens refers to guilt and shame (*Modernity and Self-Identity*, 64).

⁴⁸ For example, he defines shame as dependent on feelings of personal insufficiency. While shame should be understood in relation to the integrity of the self, guilt derives from feelings of wrongdoing. Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, 65.

⁴⁹ See Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, 46–47.

⁵⁰ Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, 64.

⁵¹ Anthony Giddens, “For a Democracy of Emotion,” *Aspenia Online*, no. 1 (January 1995), PDF, <https://www.aspeninstitute.it/en/aspenia/number/aspenia-1>.

⁵² Giddens writes, “Regularized control of the body is a fundamental means whereby a biography of self-identity is maintained” (*Modernity and Self-Identity*, 57).

⁵³ Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, 77. Giddens mentions dress and other embodied practices as performances that give external form to narratives of self-identity (62).

with bodily regimens. . . . We become responsible for the design of our own bodies, and in a certain sense . . . are forced to do so the more post-traditional the social contexts in which we move.⁵⁴

Patterns of Inverse

This dissertation asks how Giddens's reflexivity squares with a biblical worldview and what implications it has for the Christian faith through the lens of liturgy. Understandings of reflexivity based on social sciences cannot simply be imported uncritically for Christians. This section examines three areas of theological concern as it relates Christian identity.

Extended Reflexivity

Giddens's reflexivity thesis is not without its critics and concerns,⁵⁵ for it can appear overly reductionistic and paradoxical.⁵⁶ A few critics argue that if reflexivity is a product of its time (modernity), can it ever be understood outside the context of its social and cultural boundaries?⁵⁷ What he has proposed is an *extended* vision of reflexivity,

⁵⁴ Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, 102.

⁵⁵ Several voices have taken issue with the extension of Giddens's reflexivity, wary of the traditional/post-traditional dichotomy favored by Giddens. The model can rely on a reductionistic set of binary oppositions, which heralds post-traditional society and views existing traditional cultures as naïve. Meštrović accuses Giddens of being "unaware that the meaning of reflexivity, agency and dialogue vary across cultures." Meštrović, *Anthony Giddens*, 134.

⁵⁶ This kind of reductionism can be seen when Giddens distinguishes tradition that is passed down along with codes of practice, as opposed to doing things based on rational or scientific theory. See Giddens and Pierson, *Conversations with Anthony Giddens*, 128. However, Matthew Adams argues that scientific enquiry is itself a "code of practice," involving rituals and traditions which provide their own "truth." Adams, "Reflexive Self and Culture," 226. Furthermore, Adams reflects on how reflexivity suffers from the same shortcomings of tradition: "To use Giddens's terminology, he is assuming that reflexivity 'disembeds' the individual from traditions. What he and others neglect to contemplate is that the concept of reflexivity, rationality, and other Enlightenment terms are themselves ways of 'embedding' the individual in a particular cultural framework" (Adams, 226).

⁵⁷ If individuals within this division reflexively transcend the boundaries of tradition and construct their self-identity, reflexivity eventually turns the self back upon itself, making it aware of the processes which made it what it was. In this way reflexivity can only be understood within the context of cultural tradition. See Jeffery C. Alexander, "Critical Reflections on 'Reflexive Modernization,'" *Explorations in Critical Social Science* 13, no. 4 (1996): 136. Additionally, as "tradition dissolves," individuals rely on common cultural forms, such as language, to make sense of their experience. Since modernists are concerned with modern society, it can remain "provincial" and "ethnocentric," thus failing to recognize that reflexivity is a product of western modernity, and thereby not transcendent. Meštrović, *Anthony Giddens*, 155.

where modern subjects have unlimited opportunity to construct self and self-relationships.⁵⁸ The overall trajectory of Giddens's extended reflexivity is oriented towards an anthropocentric rather than a theocentric ethic. Within this extended reflexivity, innate rationalism and self-actualization determines the moral good.

Local and Global

In Giddens's assessment, media has compressed the world, providing more options for reflexivity between local and global dialogue. He writes, "In high modernity, the influence of distant happenings on proximate events, and on intimacies of the self, becomes more and more commonplace. The media, printed and electronic, obviously play a central role in this respect."⁵⁹ Whereas pre-modern separation of time and space were connected through the situatedness of place, a reality with globally standardized time zones and maps conveys the image of what Giddens refers to as the "emptying of space."⁶⁰ In a modern setting, decisions by individuals and institutions can affect people living in other sectors of the world.

In Giddens's assessment, the movement towards globalization is replacing locality. However, as his critics have suggested, this is assumed to be universal, and not subject to cultural filters.⁶¹ In Giddens's conception of a global society, more "traditional" cultures may be perceived as naïve than the post-traditional West.⁶²

⁵⁸ The extended reflexivity thesis is attributed to Giddens in Adams, "The Reflexive Self and Culture," 222.

⁵⁹ Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, 4. He goes on to concede that "mediated experience" has always influenced self-identity, since the beginning of written communication. With electronic communication and the development of mass communication in today's modern context, "the interpenetration of self-development and social systems, up to and including global systems, becomes ever more pronounced."

⁶⁰ Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, 17. The *dialectic of the local and global* is a basic emphasis of his argument. Essentially, globalization is the "connecting of the local and global . . . tied to a profound set of transmutations in the nature of day-to-day-life" (22).

⁶¹ Meštrović, *Anthony Giddens*, 210.

⁶² Adams, "Reflexive Self and Culture," 225.

The Bible offers a more nuanced perspective of individual and corporate identity from an eschatological perspective. Christian identity is understood in terms of both belonging to a “universal” community (Heb 12:22–24; Rev 7:9) as well as “local” community (Heb 10:24–25; Matt 18:15–17).⁶³ The universal community is the invisible church across space and time revealed in the Last Day. However, this does not negate the importance and value of the local community that gathers regularly with unique traditions and cultural expressions.

Jesus did establish that in the new covenant the believer’s relationship to time and place will expand:

The hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth. (John 4:21–24)

In John 4, Jesus reveals that worship is no longer confined to a physical place, but rather possible by spirit and truth. In other words, worship is not predicated on *where*, but *who*.⁶⁴ The account of Pentecost in Acts 2 also displays the truly expansive and inclusive nature of Christian identity. Christian identity, and thus worship, is teleologically informed by the person of Christ. As Daniel Block put it, “When [Christians] gather for worship, [they] gather with an eschatological vision.”⁶⁵

In the same way that modern society is influenced by global standards,

⁶³ See Mark Dever, “A Catholic Church,” in *The Church: One, Holy, Catholic, Apostolic*, by Richard D. Phillips, Philip G. Ryken, and Mark E. Dever (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2004); and Stephen J. Wellum, “Beyond Mere Ecclesiology: The Church as God’s New Covenant Community,” in *The Community of Jesus: A Theology of the Church*, ed. Kendell H. Easley and Christopher W. Morgan (Nashville: B&H, 2013).

⁶⁴ D.A. Carson comments, “To worship the Father ‘in spirit and truth’ clearly means much more than worship without necessary ties to particular holy places (though it cannot mean any less). The Prophets spoke of a time when worship would no longer be focused on a single, central sanctuary, when the earth would be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea,” D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 226.

⁶⁵ Daniel I. Block, *For the Glory of God: Recovering a Biblical Theology of Worship* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2014), 326.

Christian gatherings can be shaped by a similar ethos.⁶⁶ New ways of congregating and worshipping beyond local modes is offered with technological advances.⁶⁷ However, Christians are embodied, and the church is manifested locally in time and space. There is great urgency now, in a highly globalized society, to ground identity in local contexts. Christian assemblies provide such a necessary counterbalance.

The Body and Mediated Experience

As previously discussed, the self has a unique relationship with the body in modernity. In late-modernity electronic communication has transformed individuals' relationship to time and space. Similarly, Giddens observes that science and technology have changed the relationship between humans and their bodies:

The reflexivity of the self, in conjunction with the influence of abstract systems, pervasively affects the body as well as psychic processes. The body is less and less an extrinsic "given," functioning outside the internally referential systems of modernity, but becomes itself reflexively mobilized.⁶⁸

The body has more practical value in modern society. Giddens writes, "The body is thus not simply an 'entity' but is experienced as a practical mode of coping with external situations and events."⁶⁹ One reason Giddens provides for this change is the sequestration

⁶⁶ Ryan Kennedy observes a concerning level of influence on Christians from liturgical sources outside of local church contexts, pointing to worship industry giants such as Hillsong and Christian radio. Recognizing the loss of formal catechism, for Kennedy singing is the closest thing to practicing identity-formation. Ryan Kennedy, "Let Worship Be Local Too: On the Influence of Industry on Sunday Morning," *Worship Leader* (blog), May 3, 2017, <https://worshipleader.com/leadership/worship-leader/let-worship-be-local-too-on-the-influence-of-industry-on-sunday-morning/>.

⁶⁷ Monique Ingalls has observed that new media has created a new category of church, which she calls "networked congregations." She writes, "Through audiovisual worship media experienced on small personal screens and large projection screens in church, conference, and concert settings, once-separate aural and visual strands of evangelical devotion are drawn together into a powerful experiential whole. The networked mode of congregating centered around these audiovisual worship experiences challenges the boundaries between public and private worship as it blurs the lines between individual, institutional, and industry authority." Monique M. Ingalls, *Singing the Congregation: How Contemporary Worship Music Forms Evangelical Community* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 172.

⁶⁸ Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, 7. Giddens is not only thinking about bodily appearance, but whole lifestyles connected with biology due to reproductive technology, genetic engineering, and medical interventions.

⁶⁹ Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, 56.

of certain experiences related to existential questions. Whereas in historical societies people regularly encountered madness, criminality, sickness and death, a separation of these experiences is forced on modern societies day-to-day.⁷⁰ Instead, these are encountered through mediated experience via literature, art, and media. Giddens explains,

Through mediated language and imagery, individuals also have access to experiences ranging in diversity and distance far beyond anything they could achieve in the absence of such mediations. Existential sensibilities therefore do not simply become attenuated and lost; to some extent they may even be enriched as new fields of experiences are opened up.⁷¹

In modernity, the world is opened. In Giddens's words, it "intrudes into presence via an array of varying channels and sources."⁷² But it also fragments the self.⁷³ The narrative of self-identity is endlessly in need of reconstruction and protection. Creation, time, place, and the body cease to be anchoring points in that narrative.

The Christian understanding of the body and mediated experience offer more unification in such a fragmented world. Christian faith practices do not find incoherence between the local and the global, past and present. For Giddens, the transition from pre-modern to modernity can be seen in the transformation of language acquisition. The spoken medium provides a reenactment of social practices that preserves meaning across time and space.⁷⁴ Orality and tradition are linked, thus oral cultures have a deep investment in the past. Media, on the other hand, alters time and space relations. Modernity is orientated to the future.⁷⁵ Christian identity is both eschatological and

⁷⁰ Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, 168.

⁷¹ Giddens also acknowledges that some forms of mediated experiences can further sequestration and may even result in reality inversion and morality lapses (*Modernity and Self-Identity*, 169).

⁷² Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, 189. A feature of modernity is the "intrusion of distant events into everyday consciousness (27).

⁷³ Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, 189.

⁷⁴ Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, 26.

⁷⁵ Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, 29.

spatio-temporal.⁷⁶ Eschatological means that the people of God are future oriented, looking to the *regnum Christi* (the reign of Christ),⁷⁷ but Christians also live a visible and embodied experience, existing in a local reality.⁷⁸ Christian rituals are mediated experiences that not only orient towards the future, but also draw from the past. This will be explored further.

While modernity views the body as inconsequential, Scripture views the body as an essential component of identity rooted in creation and redemptive reality. The traditional Christian view of the body deems it a part of God's divinely designed and ordered creation; it is a gift from God. Theologian Gregg Allison has taken care to address a Christian theology of human embodiment in his recent publications.⁷⁹ Concerned with the growing ambivalence towards the human body and an increasing neo-Gnosticism, Allison argues that Scripture, in contrast, presents a high view of the body that impacts human identity as created beings in the image of God: "Embodiment is God's creative design for human beings, who should be grateful for their physical existence."⁸⁰ Allison adds, "The human body is an essential aspect of human beings during their earthly existence and, following Christ's return and the resurrection of their body, in the age to come."⁸¹ The final restoration of the world does not conclude with a

⁷⁶ See Allison's discussion on the nature of church in Gregg R. Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers: The Doctrine of the Church*, Foundations of Evangelical Theology (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 103–4.

⁷⁷ Allison goes on to describe Christians as "eschatological people," and the church with a "missional identity" (*Sojourners and Strangers*, 153).

⁷⁸ Allison maintains the church's dual-identity: "The church is spatio-temporal/eschatological, or assembled as a historical reality (located in space and time) and possessing a certain hope and clear destiny while it lives the strangest of ecclesial existence in the here and now. It has physical dimensions, location requirements, a temporal existence in terms of both a past heritage and (the Lord willing) a future, and an ultimate end." Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 148.

⁷⁹ See Gregg Allison, "Toward a Theology of Human Embodiment," *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 13, no. 2 (2009): 4–17; Allison, *Embodied: Living as Whole People in a Fractured World* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2021).

⁸⁰ Allison, "Toward a Theology of Human Embodiment," 6.

⁸¹ Allison, "Toward a Theology of Human Embodiment," 5.

disembodied existence. Rather, the ultimate hope for Christians is a resurrection and glorification of the physical body. Allison writes,

Thus, as fallen and sinful, human beings are called to salvation through Christ, and they are not just “souls to be saved;” the human body is included in this divine work. Indeed, “the Lord is for the body” (1 Cor 6:13) in that his completed work of salvation will include bodily resurrection. Indeed, against the prevailing view held by many Christians, death resulting in disembodied existence in the presence of the Lord is not their ultimate hope. Rather, the resurrection and glorification of the body at his second advent, leading to embodied existence in (the millennial kingdom and) the new heavens and the new earth, is their ultimate hope (Rom 8:18–25; 2 Pet 3:8–13; Rev 21–22).⁸²

Giddens’s extended reflexivity unhinges the divinely given gift of the body. But a Christian sees that the body provides essential anchors for his or her identity.

Patterns of Consistency

Extended reflexivity overstates its powers and is teleologically disoriented. However, limited reflexivity may offer a unique insight into the shape of modernity and how modernity might be shaping self-identity. This section considers ways in which reflexivity is consistent with human agency. Framed by a theological understanding of faith, reflexivity might enrich a theological anthropology of identity development. On this basis, I contend that liturgies are a source of self-identity for Christians. Thus, the liturgy provides means of reflexivity but anchors identity in revelation.

Reflexivity and Human Agency

Giddens argues that individual autonomy is influenced by social systems, but these same structures are also maintained and adapted through the exercise of agency.⁸³ Reflexivity allows individuals to examine, reflect, and alter their social structures. To a

⁸² Allison, “Toward a Theology of Human Embodiment,” 13.

⁸³ It is important to note that critics have protested against Giddens’s structure-agency framework. Meštrović notes, “On the one hand, he advocates agency, individual power, and emancipation, but, on the other, he advocates what seems to be the opposite of agency, the submission to rationally planned and synthetically created traditions in the name of democratization. One cannot have it both ways.” Meštrović, *Anthony Giddens*, 3.

degree, it is helpful to understand reflexivity as a by-product of God-given human agency. Theologians, like Joshua R. Farris, have pointed to human freedom as a transcendent capacity of the divine image.⁸⁴ As Kathryn Tanner puts it, “Free will becomes a sign of unusual variability. Powers of self-direction mean humans can rework what they are given by nature.”⁸⁵ The nuances of human agency are beyond the scope of this discussion; however, the common understanding is that all human agents are free to do as they choose with some varying degree of constraints.⁸⁶

Individual agency can be recognized as encultured individuals who are shaped by social and cultural influences.⁸⁷ But is the influence between culture and personal agency mutual? Should the relative power of culture to shape self-identity be emphasized or is it the power of human agency to construct their own cultural reality? Farris helpfully situates the topic of agency within a theological anthropology.⁸⁸ As he suggests, human agency must be understood through the stages of the redemptive storyline.⁸⁹

Christians should be wary of extended reflexivity. Notions of unlimited agency and exclusively internal preferentialism have been a hallmark of humanity’s sinful

⁸⁴ Joshua R. Farris, *An Introduction to Theological Anthropology: Humans, Both Creaturely and Divine* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2020), 131.

⁸⁵ Kathryn Tanner, *Christ the Key*, *Current Issues in Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 50.

⁸⁶ Farris, *Introduction to Theological Anthropology*, 110.

⁸⁷ Joseph E. Bush Jr., *Practical Theology in Church and Society* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2016), 92.

⁸⁸ Farris, *Introduction to Theological Anthropology*, 111. One notable perspective in the agency discussion is the Hierarchical Compatibilism view, which assumes that humans are free when they act according to their true selves. According to Farris, this view involves individuals acting according to their truest desires, convictions, habits, dispositions, and character states (116).

⁸⁹ Farris highlights three stages of agency, depending on theological perspectives: (1) a pre-fall state where humans are free to sin and free to not sin; (2) a post-fall state where humans have fallen from a state of grace or from a state of innocence and are freely able to sin; and (3) the post-glorification state where humans are redeemed to a perfect extent and are able to not sin. Those of the reformed perspective may also include an additional stage after justification, but prior to glorification where humans are able to reject sin even though they fail to attain perfect sinlessness. Farris, *Introduction to Theological Anthropology*, 110.

trajectory since the fall. From Genesis 3 on, the emergence of knowledge and power that is internally referential has ushered humanity into a fractured existence away from God, neighbor, and shalom. Even Giddens acknowledges that an internally referential existence can be “contradictory and riven with chronic confrontations.”⁹⁰

However, limited reflexivity is not a product of modernity but is rooted in humanity bearing the image of God. Human identity is reflexive because humans reflect some degree of God’s freedom and dominion. Reflexivity is also exhibited in sanctification. Because Christians live in a post-fall state, their self-identity and behaviors can be influenced by social systems with customs, values, or practices that are antithetical to biblical ones. However, Christians display degrees of reflexivity, through conviction of sin, confession, repentance, counsel, and alter their behaviors and environments.

Reflexivity creates new structures, patterns, and regimes that align with renewed ideals of Christian identity. Theologian Joseph Bush Jr. sees culture as a powerful shaper of social practices, ideas, and values, while reflexivity focuses attention back to the agency of the individual.⁹¹ To him, reflexivity is a key component to doing practical theology, which requires constant reflection on theology and practice. Reflexivity takes the meaningful practice of mindful reflection a step further. For Bush, reflexivity is when reflection becomes “our self-reflection focused reflexively back on ourselves.”⁹² A limited reflexivity can lead to an achieved self-identity and a richer Christian faith. A few features of reflexivity will be examined for implications for the Christian faith.

⁹⁰ Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, 150.

⁹¹ Bush favors the term reflectivity, and has adapted reflexivity as a practice of theology and ministry. He encourages that a development of self-awareness is key for continued development, as is reflectivity for increasing levels of competence and ministry. Bush, *Practical Theology in Church and Society*, 94.

⁹² Bush, *Practical Theology in Church and Society*, 92.

In summary, Giddens's observations about modernity and self-identity demand thoughtful engagement. Perhaps it is helpful to view reflexivity in micro and macro terms. On a macro level, reflexivity is overstated if it suggests that modernity and traditionalism cannot co-exist. On a micro-level, it presents a dynamic picture of the human experience. For one, reflexivity offers a unique bridge for theologians of culture to engage with their field of study.⁹³ It seems to be an essential component to personal formation but also in any disciplined endeavor. Self-reflection offers a methodological tool to better understand one's own theology and ministerial practice in society.⁹⁴ This level of reflexivity is seen in attention to oneself, acting as individuals with social location, or an appreciation for the complexity of social and cultural forces that shape identity.⁹⁵ For Giddens, reflexivity is a dynamic of modern self-identity. However, Christians also understand that faith is a powerful dynamic in transformation.

Faith and Identity

At the intersection of faith and discussions of identity is the concept of a "true identity" and that of a "false identity."⁹⁶ Christians have a particular challenge when their understanding of their identity does not harmonize with the identity given to them by Christ. Jeremy Pierre describes this challenge:

People's constructed identity is their established self-image, made up of a complex

⁹³ Natalie Wigg-Stevenson has proposed that Reflexive Theology offers constructive theological insights and a potential to engage with other doctrines. See Natalie Wigg-Stevenson, "Reflexive Theology: A Preliminary Proposal," *Practical Matters Journal Online* (March 1, 2013), <http://practicalmattersjournal.org/2013/03/01/reflexive-theology/>.

⁹⁴ Bush, *Practical Theology in Church and Society*, 62. Bush meticulously develops an understanding of practical theology as "reflection on practice" (92).

⁹⁵ Bush, *Practical Theology in Church and Society*, 92.

⁹⁶ Giddens likewise distinguishes between the true (authentic) self and the "pseudo-self." This is more than just acting in terms of self-knowledge as full as possible; it also means the disentangling and rejection of the false self. The moral imperative is *authenticity*, the moral thread of self-actualization. He writes, "The morality of authenticity skirts any universal moral criteria, and includes references to other people only within the sphere of intimate relationships. . . . To be true to oneself means finding oneself." Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, 79.

arrangement of various conceptions, values, and commitments about who they are and what role they play in the world. . . . To make things even trickier, people are often unaware of their constructed identities.⁹⁷

Thus, he argues, “a central theme in the New Testament is the faith necessary to give access to one’s true identity in Christ. This faith is the only way to construct a self-conception that is ultimately true.”⁹⁸ Pierre’s argument is that the constructed identity is often the false identity, while the true identity is revealed by faith. If Giddens’s claim is that in modernity the true self is self-referential, the dynamic being reflexivity, Pierre counters with the true self received from God by faith. This claim is explored below: one’s true identity is the integration of their given identity received with their constructed identity; thus, faith is a precursor to true change. Dialoguing with Pierre’s work establishes that faith is a central component to the establishment of self-identity.⁹⁹

The Dynamic Heart

To understand the role of faith, one has to understand the nature of the human heart. Pierre presents the heart as Scripture’s understanding of the internal workings of human persons, which involves cognitive, affective, and volitional aspects.¹⁰⁰ Movements throughout history emphasized one of these aspects over the other. Modernism, in line with rationalism, has influenced the Christian understanding of human beings to prioritize intellect above all other functions.¹⁰¹ Pierre argues for a comprehensive model, where

⁹⁷ Jeremy Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life: Connecting Christ to Human Experience* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth, 2016), 128.

⁹⁸ Pierre, *Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, 139. Pierre concludes, “The Christian’s identity, therefore, is not established by his action or character, but by his faith.”

⁹⁹ Jeremy Paul Pierre, “‘Trust in the Lord with All Your Heart’: The Centrality of Faith in Christ to the Restoration of Human Functioning” (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2010); see also Pierre, *Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*.

¹⁰⁰ Pierre, “Trust in the Lord,” 4.

¹⁰¹ Pierre, “Trust in the Lord,” 7. Giddens also observes that in modernity, “A person’s identity is not found in behaviour, nor—important though this is—in the reactions of others, but in the capacity to keep a particular narrative going.” Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, 54.

inner functions of human beings work interdependently.¹⁰² In both his dissertation and his book *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, Pierre presents a theological anthropology where faith in Christ is the dynamic for true change and the bedrock for a true identity.¹⁰³

The Given and the Constructed Identity

Individuals operate out of many layers of identity and levels of identities.¹⁰⁴ Pierre conceives that there are two identities that believers must confront. These two identities can conflict and obstruct one's self-conception: the *given* identity and the *constructed* identity.¹⁰⁵

The given identity. The given identity is “God’s universal design of humans to be in relationship to him,” according to Pierre.¹⁰⁶ All people share in this design, though specific variances in capacity and context are unique to every individual.¹⁰⁷ The given identity is revealed in the text of Scripture and it comes from God.¹⁰⁸ Faith is the initiative of the Holy Spirit within people that enables them to receive God and his

¹⁰² In his dissertation, Pierre demonstrates that the wide semantical range of *kardia* (heart), and other related terms, indicates that Scripture views the inner functions of human beings as interrelated and unified. See Pierre, “Trust in the Lord,” 77.

¹⁰³ He writes, “The heart is the indivisible whole of internal human functioning—cognition, affection, and volition—that operates in relationship to God and others through words, emotions, and actions. The heart is also the seat of faith. In fact, faith in Christ is the means by which the capacities of the heart are restored to their proper function according to their original design.” Pierre, “Trust in the Lord,” 78.

¹⁰⁴ Pierre, *Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, 125–26. Giddens does not parse out various categories or levels of identity. Rather he opts for the term “narrative of the self,” which encompasses stories as reflexively understood by individuals and others. Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, 244.

¹⁰⁵ Pierre does not see these as opposites. In his view, the constructed identity is not intrinsically bad or a product of the fall. In fact, he says, it is a necessary component to one's self-conception. The problem arises when that perception is inaccurate or stands in conflict with given identity. Pierre, *Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, 128.

¹⁰⁶ Pierre, *Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, 130.

¹⁰⁷ Pierre, *Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, 130.

¹⁰⁸ Pierre, *Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, 130.

Word.¹⁰⁹ A view of the self comes from God’s view as revealed in Scripture.¹¹⁰

Central elements of the given identity include: *being created in God’s image* (Gen 1:31; Ps 8:3–9; Heb 1:4), *being fallen* (Rom 3:9–18; Ps 36:2; 1 John 1:8); *being redeemed* (Rom 3:21–26; 1 John 3:1), *being newly created and waiting for complete restoration* (2 Cor 5:17; 2 Pet 3:7; 1 Cor 6:11).¹¹¹

As part of their given identity, Pierre argues that all people are meant to be “agents of worship who reflect his [God’s] personhood in this brand new world.”¹¹² In addition, Pierre views the particular expressions of each person and his or her contextual influences, which God also arranges as the *constructed identity*.¹¹³

The constructed identity. Pierre describes the constructed identity as people’s “established self-image.”¹¹⁴ At times, this given identity might not match the individuals’ particular expression of personhood, or their *constructed identity*. Pierre does not view the constructed identity as intrinsically contrary to Scripture. Rather, a constructed identity is a necessary component to whole being. The problem with the constructed identity is that it can be influenced by a number of voices and these values are reinforced over time, building as layers of identity, a mix of accurate and inaccurate ideas about the self.¹¹⁵ Therefore, the constructed identity must submit to the given identity: “By faith, a healthy self-conception flows from a wholehearted understanding, consent, and

¹⁰⁹ Pierre, *Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, 119.

¹¹⁰ Pierre, *Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, 131.

¹¹¹ Pierre, *Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, 131–37.

¹¹² Pierre, *Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, 130.

¹¹³ Pierre, *Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, 130.

¹¹⁴ Pierre, *Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, 128.

¹¹⁵ The sources for a constructed identity range from spectrum of relationships across their lifetime during numerous historic moments in a life. Pierre writes, “The result is that every person under the sun has a constructed identity that is a rickety framework of accuracies and inaccuracies, muddled together.” Pierre, *Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, 129.

commitment to God's given identity."¹¹⁶ Faith implies a submission of people's self-conception to God's conception of them.¹¹⁷ Faith is understanding the *narrative of the self* (to borrow Giddens's phrase) through the *grand narrative of redemption* as revealed in Scripture.¹¹⁸

Faith is the means by which this grand narrative, the gospel, is received. In a modern society, the dynamic of faith not only provides meaningful engagement with the self-construction project, but it is also an essential component. Stjepan Meštrović advocates that it is more realistic and productive to conceive of traditionalism and modernity as co-existing.¹¹⁹ Faith is the only way to construct a self-conception that is ultimately true. For Pierre, transformation takes place when faith expresses itself in action, though he suggests that faith in action requires practice.¹²⁰ Faith in action requires a vision of faith that meaningfully inhabits modern society.

Liturgy as Identity Formation

The contours of modernity and the privatization of identity formations mean that engaging corporate experiences are more crucial than ever. Reflexivity that is

¹¹⁶ See Pierre, *Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, 139–44. In a way this notion, of coming to awareness of one's own self-perception, is reflexivity. Whereas Giddens locates the self as the authority, Pierre instead holds that the given identity, revealed in Scripture, is the final authority. Pierre, *Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, 131.

¹¹⁷ Pierre, *Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, 130.

¹¹⁸ Giddens defines the narrative of the self as "the story or stories by means of which self-identity is reflexively understood, both by the individual concerned and by others. Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, 243. Pierre identifies four key elements of a given identity as unfolded in the narrative of Scripture, which provides a blueprint for all constructed identities: "I am created, and therefore both eternally valuable and inescapably dependent"; "I am fallen and therefore both bad and broken"; "I redeemed, and therefore forgiven and loved"; and "I am newly created, and therefore both cleansed and waiting." Pierre, *Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, 137. This reflects a common biblical narrative framework: creation, fall, redemption, consummation.

¹¹⁹ Meštrović challenges Giddens's assertion that modernity is a juggernaut, rather it is resisted by tradition and also by its own postmodern fruits. Meštrović, *Anthony Giddens*, 215.

¹²⁰ Pierre writes, "The dynamic heart comes alive as faith expresses itself in action." Pierre, *Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, 123. In addition, see discussion on practicing dynamic imitation (pp. 114–21).

untethered presents an unrealistic condition. In a post-traditional context, Giddens himself observes the pervasiveness of “radical doubt” and anxiety marked by a continuously reflexive society.¹²¹ He states, “The more self-identity becomes internally referential, the more shame comes to play a fundamental role in the adult personality.”¹²² This section explores the function of liturgies as the external counterbalance to this problem. While James K. A. Smith and Giddens write from distinct fields, their projects intersect. While Smith’s social imaginary explores how cultural practices shape identity, Giddens’s reflexivity interrogates the very practices and narratives to create new ones in search of a more refined identity. For Smith, Christian worship is a kind of counter-formation against cultural values. In some respect, Smith’s project could not exist apart from Giddens’s work, and the untethered reflexivity of Giddens is untenable. At the same time, traditions and narratives that go unexamined can hinder the necessary trajectory to achieve a fully formed self-identity. What is needed is a reflexive approach to traditions that is tethered to timeless realities. This section surveys various perspectives on liturgies and recognizes a common pattern of reception and reflexivity within each one.

The concept of liturgy is rooted in the New Testament word *λειτουργία* (*leitourgia*). Composed of two words, *laos* (people) and *ergon* (work), it is often translated as “the work of the people.”¹²³ Definitions and application of the term *liturgy* vary from tradition to tradition. For some, liturgy can simply refer to the structure of a church service.¹²⁴ Alexander Schmemmann highlights the transformative dimensions of

¹²¹ Recent statistics indicate that anxiety and depression are on the rise among American teens, and most see it as a major concern. Travis Mitchell, “Most US Teens See Anxiety and Depression as a Major Problem among Their Peers.” *Pew Research Center’s Social & Demographic Trends Project*, February 20, 2019, <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2019/02/20/most-u-s-teens-see-anxiety-and-depression-as-a-major-problem-among-their-peers/>.

¹²² See Giddens’s discussion on shame and guilt (*Modernity and Self-Identity*, 62–69).

¹²³ Charles P. Price and Louis Weil, *Liturgy for Living*, rev. ed. (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse, 2000, 13).

¹²⁴ Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Worship: Letting the Gospel Shape Our Practice* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 18–19.

corporate gatherings and defines liturgy as “an action by which a group of people becoming something corporately which they had not been as a mere collection of individuals—a whole greater than the sum of its parts.”¹²⁵ On one hand worship imparts an identity through presentation; on the other, worship enacts a new identity through participation.

These two definitions highlight two prominent paradigms for congregational worship and the attempts to locate the aims of the liturgy: worship as *encounter* and worship as *formation*.¹²⁶ These represent theological frames for how corporate worship functions in the shaping of faith. In the former, transformation is through encounters with the divine. In focus is a personal experience of transcendence, an orientation “upward toward a meeting with the living God,” according to Glenn Packiam.¹²⁷ In the latter, transformation occurs through human reenactment and divine action.¹²⁸ These voices prioritize the formative effects of embodied practices as a response to transcendence. A more comprehensive view is required that highlights both aspects and its role in the formation of identity.¹²⁹

Liturgy as Ritualization

Consider the interplay between liturgy and rituals. For sociologists, broadly

¹²⁵ Alexander Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World: Sacraments and Orthodoxy*, 2nd ed. (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1973), 25.

¹²⁶ Glenn Packiam includes a third paradigm: worship as *mission* to distinguish between the evangelical approach from the Pentecostal approach of encountering God. See Glenn Packiam, *Worship and the World to Come: Exploring Christian Hope in Contemporary Worship*, Dynamics of Christian Worship (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2020), 28–29.

¹²⁷ Packiam, *Worship and World to Come*, 46.

¹²⁸ Packiam, *Worship and World to Come*, 32.

¹²⁹ In his dissertation, Matthew Westerholm, drawing on Nicholas Wolterstorff’s aesthetic paradigm, demonstrates how embracing both theories paves an alternative, more functional paradigm for worship. See Matthew David Westerholm “‘The Hour Is Coming and Is Now Here’: The Doctrine of Inaugurated Eschatology in Contemporary Evangelical Worship Music” (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2016), 70.

speaking, a society's ritual is the key to how the society understands itself and its world.¹³⁰ Byron Anderson highlights three roles of rituals. First, rituals internalize the exterior world. He explains,

Ritual and ritualization “domesticate” the world, enabling person and community to mark the turning of the seasons, the biological changes that accompany the life cycle, as well as social events such as war and revolution, victory and liberation, even crisis and catastrophe. Through the repetition of particular actions, stories, and practices within the context of a community, we simplify and tame what might ordinarily be perceived as a dangerous complexity.¹³¹

This can reflect a functionalist approach that the social scientists often favor. However, secondly, he also highlights that rituals speak to the unconscious through symbols.¹³²

This reflects a symbolic approach of ritual activity as it conveys meaning. Third, Andersen holds that ritual and ritualization give life sense and value.¹³³ Through ritual, a story is performed and an orientation of life is acquired.¹³⁴

Liturgy can be understood as a ritualization of knowledge. What Anderson and others demonstrate is that liturgies provide ways in which one can acquire knowledge of God and self. However, something occurs in repeated participation of liturgies. The meanings conveyed in the liturgical rituals have a way of “writing” its meanings into the participant. Here Anderson argues that liturgies provide a context for ritual participation. Through performance, liturgical rituals move from presentation to practice.

¹³⁰ Mark Searle, “Ritual,” in *Foundations in Ritual Studies: A Reader for Students of Christian Worship*, ed. Paul F. Bradshaw and John Melloh (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 10. Searle highlights two approaches: (1) the *functionalist approach*, which views ritual in terms of the purposes that it serves in human life; and (2) the *symbolic approach*, which views ritual in terms of an activity that communicates meaning (11–12).

¹³¹ E. Byron Anderson, *Worship and Christian Identity: Practicing Ourselves*, Virgil Michel (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2003), 62.

¹³² Anderson, *Worship and Christian Identity*, 63.

¹³³ Anderson, *Worship and Christian Identity*, 64.

¹³⁴ Barbara Myerhoff writes, “Through ritual we organize our understandings and dramatize our fundamental conception, rearranging our fundamental assumptions in the course of rituals themselves.” Barbara Myerhoff, “Rites of Passage: Process and Paradox,” in *Celebration: Studies in Festivity and Ritual*, ed. Victor W. Turner (Washington, DC: Smithsonian, 1982), 128.

Liturgy as Dialogue

Attempts to describe the liturgy as a dialogue further necessitate how both aspects relate to each other. In the liturgy, worshipers encounter the divine presence of God through Word and sacrament. They are also invited to participate through embodied practices. Bruce Benson condenses the rhythm of the liturgy to “call and response.”¹³⁵ He argues, like improvisational jazz, in a liturgy, one starts with things gifted to us by others and works from there.¹³⁶ With more nuanced terminology, Charles Price and Louis Weil distinguish between two aspects of liturgy. “Intensive liturgy” involves “what happens when Christians assemble to worship God”—encountering Christ through Word and Sacrament.¹³⁷ On the other hand, “Extensive liturgy” describes what happens “when the gathered community scatters into the world to live obediently to the Christ whose liturgy was encountered at prayer.”¹³⁸ This involves reenactments and spiritual practices. In the same way the liturgy’s extensive and intensive forms directly relate to each other.¹³⁹ The formation of identity begins with the Christian community gathering around the Word of Christ and then subsequently scattering into the world to live obediently for Christ.

Liturgies shape identities. Attempts to locate just how this takes place vary in language. Essentially, two themes emerge. Liturgies are both receptive and reflexive. In other words, particular identities are rehearsed in the liturgy and received through ritual. Through Word and sacrament, individual identity is gifted through divine revelation. However, the liturgy is not transformative by itself. Identity is examined and transformed

¹³⁵ He writes, “I think it is safe to say that there is nothing more basic to human existence than the call and response structure. It is, quite simply, the very structure of our lives. . . . We are called into being and our lives constitute our response.” Bruce Ellis Benson, *Liturgy as a Way of Life: Embodying the Arts in Christian Worship* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 128.

¹³⁶ Benson, *Liturgy as a Way of Life*, 17. Furthering the artistic metaphor, he states, “To improvise in jazz, then, is to respond to a call, to join in something that is always already in progress” (40).

¹³⁷ Price and Weil, *Liturgy for Living*, 105.

¹³⁸ Price and Weil, *Liturgy for Living*, 15.

¹³⁹ Price and Weil, *Liturgy for Living*, 15.

through participation of those embodied practices. In other words, biblical identity requires faith and faithfulness. There is a call and there is a response. Both aspects are adopted to present a case for how liturgies shape identity.

Receptivity in the Liturgy

Giddens’s reflexivity demands a reordering of self-narratives. Here liturgies are presented as an external narrative that anchors identity in that reflexive struggle. All liturgies present a narrative. The narratives people identify with provide a framework for life by unifying past, present, and future. When Christians gather, they tell stories through their practices, signs, and rituals. As Robert Webber puts it, “Worship proclaims, enacts, and sings God’s story. . . . Worship is a narrative—God’s narrative of the world from its beginning to its end.”¹⁴⁰ Sermons, prayer, songs, symbols, and rites propose not only values, but truths about human existence.

Devon Kauflin argues that Christian identity is ultimately rooted in the narrative of Christ’s life, death, and resurrection, which is received in Christian worship.¹⁴¹ Union with Christ, he contends, is the source of the Church’s identity. Through the practices embodied in corporate worship, Christians foster their identity as those united to Christ, not as a performance or passive rite, but as inhabiting practices that define their relationships with God, one another, and the world.¹⁴² What identities are received in the liturgy? Kauflin highlights two important identities individual Christians inhabit.

First, the individual’s identity is that of image-bearer, created by God.¹⁴³

¹⁴⁰ Robert E. Webber, *Ancient-Future Worship*, Ancient-Future Series (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008) 39.

¹⁴¹ Devon Andrew Kauflin, “All We Have Is Christ: The Centrality of Union with Christ in the Church’s Corporate Worship (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2020).

¹⁴² Kauflin, “All We Have Is Christ,” 210.

¹⁴³ Kauflin, “All We Have Is Christ,” 42–44.

Genesis 1:27 records, “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.” From the very first pages of holy Scripture, the liturgy of humanity’s origins announces that every person is made by God the Creator bearing his likeness. In modernity, the line of development of the self is internally referential.¹⁴⁴ In the liturgy, individuals who look to Christ see a truer self. If humans are made in the image of God, they are created to reflect him. David Benner puts it this way: “Paradoxically, as we become more and more like Christ, we become more uniquely our own true self.”¹⁴⁵ This idea is supported by 2 Corinthians 3:18, which teaches, “And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.” This means that there are aspects of self-identity that can only be understood, not by looking inward, but looking outward, towards a benevolent triune God.

Secondly, those in Christ are children of God.¹⁴⁶ In modernity, individuals interpret and produce their own autobiographies, a narrative of the self.¹⁴⁷ They face “passages” of life unaccompanied, left to negotiate every significant transition in life with continuous risk.¹⁴⁸ In the liturgy, Christians inherit a narrative. As a child of God, they are recipients of the benefits of salvation and counted righteous. The promises of hope and glorification are theirs as heirs. Paul writes, “The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and

¹⁴⁴ Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, 80.

¹⁴⁵ David G. Benner, *The Gift of Being Yourself: The Sacred Call to Self-Discovery*, exp. ed., Spiritual Journey (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2015), 17.

¹⁴⁶ Kauflin, “All We Have Is Christ,” 84. Additionally, it follows that Christian identity must also be understood in terms of “brothers and sister” in the family of God.

¹⁴⁷ Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, 76.

¹⁴⁸ Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, 79.

fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him” (Rom 8:16–17).

These identities are among a few of many that belong to the Christian and their self-identity narrative.¹⁴⁹ These are received in the liturgy, expressed in a variety of elements; this receptivity occurs most often near certain orders of the worship service: the call to worship, adoration, assurance, and passing of the peace.¹⁵⁰ However, liturgies present opportunities of reflexivity as well.

Reflexivity in Liturgy

The work of the liturgy entails self-examination. Benson states that part of the work is to “deconstruct images of God that are inadequate or inaccurate.”¹⁵¹ Liturgical reflexivity offers a problem-solving dynamic rooted in ancient practices of confession, lament, and repentance over sin. Reflexive responsiveness in the liturgy results in transformation. This is where Giddens and Smith intersect and when reflexivity is at its best.

Within the constraints of a liturgy, a better, more liberating reflexivity can be experienced. Smith views liturgies as gracious constraints in a world that overvalues freedom:

Perhaps what we need is good constraints and the imagination to receive them as gifts for innovation. Could we imagine the authority and inheritance of the historic liturgical tradition as just this sort of liberating constraint that will spark creativity and imagination?¹⁵²

¹⁴⁹ Other Christian identities that could be discussed include the following: *imago Dei* (Gen 1:27); chosen and loved (Col 3:12); members of God’s household (Eph 2:19); children of God (1 John 3:1); God’s handiwork (Eph 2:10); new creation (2 Cor 5:17); God’s possession, holy, priests (1 Pet 2:9), to name a few.

¹⁵⁰ More detailed liturgical discussions will be addressed in later chapters.

¹⁵¹ Benson, *Liturgy as a Way of Life*, 30.

¹⁵² James K. A. Smith, *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2016), 185.

In this way, reflexivity might flourish better when identities are handed down through the traditions of the church's worship. The practice of reflexivity in the liturgy occurs most often in the following liturgical spaces: confession, lament, petition, baptism, and the fencing of the Lord's Supper.

In ritual confession, Christians abandon their self-creation projects.¹⁵³ Smith describes it this way:

If the rituals of social media and smartphones are involutorial, the practices of Christian worship are fundamentally ecstatic—calling us out of ourselves and into the life of the Triune God, not to “lose” ourselves, but to be found in him. Granted, there is still a call to vulnerability, even a kind of “display” in the call to confession. But this is not a competitive display. It is rather a vulnerability that is met with mercy and grace: you confess your sins and are reminded once again that “you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.” (Col 3:3)¹⁵⁴

Witvliet provides two important reasons to practice corporate confession as it relates to self-identity. First, it instills the sense of a corporate identity. Witvliet exhorts, “If we avoid corporate confession, we convey the idea that sin—and thus salvation—is only an individual matter.”¹⁵⁵ Secondly, it resists (perhaps *reflexes* could also be used) against self-righteousness and triumphalism.

The practice of confession before receiving communion in worship invites for meaningful reflexivity. Enuma Okoro describes this practice as a beautiful reminder of one's stance before God. She writes,

We are creatures forever faltering forward toward God, our creator. Confession

¹⁵³ Smith describes it this way: “If the rituals of social media and smartphones are involutorial, the practices of Christian worship are fundamentally ecstatic—calling us out of ourselves and into the life of the Triune God, not to ‘lose’ ourselves, but to be found in him. Granted, there is still a call to vulnerability, even a kind of ‘display’ in the call to confession. But this is not a competitive display. It is rather a vulnerability that is met with mercy and grace: you confess your sins and are reminded once again that ‘you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God (Col 3:3).” James K. A. Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom: How Worship Works*, Cultural Liturgies, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 149.

¹⁵⁴ Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 149.

¹⁵⁵ Witvliet proposes two other reasons: corporate confession shapes everyday habits, and it orients Christians towards grace. See Kathleen Norris, John D. Witvliet, and Enuma Okoro, “Three Views: Why Confess Sins in Worship When It Seems So Rote?,” *Christianity Today*, November 22, 2013, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2013/december/why-confess-sins-inworship-when-it-seems-so-rote.html>.

symbolically cleanses and prepares our hearts to come before the One who forgives us while we are yet sinners, and who calls us each week, each day, each morning to try again to live into the life Christ.¹⁵⁶

The assurance of God's transformative work is promised in Philippians 2:12–13: “for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.” However, Christians are also commanded to “work out [their] salvation with fear and trembling.” They work out that which God works in. In regard to identity, Christians must receive their ultimate identity from God, and they must reflex against idolatrous and harmful self-identities.

Conclusion

This chapter surveyed the intricacies of reflexivity on the self. It did so by surveying the works of Anthony Giddens on the contours of modernity. By evaluating Giddens and reflexivity, it sought to demonstrate how liturgies provide means of identity unification in a world fragmented by extended reflexivity. It has argued for a vision of liturgies as both receptive and reflexive, where ritual knowledge and reflexive practice are both exercised. Within Christian liturgies, congregational singing presents a unique opportunity for identity formation. Music reflects this coexistence for both *reflexivity*—reforming articulations of the faith, and *reception*—receiving the one faith handed down through the saints. The next three chapters explore three components to identity formation: relationships, emotions, and statuses; in addition, the chapters evaluate identity language in congregational songs.

¹⁵⁶ Norris, Witvliet, and Okoro, “Three Views.”

CHAPTER 3
RELATIONSHIPS: SELF, SOCIETY,
AND THE SUPERNATURAL

What a friend we have in Jesus all our sins and griefs to bear!
What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer!
O what peace we often forfeit; O what needless pain we bear;
All because we do not carry everything to God in prayer!¹

In Joseph Scriven’s beloved hymn, a transcendent God becomes a friend to sinners. For the Christian, a relationship with God is central to self-understanding.² The previous chapter introduced the perspective of sociologist, Anthony Giddens, which provided the context for my discussion on identity formation. This chapter explores the role of relationships in identity formation, beginning with Charles Taylor’s *Sources of the Self*.³ If Anthony Giddens represents the sociological presentation of modernity, Taylor represents the analogous philosophical argument, tracing the development of modern self-identity along a spinning web of Western philosophical ideas.

Taylor reflects modernity’s notion to root identity in relationships. He presents three sources for identity which can be distilled to the self, society, and nature. For Taylor, the self in modernity is inseparable to conceptions of self-fulfillment, autonomy,

¹ Joseph Medlicott Scriven, “What a Friend We Have in Jesus” (403), in *The Jubilee Harp*, ed. A. T. Gorham (Boston: Advent Christian, 1867).

² The human experience can be summed up in relationships. Jesus once explained to the religious leaders of his day that the “greatest commandment” could be summarized as *loving God* and *loving neighbor* (Matt 22:34–40). Amazingly, God Incarnate tells his disciples, “I have called you friends (John 15:15). Sinners becoming friends with a Holy God is among the most scandalous aspects in the gospel. But it is this relationship with God that gives value and dignity to all human relationships. Thomas Aquinas contended, “There is nothing on this earth more to be prized than true friendship.” Thomas Aquinas and I. T. Eschmann, *On Kingship: To the King of Cyprus*, trans. G. B. Phelan (Belgium: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1949).

³ Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989).

and self-mastery. Additionally, social life in modernity's conception of identity is also influenced by the systems of relationships one has, especially the family. The final source which he refers to as the "voice of nature" is evident in the impulse towards particular identity and self-expression. While the Bible affirms both individual and social identity, it does not do so in a vacuum but through a relationship with God the Creator. Articulations of the self-image and social image must be assembled through a redemptive relationship with the ideal—the image of the invisible God as revealed in Jesus Christ.

Like James K. A. Smith, Taylor argues that the source of selfhood comes from visions of the good.⁴ Therefore, it is important to discuss the role of liturgy in terms of the relational systems embedded in Christian practices as visions of moral good. In addition to interacting with Taylor, this chapter considers the benefits of two liturgical elements: (1) *adoration*—a recognition of the reality of God, and responding to him accordingly; and, (2) *passing of the peace*—a recognition of relationships in their proper, redemptive context. Finally, this chapter applies a taxonomy from the study to evaluate CWM's portrayal of the Christian's relationship to the supernatural, social, and the self.

Charles Taylor and *Sources of the Self*

In *Sources of the Self*, Taylor explores modernity's attempt to define selfhood and its genesis.⁵ Rather than accepting the notion that the modern self is a neutral clean slate, or "bleached" entity, Taylor argues that selfhood is inseparable from concepts of

⁴ Taylor discusses the link between identity and what he refers to as moral orientation: "We have a sense of who we are through our sense of where we stand to the good." Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 105. Smith suggests that identity is driven by a *telos* or a vision of the good life, transmitted through an aesthetic registry, and he notes that this is similar to Taylor's emphasis: a "social imaginary" is "carried in images, stories, and legend." Charles Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), 23, quoted in James K. A. Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom: How Worship Works*, Cultural Liturgies, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 126.

⁵ Like Giddens, Taylor sees a unique transition in modern life from a traditional society. In previous times, he says, people most feared God's wrath and condemnation; but today, when God is dead for many, the "existential predicament" of "meaninglessness . . . perhaps defines our age" (*Sources of the Self*, 18).

the good life.⁶ He therefore seeks to articulate these visions of the good that shape the understanding of the self.⁷ By tracing philosophical developments of western civilization, he points to three particular visions of the good that influence identity: (1) self-mastery through reason; (2) affirmations of ordinary life; and (3) expressionism.⁸ These projections have largely been influenced by the Enlightenment and Romanticism.⁹

Modern Inwardness: The Individual and Relationship to Self

Taylor traces the notion of self-mastery through the development of what he calls “inwardness” from Plato to Augustine, then to Rene Descartes and John Locke.¹⁰ In Plato’s vision of rational *self-mastery*, he asserts that humans are good when reason rules, and bad when they are dominated by desires.¹¹ Furthermore, Plato applies the warrior-honor ethic, where “strength, courage, and the ability to conceive and execute great deed[s]”¹² are valued, aiming at fame and glory. Taylor writes, “The mastery of self

⁶ Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 3, 50.

⁷ Taylor refers to this as the “projective view” of morality (*Sources of the Self*, 60).

⁸ Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 393.

⁹ Taylor, preface to *Sources of the Self*, x. The developments are large sweeps of time which reflect a recent approach in ethical and social philosophy called the “return of grand theory.” Nate Teske, review of *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity*, by Charles Taylor, *Berkley Journal of Sociology* 35 (1990): 1.

¹⁰ Taylor observes that “for Plato, to be rational we have to be right about the order of things. For Descartes rationality means thinking according to certain canons. The judgement now turns on properties of the activity of thinking rather than on the substantive beliefs which emerge from it” (*Sources of the Self*, 156).

¹¹ Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 115.

¹² Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 117. Taylor observes that Plato draws a distinction between the higher and lower parts of the soul, with reason ruling over desire (115). In *Republic*, Plato even goes on to describe injustice as a kind of civil war, or a revolt of one part of the soul against the whole:

Must not this be a kind of civil war of these three principles, their meddlesomeness and interference with one another’s functions, and the revolt of one part against the whole of the soul that it may hold therein a rule which does not belong to it, since its nature is such that it befits it to serve as a slave to the ruling principle? Something of this sort, I fancy, is what we shall say, and that the confusion of these principles and their straying from their proper course is injustice and licentiousness and cowardice and brutish ignorance and, in general, all turpitude.

Plato, *Republic* 4.444b, ed. and trans. Christopher Emlyn-Jones and William Preddy, Loeb Classical

through reason brings with it these three fruits: unity with oneself, calm, and collected self-possession.¹³ This elevation of reason is picked up by Augustine and Descartes. Taylor traces Augustine's adoption of Plato towards an emphasis on radical reflexivity as well.¹⁴ For Augustine, Taylor observes, the central role of God's existence starts within,¹⁵ and proof of God is from the first-person experience of knowing and reason: "I am aware of my own sensing and thinking; and in reflecting on this, I am made aware of its dependence on something beyond it."¹⁶ This reflexivity and the *cogito*—the rational self—is shared by Descartes, according to Taylor.¹⁷

Descartes connects knowledge and self-control through disengaged reason. Taylor observes, "For Descartes, rationality means thinking according to canons. The judgement now turns on properties of the activity of thinking rather than on substantive beliefs which emerge from it."¹⁸ Disengagement, Taylor argues, "demands that we stop simply living in the body or within our traditions or habits"; instead, he continues "We make them objects for us and subject them to radical scrutiny and remaking."¹⁹ By disengaging and objectifying the physical, a person enacts agency and can *make himself*

Library 237 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013).

¹³ Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 116.

¹⁴ Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 143.

¹⁵ Taylor reflects, "Augustine's turn to the self was a turn to radical reflexivity, and that is what made the language of inwardness irresistible. The inner light is the one which shines in our present to ourselves" (*Sources of the Self*, 131).

¹⁶ Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 134.

¹⁷ Taylor notes that "for Augustine, the path inward was only a step on the way upward . . . the thinker comes to sense more and more his lack of self-sufficiency, comes to see more and more that God acts within him" (*Sources of the Self*, 156). This was different from Descartes's view that the "whole point of the reflexive turn is to achieve a quite self-sufficient certainty."

¹⁸ Taylor emphasizes the goal of certainty: "What I get in the cogito, and in each successive step in the chain of clear and distinct perceptions is just this kind of certainty, which I can generate for myself by following the right method." Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 156.

¹⁹ Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 175. Taylor explains, "For Descartes . . . we have to objectify the world, including our own bodies, and that means to come to see them mechanistically" (*Sources of the Self*, 145).

by methodical and disciplined action.²⁰

Radical disengagement between the self and everything else opens the prospect of self-remaking.²¹ Taylor studies John Locke and what he refers to as the “punctual self,” which exerts control over the external world through objectification of it.²² Thus, one of the inventions of modernity is disengaged rational autonomy—“the notion of ourselves as disengaged subjects, breaking free from a comfortable but illusory sense of immersion in nature, and objectifying the world around us . . . as pure rational agents.”²³ The goal is objectification of the world: “Objectifying a given domain involves depriving it of its normative force for us.”²⁴ Quoting Ralph Cudworth, Taylor argues, “Knowledge is an inward . . . vigour from within, whereby it doth conquer, master and command its objects and so begets a clear, serene and victorious and satisfactory sense within itself.”²⁵ Thus, a radically, subjectivist view of the self emerges with associated ideals of self-exploration, self-control and personal freedom, as well as personal commitment.

Affirmations of Ordinary Life: Social Relationships with Others

The second source of the self surfaces out of what he refers to as “the

²⁰ Taylor writes, “The material world here includes the body, and coming to see the real distinction requires that we disengage from our usual embodied perspective, within which the ordinary person tends to see the objects around him as really qualified by colour or sweetness or heat, tends to think of the pain or tickle as in his tooth or foot. We have to objectify the world, including our own bodies, and that means to come to see them mechanistically and functionally, in the same way that an uninvolved external observer would.” Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 145.

²¹ Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 171.

²² Taylor explains, “The modern figure I call the punctual self has pushed this disengagement much further, and has been induced to do so by the same mix of motivations: the search for control intertwined with a certain conception of knowledge” (*Sources of the Self*, 161).

²³ Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 12.

²⁴ Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 160.

²⁵ Ralph Cudworth, *Concerning Eternal and Immutable Morality* (London, 1731), 126, quoted in Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 165.

egalitarian affirmations of ordinary life.”²⁶ By “ordinary life,” Taylor means “those aspects of human life concerned with production and reproduction, that is, labor, the making of the things needed for life, and our life as sexual beings, including marriage and family.”²⁷ This emerges from the Judeo-Christian tradition and its emphasis on *agape* love, which Nate Teske describes as “universal human benevolence and a desire to end human suffering everywhere.”²⁸

Taylor notes the influence of the Protestant Reformation, which challenged platonic ideals within the church and broke with the monastic “counsels of perfection.”²⁹ He states,

With the Reformation we find a modern, Christian-inspired sense that ordinary life was on the contrary the very centre of the good life . . . I believe this affirmation of ordinary life . . . has become one of the most powerful ideas in modern civilization. It underlies our contemporary “bourgeois” politics, so much concerned with issues of welfare and at the same time powers the most influential revolutionary ideology of our century, Marxism.³⁰

What emerges is a traditional Aristotelian ethic that includes the value of self-expression, justice, worship of God, and an unprecedented high regard for family life, which Taylor refers to as Rationalized Christianity.³¹ From then on, Taylor remarks on the shift toward a “growing idealization of marriage based on affection, true companionship between husband and wife and devoted concern for children.”³² He contends, “Marriage and a

²⁶ Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 286.

²⁷ Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 211.

²⁸ Teske, review of *Sources of the Self*, 162; Taylor comments about this vision: “The world was designed so that each in seeking his or her good will also serve the good of others. The fullest human happiness, on Hutcheson’s view, is attained when we give full reign to our moral sentiments and feelings of benevolence. But it is just then that we do most to contribute to the general happiness.” Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 267.

²⁹ Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 242.

³⁰ Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 13–14.

³¹ Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 13. Taylor explains that following the Puritan strand of Christian spirituality, Locke inclined to theological voluntarism (235).

³² Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 289.

calling are not optional extras; they are the substance of life, and we should throw ourselves into them purposefully.”³³ Taylor concludes that since God’s goodness consists in his seeking the good of his creatures, human happiness is what really matters in the universe.³⁴

Naturalism: Enlightenment and Expressivism

Taylor traces a constellation of philosophical and literary sources of the nineteenth century to the final source of the self in what he calls the “voice of nature.”³⁵ Whereas for those in the premodern age, rational order, and the depths of nature (desire), could be pursued by holding to a belief in God—Augustinian traditions, and even Descartes and Locke—the “expressivist” looks to nature as the inner moral source.³⁶ He traces this notion of nature’s inherent goodness primarily to Jean-Jacques Rousseau whose search for the cure of human evil is not in the increase of knowledge but in nature (conscience) and the will (motive).³⁷ Here the will, not reason, is the central moral capacity.³⁸ Rather than viewing the world as a providential order, people “can look at it and indeed at our own natures, as a neutral domain, which we have to understand in order to master it, and whose causal rations we have to make use of in order to produce the greatest amount of happiness.”³⁹ The moral good involves “austere freedom from

³³ Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 223.

³⁴ Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 268, 271.

³⁵ Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 326, 359.

³⁶ He writes, “The expressivist views fine their second dimension in nature as a source. The life of instrumental reason lacks the force, the depth, the vibrancy, the joy which comes from being connected to the élan of nature.” Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 383.

³⁷ “Naturalism . . . is the belief that one ought to understand human beings in terms continuous with the sciences of extra-human nature.” Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 80.

³⁸ Taylor explains, “Everything is will to power, and humans only a more intense objectification of this will. The aspiration is realized by a victory over oneself, a kind of self-overcoming” (*Sources of the Self*, 453).

³⁹ Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 321.

excess.”⁴⁰ Taylor presents the following picture: “The happiest people are groups of peasants who settle their affairs under an oak.”⁴¹

Taylor examines two frontiers: Radical Enlightenment and Romantic Expressivism. Radical Enlightenment embraces materialism as the deliverance of self-responsible reason and a way towards living morally with their nature.⁴² In Taylor’s assessment, Kant continues this trajectory by emphasizing that nature is “common nature”—one’s inner motivations to find universal justice.⁴³ Meanwhile, the Romantics emphasize the particular nature—one’s inner source for good—whose sense of the good is authentic self-expression.⁴⁴ Taylor observes the rise of “self-expression” and romanticism which “affirmed the rights of the individual of the imagination and of feeling.”⁴⁵ This particular vision of the good life “comes to consist in a perfect fusion of the sensual and the spiritual, where our sensual fulfilments are experienced as having higher significance,” according to Taylor.⁴⁶ For the romantic, the moral good is authentic self-expression rather than rational autonomy.

⁴⁰ Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 359.

⁴¹ Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 360.

⁴² Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 325; c.f. Mic 4:4.

⁴³ Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 395.

⁴⁴ Taylor writes, “In Kant, what takes the place of universal benevolence is something closer to a principle of universal justice, the determination to act only by universal maxims and to treat all relational beings as ends. . . . Human beings are capable of a universal will to beneficence or justice, which is part of their make-up as rational beings, and which comes to be released in its full power by their acceding to self-responsible reason. There is a kind of secularized variant of agape implicit in reason itself, which cannot but grow stronger with the development of enlightenment.” Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 367.

⁴⁵ Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 368. Feeling is given a new importance in the religious revivalism of the period, among Pietists, Methodists, and Chassidim (302).

⁴⁶ Taylor also notes the rise of Aestheticism which tended to “focus less on the nature of the object and more on the quality of the experience it invoked” (*Sources of the Self*, 373).

Patterns of Inverse

Considering these sources of selfhood, this section examines Taylor's conclusions and the insufficiencies of these "sources." At the end of Taylor's study he finds each source in some way insufficient and problematic, in that they inevitably diminish some aspect of morality, which is inseparable from identity. An anthropocentric telos inevitably leads to moral insufficiency. Taylor even observes that the challenge with modernity is that it seeks for moral good but opts for a secular outlook.⁴⁷

Enlightened naturalism, as he suggests, rejects religion yet calls to do justice to the innocence of natural desire.⁴⁸ However these modern attempts to define the self are problematic: "There is something morally corrupting, even dangerous, in sustaining the demand simply on the feeling of undischarged obligation, on guilt, or its obverse, self-satisfaction."⁴⁹ This leads to hypocrisy and self-condemnation. He writes,

Adopting a stripped-down secular outlook, without any religious dimension or radical hope in history, is not a way of avoiding the dilemma, although it may be a good way to live with it. It doesn't avoid it, because this too involves its "mutilation". It involves stifling the response in us to some of the deepest and most powerful spiritual aspirations that humans have conceived. This, too, is a heavy price to pay.⁵⁰

Patterns of Consistency

Taylor argues that high standards need strong sources.⁵¹ By suggesting that a secular outlook is insufficient, he proposes, albeit subtly, a solution could be found in the

⁴⁷ Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 423. Taylor explores Nietzsche's examinations of "benevolence on demand and its consequences, such as a threatened sense of unworthiness and what he refers to as a projection of evil outward; this is usually in the form of strong ideological polarization" (516).

⁴⁸ Taylor observes a unique collision between the Enlightened "punctual self" and the Romantic self-expressionists of the modern era, which he refers to as Enlightened naturalists (*Sources of the Self*, 516).

⁴⁹ Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 516.

⁵⁰ Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 520.

⁵¹ Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 516.

Christian tradition, which articulates its devotion to the good in a language of being.⁵² Taylor suggests that “within Christian theology, it is never possible to escape altogether the notion that the creation is ultimately good.”⁵³ For example, the Christian perspective roots the notion of love and goodness in the love of God, and consequently, human goodness as divine creations. He writes,

The original Christian notion of *agape* is of a love that God has for humans which is connected with their goodness as creatures (though we don’t have to decide whether they are loved because good or good because loved). Human beings participate through grace in this love. There is a divine affirmation of the creature, which is captured in the repeated phrase in Genesis 1 about each stage of the creation, “and God saw that it was good.” *Agapé* is inseparable from such a “seeing-good.”⁵⁴

Driving his ideas on selfhood, Taylor’s *Sources of the Self* advances the discussion regarding identity formation in modernity. His observations are worth considering. First, the persistence of Platonism and the “punctual self” appears in modernity in the form of Radical Enlightenment. Taylor’s descriptions of Radical Enlightenment correlate with other observations of identity previously discussed, namely the achieved identity of Giddens and the constructed identity described by Jeremy Pierre.⁵⁵ Second, romanticism, social relationships, and egalitarian ideals of benevolence appear in modernity in the form of affirmations of ordinary life. Similarly, Taylor’s descriptions with these moral goods correlate with Erik Erickson’s articulation of corporate identity,⁵⁶ as well as Pierre’s “self and others” as contexts of dynamic heart

⁵² See Russell Hittinger, “Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self*: A Critical Study,” *Review of Metaphysics* 44, no. 1 (1990): 130.

⁵³ Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 448.

⁵⁴ Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 516.

⁵⁵ See chap. 2 of this dissertation; Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991), 5; and Jeremy Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life: Connecting Christ to Human Experience* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth, 2016), 128–30.

⁵⁶ Erikson’s work demonstrates that it is the work of the community modeling the virtues necessary for adolescent identity formation. Erikson explains, “We must not overlook what appears to be a certain abrogation of responsibility on the part of the older generation in providing those forceful ideals which must antecede identity formation in the next generation.” Erik H. Erikson, *Identity: Youth and Crisis*

responses.⁵⁷ While Taylor does not critique the substance behind these articulations of the moral good, he views that procedural reasoning has replaced substantive reasoning in moral theory, along with its suppression of moral ontology.⁵⁸ While there are blind spots in reason and nature, a theistic worldview provide a fuller picture.

The Redemptive Relationship with God

This section builds on Taylor’s insights by discussing the redemptive relationship with God as the substantive source for the self. The prayer of Augustine bears reflection: “*Noverim me, noverim te* [May I know myself, may I know Thee [God]].”⁵⁹ For Augustine, knowledge of God and knowledge of self are not two different things, rather they exist together in union. David Benner argues, “Knowing ourselves must therefore begin by knowing the self that is known by God.”⁶⁰ Thus, returning to Pierre, this section argues that a redemptive relationship with God is the key that unlocks self-understanding and true change. Pierre argues that the heart is responsive. He notes four main contexts to which the heart responds: God, self, others, and circumstances.⁶¹ This section examine the impacts of redemptive relationship with God as it impacts others and the self.

(New York: W. W. Norton, 1968), 30.

⁵⁷ Pierre’s work highlights the importance of people’s experience of the self and and the influence of others for identity formation (see *Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, 126–63).

⁵⁸ See Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 85–90.

⁵⁹ Augustine, *Soliloquies* 2.1.1, in *Soliloquies: St. Augustine’s Cassiciacum Dialogues*, vol. 4, trans. Michael P. Foley (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2020).

⁶⁰ David G. Benner, *The Gift of Being Yourself: The Sacred Call to Self-Discovery* (Nashville: InterVarsity, 2015), 45. Benner notes that true self-knowledge is a gift from God, not a result of personal introspection (68).

⁶¹ This section examines God, self, and others. *Circumstances* will be addressed in the next chapter.

Relationship to God and Self

John Calvin asserted that without knowledge of God, there is no knowledge of self.⁶² Every person is uniquely created by God and fully known by him (Pss 119:73; 139:13–14; Job 10:8; Jer 1:4–5; 1 Cor 8:3). They are also created to relate to God and imitate him (Gen 9:6; Matt 5:48; Eph 5:1; Col 3:10; 1 Pet 1:15–16).⁶³ Pierre explains that people imitate God and his character through acts of obedience, in their emotional dispositions, and when they align their values and priorities with God’s priorities.⁶⁴ For image bearers, to know God and to be like him are inseparable aspects to self-identity. This is the nature of being a worshiper. As G. K. Beale puts it, “What people revere, they resemble, either for ruin or for restoration.”⁶⁵ Paul says that believers in the new covenant know God in a way that Moses, with his veiled face, did not: “We all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit” (2 Cor 3:18). Christians behold God and become like him.

A relationship between fallen individuals and a holy God is impossible apart from the gift of faith (Eph 2:8–9) and the work of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor 3:18b). Faith is how the heart relates to God rightly, resulting in also rightly relating to the rest of the world.⁶⁶ Additionally, faith is inseparable from the special revelation on God. Pierre argues that for understanding and constructing self-identity, “Scripture reveals God’s understanding of who people are; thus, it should be the primary building material.”⁶⁷

⁶² John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1960), 1:35–37.

⁶³ Jeremy Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life: Connecting Christ to Human Experience* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth, 2016), 111.

⁶⁴ Pierre, *Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, 111.

⁶⁵ G. K. Beale, *We Become What We Worship: A Biblical Theology of Idolatry* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2008), 11.

⁶⁶ Pierre, *Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, 112.

⁶⁷ Pierre, *Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, 129.

He also writes, “This means that the Scriptures are directly shaping and arranging self-understanding.”⁶⁸ When the Scriptures inform the individual’s relationship to God, his or her relationship to others is also realigned.

Relationship to Others

Pierre connects the imitation of God with imitating one another as a component of the dynamic heart. Paul reflects this motif as he instructs believers in 1 Corinthians 11:1: “Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ” (cf. 1 Cor 4:16; Eph 5:1). Imitation becomes an effective means of spiritual formation for a community.⁶⁹ While Taylor argued that visions of social life and family in modernity were a source of one’s identity, the Christian views social life and family as an extension of their identity rooted in their relationship with God.⁷⁰ Jesus exhorted, “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you” (John 15:12). This is also how the apostle Paul summed up the Law to the Galatians:

For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another. Keep in step with the Spirit . . . I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. . . . But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.” (Gal 5:14–16, 22–23)

Christ first loved believers; and their love for one another is a fruit of the Spirit. Pierre notes that “people made to image the triune God are inescapably communal.”⁷¹ Pierre goes on to suggest that this dynamic imitation is something that must be *practiced* in

⁶⁸ Pierre, *Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, 114.

⁶⁹ Pierre says, “Imitation is an effective means of spiritual formation as people model themselves after others who embody a full-hearted faith” (*Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, 148).

⁷⁰ Chan holds that the church as the body of Christ is “the extension of Christ the Truth” and the tradition is “the extension of the Truth, the progressive actualizing of the Truth through time until it reaches its eschatological fulfillment.” Simon Chan, *Liturgical Theology: The Church as Worshiping Community* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006), 31.

⁷¹ Pierre, *Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, 146.

worship.⁷² Faith in action in any present situation, as Pierre describes, is the fruit of faith first imitated through worship and submission unto Christ. These practices can be understood as worship and discipleship:

(1) expressing the raw contents of the heart to God; (2) submitting the raw contents of the heart to what God has said about himself and his Word; and (3) acting in the present situation according to what God says is true, valuable, and worthy of commitment.⁷³

When believers assemble, imitate Christ to each other, and walk in the Spirit, Kevin Vanhoozer refers to this as the Christian vocation of *creative imitation*:

The Christian vocation is that of creative imitation, a nonidentical participation in the missions of the Son and the Spirit. The redemptive work of Christ is itself complete; there is nothing that the church can add to it, though it points to and participates in it through praise, proclamation, and performance. The church is a mimesis [an imitation] of the gospel, the creative and celebratory imitation of a company of players, a community of joyful corporate witness.⁷⁴

Through their collective participation and performance of their new identity in Christ in worship, believers become a new corporate identity: the body of Christ. Even the title “body of Christ” captures well the layers of identities involved in this dynamic interplay between God, the self, and others. Paul uses this metaphor in 1 Corinthians 12:12–27, where he explains that the body (corporate identity) is made up of many individual members (individual identity), yet all belong to Christ.

Liturgical Discussion: Adoration of God and Peace with Others

Taylor suggests how ritual shapes a person’s relationship to God: “The gesture of ritual, its music, its display of visual symbols, all enact in their own fashion our

⁷² Pierre, *Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, 114.

⁷³ See Pierre, *Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, 115–17, 122.

⁷⁴ Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical-Linguistic Approach to Christian Theology* (Louisville: Presbyterian, 2005), 401.

relation to God.”⁷⁵ This section discusses two historic practices within the liturgy that focuses on one’s relationship with God and with the church: *call to worship* and *adoration*, and *passing of the peace*.

Call to Worship and Adoration

Many Christian gatherings begin with an invitation to worship. The *Westminster Directory for the Publick Worship of God*, published in 1644, gives these instructions: “Let all enter the assembly, not irreverently, but in a grave and seemly manner The congregation being assembled, the minister, after solemn calling on them to the worshipping of the great name of God, is to begin with prayer.”⁷⁶ The Bible contains many examples of God’s people being called to worship (e.g., Pss 95:1–2, 6–7; 96:1–3; 98:4–6; 100:1–2; 150:1–2). *The Worship Sourcebook* describes the openings of a worship service this way:

The primary activity of the worship service is for worshipers to participate in the gift exchange of worship itself, by hearing God’s Word, by offering prayers and praise, and by receiving spiritual nourishment offered at the Lord’s table. *The Call to worship establishes the unique purpose of the worship service and reinforces the “vertical dimension” of worship— an encounter between God and the gathered congregation.*⁷⁷

The Call to Worship establishes both the relationship of the individual into the corporate identity of the church, and the relationship of the church and God. Prayers of adoration are a primary and common response in the opening of worship,⁷⁸ not only featuring praise for God’s character but also “praise for particular actions of God, such as creating the world, providing care and guidance for the people, redeeming the world in Christ, and

⁷⁵ Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 90.

⁷⁶ “Directory for the Publick Worship of God,” (1644), *Westminster Standard*, accessed February 21, 2023, <https://thewestminsterstandard.org/directory-for-the-publick-worship-of-god/>.

⁷⁷ *The Worship Sourcebook*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Calvin Institute of Christian Worship, Faith Alive, Baker, 2013), 45, 48; emphasis added.

⁷⁸ *The Worship Sourcebook*, 61.

sending the Holy Spirit.”⁷⁹ Observing similar patterns in various traditions of worship, Bryan Chapell notes that most Christian traditions begin worship with “recognition of the greatness and goodness of God.”⁸⁰ He summarizes,

The ancient Roman Catholic liturgy starts with a praise Introit sung by the choir. Luther expands this praise into the congregation with an entrance Hymn. Calvin’s more austere service emphasizes the importance of entering God’s presence with humility. . . . But even Calvin begins with a Sentence of Praise, using Scripture that ascribes greatness to God and declares his willingness to help us (e.g., Ps. 121:2). . . . The Westminster Liturgy reflects similar priorities. It also opens with praise, starting with a Call to Worship that moves into a Prayer of Adoration.⁸¹

In many traditions, there is an act of proclaiming who God is, with the people responding to his call together.⁸²

Jonathan Gibson observes that the first explicit “call to worship” was made to Adam in the Garden.⁸³ Observing that the liturgy reflected the structure of worship in Eden (“call–response–meal”), Gibson notes that the first invitation to man was in Adam’s creation from dust; yet he was made in the image of God as his son, and placed in the garden temple.⁸⁴ Gibson hints that worship of the true God versus idolatry forms a battle of *calls* to worship. He notes that as with Adam, Israel heard an alternative call to worship from the Baals and Asherim: “and they responded in faith and obedience to the

⁷⁹ *The Worship Sourcebook*, 61.

⁸⁰ Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Worship: Letting the Gospel Shape Our Practice* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009), 86.

⁸¹ Chapell, *Christ-Centered Worship*, 86.

⁸² Chan observes, “In many traditions the Gloria in Excelsis is sung. Adoration anticipates the eternal praise that the church together with the whole creation renders to God in the new creation. God should not be seen primarily in terms of the benefits I can get from him. Unfortunately, this seems to be the accent of much ‘praise and worship’ singing in ‘contemporary’ services. God is lovely, beautiful, holy, powerful—for me.” Chan, *Liturgical Theology*, 131.

⁸³ Jonathan Gibson, “Worship on Earth as It Is in Heaven,” in *Reformation Worship: Liturgies from the Past for the Present*, ed. Jonathan Gibson and Mark Earney (Greensboro, NC: New Growth, 2018), 3.

⁸⁴ Gibson, “Worship on Earth as in Heaven,” 2–3.

created not the Creator; they feasted at the altars and high places of others.”⁸⁵ In the liturgy, the opening marks the beginning of the story of human history. The *call to worship and adoration* articulate the source of the call, and thus sets a trajectory for identity. Echoing Augustine, Gibson writes, “We are called to worship, and our hearts are restless until we respond to that call by faith and obedience and come and feast on Christ.”⁸⁶

Passing the Peace

A gesture of peace communicates an extension of God’s peace toward others. This mutual greeting is often referred to as the *passing of the peace*. The emphasis of peace in the church is patterned on the New Testament (Gal 1:3–5; Phil 1:2; 2 Tim 1:2; 2 Pet 1:2; 2 John 3; Jude 1–2; Rev 1:4–5). Chapell traces this symbolic act to the peace offering in the temple liturgy.⁸⁷ The peace offering symbolizes communion with God and fellowship with his people.⁸⁸ Gestures of mutual peace occur in various orders across liturgies. Chapell views corporate worship as preparation of the people for “communion” with God and with one another.⁸⁹

In the “Liturgy of Rome,” the “Kiss of Peace” occurs after the Lord’s Prayer.⁹⁰ From these liturgies, Chapell infers that the “Kiss of Peace” offers the church a way to “express their love for one another in forms of greeting appropriate for their culture.”⁹¹ In some cases, peace is extended following the openings of worship as a greeting in which

⁸⁵ Gibson, “Worship on Earth as in Heaven,” 11.

⁸⁶ Gibson, “Worship on Earth as in Heaven,” 20.

⁸⁷ See Chapell, *Christ-Centered Worship*, 105–6.

⁸⁸ Chapell, *Christ-Centered Worship*, 106.

⁸⁹ Chapell, *Christ-Centered Worship*, 33.

⁹⁰ See Chapell, *Christ-Centered Worship*, 64, 83.

⁹¹ Chapell, *Christ-Centered Worship*, 33.

worshippers extend God’s blessing to one another, using phrases such as “Christ’s peace be with you.”⁹² The passing of the peace can be described as “acts of mutual love and dedication that may function in a way that symbolizes Jesus’ washing of the disciples’ feet.”⁹³ In other liturgies, a sharing of peace occurs after the assurance or in conjunction with the Lord’s Supper.⁹⁴ In this case, Christ’s work of reconciliation offers the believer peace and fellowship with others in community.⁹⁵

Across Christian traditions, the trajectory of divine fellowship begins with God in the opening portion of corporate worship, and encourages fellowship and reconciliation between believers. Given the biblical and historic precedence of these symbolic acts, it is clear that the Christian worship narrative centers first on the relationship between God and humanity; it then flows out in blessing toward others. How might this narrative be experienced through the “aesthetic register,” as Smith suggests?⁹⁶ If these themes are present in the elements of historic liturgies, are they also reflected in the imagery, poetry and drama of the songs sung in churches today? The next section interacts with these questions.

Relational Language of CWM

This section applies the taxonomy of “relationships” as discussed by Taylor to assess the lyrics of a core repertory of the most popular CWM songs between 2005–2020. Here I look for motifs and patterns that portray individual relationships to the supernatural, social, and self. I begin by observing how individual relationships with God are portrayed, followed by the individual relationships relative to their immediate social

⁹² *The Worship Sourcebook*, 59.

⁹³ *The Worship Sourcebook*, 598.

⁹⁴ *The Worship Sourcebook*, 125.

⁹⁵ *The Worship Sourcebook*, 125.

⁹⁶ Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 126.

context, the church; finally, I analyze how songs depict individual relationships to the self. These perspectives are largely categorized based on the contents of the songs and their narrative mode: songs sung to God, songs sung to others, and songs sung to the self. Within these modes, patterns emerge which convey preference in Christian worship music, demonstrating how these relationships are described.⁹⁷

Portrayals of Human Relationship with the Supernatural

It is no surprise that the majority of the core repertoire of CCLI is addressed to God because he is rightly the object of praise and exaltation. The simplest articulation of this relationship is in the *God and worshiper* relationship, where God displays his glory and worshipers adore him. This relationship can be seen directly in David Ruis's "You're Worthy of My Praise":

I will worship (I will worship); With all of my heart (with all of my heart);
I will praise You (I will praise You); With all of my strength (all my strength);
I will give You all my worship; I will give You all my praise;
You alone I long to worship; You alone are worthy of my praise.⁹⁸

Worshippers offer their praise and strength in veneration, and God receives it. This is often expressed with two aspects of God in mind: his *transcendence* and his *immanence*.⁹⁹

Transcendent views of God. First, I consider descriptions of God by exploring his transcendent *far* roles as Creator, King, Protector, Savior, and Lord. Then, I

⁹⁷ Chan writes, "If music is to fulfill its intended purpose in worship, it has to be understood as an important medium through which the various components of worship retell the Christian story. If singing fails to communicate the church's metanarrative or to reinforce the church's basic identity as the covenant people of God, then worship has fallen short of being a 'divine office.'" Chan, *Liturgical Theology*, 156–57.

⁹⁸ David Ruis, "You're Worthy of My Praise," CCLI 487976, Shade Tree Music (admin. by Brentwood-Benson Music), Universal Music (admin. by Brentwood-Benson Music), 1991.

⁹⁹ John Frame distinguishes God's transcendence with theological and philosophical descriptions of God as "Most High" (Gen 14:18–22; Deut 32:8; Pss 7:17; 9:2) or "High and lifted up" (Isa 6:1). Frame designates God's transcendence with God's rule and authority. This does not conflict with his immanence, which refers to his covenant presence. An emphasis is on knowing God wholly as he reveals himself. John M. Frame, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Christian Belief* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2013), 39–44.

assess immanent visions of a relationship with God, in his particular *near* roles as Love, Father, and Friend. Rich Mullin captures God’s transcendence, describing God as seated in the heavens:

Our God is an awesome God;
He reigns from heaven above;
With wisdom pow’r and love;
Our God is an awesome God.¹⁰⁰

God’s divine transcendence is also expressed in his greatness, his power over his creation, his royal dignity as supreme ruler, and his strength as protector.

The Creator and the creation. Frequently, the relationship between God and people is expressed in the *Creator-creation* relationship. Steve Fee and Vicky Beeching focus on God the Creator as the source of all life from the first breath:

Creator God You gave me breath so I could praise;
Your great and matchless name; All my days all my days;
So let my whole life be; A blazing offering;
A life that shouts and sings; The greatness of our King.¹⁰¹

Likewise, in “Shout to the Lord” Darlene Zschech recognizes God’s reign as Creator, inviting multitudes to join in rightful worship:

Shout to the Lord; *All the earth let us sing*;
Power and majesty; Praise to the King;
Mountains bow down; And the seas will roar;
At the sound of Your name.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ Rich Mullins, “Awesome God,” CCLI 41099, Universal Music (admin. Brentwood-Benson Music), 1988.

¹⁰¹ Steve Fee and Vicky Beeching, “Glory to God Forever,” CCLI 5384338, sixsteps Songs (admin. Capitol CMG), Thankyou Music (admin. Capitol CMG), Worship Together Music (admin. Capitol CMG), 2006. The writers employ a similar picture in “Great Are You Lord”:

It’s Your breath in our lungs;
So we pour out our praise; We pour out your praise . . .
And all the earth will shout Your praise;
Our hearts will cry these bones will sing; Great are You Lord.

David Leonard, Jason Ingram, and Leslie Jordan, “Great Are You Lord,” CCLI 6460220, Open Hands Music (admin. Essential Music) et al., 2012.

¹⁰² Darlene Zschech, “Shout to the Lord,” CCLI 1406918, Wondrous Worship (admin. Music Services), 1993; emphasis added.

This divine relationship extends throughout the created universe as seen in “God of Wonders”:

*Lord of all creation; Of water earth and sky;
The heavens are Your tabernacle; Glory to the Lord on high;
God of wonders beyond our galaxy; You are holy holy;
The universe declares Your majesty; You are holy holy;
Lord of heaven and earth; Lord of heaven and earth.*¹⁰³

Furthermore, the songs demonstrate the Creation-creature relationship by connecting Christ to his redeemed people. Jennie Lee Riddle’s “Revelation Song” pictures worship in the heavenly realms around Christ who is the Worthy “Lamb Who was slain”¹⁰⁴:

*Filled with wonder, awestruck wonder;
At the mention of Your name;
Jesus Your name is power, breath, and living water;
Such a marv’lous mystery.*¹⁰⁵

The new creation pictured in the song views Christ as its author, and redeemed church singing with the restored creation:

*Holy holy holy; Is the Lord God Almighty;
Who was and is and is to come;
With all creation I sing; Praise to the King of kings;
You are my ev’rything; And I will adore You.*¹⁰⁶

The King and his citizens. God as *King* is another frequent picture of the divine and human relationship. As King, God is the supreme ruler whose authority gives rise to the praise and reverence of his ruled people. God’s supremacy over creation and man is ultimate. Lenny LeBlanc and Paul Baloche explore the heights of which God’s rulership extends over all other authorities and power:

¹⁰³ Marc Byrd and Steve Hindalong, “God of Wonders,” CCLI 3118757, Never say Never Songs (admin. Brentwood-Benson Music) et al., 2000; emphasis added; see also Chris Tomlin, Ed Cash, and Jesse Reeves, “How Great Is Our God,” CCLI 4348399, Rising Springs Music et al., 2004; Jesse Reeves and Laura Story, “Indescribable,” CCLI 4403076, Laura Stories, sixsteps Music, worshiptogether.com (admin. Capitol CMG), 2004.

¹⁰⁴ Jennie Lee Riddle, “Revelation Song,” CCLI 4447960, Gateway Create (admin. Capitol CMG [IMI]), 2004.

¹⁰⁵ Riddle, “Revelation Song”; emphasis added.

¹⁰⁶ Riddle, “Revelation Song”; emphasis added.

Above all powers above all kings;
Above all nature and all created things;
Above all wisdom and all the ways of man;
You were here before the world began;
Above all kingdoms above all thrones;
Above all wonders the world has ever known;
Above all wealth and treasures of the earth;
There's no way to measure; What You're worth.¹⁰⁷

God's authority even extends above the domains of darkness. In "This is Amazing Grace," the writers utilize rhetorical device to assert that every domain is beneath the reign of God. First, they ask about the powers of darkness:

Who breaks the power of sin and darkness;
Whose love is mighty and so much stronger;
The King of Glory the King above all kings.¹⁰⁸

This is followed by the same question concerning the foundations of the earth:

Who shakes the whole earth with holy thunder;
And leaves us breathless in awe and wonder;
The King of Glory the King above all kings.¹⁰⁹

The writers shift tense to personalize what a relationship with a divine king means:

Who brings our chaos back into order;
Who makes the orphan a son and daughter;
The King of Glory the King of Glory.¹¹⁰

This song and others make clear, God's people are not merely his subjects, but rather, they are heirs to his kingdom.

God's royal dignity is expressed in his character. Chris Tomlin exhorts Christians to give thanks to God because of the kind of King he is:

Give thanks to the Lord; Our God and King;

¹⁰⁷ Lenny LeBlanc and Paul Baloche, "Above All," CCLI 2672885, Integrity's Hosanna! Music (admin. Integrity Music), LenSongs (admin. LenSongs), 1999.

¹⁰⁸ Jeremy Riddle, Josh Farro, and Phil Wickham, "This Is Amazing Grace," CCLI 6333821, Phil Wickham Music ([c/o Music Services, Inc.]) et al., 2012.

¹⁰⁹ Riddle, Farro, and Wickham, "This Is Amazing Grace."

¹¹⁰ Riddle, Farro, and Wickham, "This Is Amazing Grace." God's reign is extended to the nations in the final verse to complete the redemption narrative: "Who rules the nations, with truth and justice; Shines like the sun in all of its brilliance; The King of Glory the King above all kings."

His love endures forever;
For He is good, He is above all things;
His love endures forever;
Sing praise sing praise¹¹¹

God is a good King who rules with enduring love over his people. Tomlin continues,

With a mighty hand; And an outstretched arm;
His love endures forever;
For the life that's been reborn;
His love endures forever;
Sing praise sing praise; Forever God is Faithful”¹¹²

The ruling hand of God is mighty, but in Tomlin’s song, it extends a gracious gesture to his beneficiaries, his people.

Associated with God’s kingship is his infinite value to the believer. John Mark McMillan and Sarah McMillan also explore this motif of God as king of the heart:

Let the King of my Heart;
Be the mountain where I run;
The fountain I drink from;
Oh He is my song;
Let the King of my heart;
Be the shadow where I hide;
The ransom for my life;
Oh He is my song;
You are good good oh.¹¹³

As King, God holds primacy in one’s life. McMillan articulates this dynamic relationship in “How He Loves” with these words: “We are His *portion* and He is our *prize*.”¹¹⁴

¹¹¹ Chris Tomlin, “Forever,” CCLI 3148428, Rising Springs Music (admin. Capitol CMG), Vamos (admin. Capitol CMG), worshiptogether.com (admin. Capitol CMG), 2001; emphasis added.

¹¹² Tomlin, “Forever.”

¹¹³ The rest of the song continues along these lines using poetic imagery to describe God’s primacy in one’s heart:

Let the King of my heart; Be the wind inside my sails; The anchor in the waves;
Oh He is my song;
Let the King of my heart; Be the fire inside my veins; The echo of my days;
Oh He is my song; You are good good oh.”

John Mark McMillan and Sarah McMillan, “King of My Heart,” CCLI 7046145, Meaux Jeux Music (admin. Capitol CMG), Raucous Ruckus (admin. Capitol CMG), Sarah McMillan (admin. Capitol CMG), 2015.

¹¹⁴ John Mark McMillan, “How He Loves,” CCLI 5032549, Integrity’s Hosanna! Music (admin. Integrity Music), 2005; emphasis added.

Dennis Jernigan, similarly, employs the “treasure metaphor”:

You are my strength when I am weak; *You are the treasure* that I seek;
You are my all in all;
Seeking You as a precious jewel; Lord to give up I’d be a fool;
You are my all in all.¹¹⁵

As King, God is the center of his people’s lives.

The Protector and the vulnerable. The juxtaposition of God’s might and mercy is portrayed in God’s role as his people’s *protector*. Many songs trace how God is depicted as a protector who comforts, guides, and defends his people against sin and darkness. Christians are often depicted as those who are vulnerable and in need; however, because of their relationship with Christ, they can find assurance and confidence. For example, in Brenton Brown and Ken Riley’s “Everlasting God,” God is conveyed as protector who defends and comforts his people with infinite stamina.¹¹⁶ They write,

You are the everlasting God; The everlasting God;
You do not faint; You won't grow weary;
You're the defender of the weak; You comfort those in need;
You lift us up on wings like eagles.¹¹⁷

Similarly, the song “Lord I Need You” captures dependency for God:

Lord I need You oh I need You;
Ev’ry hour I need You;
My one defense, my righteousness;
Oh God how I need You.¹¹⁸

The refrain “I need you,” is the motto of the Christian.

¹¹⁵ Dennis Jernigan, “You Are My All in All,” CCLI 825356, Shepherd’s Heart Music (admin. PraiseCharts), 1991; emphasis added.

¹¹⁶ In his published biography, Brown shares that both he and his wife fell ill with chronic fatigue syndrome in 2003. Brenton Brown, “Bio,” Brenton Brown Music, accessed February 12, 2023, <https://www.brentonbrownmusic.com/bio>. This provides a unique perspective into the song’s portrayal of one’s dependency on God’s strength when one sings, “Strength will rise as we wait upon the Lord.” Brenton Brown and Ken Riley, “Everlasting God,” CCLI 4556538, Thankyou Music (admin. Capitol CMG), 2005.

¹¹⁷ Brown and Riley, “Everlasting God”; emphasis added.

¹¹⁸ Christy Nockels et al., “Lord I Need You,” CCLI 5925687, sixsteps Music (admin. Capitol CMG) et al., 2011.

People are dependent on God their protector for guidance through trials. This dependency on God's leadership is conveyed in the song, "Oceans (Where Feet My Fail)."¹¹⁹ In it, individuals find comfort and guidance thanks to the voice of God, even though they are lost and vulnerable in the vast mystery of the ocean:

You call me out upon the waters;
The great unknown where feet may fail . . .
Your grace abounds in deepest waters;
Your sov'reign hand will be my guide;
Where feet may fail and fear surrounds me;
You've never failed and You won't start now.¹²⁰

God is present in life's deepest challenges and he responds to the cries of his people.

Frequently, God is depicted as a *Protector-Warrior*. Whereas God is a defender for his people against trials and tribulations, against sin he is portrayed as a victorious warrior. Adapting Psalm 27, Tomlin portrays God as a military leader in "Whom Shall I Fear (God of Angel Armies)."¹²¹ God hears the call of his people and is a vanguard towards the enemy:

You crush the enemy underneath my feet; You are my sword and shield;
Though troubles linger still; Whom shall I fear;
I know Who goes before me; I know Who stands behind;
The God of angel armies is always by my side.¹²²

Because God has claimed the victory on behalf of his people, there is nothing to fear:

"My strength is in Your name; For You alone can save; You will deliver me; *Yours is the*

¹¹⁹ Joel Houston, Matt Crocker, and Salomon Ligthelm, "Oceans (Where Feet May Fail)," Hillsong Music Australia (admin. Capitol CMG), 2012.

¹²⁰ Houston, Crocker, and Ligthelm, "Oceans (Where Feet May Fail)." Specifically, the song addresses God the Spirit, the one who calls and leads:

Spirit lead me where my trust is without borders; Let me walk upon the waters;
Wherever You would call me; Take me deeper than my feet could ever wander;
And my faith will be made stronger; In the presence of my Saviour.

¹²¹ Chris Tomlin, Ed Cash, and Scott Cash, "Whom Shall I Fear (God of Angel Armies)," CCLI 6440288, Capitol CMG Paragon (admin. Capitol CMG), McTyeire Music (admin. Capitol CMG), S. D. G. (admin. Capitol CMG), Twelve Lions Music (admin. Capitol CMG), Worship Together Music (admin. Capitol CMG), 2012.

¹²² Tomlin, Cash, and Cash, "Whom Shall I Fear (God of Angel Armies)"; emphasis added.

victory; Whom shall I fear.”¹²³

In Kari Jobe’s “Forever (We Sing Hallelujah),” the use of war imagery is frequent, describing Christ’s campaign against sin:

One final breath He gave; As heaven looked away;
The Son of God was laid in darkness;
A battle in the grave; The war on death was waged;
The power of hell forever broken.¹²⁴

The resurrection is the image of Jesus’s triumph over death:

The ground began to shake; The stone was rolled away;
His perfect love could not be overcome;
Now death where is your sting;
Our resurrected King has rendered you defeated.¹²⁵

Christ also claims victory over dark spiritual forces. In “Tremble,” Jesus intimidates and overwhelms the opposition:

Jesus Jesus, You make the darkness tremble;
Jesus Jesus, You silence fear . . .
Your name is a light that the shadows can’t deny;
Your name cannot be overcome;
Your name is alive forever lifted high;
Your name cannot be overcome.¹²⁶

God the Warrior fights on behalf of his people. As the song title suggests, “The Lion and the Lamb” portrays God as a protective lion: “Our God is the Lion; The Lion of Judah; He’s roaring with power and fighting our battles.”¹²⁷ The song “See a Victory” similarly

¹²³ Tomlin, Cash, and Cash, “Whom Shall I Fear (God of Angel Armies)”; emphasis added. Tomlin does something similar in his song, “Our God,” where he asks, “And if our God is for us; Then who could ever stop us; And if our God is with us; Then what could stand against.” Chris Tomlin et al., “Our God,” CCLI 5677416, Atlas Mountain Song (admin. Capitol CMG) et al., 2010.

¹²⁴ Brian Johnson et al., “Forever (We Sing Hallelujah),” CCLI 7001228, Bethel Music et al., 2013; emphasis added.

¹²⁵ Johnson et al., “Forever (We Sing Hallelujah).” Phil Wickham refers to Jesus as “Our Hero of Heaven” who has “conquered the grave.” Jonas Myrin and Phil Wickham, “Great Things,” CCLI 7111321, Capitol CMG Paragon et al., 2018; see also Ben Fielding and Reuben Morgan, “Our God Is Able,” CCLI 5894275, Hillsong Music Australia (admin. Capitol CMG), 2010.

¹²⁶ Andres Figueroa et al., “Tremble,” CCLI 7065049, All Essential Music (admin. Essential Music) et al., 2016.

¹²⁷ Brenton Brown, Brian Johnson, and Leeland Mooring, “The Lion and the Lamb,” CCLI 7038281, Bethel Music et al., 2015.

draws upon military language to describe the relation between God, man, and the enemy:

The weapon may be formed but it won't prosper;
When the darkness falls it won't prevail;
'Cause the God I serve knows only how to triumph;
My God will never fail.¹²⁸

Because of one's relationship with God, the Victor, one can find courage: "There's power in the mighty Name of Jesus; Every war He wages He will win," and the writers continue, "I'm not backing down from any giant; I know how this story ends."¹²⁹ For Christians, the reality is that a cosmic battle rages, but the victory is sure. This sense of victory evokes a confident assurance as seen in the chorus: "I'm gonna see a victory; I'm gonna see a victory; For the battle belongs to You Lord."¹³⁰

The Savior and the liberated. Christian worship emphasizes the salvific work of Jesus Christ. Ben Fielding and Reuben Morgan's chorus declares God's conquering power in Christ:

Saviour, He can move the mountains;
My God is mighty to save; He is mighty to save;
Forever Author of salvation; He rose and conquered the grave;
Jesus conquered the grave.¹³¹

Similarly, Brown and Baloché's anthem declares, "Hosanna, hosanna; You are the God who saves us."¹³² Jesus is frequently presented as a savior and deliver, while CWM often portrays Christians as once captives who are delivered by Christ. This is most notable in Tomlin's treatment of Amazing Grace:

My chains are gone I've been set free;

¹²⁸ Ben Fielding et al., "See a Victory," CCLI 7129060, Music by Elevation Worship et al. 2019.

¹²⁹ Fielding et al., "See a Victory."

¹³⁰ Fielding et al., "See a Victory."

¹³¹ Ben Fielding and Reuben Morgan, "Mighty to Save," CCLI 4591782, Hillsong Music Australia (admin. Capitol CMG), 2006.

¹³² Brenton Brown and Paul Baloché, "Hosanna (Praise Is Rising)," CCLI 4662491, Thankyou Music (admin. Capitol CMG), Integrity's Hosanna! Music (admin. Integrity Music), 2005.

My God my Savior has ransomed me;
And like a flood His mercy rains;
Unending love amazing grace.¹³³

Jesus is the Savior who brings life and freedom. These themes are prevalent in Alexander Pappas's and Aodhan King's song "Alive":

In the midst of the darkest night; Let Your love be the shining light;
Breaking chains that were holding me; You sent Your Son down and set me free . . .
'Cause You are You are You are my freedom;
We lift You higher lift You higher . . . *Your love has set us free (oh).*¹³⁴

The bondage that once held Christian's prisoner includes shame and the debt of sin. The captive and liberation metaphor is explicit in "Death Was Arrested":

Released from my chains I'm a pris'ner no more;
My shame was a ransom He faithfully bore;
He cancelled *my debt* and He called me His friend;
When death was arrested and my life began.¹³⁵

In an ironic twist, Jesus the liberator, puts *death in chains*.¹³⁶

CWM often portrays Jesus as a *rescuer*, such as in "Jesus Messiah." The work of Christ is extolled in his many titles: "Jesus Messiah Name above all names; Blessed *Redeemer*, Emmanuel; *The Rescue for sinners*; *The Ransom* from heaven; Jesus Messiah Lord of all."¹³⁷ The response of the rescued is hope and praise: "All our hope is in you; all the glory to God."¹³⁸

¹³³ Chris Tomlin, John Newton, and Louie Giglio, "Amazing Grace (My Chains Are Gone)," CCLI 4768151, sixsteps Music (admin. Capitol CMG), Vamos (admin. Capitol CMG), worshiptogether.com (admin. Capitol CMG), 2006; emphasis added. Wickham and Johnson similarly praise God: "Hallelujah praise the One who set me free; Hallelujah death has lost its grip on me; *You have broken every chain.*" Brian Johnson and Phil Wickham, "Living Hope," CCLI 7106807, Phil Wickham Music (Fair Trade Music [c/o Essential Music]) et al., 2017.

¹³⁴ Alexander Pappas and Aodhan King, "Alive," CCLI 6605212, Hillsong Music Australia (admin. Capitol CMG), 2012; emphasis added.

¹³⁵ Adam Kersh et al., "Death Was Arrested," CCLI 7046448, Seems Like Music (admin. BMG Rights [c/o Music Services]) et al., 2015; emphasis added.

¹³⁶ The lyrics proclaim, "Oh we're free free forever we're free; Come join the song of all the redeemed; Yes we're free free forever amen; *When death was arrested and my life began.*" Kersh et al., "Death Was Arrested."

¹³⁷ Chris Tomlin et al., "Jesus Messiah," CCLI 5183443, Rising Springs Music (admin. Capitol CMG) et al., 2008; emphasis added.

¹³⁸ Tomlin et al., "Jesus Messiah."

“Glorious Day” depicts sin as a heavy burden and a tomb for the dead:

I was *buried* beneath my shame;
Who could carry that kind of *weight*;
It was my *tomb* 'til I met You . . .
I needed rescue my sin was *heavy*;
But *chains* break at the weight of Your glory.¹³⁹

Evoking the scene of Lazarus in John 11:43, Jesus is pictured calling to the captives:

“You called my name, and I ran out of that grave; Out of darkness into Your glorious day.”¹⁴⁰

Lord and servant. CWM songs portray those who have been delivered joyfully submitting to the lordship of Christ. Brown prays for Christ’s rule in every dimension of life: “Lord reign in me, reign in Your pow’r; Over all my dreams in my darkest hour; You are the Lord of all I am; So won’t You reign in me again.”¹⁴¹ The theme of surrender emerges as Christians offer their lives to Christ in order to change. Joel Houston relinquishes control to Christ for genuine transformation: “In my heart in my soul; Lord I give You control; Consume me from the inside out Lord,” and he continues, “Let justice and praise; Become my embrace; To love You from the inside out.”¹⁴²

Surrendering to Christ’s lordship is often a response to his salvation. In one Tomlin song, worshipers surrender their life as a response to Christ’s redemptive work:

At the cross at the cross; *I surrender my life*;
I’m in awe of You I’m in awe of You;
Where Your love ran red and my sin washed white;

¹³⁹ Jason Ingram et al., “Glorious Day,” CCLI 7081388, KPS1.0 (admin. Capitol CMG) et al., 2017; emphasis added.

¹⁴⁰ Ingram et al., “Glorious Day,” 2017.

¹⁴¹ Brenton Brown, “Lord Reign in Me,” CCLI 2490706, Vineyard Songs (UK/Eire) (admin. Integrity Music), 1998.

¹⁴² Joel Houston, “From the Inside Out,” CCLI 4705176, Hillsong Music Australia (admin. Capitol CMG), 2005.

*I owe all to You I owe all to You (Jesus).*¹⁴³

Similarly, Keith Getty and Stuart Townend conclude their song with this resolute response:

No guilt in life no fear in death; This is the power of Christ in me;
*From life's first cry to final breath; Jesus commands my destiny.*¹⁴⁴

As Lord, Christ instructs and orders the Christian's life.

Immanent views of God. As previously seen, transcendent views of God inform relational dynamics of authority and power. This section explores God's immanence and his particular involvement with individuals. It surveys how CWM portrays God's nearness to his people.¹⁴⁵ God and man mutually draw near. Adapting Psalm 84, Redman demonstrates that nearness with God is a hallmark of the divine relationship:

My heart and flesh cry out; For You the living God;
Your Spirit's water to my soul;
I've tasted and I've seen; *Come once again to me;*
*I will draw near to You; I will draw near to You.*¹⁴⁶

Similarly, Kelly Carpenter's song is a prayer to God for nearness, friendship, and warmth, as seen in these lyrics: "Draw me close to You, never let me go . . . To hear You say that I'm Your friend . . . You are my desire no one else will do . . . To feel the warmth of Your embrace . . . You're all I want . . . Help me know You are near."¹⁴⁷ CWM

¹⁴³ Chris Tomlin et al., "At the Cross (Love Ran Red)," CCLI 7017786, Countless Wonder (admin. Brentwood-Benson Music) et al., 2014; emphasis added.

¹⁴⁴ Keith Getty and Stuart Townend, "In Christ Alone," CCLI 3350395, Thankyou Music (admin. Capitol CMG), 2001; emphasis added.

¹⁴⁵ God is near, in a general sense, to his people—especially in corporate worship as conveyed in Sinach's Way Maker: "You are *here moving in our midst*; I worship You I worship You; *You are here working in this place*; I worship You." Osinachi Kalu Okoro Egbu, "Way Maker," CCLI 7115744, Integrity Music, 2016; emphasis added; see also Bryan Torwalt and Katie Torwalt, "Holy Spirit," CCLI 6087919, Capitol CMG Genesis (admin. Capitol CMG), Jesus Culture Music (admin. Capitol CMG), 2011.

¹⁴⁶ Matt Redman, "Better Is One Day," CCLI 1097451, Thankyou Music (admin. Capitol CMG), 1995; emphasis added.

¹⁴⁷ Kelly Carpenter, "Draw Me Close," CCLI 1459484, Mercy/Vineyard (admin. Integrity Music), 1994.

reveals three distinct portraits of God’s immanent relationship as beloved, father, and friend.

Beloved. CWM is unapologetic in its portrayal of love between God and his people. This is seen in Klein’s simple refrain: “I Love You Lord; And I lift my voice.”¹⁴⁸ Tim Hughes’s song expresses love towards God: “*Beautiful One I love You; Beautiful One I adore,*” and love is reciprocated:

You opened my eyes to Your Wonders anew;
You captured my heart with this love . . .
You opened my eyes to Your wonders anew;
You captured my heart with this love;
‘Cause nothing on earth is as beautiful as You.¹⁴⁹

God welcomes the love and admiration of his people. In “One Thing Remains,” God’s love is admired throughout the song by the use of comparative statements:

Higher than the mountains that I face;
Stronger than the power of the grave;
Constant in the trial and the change;
One thing remains; Your love will never change.¹⁵⁰

This love is eternal and engulfs the individual: “On and on it goes; it overwhelms and satisfies my soul,” as the song proclaims.¹⁵¹ Devotion and adoration is also reflected in the loving relationship between and an affectionate God and the worshipper. Brown and Doerksen’s anthem declares,

Your love is amazing; Steady and unchanging;
Your love is a mountain; Firm beneath my feet;

¹⁴⁸ Laurie Klein, “I Love You, Lord,” CCLI 25266, House Of Mercy Music (admin. Brentwood-Benson Music), 1978, 1980.

¹⁴⁹ Tim Hughes, “Beautiful One,” CCLI 3915912, Thankyou Music (admin. Capitol CMG), 2002; emphasis added; see also Martin Smith, “I Could Sing of Your Love Forever,” CCLI 1043199, Curious? Music UK (admin. Integrity), 1994.

¹⁵⁰ Brian Johnson, Christa Black Gifford, and Jeremy Riddle, “One Thing Remains (Your Love Never Fails),” CCLI 5508444, ChristaJoy Music (admin. Bethel Music), Mercy/Vineyard (admin. Vineyard Music), Bethel Music, 2010.

¹⁵¹ Johnson, Gifford, and Riddle, “One Thing Remains.”

Your love is a myst'ry; How You gently lift me;
When I am surrounded; Your love carries me.¹⁵²

This loving relationship with God sustains the person. Morgan declares a similar sentiment in “I Give You My Heart.”¹⁵³ He offers devotion with his adoration.

Receiving and offering love to God is the heart’s deepest desire, according to the representative songs. In “Graves into Gardens,” God satisfies every desire:

I searched the world but it couldn’t fill me;
Man’s empty praise and treasures that fade; Are never enough;
Then You came along and put me back together;
And every desire is now satisfied here in Your love.¹⁵⁴

Put another way, in God one finds wholeness, as illustrated by Ingram and Morgan’s “Forever Reign”: “(Oh) I’m running to Your arms . . . The riches of Your love will always be enough; Nothing compares to Your embrace.”¹⁵⁵ While some songs portray people pursuing God’s love, God is also portrayed as the pursuer of these relationships. In “Reckless Love,” Cory Asbury adapts the parable of the Lost Sheep (Luke 15:7), examining the depths of love that pursues a person:

O the overwhelming never-ending reckless love of God;
O it chases me down, fights ‘til I’m found;
Leaves the ninety-nine.¹⁵⁶

In this song, Asbury expresses the pursuing love of God that chases even a foe: “When I was Your foe still Your love fought for me; You have been so so good to me.”¹⁵⁷

¹⁵² Brenton Brown and Brian Doerksen, “Hallelujah,” CCLI 3091812, Vineyard Songs (admin. Vineyard Music UK), 2000.

¹⁵³ See Reuben Morgan, “I Give You My Heart,” CCLI 1866132, Hillsong Music Australia (admin. Capitol CMG), 1995.

¹⁵⁴ Brandon Lake et al., “Graves into Gardens,” CCLI 7138219, Brandon Lake Music (admin. Bethel Music), 2019.

¹⁵⁵ Jason Ingram and Reuben Morgan, “Forever Reign,” CCLI 5639997, Hillsong Music (admin. Capitol CMG), Sony/ATV Timber (admin. Sony/ATV Music), West Main Music (admin. Sony/ATV Music), Spirit Nashville Three (admin. Spirit Music), 2009.

¹⁵⁶ Cory Asbury, Caleb Culver, and Ran Jackson, “Reckless Love,” CCLI 7089641, Cory Asbury (admin. Bethel Music) et al., 2017.

¹⁵⁷ Asbury, Culver, and Jackson, “Reckless Love.”

Divine family. The love of God is expressed often using familial language.

God is portrayed as father while redeemed people are depicted as his children. This is the motif of Townend's song:

How deep *the Father's love for us*;
How vast beyond all measure;
That He should give His only Son;
To make a wretch His treasure;
How great the pain of searing loss;
The Father turns His face away;
As wounds which mar the Chosen One;
Bring many sons to glory.¹⁵⁸

God expresses his incalculable love by offering his only Son, in order to make sinners sons. Anthony Brown and Pat Barrett believe this relationship answers the “questions” of life: You're a Good Good Father; It's who You are; I am loved by You; It's who I am.”¹⁵⁹ Ben Fielding and Reuben Morgan answer the proverbial question, “Who am I?” with the same familial language:

Who You [God] say I am: In my Father's house;
There's a place for me; *I'm a child of God*;
Yes I am; I am chosen not forsaken;
*I am who You say I am.*¹⁶⁰

The language of adoption is employed to articulate the transition into this divine family. Several songs identify Christians as former orphans: “My orphan heart was given a name,”¹⁶¹ and “Who makes the orphan a son and daughter.”¹⁶² “No Longer Slaves” most explicitly identifies the new birth of God's children: “Love has called my name; *I've been born again into Your family; Your blood flows through my veins.*”¹⁶³

¹⁵⁸ Stuart Townend, “How Deep the Father's Love For Us,” CCLI 1558110, Thankyou Music (admin. Capitol CMG), 1995; emphasis added.

¹⁵⁹ Anthony Brown and Pat Barrett, “Good Good Father,” CCLI 7036612, Capitol CMG Paragon (admin. Capitol CMG) et al., 2014.

¹⁶⁰ Ben Field and Reuben Morgan, “Who You Say I Am,” CCLI 7102401, Hillsong Music Australia (admin. Capitol CMG), 2017; emphasis added.

¹⁶¹ Kersh et al., “Death Was Arrested.”

¹⁶² Riddle, Farro, and Wickham, “This Is Amazing Grace.”

¹⁶³ Brian Johnson, Joel Case and Jonathan David Helser, “No Longer Slaves,” CCLI 7030123,

Christians were once slaves, but now they've been "rescued," so they can sing: "I'm no longer a slave to fear; I am a child of God."¹⁶⁴

At times the depth of the familial relationship extends with other descriptions. Matt Maher's song of praise combines the imagery of God's covenant people with being his children: "So remember Your people . . . Your children . . . Your promise O God."¹⁶⁵ Finally, in "Goodness of God," one's relationship with God is described intimately with God's faithful love expressed as both father and friend:

I love Your voice;
You have led me through the fire;
In darkest night; You are close like no other;
I've known You as a father; I've known You as a friend;
I have lived in the goodness of God.¹⁶⁶

Divine friendship. This section further explores the nature of friendship with God. CWM songs convey a friendship with God that is marked by being known by him. For example, Israel Houghton and Michael Gungor express this in their song: "Who am I that *You are mindful of me; That You hear me when I call; Is it true that You are thinking of me; How You love me it's amazing.*"¹⁶⁷ The chorus of the song celebrates friendship with God: "I am a friend of God . . . God Almighty Lord of Glory; You have called me friend."¹⁶⁸ Notions of love, as well as fulfilled desires, describe a relationship with God in "Graves into Gardens" by Elevation Music,¹⁶⁹ as does friendship, marked by disclosures

Bethel Music, 2014; emphasis added.

¹⁶⁴ Johnson, Case and Helser, "No Longer Slaves."

¹⁶⁵ Matt Maher, "Your Grace Is Enough," CCLI 4477026, Thankyou Music (Admin. by Capitol CMG), 2003.

¹⁶⁶ Ben Fielding et al., "Goodness of God," CCLI 7117726, Capitol CMG Paragon (admin. Capitol CMG) et al., 2018; emphasis added.

¹⁶⁷ Israel Houghton and Michael Gungor, "Friend of God," CCLI 3991651, Integrity Worship Music (admin. Integrity Music), Integrity's Praise! Music (admin. Integrity Music), Sound Of the New Breed (admin. Integrity Music), 2003; emphasis added.

¹⁶⁸ Houghton and Gungor, "Friend of God."

¹⁶⁹ They write, "And *every desire is now satisfied here in Your love; There is nothing better*

of weakness and freedom to be vulnerable:

I'm not afraid to show You my weakness; My failures and flaws;
Lord You've seen them all; And You still call me friend.¹⁷⁰

Portrayals of Human Relationship with the Social

Depictions of human relationships with one another reveals a second aspect of relational portrayals in CWM. In the song “Build My Life,” the writers describe how love for God transforms social relationships.¹⁷¹ In the chorus, the prayer is “fill me with Your heart; And lead me in Your love to those around me.”¹⁷² Portrayals of a relationship with God often connects relationship with others. Given that congregational songs are most often sung in church gatherings, mentions of social relationships are nearly exclusively in the context of the church. This section examines how CWM portrays one’s relationship with the church as a corporate identity, namely as corporate worshipers and corporate witnesses.

Corporate worshipers. While the majority of CWM speaks to various relational aspects with God, there are a few songs that address one’s relationship with a community. These songs use the plural tense and often address one another as God’s covenant people. In these songs, the Christian community shares a corporate identity as the church. First, the corporate identity of Christians is reflected as *worshipers of the Living God*. Through song, Christians call each other to worship in solidarity. For instance, in “Come Now Is the Time to Worship” the church is a worshipping community,

than you.” Lake et al., “Graves into Gardens”; emphasis added.

¹⁷⁰ Lake et al., “Graves Into Gardens.”

¹⁷¹ Brett Younker et al., “Build My Life,” Kaple Music (admin. Bethel Music) et al., 2016.

¹⁷² Younker et al., “Build My Life.”

offering an invitation to one another.¹⁷³ The opening of Wickham’s “Great Things” similarly welcomes the gathered worshipping church: “Come let us worship our King; Come let us bow at His feet; He has done great things.”¹⁷⁴

These songs encourage believers to worship together through various actions, most often singing and praising. Brown and Baloché describe the swelling of praise to God that erupts from the Church: “Praise is rising; Eyes are turning to You; We turn to You.”¹⁷⁵ This praise responds to the salvific work of Christ.¹⁷⁶ Tomlin’s “Forever” calls the church to *sing* in response to God’s presence with his covenant people: “*Sing praise sing praise; Forever God is faithful; Forever God is strong; Forever God is with us; Forever.*”¹⁷⁷

Other songs describe worship as seeking after God in prayer and petition. In Brown’s “Everlasting God,” individuals call each other to worship through *waiting* on the Lord: “Strength will rise as we *wait* upon the Lord.”¹⁷⁸ Packiam and Baloché describe how the church prays for God’s strength and protection:

Jesus in Your Name *we pray*;
Come and fill our hearts today;
Lord *give us strength* to live for You;
And glorify Your Name.¹⁷⁹

The believer does not just identify with its immediate local community; CWM

¹⁷³ See Brian Doerksen, “Come Now Is the Time to Worship,” CCLI 2430948, Vineyard Songs (UK/Eire) (admin. Integrity Music), 1998.

¹⁷⁴ Myrin and Wickham, “Great Things.”

¹⁷⁵ Brown and Baloché, “Hosanna (Praise is Rising).”

¹⁷⁶ The chorus of “Hosanna” reveals the reason for the church’s song: “Hosanna, hosanna; You are the God who saves us; Worthy of all our praises.” Brown and Baloché, “Hosanna (Praise is Rising).”

¹⁷⁷ Tomlin, “Forever”; emphasis added.

¹⁷⁸ Brown and Riley, “Everlasting God”; emphasis added.

¹⁷⁹ Glen Packiam and Paul Baloché, “Your Name,” CCLI 4611679, Integrity Worship Music (admin. Integrity Music), Integrity’s Hosanna! Music (admin. Integrity Music), 2006; emphasis added.

places them with the global Christian community as well. Packiam and Baloché envision a larger future community in the chorus of “Your Name,” where the church sings:

Your Name is a strong and mighty tower;
Your Name is a shelter like no other;
Your Name, *let the nations sing it louder*;
'Cause nothing has the power to save; But Your Name.¹⁸⁰

This leads to a second portrayal of human relationships within the Christian community. Worship leads to witness.

Corporate witnesses. Christians and the church function as corporate witnesses to each other and to the watching world. Songs often function as narrative and response. In terms of narrative, songs usually detail the work of Christ, while also calling Christians to respond by singing. “Forever (We Sing Hallelujah)” attempts to do both. First, it describes the death of the Savior: “The Savior of the world was fallen; His body on the cross; His blood poured out for us.”¹⁸¹ Then, the song proclaims the Savior’s victorious resurrection:

The ground began to shake;
The stone was rolled away;
His perfect love could not be overcome;
Now death where is your sting;
Our resurrected King has rendered you defeated.¹⁸²

The song concludes, in response to this story, with the refrain, “We sing hallelujah we sing hallelujah; We sing hallelujah the Lamb has overcome.”¹⁸³

The church witnesses to each other about the finished work of Christ. Similarly, in “Jesus Messiah” Christians testify of Christ’s active ministry to the body of believers.¹⁸⁴ It begins, “He became sin who knew no sin; That we might become His

¹⁸⁰ Packiam and Baloché, “Your Name”; emphasis added.

¹⁸¹ Johnson et al., “Forever (We Sing Hallelujah).”

¹⁸² Johnson et al., “Forever (We Sing Hallelujah).”

¹⁸³ Johnson et al., “Forever (We Sing Hallelujah).”

¹⁸⁴ Tomlin et al., “Jesus Messiah.” The corporate voice of the song is in the bridge: “All our

righteousness; He humbled Himself and carried the cross.”¹⁸⁵ This is followed by his death on their behalf: “His body the bread His blood the wine; Broken and poured out all for love; The whole earth trembled and the veil was torn.”¹⁸⁶ In response, the church heralds the name of their Redeemer:

Jesus Messiah Name above all names;
Blessed Redeemer Emmanuel;
The Rescue for sinners; The Ransom from heaven;
Jesus Messiah Lord of all.¹⁸⁷

Corporate prophet. A few songs reflect this witness as *watchers in waiting*, or as saints anticipating the first and second appearance of Christ.¹⁸⁸ Brooke Ligertwood and Jason Ingram explore this in their song, which also presents a biblical narrative of the gospel:

In the darkness we were waiting;
Without hope, without light;
Till from Heaven You came running;
There was mercy in Your eyes.¹⁸⁹

Vertical Worship represents Christians as those who patiently wait for Christ’s second coming, but who also experience his manifest presence in gathered worship.¹⁹⁰ Verse 1 explores this anticipation in the assembly:

hope is in You.”

¹⁸⁵ Tomlin et al., “Jesus Messiah.”

¹⁸⁶ Tomlin et al., “Jesus Messiah.”

¹⁸⁷ Tomlin et al., “Jesus Messiah.”

¹⁸⁸ Herman Bavinck writes, “The church itself is a prophetic and all Christians share in Christ’s anointing and are called to confess his Name. Christ is the Chief Prophet, but he regularly employs peoples as his organs.” Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics: Abridged in One Volume*, edited by John Bolt (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 633.

¹⁸⁹ They continue detailing how the Messiah fulfills the Scriptures: “To fulfil the law and prophets; To a virgin came the Word; From a throne of endless glory; To a cradle in the dirt.” Brooke Ligertwood, Jason Ingram, and Scott Ligertwood, “King of Kings,” CCLI 7127647, Hillsong Music Australia (admin. Capitol CMG), Fellow Ships Music (admin. Essential Music LLC), So Essential Tunes (admin. Essential Music LLC), 2019.

¹⁹⁰ Andi Rozier et al., “Open Up the Heavens,” CCLI 6304702, Curb Songs (admin. Curb Music) et al., 2012.

We've waited for this day;
We're gathered in Your Name;
Calling out to You;
Your glory like a fire awakening desire;
Will burn our hearts with truth.¹⁹¹

Verse 2 applies this anticipation to Christ's return:

Your presence in this place Your glory on our face;
We're looking to the sky; Descending like a cloud;
You're standing with us now; Lord unveil our eyes.¹⁹²

Brown, Johnson, and Mooring employ prophetic imagery from Revelation 5, envisioning the whole world bowing the knee to Christ in the second coming.¹⁹³ In the first verse of their song, Christians witness to each other about his return:

He's coming on the clouds;
Kings and kingdoms will bow down;
And every chain will break;
As broken hearts declare His praise;
For who can stop the Lord Almighty.¹⁹⁴

The church reminds itself of their coming Lord's identity:

Our God is the Lion; The Lion of Judah;
He's roaring with power; And fighting our battles;
And every knee will bow before Him;
Our God is the Lamb; The Lamb that was slain.¹⁹⁵

The church is also portrayed as a witness to the unbelieving world. In the opening verse of Robin Mark's anthem, the world is compared to the days of the prophets:

These are the days of Elijah;
Declaring the Word of the Lord;
And these are the days; Of Your servant Moses;
Righteousness being restored;
And though these are days; Of great trial;

¹⁹¹ Rozier et al., "Open Up the Heavens."

¹⁹² Rozier et al., "Open Up the Heavens."

¹⁹³ Brown, Johnson, and Mooring, "The Lion and the Lamb."

¹⁹⁴ Brown, Johnson, and Mooring, "The Lion and the Lamb."

¹⁹⁵ Brown, Johnson, and Mooring, "The Lion and the Lamb."

Of famine and darkness and sword.¹⁹⁶

The church, therefore, is depicted as Elijah and Moses: “Still *we are the voice*; In the desert crying; Prepare ye the way of the Lord.”¹⁹⁷

The church also calls to the hurting world and invites them to receive the gift of forgiveness in Christ. Elevation Worship provides an example, as they portray the church calling to those who are “hurting,” “broken within,” and “Overwhelmed by the weight” of sin.¹⁹⁸ Their invitation is to hear the call of Jesus and be forgiven:

O come to the altar; The Father’s arms are open wide;
Forgiveness was bought with; The precious blood of Jesus Christ.¹⁹⁹

The song concludes with a call to the newly forgiven to join the corporate witness: “Bear the cross as you wait for the crown; Tell the world of the treasure you’ve found.”²⁰⁰

Self. This section concludes by considering a minority of songs that address the individual’s relationship to the self; within these songs, the self is primarily an admonisher, catechist, and historian of redemption.

The psalmist turns to himself and says things like, “Why are you cast down” (Pss 42:5, 11; 43:5), and “Bless the Lord, O my soul.” (Pss 103:1–2; 104:1). In this way the individual talks to the self as an *admonisher* and *encourager*.²⁰¹ Myrin and Redman adapt Psalm 103 as an encourage to the self:

¹⁹⁶ Robin Mark, “The Days of Elijah,” CCLI 1537904, Song Solutions Daybreak (admin. Song Solutions), 1996.

¹⁹⁷ Mark, “The Days of Elijah”; emphasis added.

¹⁹⁸ Chris Brown et al., “O Come to the Altar,” CCLI 7051511, Music by Elevation Worship (admin. Essential Music), 2015. This song poses a challenge for categorization since it could be interpreted as addressing the individual in the form of self-talk. It also speaks about one’s relationship to Christ as Savior. As do many of these songs, it could be viewed from multiple angles. However, given the liturgical application of the song as a corporate response, it is best understood as a corporate invitation to the church.

¹⁹⁹ Brown et al., “O Come to the Altar.”

²⁰⁰ Brown et al., “O Come to the Altar.”

²⁰¹ Martyn Lloyd-Jones suggests that in the relationship between individual and self, the individual is the one who talks and the self is the one who listens: “We must talk to ourselves instead of allowing ‘ourselves’ to talk to us!” D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Spiritual Depression: Its Causes and Its Cure* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 20–21.

Bless the Lord O my soul O my soul;
Worship His holy name;
Sing like never before; O my soul;
I'll worship Your holy name.²⁰²

Self-encouragement and self-admonishment is often conveyed in the resolve of the individual. The resolve is seen in the final stanza of “In Christ Alone,” which proclaims, “No guilt in life no fear in death; This is the power of Christ in me.”²⁰³

Bethel Music describes this resolve amidst great opposition:

I raise a hallelujah in the presence of my enemies;
I raise a hallelujah *louder than the unbelief*;
I raise a hallelujah my weapon is a melody;
I raise a hallelujah Heaven comes to fight for me.²⁰⁴

By talking to the self, hope develops: “I’m gonna sing in the middle of the storm . . . *Up from the ashes hope will arise.*”²⁰⁵ At the same time self-talk loosens the grip of darkness and fear:

I raise a hallelujah with everything inside of me;
I raise a hallelujah *I will watch the darkness flee*;
I raise a hallelujah in the middle of the mystery;
I raise a hallelujah *fear you lost your hold on me.*²⁰⁶

Hillsong Music, with their modern take on Edward Mote’s hymn, reminds the individual self to rest on the grace of Christ during trials:

When darkness seems to hide His face;
I rest on His unchanging grace;
In every high and stormy gale;
My anchor holds within the veil.²⁰⁷

²⁰² Jonas Myrin and Matt Redman, “10,000 Reasons (Bless the Lord),” CCLI 6016351, Atlas Mountain Songs (admin. Capitol CMG) et al., 2011.

²⁰³ Getty and Townend, “In Christ Alone,” 2001.

²⁰⁴ Jake Stevens et al., “Raise a Hallelujah,” CCLI 7119315, Bethel Music, 2018; emphasis added.

²⁰⁵ Stevens et al., “Raise a Hallelujah”; emphasis added.

²⁰⁶ Stevens et al., “Raise a Hallelujah”; emphasis added.

²⁰⁷ Edward Mote et al., “Cornerstone,” CCLI 6158927, Hillsong MP Songs (admin. Capitol CMG) et al., 2011; emphasis added.

To highlight another angle, self-admonishment takes the form of *self-reflection*. For example, in verses 2 and 3 of “How Deep the Father’s Love for Us,” the perspective of the song changes to first person. The individual tells the self to imagine Christ’s crucifixion for their sin:

Behold the Man upon a cross; My sin upon His shoulders;
Ashamed I hear my mocking voice; Call out among the scoffers;
It was my sin that held Him there.²⁰⁸

Self-encouragement finds resolve in the final stanza: “I will not boast in anything; No gifts no pow’r no wisdom; But I will boast in Jesus Christ; His death and resurrection.”²⁰⁹

Catechist. In CWM, the individual *theologizes the self* and takes on the function of a *catechist*. These songs rehearse key doctrines of the faith to the self. A key example of this would be Ben Fielding and Matt Crocker’s adaptation of the Apostle’s Creed.²¹⁰ The chorus resolves with statements of belief:

I believe in God our Father;
I believe in Christ the Son;
I believe in the Holy Spirit;
Our God is three in One;
I believe in the resurrection;
That we will rise again;
For I believe in the Name of Jesus.²¹¹

CWM songs teach other biblical doctrines and themes in this way. Getty and Townend present a concise Christology, beginning with salvation by faith in Christ alone (“in Christ alone my hope is found”), the incarnation (“In Christ alone who took on flesh), substitutionary atonement (“Till on that cross as Jesus died; the wrath of God was satisfied; For every sin on Him was laid”), the resurrection (“Up from the grave He rose

²⁰⁸ Townend, “How Deep the Father’s Love for Us.”

²⁰⁹ Townend, “How Deep the Father’s Love for Us.”

²¹⁰ Ben Fielding and Matt Crocker, “This I Believe (The Creed),” CCLI 7018338, Hillsong Music Australia (admin. Capitol CMG), 2014.

²¹¹ Fielding and Crocker, “This I Believe (The Creed).”

again”, assurance of salvation (“No guilt in life no fear in death”), and the lordship of Christ (“Jesus commands my destiny”).²¹² As the title suggests, “Cornerstone” employs the biblical imagery of Christ as the cornerstone (Matt 21:42; Eph 2:19–22; 1 Pet 2:4).²¹³ Adapting the hymn, “Solid Rock,” the song offers a primer on substitutionary atonement:

My hope is built on nothing less;
Than Jesus’ blood and righteousness;
I dare not trust the sweetest frame;
But wholly trust in Jesus’ Name.²¹⁴

One of the doctrines sung to the self is inaugurated eschatology.²¹⁵

“Cornerstone” concludes with a verse on Jesus’s return, imagining the self in the glorified state with Christ:

When He shall come with trumpet sound;
Oh may I then in Him be found;
Dressed in His righteousness alone.²¹⁶

Another song takes up the topic of inaugurated eschatology by imagining Christ’s second coming in detail: “I see the King of glory; Coming on the clouds with fire; The whole earth shakes.”²¹⁷

Redemption historian. Finally, songs sung to the self reflect CWM’s portrayal of the individual’s relationship of the self as a *historian* of God’s redemptive acts in the world and in believers’ personal lives.²¹⁸ These songs retrace the time line of

²¹² Getty and Townend, “In Christ Alone.”

²¹³ Mote et al., “Cornerstone.”

²¹⁴ Mote et al., “Cornerstone.”

²¹⁵ See Westerholm’s discussion on the language of inaugurated eschatology in CWM: Matthew David Westerholm, “‘The Hour Is Coming and Is Now Here’: The Doctrine of Inaugurated Eschatology in Contemporary Evangelical Worship Music” (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2016), 123–70.

²¹⁶ Mote et al., “Cornerstone.”

²¹⁷ Brooke Ligertwood, “Hosanna,” CCLI 4785835, Hillsong Music Australia (admin. Capitol CMG), 2006. The perspectives in this song vary. Verse 1 speaks to the self, while verses 2 and 4 speak to the corporate body of believers; the chorus and bridge are addressed to God.

²¹⁸ John Witvliet states that historical recitation is fundamental to the practice of Christian worship. Using the Former Prophets as a source for paradigmatic liturgical discussion, he says that one of

Christ's work on the cross as a mediated experience. Hillsong Music calls the self to imagine the Calvary scene:

I cast my mind to calvary;
Where Jesus bled and died for me;
I see His wounds His Hands His feet;
My Saviour on that cursed tree.²¹⁹

The song then invites the self to imagine the victory scene in heaven at the resurrection:

“O trampled death where is your sting; The angels roar for Christ the King.”²²⁰ This historic timeline continues into the future return of Christ where the individual is envisioned in glory:

He shall return in robes of white;
The blazing sun shall pierce the night;
And I will rise among the saints;
My gaze transfixed on Jesus' face.²²¹

Tomlin's adaptation of an Isaac Watts hymn accomplishes a similar task, for it imagines the death of Christ and personalizes the experience:

*When I survey the wondrous cross; On which the Prince of Glory died;
My richest gain I count but loss; And pour contempt on all my pride;
See from His head His hands His feet; Sorrow and love flow mingled down;
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet; Or thorns compose so rich a crown.*²²²

Other times, CWM retraces the timeline of personal redemption. For example, “Death Was Arrested” revisits one's deadened state and recounts conversion:

Alone in my sorrow and dead in my sin;
Lost without hope with no place to begin;

the fundamental practices of corporate worship is to retrace the time line of divine action. He writes, “The point of liturgical celebration is not merely to cultivate a common religious sentiment but to rehearse God's actions in history.” John D. Witvliet, *Worship Seeking Understanding: Windows into Christian Practice* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 31–32.

²¹⁹ Benjamin Hastings, Dean Ussher, and Marty Sampson, “O Praise the Name (Anástasis),” CCLI 7037787, Hillsong Music Australia (admin. Capitol CMG), Small City Music (admin. Music Services), 2015.

²²⁰ Hastings, Ussher, and Sampson, “O Praise the Name (Anástasis).”

²²¹ Hastings, Ussher, and Sampson, “O Praise the Name (Anástasis).”

²²² Chris Tomlin et al., “O The Wonderful Cross,” CCLI 3148435, Rising Springs Music (admin. Capitol CMG) et al., 2000; emphasis added.

Your love made a way to let mercy come in;
When death was arrested, and my life began.²²³

Wickham's chronical follows a similar pattern,²²⁴ beginning with the separation between God and the individual:

How great the chasm that lay between us;
How high the mountain I could not climb;
In desperation I turned to heaven;
And spoke Your name into the night.²²⁵

Furthermore, it visits the resurrected tomb with implications:

Then came the morning that sealed the promise;
Your buried body began to breathe;
Out of the silence the Roaring Lion;
*Declared the grave has no claim on me.*²²⁶

Joel Houston's song follows a "creation-fall-redemption" narrative. It first begins with God in creation bringing forth the individual soul: "You stood before creation; Eternity in Your hand; You spoke the earth into motion; My soul now to stand."²²⁷ The second verse envisions God standing before the individual's sin: "You stood before my failure; And carried the cross for my shame; My sin weighed upon Your shoulders; My soul now to stand."²²⁸ The individual's redemption is seen in verse 3, with the Spirit awakening the individual to the new birth: "So I'll walk upon salvation; Your Spirit alive in me; My life to declare Your promise; My soul now to stand."²²⁹

Much of CWM portrays one or more of the relational dynamics discussed. Fielding's and Morgan's "Who You Say I Am" reflects a concern for self-identity. The

²²³ Kersh et al., "Death Was Arrested."

²²⁴ Johnson and Wickham, "Living Hope."

²²⁵ Johnson and Wickham, "Living Hope."

²²⁶ Johnson and Wickham, "Living Hope"; emphasis added.

²²⁷ Joel Houston, "The Stand," CCLI 4705248, Hillsong Music Australia (admin. Capitol CMG), 2005.

²²⁸ Houston, "The Stand."

²²⁹ Houston, "The Stand."

song conveys identity language and attributes God's Word as the final authority.²³⁰ It reflects God as the "highest King" as well as "father," and the individual as a beloved "child of God."²³¹ Additionally, the song speaks to the self as a redemption historian and traces the deliverance of God:

He has ransomed me; His grace runs deep;
While I was a slave to sin; Jesus died for me;
*who the Son sets free Oh is free indeed.*²³²

The bridge turns to God and declares, "I am chosen not forsaken; *I am who You say I am;* You are for me not against me; *I am who You say I am.*"²³³

Conclusion

This chapter surveyed contemporary philosophical thoughts on self-identity through Taylor and his *Sources of the Self*. Taylor argues that moral goods are inseparable from selfhood and locates them in relationships, namely with the self and society. This chapter builds on Taylor's ideas, exploring the theology of a redemptive relationship with God. For Christians, identity formation takes place within a relationship with God, forming a redeemed identity; a community of faith forms a corporate identity; and a relationship with the self, forms a renewed (true) self-identity. Liturgical elements, including adoration and the passing of the peace, help relationally locate believers in their proper context, encouraging healthy relationship development within the body of Christ.

Songs that portray a relationship with the supernatural are frequent and describe a relationship with God using both transcendent and immanent language. In the category of transcendent language, it most often involves descriptions of God as King. The believer's response is adoration and praise for his royal dignity and reign. In the

²³⁰ Fielding and Morgan, "Who You Say I Am."

²³¹ Fielding and Morgan, "Who You Say I Am."

²³² Fielding and Morgan, "Who You Say I Am"; emphasis added.

²³³ Fielding and Morgan, "Who You Say I Am"; emphasis added.

category of immanent language, popular songs most often depict the believer's relationship to God as beloved. Thus loved by God, the believer responds by admiring God for his presence.

Songs that address the corporate identity of believers as the church include the roles of worshiper and witness. Believers relate to each other through calling one another to worship God with all of their strength, testifying about God's deeds in their lives, and in redemptive history—pointing sinners to the forgiveness of Christ. Less common, a few songs portray the believer's relationship with the self as self-encourager, catechist, and redemption historian. Most songs in this category admonish the self to worship genuinely and richly. In other songs, the individual reminds the self of doctrine and theological implications. Finally, songs that address the self tend to chronicle the redemptive acts of God in the world and in the individual's experience. In the next chapter, I will examine the contours of a Christian's emotional life as it contributes to identity formation. By adapting Erikson's language and model for human development, I assess CWM through the lens of conflict and resolute emotions.

CHAPTER 4

EMOTIONS: CONFLICT AND RESOLUTION

Ye fearful Saints, fresh courage take; the clouds ye so much dread;
Are big with mercy and shall break; In blessings on your head;
His purposes will ripen fast, Unfolding ev'ry hour;
The bud may have a bitter taste, But sweet will be the flower.¹

Eighteenth-century hymnist William Cowper penned these words in his hymn “God Works in Mysterious Ways.” In these two stanzas, Cowper captured the dynamic range of the human experience—from fear to courage; dread to blessed; bitterness to sweetness; the Christian sojourns through desert plains and grassy meadows. Cowper’s own life journey was met with chronic depression and emotional turmoil.² But from his depictions of conflict, his resolve in the providence and peace of God gained clarity and depth.

Chapter 2 charted the landscape of modern self-identity. I argued that the Christian faith establishes a basis for how self-identity is both received and re-shaped through liturgy. In Christian worship, congregational singing is both an embodied and aesthetic ritual of explanation and formation of the self. Chapter 3 explored the role of relationships in that formational effort from a philosophical perspective.

This chapter examines the function of emotions in identity theory by surveying the works of Erik Erikson, one of the fathers of modern social science, along with his

¹ William Cowper, “God Moves in a Mysterious Way” (172), in *A Pocket Hymn book, designed as a constant companion for the pious* (Philadelphia: Prichard and Hall, 1788).

² John Julian observes, “The spiritual ideas of the hymns are identical with Newton’s: their highest note is peace and thankful contemplation, rather than joy: more than half of them are full of trustful or reassuring faith: ten of them are either submissive (44), self-reproachful (17, 42, 43), full of sad yearning (1, 34), questioning (9), or dark spiritual conflict (38–40).” John Julian, ed., *Dictionary of Hymnology: Setting Forth the Origin and History of Christian Hymns of All Ages and Nations* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1892), 265.

psychosocial identity theory. In order to appropriate Erikson's theory in the light of normative biblical truth, I apply the principle of inverse consistency, in order to assess the following: (1) patterns of inverse that present challenges to the Christian scholar; and (2) patterns of consistency that enrich Christian understanding of the created order.³ This chapter appraises identity theory for insights into ontology that are compatible with a Christian perspective,⁴ and presents a biblical vision for human development with a redemptive framework. Erikson's theory on identity formation—which prioritizes crisis, resolution, and social integration—is explored from a liturgical perspective. With this understanding of the role of emotions in self-identity, I discuss the necessity of confession and assurance in the liturgy. Christians need language and embodied practices to articulate both conflict and resolution in meaningful ways. The chapter concludes with an analysis of how CWM represents the emotional lives of believers; assessing lyrical content helps understand the various ways that Christians feel their way toward their identity.

Erik Erikson and Identity Development Theory

Erikson's theory of human development centers on the emotional journey of individuals through conflict and resolution. Through each stage, the crisis catalyzes the progression of the self. The emotional resolution fosters virtues that are essential for the maturation of their identity. However, Erikson overestimated the human ability to consistently integrate godly virtues. Not all conflict is created equal, and not all sorrow leads to godliness. The Scriptures distinguish repentance as an essential component to

³ See John David Trentham, "Reading the Social Sciences Theologically (Parts 1 and 2): Engaging and Appropriating Models of Human Development," *Christian Education Journal* 16, no. 3 (October 2019): 458–94.

⁴ The principle of inverse consistency is Trentham's hermeneutical tool for engaging and appropriating the social sciences. It seeks to account for both common grace and antithesis to biblical revelation. I adapt the protocol to highlight (1) areas in Erikson that are contrary to the Christian understanding; (2) areas that are consistent; and finally, (3) a redemptive vision for maturity.

godly sorrow (2 Cor 7:10); and virtuous repentance is rooted in an understanding of the ministry of Jesus Christ. Erikson conflated ontological and ethical categories, so that growth (ontological change) and repentance (ethical change) look identical.⁵ Therefore, articulations of what is commonly referred to as “positive” and “negative” emotions concerning identity must be understood and articulated by considering the redemptive work of Jesus Christ.

This section examines emotions in identity theory. First, it surveys the development of Erikson’s Psychosocial Identity Theory. He was among the first to provide definitions for identity, selfhood, and ego formation. “Identity,” he argues, “is not the sum of childhood identifications, but rather a new combination of old and new identification fragments.”⁶ In other words, human beings engage in the act of self-making and re-making through collective reflecting. This is consistent with other theorists who have emphasized a system of continuous self-interpretation. For Erikson, identity formation mainly occurs as adolescents integrate into their social context. Erikson writes,

[Identity] is a subjective sense as well as an observable quality of personal sameness and continuity, paired with some belief in the sameness and continuity of some shared world image. As a quality of unself-conscious living, this can be gloriously obvious in a young person who has found himself as he has found his communality. In him we see emerge a unique unification of what is irreversibly given—that is, body type and temperament, giftedness and vulnerability, infantile models and acquired ideals with the open choices provided in available roles, occupational possibilities, values offered, mentors met, friendships made, and first sexual

⁵ Other terminology for this is Albert Wolter’s categories of “structure” (ontological) and “direction” (ethical). Wolter suggests that the biblical storyline of “Creation, Fall, and Redemption,” presents a paradigm for Christians to engage towards redemptive action in the world. He writes, “This twin emphasis makes a radical difference in the way Christian believers approach reality. Because they believe that creational structure underlies all of reality, they seek and find evidence of lawful constancy in the flux of experience, and of invariant principles amidst a variety of historical events and institutions.” Albert M. Wolters, *Creation Regained: Biblical Basics for a Reformational Worldview* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 88. He continues, “Because they confess that a spiritual direction underlies their experience, they see abnormality where others see normality, and possibilities of renewal where others see inevitable distortion. In every situation, they explicitly look for and recognize the presence of creational structure, distinguishing this sharply from the human abuse to which it is subject” (89).

⁶ Erik H. Erikson, *Insight and Responsibility: Lectures on the Ethical Implication of Psychoanalytic Insight* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1964), 90.

encounters.⁷

There is parallel between Erikson's two categories of identities and Pierre's: that which is given (objective) and that which is constructed (subjective).⁸

In addition, Erikson's emphasis on identity formation across life stages reshaped the future of the social sciences and expanded identity studies. His most original contributions to psychoanalysis and the study of human identity development in the mid-twentieth century are as follows: (1) Psychosocial Identity Theory—a model that integrates biology, psychology, and social context; and (2) the charting of identity development across the human lifespan.

Psychosocial Identity Theory

A psychosocial theory on identity development involves what Erikson refers to as “triple-bookkeeping.”⁹ This approach integrates the *somatic processes* (physiological processes on which behavior and experience depend), *social context* (significance, which society provides) and *ego processes* (ways in which a person resolves conflicts and makes sense of themselves and situations).¹⁰ For Erikson, identity formation is the interplay of biology, psychology, and society. In his writings, Erikson's clinical research and study of American Indian tribes explores ways in which children respond to their

⁷ Erik Erikson, *Life History and the Historical Moment: Diverse Presentations* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1975), 18–19. Similarly, Peter Weinreich writes, “One's identity is defined as the totality of one's self-construal, in which how one construes oneself in the present expresses the continuity between how one construes oneself as one was in the past and how one construes oneself as one aspires to be in the future.” Peter Weinreich, “The Operationalisation of Identity Theory in Racial and Ethnic Relations,” in *Theories of Race and Ethnic Relations*, ed. David Mason and John Rex (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 317.

⁸ See Jeremy Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life: Connecting Christ to Human Experience* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth, 2016), 128–38.

⁹ Erikson writes, “We are speaking of three processes, the somatic process, the ego process, and the societal process. In the history of science these three processes have belonged to three different scientific disciplines—biology, psychology and the social sciences. . . . Our thinking is dominated by this trichotomy because only through the inventive methodologies of these disciplines do we have knowledge at all.” Erik H. Erikson, *Childhood and Society*, 2nd ed. (New York: W. W. Norton, 1963), 36–37.

¹⁰ Richard Stevens, *Erik Erikson: An Introduction* (New York: St. Martin's, 1983), 10.

caretakers at each timetable of development. This interdisciplinary approach has shaped the foundations of understanding ego development in the modern era.¹¹ According to his view, the body, social environment, and the internal functions of the individual are the primary means of identity development.

Eight Stages of Human Development

Erikson integrates his biopsychosocial view in his model for human life cycle. Erikson charts the developmental stages of the ego in the “Eight Stages of Man.”¹² These stages provide a map of the full human life cycle from “womb to tomb.”¹³ Personality development is a predetermined order outlined in an eight-stage model. Within the model, each stage involves a psychosocial crisis, or phase of conflict.¹⁴ In Erikson’s view, these conflicts are essential components to developing a psychological quality towards maturation. As the individual resolves a crisis, within their ego emerges a “virtue.”¹⁵ Each virtue marks the success of the individual’s maturation and as a result, readiness to enter the next stage of development.

For Erikson, the “identity versus role confusion” phase is a key transition of

¹¹ James Marcia, a neo-Erikson, further develops upon Erikson’s theory of identity to include four identity statuses. James E. Marcia, “Development and Validation of Ego-Identity Status,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 3 (1966): 551–58; see also Tommy M. Phillips and Joe F. Pittman, “Adolescent Psychological Well-Being by Identity Style,” *Journal of Adolescence* 30, no. 6 (December 2007): 1021–34; Jane Kroger, Monica Martinussen, and James E. Marcia. “Identity Status Change during Adolescence and Young Adulthood: A Meta-Analysis,” *Journal of Adolescence* 33, no. 5 (October 2010): 683–98.

¹² For a systematic discussion of Erikson’s developmental stages see Richard Evans, *Dialogue with Erik Erikson* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967); see also Erik H. Erikson, *Childhood and Society*, 2nd ed. (New York: W. W. Norton, 1963), 247–74.

¹³ The influence of life cycles and stages of development is in the range of literature from psychology to faith. See James Marcia et al., *Ego Identity: A Handbook for Psychosocial Research* (New York: Springer-Verlag, 1993); Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, *On Grief and Grieving: Finding the Meaning of Grief Through the Five Stages of Loss* (New York: Scribner, 2014); James W. Fowler, *Stages of Faith: Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning* (San Francisco: Harper, 1995).

¹⁴ Erik H. Erikson, *Identity and the Life Cycle* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1994), 130.

¹⁵ Erikson locates eight “basic virtues” that mark each life stage: hope, will, purpose, competency, fidelity, love, care, and wisdom (*Identity and the Life Cycle*, 328).

identity formation among adolescents as they move between childhood and adulthood. This is the fifth stage of the cycle and begins somewhere in the teens and extends into the early twenties. He writes, “The adolescent mind is essentially a mind or moratorium, a psychosocial stage between childhood and adulthood, and between the morality learned by the child, and the ethics to be developed by the adult.”¹⁶ In this stage the adolescent “tries to comprehend possible future roles, or at any rate to understand what roles are worth imitating.”¹⁷ In the process, people encounter a need to belong to something and a diffusion of roles.¹⁸ Erikson notes, “It is true, of course, that the adolescent, during the final stage of his identity formation, is apt to suffer more deeply than he ever did before (or ever will again) from a diffusion of roles.”¹⁹ The adolescent reexamines their identities reconstruct for themselves a way of being in society. Thus, personal identity is shaped by how individuals resolve each crisis, especially in the adolescent years.

Relationship to self. In identity theory, which has followed Erikson, the core of an identity is the relationship between the self and a role: a person incorporates into the self all the meanings and expectations associated with the role and its performance.²⁰ In other words, a sense of competencies motivates behaviors and actions. Emotions reflect the degree of congruence between the meaning of roles and how effectively one’s identity role is played out.²¹ Negative emotions are connected to inadequate role

¹⁶ Erik H. Erikson, *Youth: Change and Challenge* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1963), 245.

¹⁷ Erikson, *Identity and the Life Cycle*, 79.

¹⁸ Erikson coined the term “identity crisis.” Erik H. Erikson, *Identity: Youth and Crisis* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1968).

¹⁹ Erikson, *Identity and the Life Cycle*, 126.

²⁰ Jan E. Stets, “Examining Emotions in Identity Theory,” *Social Psychology Quarterly* 68, no. 1 (March 2005): 39.

²¹ Stets, “Examining Emotions in Identity Theory,” 40.

performance, while positive emotions are connected with adequate role performance.²² However, conflict is viewed as an essential turning point in development. Randolph Lucente summarizes the consensus of identity theorists that “all these early contributions suggest . . . character emerges from conflict, and the ‘economic gain’ of character traits is the expansion of one’s adaptive potentials.”²³ Character is equated with the ego’s ability to maintain homeostasis.²⁴ Whereas for Sigmund Freud, the ego is developed through repression of a “cathexes,” in Erikson, identity seeks to cultivate more defensive ends.²⁵ Describing the regulatory and stabilizing process character initiates in conflictual states, Lucente writes: “Character traits replace repression with reaction formations that relieve the experience of signal anxiety having undergone a change of function.”²⁶ Successful resolution of the conflict provides the necessary skills for a strong sense of self.

Relationship to society. Important to this discussion is the role of *conscious continuity* and *social solidarity*. Erikson writes, “The conscious feeling of having a personal identity is based on two simultaneous observations: the perception of the self-sameness and continuity of one’s existence in time and space and the perception of the fact that others recognize one’s sameness and continuity.”²⁷ Identity formation is cumulative. Throughout one’s life, a child develops several different images of the self.

²² Stets gives the following example: “An individual may see herself as ‘academically inclined’ in the student identity but may fail on an important test. If others in the situation have difficulty supporting her as ‘academically inclined,’ she may feel angry and may be less likely to play out the student identity in the future. On the other hand, if she reaches her goal of performing well on the test, thus confirming her identity, others may praise her, she will be happy, and she will be more likely to invoke the student identity in the future.” Stets, “Examining Emotions in Identity Theory,” 41.

²³ Randolph L. Lucente, *Character Formation and Identity in Adolescence: Clinical and Developmental Issues* (Chicago: Lyceum, 2012), 17.

²⁴ Lucente, *Character Formation and Identity*, 17.

²⁵ Lucente, *Character Formation and Identity*, 17.

²⁶ Lucente, *Character Formation and Identity*, 17.

²⁷ Erikson, *Identity and the Life Cycle*, 50.

Therefore, a healthy or whole identity is the synthesis of each successive identity.²⁸ Adult identity is reached when adolescents mature, and their inner self integrates within the society.

For Erikson, the individual must have a sense of continuity in his or her life—past, present, and future. The daily rhythms of play and habits sustain continuity in the developing ego. An identity crisis occurs when there is disruption in one’s existence. For example, Erikson observes this in youth among migrant and minority groups. Erikson’s later works focus on national and political identity, aspects of social solidarity and group identity.²⁹ The influence of culture cannot be overstated. Individuals embed in society (or perhaps society embeds within individuals) with its expectations, roles, and values. Erikson observes, “True identity . . . depends on the support which the young individual receives from the collective sense of identity characterizing the social groups significant to him: his class, his nation, his culture.”³⁰ These “psychosocial ground plans” are what *guides* the development of identity within a society:

It is important to realize that in the sequence of his most personal experiences the healthy child, given a reasonable amount of proper guidance, can be trusted to obey inner laws of development, laws which create a succession of potentialities for significant interaction with those persons who tend and respond to him and those institutions which are ready for him. While such interaction varies from culture to culture, it must remain within “the proper rate and the proper sequence” which governs all epigenesis.³¹

For Erikson, society is an essential element in healthy ego development. From society, individuals are provided with a glimpse of belonging with moral principles, purpose, and meaning. Because society plays an important role in the individual identity, one must

²⁸ Erikson, *Identity*, 159.

²⁹ For example, see Erik H. Erikson, *Toys and Reasons: Stages in the Ritualization of Experience* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1977).

³⁰ Erikson, *Insight and Responsibility*, 93.

³¹ Erikson, *Identity*, 93.

consider how corporate identity is shaped through “ritualization.”

Patterns of Inverse

How is the biblical vision of identity and emotional development distinct from the psychosocial framework of identity? A concern regarding Erikson’s assessment of identity formation is its anthropocentric view. Erikson at times prioritizes individual choices in the formation of the ego. In his own words, identity formation is “a process based on a heightened cognitive and emotional capacity to let oneself be identified as a circumscribed individual in relation to a predictable universe which transcends the circumstances of childhood.”³² For Erikson, the process of identity formation depends on the “interplay of what young persons at the end of childhood have come to mean to themselves and what they now appear to mean to those who become significant to them.”³³ At the core of his theory, individuals face an internal crisis and develop virtues, synthesizing themselves into a conscious whole. Identity becomes more of a self-constructed project rather than requiring external intervention. Scripture teaches that individual choices cannot be divorced from the sovereign will and purposes of God (see Prov 16:9; 21:30; Isa 46:10; Rom 8:28).

Also, Erikson’s model neglects the noetic effects of sin and the need for redemption. Within this psychosocial model, adolescence is seen as merely a period of integration culminating in adulthood. Adult personality results from the process of identity formation in the adolescent stage, which requires the integration of learning from the experiences of the previous life stages.³⁴ In such a model, acts of “rebellion,” and

³² Erikson, *Insight and Responsibility*, 90.

³³ Erikson, *Toys and Reasons*, 106.

³⁴ Cf. Lyn M. Bechtel, “Developmental Psychology in Biblical Studies,” in *Psychology and the Bible: A New Way to Read the Scriptures*, ed. J. Harold Ellens and Wayne G. Rollins (London: Praeger, 2004), 121: “For the first time, newly acquired cognitive skills and social experiences make it possible for young people to sort through and synthesize their childhood identifications in order to construct a more mature thinking pattern with increasingly complex reasoning, a multifaceted perception of right and wrong, and the ability to examine the basis for moral principles. This process contributes to an integrated adult

“disobedience” are deemed appropriate and necessary for psychological maturation.³⁵

However, Scripture teaches that sin disrupts identity formation because it distorts human nature and actions (Rom 3:23). The Holy Spirit brings about conviction and repentance of sin. Made alive to God, individuals strive to no longer live in sin, but newness of life (Rom 6:1–4).

Erikson’s “Eight Stages of Man” conflate ontological development with ethical development. Christians are called to discern between the *structure* (ontology) of creation and its *direction* (ethics).³⁶ Christians recognize Erikson’s observations of the maturation experience as the presence of the creational structure God intended in human development. However, because of sin in the world, human maturity is distorted. Maturation ontologically is not the same as spiritual and ethical maturation. The moral trajectory of identity development and human functions are distorted, including rationality, emotionality, and sexuality. Albert Wolters writes,

To the degree that these realities fail to live up to God’s creational design for them, they are misdirected, abnormal, distorted. To the degree that they still conform to God’s design, they are in the grip of a countervailing force that curbs or counteracts the distortion. Direction therefore always involves two tendencies moving either for or against God.³⁷

Identity development therefore requires redemption from its ethical trajectory. In the Christian view, moral change that conforms to the image of Christ requires saving faith

sense of identity, as an individual who is part of the social group and interdependent If any previous stages have been skipped, adolescents may remain in an immature thinking pattern and may suffer from identity confusion. They can become confused about who they are and what they want to do in life.”

³⁵ Bechtel writes, “Adolescence is not ‘rebellion’ or ‘sin’ but natural and critical growth in which there is questioning, a quest for freedom and new identity formation. Maturation into adolescence occurs with the accumulation of experiences, and so children are ready to engage life on a more multifarious level. Now *disobedience is appropriate and necessary* because obedience would stifle psychological maturation and critical thinking.” Bechtel, “Developmental Psychology in Biblical Studies,” 128.

³⁶ Wolters notes, “*Structure* denotes the ‘essence’ of a creaturely thing, the kind of creature it is by virtue of God’s creational law. *Direction*, by contrast, refers to a sinful deviation from that structural ordinance and renewed conformity to it in Christ.” Wolters, *Creation Regained*, 88.

³⁷ Wolters, *Creation Regained*, 59.

and repentance (see Mark 1:15; Acts 2:38; 16:31; Eph 2:8–9).

As a result, the Christian perspective of maturation is continuous. Erikson, in his earlier works, argues that identity is achieved during the transition between adolescence and adulthood. However, the Christian perspective of maturation sees more continuity between childhood, adolescence, and adulthood, rather than qualitative distinction. For example, a child and an adult can be described as siblings in Christ. Generations look to one another for Christlikeness in order to reach maturity.

In practice, it is difficult to assess the nature and approach of each identity crisis and context. Scholars have noted how surprisingly little research has considered individual differences in temperament among parents and their influences on adolescents' relationships within the family.³⁸ Additionally, Erikson does not consider the significance in sex differences in identity formation.³⁹ In fact, identity researchers disagree on the roles of internal and external forces in identity development.⁴⁰

Psychosocial identity models offer an incomplete evaluation of the human condition if it is divorced from the gospel. Fundamental to a biblical view of identity formation is a personal relationship with Christ. Eric Johnson comments,

The most important soul-healing event of all time was the death and resurrection of Christ, an event that has many ramifications for the soul. The most important outcome was that Christ's death propitiated the wrath of God against sinners (Rom 3:25) and made possible their reconciliation with God (2 Cor 5), which in turn made it possible for God to be the believer's soul-healer, Father and friend, all roles that bring comfort and create unique forms of religious coping for the Christian The Bible informs us that when the believer is brought into Christ, a host of psychospiritual benefits become available to him or her.⁴¹

³⁸ Judith Smetana, "Conflicting Views of Conflict," *Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development* 73, no. 2 (2008): 161–68.

³⁹ Smetana, "Conflicting Views of Conflict," 161.

⁴⁰ Deepak Varghese Reju, "Toward a Definition of Christian Identity: Using the Interpretive Lens of Creation, Fall, and Redemption in Christian Counseling" (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2007).

⁴¹ Eric L. Johnson, *Foundations for Soul Care: A Christian Psychology Proposal* (Downers

Compared to Johnson, Erikson reflects only a partial picture of identity development. Human development occurs through life biologically, so natural change accompanies each stage. However, without Scripture and an awareness of the impacts of sin, every model fails to see the complete picture.⁴² As David Powlison puts it, interpretive grids direct solutions.⁴³ For the Christian, the task of understanding the self is one of reinterpretation through the person of Christ:

The test of the truth, scope, and depth of any analysis of the human condition is whether or not it sees how Christ explicitly meets human need. *The* test of any fully Christian engagement with the psychologies and psychotherapies will be our ability to call them to repentance from their pervasive distortions.⁴⁴

Compared to modern approaches to the self, Scripture views the process of identity formation more comprehensively, considering a host of internal and external dimensions, including the power of the gospel, by the work of the Spirit, and the context of the Church (Rom 1:16; 8:1–2; Eph 4:11–13).

Patterns of Consistency

Erikson identifies common goods, even while missing ultimate goods—knowledge and love of God. Erikson, especially in his later works, offers some considerable reflections for Christian leaders who are tasked with the role of participating in the identity formation of others. Additionally, aspects of his model also present themselves as bridges for Christian engagement with the social sciences.

Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2007), 44–45.

⁴² David Powlison paints a helpful picture: “A telescope sees into deep space by narrowing the field of view. The very power that lets us examine one thing also has the potential to miss essential facts and to obscure the overall pattern and meaning . . . secular psychological research does not see and report the most significant pieces of information about people, and it invariably misses the overall pattern of what is there.” David Powlison, “A Biblical Counseling View,” in *Psychology and Christianity: Four Views*, ed. E. Johnson and S. L. Jones (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000), 109.

⁴³ David Powlison, “Modern Therapies and the Church’s Faith,” *Journal for Biblical Counseling* 15, no. 1 (1996): 39.

⁴⁴ Powlison, “Modern Therapies,” 41.

Spirituality in Identity Formation

First, Erikson's models provide a case for identity formation as psycho-social-spiritual. While modern approaches to psychoanalysis are secular in nature, spiritual elements with their corresponding values, practices, and principled behavior are integral to Erikson's concepts of mature adult identity.⁴⁵ It may be that his own experiences had a role to play in his research.⁴⁶ At times, Erikson's psychoanalytic and teleological viewpoints seem consistent with Christian faith and spirituality.⁴⁷

While Erikson maintained his distance from religious forms, he understood that religious practices can have a profound impact on self-identity, particularly in regards to crisis, and can "restore . . . a new sense of wholeness."⁴⁸ He claims, "A defined identity in space and time and a transcendent one is given in all human beings."⁴⁹ And all people "must accept a ritual code of mortality and immortality which . . . promises a rebirth on earth or in heaven."⁵⁰ Here he is referring to an identity in the present physical world and a renewed transcendent one. Christians understand that the spiritual component is crucial, even greater than physical or circumstantial, to their being and experiences.⁵¹ If by selfhood, ego, or sense of self, Erikson also means a spiritual self, then some of Erikson's psychoanalytic viewpoints may be appropriated with Christian faith and

⁴⁵ Carol Hoare, "Identity and Spiritual Development in the Papers of Erik Erikson," *Identity* 9, no. 3 (2009): 184.

⁴⁶ Hoare notes that Erikson's own life experiences—of prejudice, interactions with religion, and involvement between Hitler and the United States—character Erikson's respect for the spiritual and ethical elements of adult identity. Hoare, "Identity and Spiritual Development," 186–87.

⁴⁷ Hoare, "Identity and Spiritual Development," 186–87.

⁴⁸ Erik H. Erikson, "Wholeness and Totality—A Psychiatric Contribution," in *Totalitarianism: Proceedings of a Conference Held at the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, March 1953*, ed. Carl J. Friedrich (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1954), 164.

⁴⁹ Erik H. Erikson, *Dimensions of a New Identity* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1974), 43.

⁵⁰ Erikson, *Dimensions of a New Identity*, 42.

⁵¹ Paul exhorted, ". . . our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal" (2 Cor 4:16–18).

spirituality.⁵²

Moral Character in Identity Formation

Likewise, Erikson's stages of development illustrate the importance of character in identity formation. Carol Hoare comments on Erikson's contributions:

The eight strengths—hope, will, purpose, competence, fidelity, love, generativity, and their completion in integrality (and hope) had to be developed individually, as well as developed and strengthened in subsequent generations. . . . Persons denounce such virtues as too “lofty” and idealistic when those very virtues are most socially “weakened.” Thus, the antithesis of virtue, Erikson's term for strength, was not *vice*. Rather it was a *weakness*, shown by “disorder, dysfunction, and disintegration, anomie.”⁵³

While Erikson may not articulate the source for these moral virtue, Christians understand that identity and morality are inextricably linked since both have a theocentric origin and end. The first of these virtues, cultivated in the first stage of development, is “hope,” which Erikson views as the “basic ingredient of all strength.”⁵⁴ Similarly, the Christian life is built on the foundation of faith, the assurance of things hoped for (Heb 11:1). By “virtue,” Erikson appeals to spiritual language, referring to it as “something vital, that animates, and is the ‘soul of something.’”⁵⁵ Furthermore, Erikson's idea of the “numinous” amalgamated feelings of attraction and awe⁵⁶ was his attempt to describe humanity's peripheral awareness of a Creator.⁵⁷ This “divine light” is akin to Christian

⁵² Hoare observes that Erikson's later works understood the sense of self as a spiritual being with the “light of consciousness.” She writes, “Erikson's light is threefold. The first dimension is ego and spirit, the light of consciousness. The second is that of a consciousness of being alive, whole, and well, and of sensing one's spiritual self in changing ways throughout developmental time. The third dimension is the human's peripheral awareness of a God who created and creates, a brilliance that might be beyond the humans' physical world, but might just be here as well.” Hoare, “Identity and Spiritual Development,” 188.

⁵³ Hoare, “Identity and Spiritual Development,” 191.

⁵⁴ Hoare, “Identity and Spiritual Development,” 191.

⁵⁵ Evans, *Dialogue with Erik Erikson*, 17.

⁵⁶ Stevens, *Erik Erikson*, 44.

⁵⁷ Hoare, “Identity and Spiritual Development,” 188.

understandings of the *imago Dei*; and if the numinous was the spark of religious life, Erikson was concerned that ritualism could quench it.

Maturation as Moral-Ethical Trajectory

Erikson also stretches the developmental landscape by viewing childhood morality as the seedbed for adult ethics.⁵⁸ For Christians tasked with discipling and training the next generation, Erikson demonstrates that in the same way identity develops in stages, so do ideologies, ethics, and faith orientations. Erikson sees the practices of faith between parent and child as the foundation for spirituality and morality. Morals taught in childhood grow into ideologies during adolescence. By adulthood, ideologies solidify into codes of ethics, explaining why most adults are moral and rule-driven.⁵⁹

Erikson explains,

I would propose that we consider moral rules of conduct to be based on a fear of threats to be forestalled—outer threats of abandonment, punishment, public exposure; or a threatening inner sense of guilt, shame, or isolation. In contrast, I would consider ethical rules to be based on a love of ideals to be striven for—ideals that hold up to us some highest good, some definition of perfection, and some promise of realization.⁶⁰

In a sense, Erikson’s moral-ethical trajectory is the journey of “me-focus” (moral) to “we-focus” (ethical) as individual integrate with society. This developmental process has several implications for Christian reflection.⁶¹ He writes,

Trust born of care is, in fact, the touchstone of the actuality of given religion. All religions have in common the periodical childlike surrender to a Provider or providers who dispense earthly fortune as well as spiritual health; some

⁵⁸ Hoare comments that some interpreters of Erikson considered him a “pseudoreligious theorist” (“Identity and Spiritual Development,” 188).

⁵⁹ Hoare, “Identity and Spiritual Development,” 193.

⁶⁰ Erik H. Erikson, “The Golden Rule and the Cycle of Life,” in *The Study of Lives: Essays on Personality in Honor of Henry A. Murray*, ed. R. W. White (New York: Routledge, 2006), 412–28.

⁶¹ Examples might include the following discussions: the benefits of early and late confirmations of faith, appropriate ages for baptism and communion, the ages of volunteers in church operations, or introductions of catechism for young children.

demonstration of man's smallness by way of reduced posture and humble gesture; the admission in prayer and song of misdeeds, of mis-thoughts, and of evil intentions; fervent appeal for inner unification by divine guidance; and finally, the insight that individual trust must become a common faith, individual mistrust a commonly formulated evil, while the individual's restoration must become part of the ritual practice of many, and must become a sign of trustworthiness in the community.⁶²

Belonging to the church is initiated through faith in Christ and his saving work. But this is expressed in embodied practices in the local church, including baptism and the Lord's supper. For Erikson, "identity is not the sum of childhood identifications, but rather a new combination of old and new identification fragments."⁶³ This is consistent with Christian teachings of regeneration and the new life. Christians rehearse the past and hope for the future through a redemptive lens. Prayers recited and sung confess the past and give thanks for the future. Christian worship is a way to engage the process of identity formation through the work of the gospel.

A Redemptive Framework for Identity Development

This section now presents a biblical vision for human development with a redemptive framework. It focuses on the role of the triune God and the church in human maturation.

Knowledge of God

A biblical vision for human development is rooted in the knowledge of God, redeemed by the work of Christ, experienced in body, spirit, and community, and expressed in paradox. Psalm 139 and 2 Corinthians 3 are two biblical passages pertinent to a vision for human development and redemptive maturity. In Psalm 139:13–16, David expresses that his identity is marked specifically by being a creature made intentionally by God. In other words, God's work is the defining characteristic of David's identity (Ps

⁶² Erikson, *Childhood and Society*, 250.

⁶³ Erikson, *Insight and Responsibility*, 90.

139:13, 15). Additionally, God has ordained all of his life—past, present, and future (Ps 139:16). The vocation and purpose of David’s identity as a creature is primarily to worship God (Ps 139:14). The underlying subtext of this psalm is the creation account, where God creates man in his own image (Gen 1:26–28). This doctrine is so rudimentary to Christian understanding that theologians have constructed a comprehensive biblical anthropology centered on the image of God: creation, fall, redemption, and restoration of the *imago dei*.⁶⁴

Redemptive Work of Christ

Second, according to 2 Corinthians 3:18, redemptive transformation centers on the saving work of the Lord Jesus through the Spirit. A saving faith is foundational to a Christian’s definition and development of identity.⁶⁵ Prior to saving faith, the true image of one’s identity is “veiled” (2 Cor 3:14), his or her awareness “hardened apart from regeneration.”⁶⁶ Saving faith by repentance results in the capacity to behold the image of God and become *like* Him. Redemptive transformation is the transition from fractured image to whole image.⁶⁷ In this view, sin and the evils of history can be understood as symptoms of immaturity, fractured people living in false identities; and salvation is the only way to recover that capacity for goodness or growth towards true maturity and adulthood.⁶⁸ While general revelation can lead a person to a general knowledge of God,

⁶⁴ See Anthony Hoekema, *Created in God’s Image* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986); Reju, “Toward a Definition of Christian Identity.”

⁶⁵ Joshua R. Farris, *An Introduction to Theological Anthropology: Humans, Both Creaturely and Divine* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2020), 108. Farris writes, “Distinctively, humans are images at creation in seed form, but that seed is only developed by the redemptive water found in Christ . . . similar to the seed in relation to the full-grown tree, which has an inner potency that requires God’s impartation of grace to grow into a mature fruit-bearing tree.”

⁶⁶ Calvin comments on this verse, “Let us learn, that without Christ, the Sun of righteousness (Mal 4:12), there is no light even in the law, or in the whole word of God.” John Calvin, *Calvin’s New Testament Commentaries*, trans. T. H. L. Parker (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1971), 11:182–84.

⁶⁷ This is an adaption of Gregg Allison’s definition of human embodiment in Gregg R. Allison, *Embodied: Living as Whole People in a Fractured World* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2021), 16.

⁶⁸ William Bouwsma makes an interesting distinction between *adulthood* and *manhood*

special revelation is an essential ingredient to saving knowledge of God, true knowledge of self, and redemptive transformation.⁶⁹ This progressive transformation moves in varying degrees, from glory to glory (2 Cor 3:18). Puritan divine Stephen Charnock puts it beautifully:

Tis not a change only into the image of God with slight colors, an image drawn as with charcoal; but a glorious image even in the rough draught, which grows up into greater beauty by the addition of brighter colors: Changed (saith the Apostle, 2 Corinthians 3:18) into the same image from glory to glory: glory in the first lineaments as well as glory in the last lines.⁷⁰

The biblical transformation encompasses every aspect of life throughout one's existence.

The Ministry of the Spirit

Transformation comes from the Spirit of God. However, transformation is not exclusively in spiritual or ethical terms but is experienced physically and in community with others. Pauline descriptions of growing up in Christ are primarily expressed in the context of the Christian community. In addition, the physical body typifies how humans relate to each other within the covenant community. The church is described as the body (*soma*) of Christ and each individual reflects the natural condition of the human body, as members of one another, collaborating together and growing together (1 Cor 12:27). In this light, Scripture affirms God's design for people to live as image bearers in physical, social connection, and in real space and time. Identity formation takes place through

etymologically. The latter, inherited from classical antiquity, implies a supposed qualitative category, which he attributes to hints of anthropological dualism, and qualitative distinctions between childhood and manhood. *Adulthood*, on the other hand, from the Latin *adolescere* means to "grow up," and implies a process rather than possession of specific qualities or faculties. William J. Bouwsma, "Christian Adulthood" in *Adulthood*, ed. Erik H. Erikson (New York: W.W. Norton, 1978), 89.

⁶⁹ David Brenner argues that the transformational journey of becoming one's "true self-in-Christ" and living into that vocation requires the need for a transformational knowing God that comes from meeting God in the depths of one's being; and also the need for a transformational knowing of oneself that comes from discovering how he or she is known by God. David G. Benner, *The Gift of Being Yourself: The Sacred Call to Self-Discovery*, exp. ed., Spiritual Journey (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2015), 16–18.

⁷⁰ Stephen Charnock, "A Discourse of the Efficient of Regeneration (part II)," in *Complete Works of Stephen Charnock* (London: James Nisbet, 1864–1866), 2:209.

natural processes, but primarily in organic community and interpersonal relationships with others.⁷¹ The order of social roles—parents and children, husband and wife, overseers and workers—are guided by principles rooted in redemptive identities (Eph 5:22–6:9). Older and younger generations are mutually invested in one another’s development (Titus 2:1–6).⁷²

The Relationship to the Church

Finally, to live redemptive lives is to live in paradox. In one sense, the gospel promises the kingdom of God to those who become like children (Matt 18:1–3). Redemptive identities are reflected in the title “children of God” (Rom 8:16; Eph 5:1; 1 John 2:28). In another sense, however, immaturity is compared to spiritual infancy while mature manhood is to attain Christlikeness. Christian maturity is likened to human development, for children first feed on milk alone, but must eventually mature and feed on meat (1 Cor 3:1–3; Heb 5:14). This paradox is found in the apostle Paul’s letter to the Ephesians:

. . . until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love. (Eph 4:13–16)

⁷¹ In the incarnation, the Son of God became an embodied person (John 1:14), grew up (Luke 2:40, 52) and lived as an enjoined member of a particular society and context as a Galilean. See Allison, *Embodied*, 113–18. As Christians are transformed into the likeness of God, they become like him morally and behaviorally. This is the definition of progressive sanctification. Allison addresses three specific areas of embodied sanctification: lust, gluttony, and sloth. See Allison, *Embodied*, 128–44. He refers to human *sociality*—“the universal human condition of desiring, expressing, and receiving human relationships”—as one of the embodied gifts (73).

⁷² Bouwsma describes this synergism between Christians: “One encounters Christ and the opportunity to serve him in others; the maturity of the individual is realized only in loving unity with others. The power of growth is thus finally a function of community, and, at the same time, maturity finds expression in identification with other men; Christ, the model of human adulthood, was supremely ‘the man for others.’” Bouwsma, “Christian Adulthood,” 92.

The metaphor of children is applied to people of all ages and is associated with varying stages of maturity.⁷³ For the Christian, regardless of one's wealth in years, they can never achieve completeness in maturity. The aim of human development is total conformity to the personhood of Christ. Since this is a transcendent goal, the emphasis in Christian maturity is on the process rather than merely its end.⁷⁴ This also means that the capacity for growth is assumed in any stage of life.⁷⁵ The Christian view insists on the *continuity* rather than the *qualitative* differences between children and adults.⁷⁶ As a community of believers, the social aspect is an essential component to the divine design, and is God's redemptive plan for his people in a fractured world.⁷⁷

Liturgical Discussion: Confession and Assurance

This section explores how ritualization interacts with corporate identity from Erikson's perspective and provides common ground to discuss the nature of the church and the role of liturgies. The role of confession and repentance provides language for conflict, while assurance presents meaningful ways to articulate resolution.

⁷³ Calvin comments on this text: "As [the apostle] had spoken of that full-grown age toward which we proceed throughout the whole course of our life, so now he tells us that, during such a progress, we ought not to be like children. He thus sets an intervening period between childhood and maturity." Calvin, *New Testament Commentaries*, 11:182–84. He continues, "Those are children who have not yet taken a step in the way of the Lord, but still hesitate, who have not yet determined what road they ought to choose, but move sometimes in one direction, and sometimes in another, always doubtful, always wavering. But those are thoroughly founded in the doctrine of Christ, who although not yet perfect, have so much wisdom and vigor as to choose what is best, and proceed steadily in the right course. Thus the life of believers, longing constantly for their appointed status, like adolescence. So when I said that in this life we are never men, this ought not to be pressed to the other extreme, as they say, as if there were no progress beyond childhood. After being born in Christ, we ought to grow, so as not to be children in understanding . . . although we have not arrived at man's estate, we are at any rate older boys."

⁷⁴ Bouwsma, "Christian Adulthood," 85.

⁷⁵ Bouwsma, "Christian Adulthood," 85. Bouwsma notes that in this sense, all of Christian life is like adolescence.

⁷⁶ Bouwsma, "Christian Adulthood," 85.

⁷⁷ See Allison, *Embodied*, 82.

Ritualization as Transmission of Corporate Identity

The corporate identity is fostered through what Erikson refers to as *ritualization*—“the formalization of minute patterns of daily interplay, the ways we say ‘hello,’ dress and eat.”⁷⁸ Ritualization is a way in which aspects of social identity is transmitted to the individual. While in his earlier works, ritualization provided children with consistency for ego development, his later works would revisit ritualization in the broader context of corporate identity: spiritual, cultural, and national political identity.⁷⁹ In *Toys and Reasons* (1977), Erikson explores the transmission of identity through rites, spirituality, and ethics. He refers to the “mixture of formality and improvisation, a rhyming in time”—such as ways a society welcomes a newborn baby, customs of eating, seeing, hoping, and believing, that “familiarizes a person with a particular version of human existence.”⁸⁰ In this way, Erikson has been regarded as a trans-Freudian.⁸¹ Whereas for Freud the key issues of selfhood and personality revolves around sexuality and suppression of libido, Erikson enlarges the role of culture by discussing the place of ritualization in the life cycle.⁸² Customary ways of doing things such as eating, ways of atoning, marriage ceremonies, etc., are means by which a culture socializes its members into the community’s vision of life.⁸³ By transforming needs into social actualities, ritualization links the individual to the social order.⁸⁴

⁷⁸ Stevens, *Erik Erikson*, 78.

⁷⁹ See Erik H. Erikson, *Young Man Luther* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1958); Erikson, *Gandhi’s Truth* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1968); Erikson, *Dimensions of a New Identity*; Erikson, *Life History and Historical Moment*.

⁸⁰ Erikson, *Toys and Reasons*, 79–84.

⁸¹ See Hoare, “Identity and Spiritual Development,” 183–200. Hoare predicts that Erikson, having witnessed Hitler’s growth in power and the new inventions of warfare, was driven to portray spiritual and ethical developments as essential ingredients of mature adult identity (186).

⁸² Stevens, *Erik Erikson*, 42.

⁸³ Stevens, *Erik Erikson*, 42.

⁸⁴ Stevens, *Erik Erikson*, 42.

Ritualization as Transition into Corporate Identity

Ritualization is also a way in which individuals demark their transition and acceptance into their social identity. At its best, ritualization represents “a creative formalization which helps to avoid both impulsive excess and compulsive self-restriction, both social anomie and moralistic coercion.”⁸⁵ Ritualizing adolescents into social order offers several practical benefits to the individual. For example, society provides a manual of how things are done, a sense of worth through inclusion, and organizes the cognitive pattern of the general vision shared by the community.⁸⁶ Ritual confirmations, initiations, and indoctrinations enhance a process by which societies bestow traditional strength on the new generation.⁸⁷ Concerning formal rites, Erikson viewed events such as graduations and marriage ceremonies as corporate confirmations by the community that help transition adolescences into adulthood, or their renewed inner identity. He comments on the transition of identities by confirmation of the community this way:

The wholeness to be achieved at this stage I have called a sense of inner identity. The young person, in order to experience wholeness, must feel a progressive continuity between that which has come to be during the long years of childhood and that which he promises to become in the anticipated future; between that which he conceives himself to be and that which he perceives others to see in him and to expect of him.⁸⁸

This applies to religious ritualization. Spiritual activities in a community similarly sustain the development of the ego. While he remained distant to formal religion personally, Erikson believed that religious practices “restore . . . a new sense of wholeness,” coherence, and ego vitality.⁸⁹ In his view, positive religious ritual and

⁸⁵ Erikson, *Toys and Reasons*, 82.

⁸⁶ Erikson, *Toys and Reasons*, 82.

⁸⁷ Erikson, *Insight and Responsibility*, 90.

⁸⁸ Erikson, *Insight and Responsibility*, 91.

⁸⁹ Erikson, *Identity*, 268.

affirmations counteract a threatening sense of alienation.⁹⁰

Ritualization often involves the use of symbols and images. Erikson sees these forms of ritualization as further acts in which a society presents their version of human experience. Images tell history, and history presents images that forecast archetypes of being.⁹¹ Not all ritualization is positive. Erikson was concerned about “negative identities,” debased self-images and social roles perpetuated by large group identities or depictions of others in certain rituals.⁹² Similarly, he was concerned about negative forms of ritualization that occur when traditions and communal acts have lost their meaning.⁹³

Ritual Knowledge and Practice

Christians can be just as vulnerable of allowing their practices to lose meaning or of maintaining false ideas about God, self, and others. It is therefore important that Christian worship practices are grounded in the truths of Scripture. Erikson’s triple bookkeeping offers three areas that shape identity: the body, social relationships, and the individuals’ attitudes. This invites more questions about how liturgies, as Christian ritualization, shape identity.

Liturgies are embodied practices expressed in corporate identity that shape and

⁹⁰ Erikson, *Insight and Responsibility*, 127.

⁹¹ For example, he reflects on post-war American identity (its creeds, brand of competitiveness and way of life) in four images: the *mom*, the *cowboy*, the *frontier*, and the *machine*. Erikson speculates on how each of these images narrate roles for men and women. For example, the image of the American mother is emotionally detached, perpetuating a narrative that American women who are dutiful have healthy children and survive. Or the mythology of the cowboy presents a history of America where men were able to navigate the harsh realities of frontier life by their bootstraps. Each of these spirits are deeply embedded in American history and identity. See Erikson’s “Reflections on the American Identity,” in *Childhood and Society*, 289–325. These images each reflect a “portrait”—stereotypes and traditional expectations of genders and attitudes imparted subconsciously to ensure or inspire children in ways that are vital to their survival. Because healthy identities require maintaining essential patterns, large scale uprooting and transmigration in individuals and generations displace identity growth. Thus, Erikson saw indicative differences between images of the “gypsy,” the “shifless,” and the “vagrant,” and the “pioneer” and the “frontiersman,” that influence self-image for uprooted individuals and generations. Erikson, *Insights and Responsibility*, 98–99.

⁹² Erikson, *Insights and Responsibility*, 96–97.

⁹³ Erikson, *Childhood and Society*, 243.

form people's attitudes so that they conform to those of Christ.⁹⁴ Byron Anderson suggests that worship is a form of *ritual knowledge* and *ritual practice*.⁹⁵

Ritual knowledge orients persons and communities towards a way of being. Anderson writes, "Ritual and ritualization, then, are ways of knowing self and other, person and community in the world that is both other and more than a cognitive knowing. Ritual knowing is affective and physical, imaginal and embodied."⁹⁶ The emphasis is on physical action: "How we use our bodies in worship influences the meaning we attribute to our liturgical action."⁹⁷ By this he means that the liturgy narrates "who we are" and "where we belong."⁹⁸

As a form of ritual practice, Byron means the liturgy functions as an emergent act by which a community both produces its future and reconstructs its past.⁹⁹ Worship as practice is liturgical catechism, "a social uniting of past, present and future" and a "pattern of *meaning* and *action* that is culturally constructed and communally instantiated."¹⁰⁰ Liturgies are rituals in which Christians organize their understandings, "dramatize" their fundamental conceptions, and rearrange their fundamental assumptions.¹⁰¹

⁹⁴ Philip Pfatteicher, *The School of the Church: Worship and Christian Formation* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity International, 1995), 102.

⁹⁵ Byron E. Anderson, *Worship and Christian Identity: Practicing Ourselves*, Virgil Michel (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2003), Kindle.

⁹⁶ Anderson, *Worship and Christian Identity*, chap. 3.

⁹⁷ Essentially, Christians learn how to be a Christian by enacting those stories and traditions in ritual action with the Christian community through baptism, communion, singing, praying, and bowing. Anderson, *Worship and Christian Identity*, chap. 3.

⁹⁸ Anderson, *Worship and Christian Identity*, chap. 3.

⁹⁹ Anderson's notion of ritual practice combines how the ritual event is "being-played" as the past ("ritual practice as manifestation") as encountered in the context of the present ("ritual practice as presentation") towards a future orientation. Anderson, *Worship and Christian Identity*, chap. 4.

¹⁰⁰ Anderson, *Worship and Christian Identity*, chap. 4; emphasis added.

¹⁰¹ Anderson, *Worship and Christian Identity*, chap. 3.

Confession and Assurance as Expressions of Conflict and Resolution

This section addresses the role of confession and assurance in the liturgy. Christian worship can often be commandeered by celebration to the neglect of confession. Walter Sundberg observes that much of the American church has failed to uphold the primary purpose of the liturgy or has demonstrated serious weakness in fulfilling it, especially under the conditions of modernity.¹⁰² He argues that while much of gathered worship centers on celebrating God's love, the purpose of the liturgy is to do the following:

Call Christians to repentance; to warn them to be under no illusion as to who they are and how far they fall short when they stand before God and holy things; to teach them to worship God in humility; to feed them the Bread of Life; to make them ready to give testimony to Christ in word and deed.¹⁰³

Christians are called to confess their sins (Jas 5:16; 1 John 1:9; Prov 28:13). Through confession, Christians articulate sorrow and lament for their sin. In other words, "Christians identify their failures of relatedness to God and one another."¹⁰⁴ Taking Anderson's vision of the liturgy's two-fold role, confession narrates conceptions of sin and failings. It also practices renunciations of past attitudes and behaviors, and orients and initiates a renewed identity. John Witvliet notes that the practice of corporate confession and penitence orients Christians towards grace: "Think of penitence [confession] not as a burden but as a place to set aside our burdens."¹⁰⁵ In assurance,

¹⁰² Walter Sundberg, *Worship as Repentance: Lutheran Liturgical Traditions and Catholic Consensus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 22.

¹⁰³ Sundberg, *Worship as Repentance*, 22.

¹⁰⁴ Anderson, *Worship and Christian Identity*, chap. 3.

¹⁰⁵ Kathleen Norris, John D. Witvliet, and Enuma Okoro, "Three Views: Why Confess Sins in Worship When It Seems So Rote?," *Christianity Today*, November 22, 2013, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2013/december/why-confess-sins-inworship-when-it-seems-so-rote.html>.

Christians proclaim the power of forgiveness and the promise of salvation. An assurance of pardon is restoration to God's favor. In Erikson's model, individuals achieve identity through conflict and resolution. Similarly, Anderson suggests that confession and assurance result in the "ongoing social and psychological 're-writing' of a person and community."¹⁰⁶

In a society that avoids discussing sin and personal accountability, a call to confession invites honest dialogue with God in the context of a covenantal relationship (Pss 32:1–6; 66:16–20; 139:23–24).¹⁰⁷ Christians practice confession and assurance to orient themselves towards their new identity in Christ. Given Sundberg's argument on the purpose of the liturgy,¹⁰⁸ it follows that these themes in corporate worship should be expressed in the lyrical content of congregational songs.

Emotional Language of CWM

Emotional development is an essential component of identity and maturation. Erikson suggests that individuals move through stages of their development as they experience both *conflict* and *resolution*.¹⁰⁹ One might expect congregational songs to portray a wide range of emotions with attention to the transition of conflict to resolution. However, a survey of CWM published in the last fifteen years finds that most songs used in worship are partial towards emotional resolution, while language that navigates

¹⁰⁶ Anderson draws this from George Worgul's discussion on Erikson and ritualization; Worgul suggests that rituals "secure a consistent identification of one human generation with another," and "provide a psychological foundation for 'ego' development which is essential for the eventual total personality integration in adulthood. George Worgul, quoted in Anderson, *Worship and Christian Identity*, chap. 3.

¹⁰⁷ *The Worship Sourcebook*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Calvin Institute of Christian Worship, Faith Alive, Baker, 2013), 81.

¹⁰⁸ Sundberg, *Worship as Repentance*, 22.

¹⁰⁹ James Marcia further develops upon Erikson's theory of identity to include four identity statuses built on the interplay between exploration and commitment. This will be explored in chap. 5. See also Phillips and Pittman, "Adolescent Psychological Well-Being," 1021–34; Kroger, Martinussen, and Marcia, "Identity Status Change during Adolescence," 683–98.

emotional conflict is lacking. The emotional language of CWM falls into two categories: (1) positive emotions that are associated with the experience of *resolution*, such as joy, reverence, and love; and (2) negative emotions that are associated with the experience of *conflict*, such as longing and sorrow.¹¹⁰

Portrayals of “Resolute” Emotions

The majority of CWM depict positive emotions in response to God’s character and redemptive work. These songs paint a tapestry of the life of a believer in resolute terms.

Joy and celebration. Among these experiences is that of revelry for God’s work in creation. Christians identify as a joyful people who are witnesses to God’s divine creation. Darlene Zschech’s refrain exhorts all of creation to “shout to the Lord” and committedly exclaims, “I sing for joy at the work of your hands.”¹¹¹ Similarly, Marc Byrd’s and Steve Hindalong’s “God of Wonders,” which exalts God as Creator, embraces each new day with celebration: “Early in the morning; I will celebrate the light.”¹¹²

Joy is a response to God’s redemptive work as well. Stuart Wesley Hine saw the pinnacle of Christian joy as the time when Christ returns at the final restoration:

When Christ shall come with shout of acclamation;
And lead me home what *joy* shall fill my heart;
Then I shall bow with humble adoration;

¹¹⁰ This is adapted from Matthew Westerholm’s taxonomy in order to assess the emotional life of believers as portrayed in CWM. He finds that portrayal of positive emotions are associated with “already” aspects of the kingdom, such as love and joy, confidence, and commitment, while the negative emotions are associated with the “not yet” aspects of the kingdom”; these include longing for the Lord, external difficulties, and internal weaknesses. See Matthew David Westerholm, “‘The Hour Is Coming and Is Now Here’: The Doctrine of Inaugurated Eschatology in Contemporary Evangelical Worship Music” (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2016), 147, 155.

¹¹¹ Darlene Zschech, “Shout to the Lord,” CCLI 1406918, Wondrous Worship (admin. Music Services), 1993.

¹¹² Marc Byrd and Steve Hindalong, “God of Wonders,” CCLI 3118757, Never say Never Songs (admin. Brentwood-Benson Music) New Spring (admin. Brentwood-Benson Music) Meaux Mercy (admin. Capitol CMG), Storm Boy Music (admin. Capitol CMG), 2000.

And then proclaim my God how great Thou art.¹¹³

Joyful singing and joy-inspired singing are common motifs. Brenton Brown details the joyful heart which springs forth in singing. In addition to describing God’s love and goodness, he writes,

I can feel it rising, all the *joy* that’s growing deep inside of me;
Every time I see you; All your goodness shines through;
I can feel this God song; Rising up in me.¹¹⁴

One song in particular depicts a transaction where sorrow can be exchanged for joy upon response to the call of Jesus: “Bring your sorrows and trade them for joy; from the ashes a new life is born; Jesus is calling.”¹¹⁵

Additionally, the celebrating Christian is depicted with kinesthetic language, such as *dancing*. Martin Smith explores a notion of undignified dancing—similar to David in 2 Samuel 6:22—in his song “I Could Sing Your Love Forever”:

Oh I feel like dancing; It’s foolishness I know;
But when the world has seen the light;
They will dance with joy
like we’re dancing now.¹¹⁶

For the Christian, mourning is turned to dancing.¹¹⁷ Likewise, the song “Glorious Day” describes the transition of the believer from spiritual death to spiritual life with animated language. Believers respond to God’s salvific call by *running* towards God with triumph and celebration: “You called my name, and I *ran* out of that grave; Out of the darkness

¹¹³ Stuart Wesley Hine and Carl Gustav Boberg, “How Great Thou Art,” CCLI 14181, Stuart K. Hine Trust (admin. Capitol CMG), 1949; emphasis added.

¹¹⁴ Brenton Brown and Brian Doerksen, “Hallelujah,” CCLI 3091812, Vineyard Songs (admin. Vineyard Music UK), 2000; emphasis added.

¹¹⁵ Chris Brown et al., “Come to the Altar,” CCLI 7051511, Music by Elevation Worship (admin. Essential Music), 2015.

¹¹⁶ Martin Smith, “I Could Sing Your Love Forever,” CCLI 1043199, Curious? Music UK (admin. Capitol CMG), 1994.

¹¹⁷ Brandon Lake et al., “Graves into Gardens,” CCLI 7138219, Brandon Lake Music (admin. Bethel Music), 2019.

into your glorious day.”¹¹⁸

Within these songs that describe “dancing,” there is a picture of redemptive *freedom*. Christians identify as those who feel liberated and released from the bonds of sin: “We *dance in Your freedom* awake and alive; O Jesus Our Savior Your name lifted high; O God, You have done great things.”¹¹⁹ “Who You Say I Am,” a song by Ben Fielding and Reuben Morgan, explicitly speaks about the Christian’s identity, and celebrates their deliverance from sin because of God’s grace:

Free at last; He has ransomed me;
His grace runs deep;
While I was a slave to sin; Jesus died for me;
Who the Son sets free; Oh is free indeed.¹²⁰

According to Bryan and Katie Torwalt’s song, “Holy Spirit,” the identity of a Christian is one that has transitioned from a life of encumbrance by shame to one of relief: “I’ve tasted and seen of the sweetest of loves; *Where my heart becomes free* and my shame is undone.”¹²¹ These endearments are experienced by Christians who have a newfound identity in Jesus.

Gladness finds similar expression in Rick Found’s “Lord I Lift Your Name on High”: “I’m so glad you’re in my life, I’m so glad you came to save us.”¹²² The pinnacle of Christian celebration is often expressed through reflections on the resurrection. Ben Cantelon and Tim Hughes recount that day with celebration:

¹¹⁸ Jason Ingram et al., “Glorious Day,” CCLI 7081388, KPS1.0 (admin. Capitol CMG) et al., 2017; emphasis added.

¹¹⁹ Jonas Myrin and Phil Wickham, “Great Things,” CCLI 7111321, Capitol CMG Paragon (admin. Capitol CMG), 2018; emphasis added.

¹²⁰ Ben Fielding and Reuben Morgan, “Who You Say I Am,” CCLI 7102401, Hillsong Music Australia (admin. Capitol CMG), 2017.

¹²¹ Bryan Torwalt and Katie Torwalt, “Holy Spirit,” CCLI 6087919, Capitol CMG Genesis (admin. Capitol CMG), Jesus Culture Music (admin. Capitol CMG), 2011; emphasis added.

¹²² Rick Founds, “Lord, I Lift Your Name on High,” CCLI 117947, Universal Music-Brentwood Benson (admin. Brentwood-Benson Music), 1989.

The greatest day in history;
Death is beaten You have rescued me;
Sing it out Jesus is Alive . . . Oh *happy day, happy day*;
You washed my sin away . . . What a glorious, glorious day.¹²³

As Psalm 95 extols, the noise that a Christian makes is distinctly a *joyful* one.

Awe and wonder. CWM often focuses on the character of God and his redemptive work, so an emphasis on awe and wonder characterizes the repertoire. This is expressed in two ways: God himself as awe-inspiring, and Christians responding to God with awe and wonder. God is an “awesome God” whose wisdom, power, and love inspires praise.¹²⁴ Chris Tomlin captures this in his triumphant chorus: “Our God is greater; Our God is stronger; God You are higher than any other; Our God is healer; Awesome in power our God, Our God.”¹²⁵ Likewise, God and his works are full of wonder, which inspires singing.¹²⁶ Both verses in “Beautiful One,” by Tim Hughes, look to God’s glory in creation, as well as his mercy at the cross, with wonder and adoration:

Wonderful, so wonderful is Your unfailing love;
Your cross has spoken mercy over me;
No eye has seen no ear has heard; No heart could fully know;
How glorious how beautiful you are;
Powerful, so powerful Your glory fills the skies;
Your mighty works displayed for all to see;
the beauty of Your majesty awakes my heart to sing;
How marvelous how wonderful you are.¹²⁷

Believers are also explicitly depicted as being filled with awe and wonder

¹²³ Ben Cantelon and Tim Hughes, “Happy Day,” CCLI 4847027, Thankyou Music (admin. Capitol CMG), 2006; emphasis added.

¹²⁴ “Our God is an awesome God; He reigns from heaven above; With wisdom pow’r and love; our God is an awesome God.” Rich Mullins, “Awesome God,” CCLI 41099, Universal Music (admin. Brentwood-Benson Music), 1988; see also Chris Tomlin and Louie Giglio, “Holy Is the Lord,” CCLI 4158039, Rising Springs Music (admin. Capitol CMG) et al., 2003. They write, “We stand and lift up our hands; For the joy of the Lord is our strength; We bow down and worship Him now; How great and awesome is He.”

¹²⁵ Chris Tomlin et al., “Our God,” CCLI 5677416, Atlas Mountain Songs (admin. Capitol CMG) et al., 2010.

¹²⁶ Byrd and Hindalong, “God of Wonders.”

¹²⁷ Tim Hughes, “Beautiful One,” CCLI 3915912, Thankyou Music (admin. Capitol CMG), 2002.

before God. For one, God as Creator invokes reverential awe. The first stanza of Hine’s hymn, “How Great Thou Art,” combined with the chorus, describes this as the source to a believers singing. He begins, “O Lord my God, When I in awesome wonder; Consider all the world’s Thy hands have made,” and continues, “Then sings my soul; My Savior God to thee; How great Thou art; How great Thou art.”¹²⁸ Also, God as Savior, gives rise to awe. Tomlin writes, “At the cross, at the cross; I surrender my life; I’m in awe, I’m in awe; Where your love ran red and my sin washed white; I owe all to You, I owe all to you.”¹²⁹ In Jennie Riddle’s anthem, which adapts the glorious scene in Revelation 5, Christ is a victorious Savior: “Filled with wonder, awestruck wonder; At the mention of your name; Jesus, Your name is power, breath and living water; Such a marvelous mystery.”¹³⁰

Amazement finds similar expression in many CWM songs. Drawing from Psalm 8, the language in “Friend of God,” expresses wonder at how God Almighty would consider the welfare of believers:

Who am I that You are mindful of me;
That You hear me when I call;
Is it true that you are thinking of me;
How you love me, it’s amazing (It’s amazing, it’s amazing).¹³¹

These similar expressions of amazement are ascribed towards God’s grace,¹³² and God’s

¹²⁸ Hine and Boberg, “How Great Thou Art.”

¹²⁹ Chris Tomlin et al., “At the Cross (Love Ran Red),” CCLI 7017786, Countless Wonder (admin. Brentwood-Benson Music) et al., 2014.

¹³⁰ Jennie Lee Riddle, “Revelation Song,” CCLI 4447960, Gateway Create (admin. Capitol CMG [IMI]), 2004.

¹³¹ Israel Houghton and Michael Gungor, “Friend of God,” CCLI 3991651, Integrity Worship Music (admin. Integrity Music), Integrity’s Praise! Music (admin. Integrity Music), Sound Of the New Breed (admin. Integrity Music), 2003.

¹³² Josh Farro, Jeremy Riddle, and Phil Wickham, “This Is Amazing Grace” CCLI 6333821, Phil Wickham Music (admin. BMG [c/o Music Services]) et al., 2013; see also Chris Tomlin, John Newton, and Louie Giglio, “Amazing Grace (My Chains Are Gone),” CCLI 4768151, sixsteps Music (admin. Capitol CMG), Vamos (admin. Capitol CMG), worshiptogether.com songs (admin. Capitol CMG), 2006.

love.¹³³ Like the psalmist in Psalm 24, Reeves, Farro, and Wickham remind worshippers that the King of Glory leaves them amazed and astonished:

Who shakes the whole earth with holy thunder;
Who leaves us breathless in awe and wonder;
The King of Glory, the King above all kings . . .
This is *amazing grace*.¹³⁴

Associated with the love and presence of God, CWM sometimes conveys the feeling of being *overwhelmed* by God's renown. Drawing on the parable of the lost sheep in Luke 15:4, Cory Asbury describes the love of God as incomprehensible and overwhelming when one considers the pursuit of the Divine: "O the *overwhelming*, never-ending reckless love of God; O it chases me down, fights 'til I'm found; Leaves the ninety-nine."¹³⁵ In the song "One Thing Remains," the writers speak of the love of God, which is unchanging, overwhelming, and satisfying to the believer: "On and on, and on, and on it goes; it *overwhelms and satisfies my soul*."¹³⁶ Additionally, the presence of God's Spirit invigorates passionate outpour. The song "Holy Spirit" makes this petition:

Holy Spirit, You are welcome here;
Come flood this place and fill the atmosphere;
Your glory God is what our hearts long for;
to be *overcome by Your Presence Lord*.¹³⁷

The Christian identity is not described as dispassionate or indifferent.

Another way awe and wonder is portrayed, is through the "limits of human language" motif. The chorus of "Indescribable" exemplifies this theme well:

¹³³ Chris Tomlin et al., "Jesus Messiah," CCLI 5183443, Rising Springs Music (admin. Capitol CMG) et al., 2008. See also Billy J. Foote, "You Are My King (Amazing Love)," CCLI 2456623, worshiptogether.com songs (admin. Capitol CMG), 1996.

¹³⁴ Farro, Riddle, and Wickham, "This Is Amazing Grace"; emphasis added.

¹³⁵ Cory Asbury, Caleb Culver, and Ran Jackson, "Reckless Love," CCLI 7089641, Cory Asbury (admin. Bethel Music) et al., 2017; emphasis added.

¹³⁶ Brian Johnson, Christa Black Gifford, and Jeremy Riddle, "One Thing Remains (Your Love Never Fails)," CCLI 5508444, ChristaJoy Music (admin. Bethel Music), Mercy/Vineyard (admin. Vineyard Music), Bethel Music, 2010.

¹³⁷ Torwalt and Torwalt, "Holy Spirit," 2011.

*Indescribable, uncontainable,
You placed the stars in the sky and You know them by name;
You are amazing God;
All powerful, untamable,
Awestruck we fall to our knees;
As we humbly proclaim; You are amazing God.*¹³⁸

In similar fashion, Paul Baloche and Lenny LeBlanc describe the incalculable worth of Christ:

Above all kingdoms above all thrones;
above all wonders the world has ever known;
above all wealth and treasures of the earth;
There's *no way to measure what You're worth.*¹³⁹

Hughes reflects on God's work at Calvary in the same manner:

I'll *never know* how much it cost; To see my sin upon that Cross;
So Here I am to worship; Here I am to bow down;
Here I am to say that You're my God;
And you're altogether lovely; altogether worthy; *Altogether wonderful* to me.¹⁴⁰

Christians are those who are shown glimpses of God's glory and are filled with wonder too deep to ever exhaust.

Love and devotion. CWM emphasizes the love of God, as well as loving God with devotion. Laurie Klein expresses that sincere desire in her lyrics, "I love you, Lord; And I lift my voice; To worship you."¹⁴¹ Like Klein, Hughes expresses how this love compels a song: "Beautiful One, *I love You*; Beautiful One, *I adore*; Beautiful One, my soul must sing."¹⁴² This love is also committed and wholehearted, like in the chorus of

¹³⁸ Jesse Reeves and Laura Story, "Indescribable," CCLI 4403076, Laura Stories (admin. Capitol CMG), sixsteps Music (admin. Capitol CMG), worshiptogether.com songs (admin. Capitol CMG), 2004; emphasis added.

¹³⁹ Lenny LeBlanc and Paul Baloche, "Above All," CCLI 2672885, Integrity's Hosanna! Music (admin. Integrity Music), LenSongs (admin. LenSongs), 1999; emphasis added.

¹⁴⁰ Tim Hughes, "Here I Am to Worship," CCLI 3266032, Thankyou Music (admin. Capital CMG), 2000; emphasis added.

¹⁴¹ Laurie Klein, "I Love You, Lord," CCLI 25266, House Of Mercy Music (admin. Brentwood-Benson Music), 1978, 1980.

¹⁴² Hughes, "Beautiful One"; emphasis added.

Zschech’s “Shout to the Lord,” where she pledges her faithful love to the Lord: “Forever I’ll love you; Forever I’ll stand; Nothing compares to the promise I have in You.”¹⁴³ Love and devotion are intertwined with celebration and joy because Christians are resolved and committed. In response to the “amazing love” of Jesus, Billy J. Foote connects his feeling of “joy” to obeying God: “It’s my *joy* to honor you; In all I do, I honor You.”¹⁴⁴

The love for God as described in these songs is not ephemeral, for it rooted in God’s character and past works. The song “Goodness of God” personifies God’s mercy and guidance: “*I love you Lord; Oh your mercy never fails me . . . I love your voice; You have led me through the fire.*”¹⁴⁵ Worshipers do not seem content with the state of their affections for God, such as in Joel Houston’s emphatic petition to love God completely:

In my heart in my soul; Lord I give You control;
Consume me from the inside out Lord;
Let justice and praise; Become my embrace;
*To love You from the inside out.*¹⁴⁶

Peace and confidence. Declarations of peace and confidence reflect CWM’s portrayal of the believer amidst external trials. Among the most frequent motifs is the employment of rain and storm as a metaphor for trials.¹⁴⁷ Bethel Music portrays *confidence* with the image of Christians praising God in the midst of *stormy* trials:

I’m gonna sing in the middle of the storm;
louder and louder you’re gonna hear my praises roar;
up from the ashes hope will arise;
death is defeated the King is alive.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴³ Zschech, “Shout to the Lord.”

¹⁴⁴ Foote, “You Are My King”; emphasis added.

¹⁴⁵ Ben Fielding et al., “Goodness of God,” CCLI 7117726, Capitol CMG Paragon (admin. Capitol CMG) et al., 2018; emphasis added.

¹⁴⁶ Joel Houston, “From the Inside Out,” CCLI 4705176, Hillsong Music (admin. Capitol CMG), 2005; emphasis added.

¹⁴⁷ This pattern finds biblical precedent in the Prophets (i.e., Isa 25:4); the Proverbs (i.e., Prov 10:25); the Psalms (i.e., Ps 107); and Gospel accounts of Jesus calming storms (i.e., Matt 8:23–27).

¹⁴⁸ Jake Stevens et al., “Raise a Hallelujah,” CCLI 7119315, Bethel Music, 2018; see also Beth

In another popular anthem, adversity is further conveyed by raging oceans and strong winds; however the Christian remains unwavering:

The wind is strong and the water's deep;
but I'm not alone here in these open seas;
Your love never fails; the chasm is far too wide;
I never thought I'd reach the other side;
Your love never fails; You stay the same through the ages;
Your love never changes;
There may be pain in the night; But joy comes in the morning;
And when the oceans rage; I don't have to be afraid;
Because I know that you love me.¹⁴⁹

In another song, tribulations are near catastrophic proportions, yet the greatest good for the Christian is not a life without trouble, but a life with Christ:

And I will call upon Your name;
And keep my eyes above the waves;
When oceans rise; My soul will rest in Your embrace;
For I am Yours and You are mine.¹⁵⁰

God's dependability is the source of this assurance. Chris Brown testifies of God's past faithfulness as the source of his confidence: "This is my *confidence*; You've never failed me yet."¹⁵¹

Believers enduring trials experience a depth of peace as well as *comfort* in Christ. For example, "In Christ Alone," by Keith Getty and Stuart Townend, describes those who know Christ, and thus know his peace and comfort:

This Cornerstone this solid ground;
Firm through the fiercest drought and storm;
What heights of love what *depths of peace*;
when fears are stilled when strivings cease;

Redman and Matt Redman, "Blessed Be Your Name," CCLI 3798438, Thankyou Music (admin. Capitol CMG), 2002. In this song, the worshiper clings to hope in God amidst trials.

¹⁴⁹ Brian Johnson, Christa Black Gifford, and Jeremy Riddle, "One Thing Remains (Your Love Never Fails)," CCLI 5508444, ChristaJoy Music (admin. Bethel Music), Mercy/Vineyard (admin. Vineyard Music), Bethel Music, 2010.

¹⁵⁰ Joel Houston, Matt Crocker, and Salomon Ligthelm, "Oceans (Where Feet May Fail)," CCLI 6428767, Hillsong Music Australia (admin. Capitol CMG), 2012.

¹⁵¹ Chris Brown et al., "Do it Again," CCLI 7067555, Said And Done Music (admin. Capitol CMG) et al., 2017; emphasis added.

My comforter my All in all; Here in the love of Christ I stand.¹⁵²

Mitigation of fear is related to peace, for those who belong to Christ. Jason Ingram and Reuben Morgan personify Christ as this peace against the debilitations of fear: “You are peace You are peace; When my fear is crippling; You are true You are true; Even in my wandering.”¹⁵³ And most assuring, this peace of Christ pacifies the fear of death. Again, Getty and Townend model this truth in their final stanza: “No guilt in life no fear in death; This is the power of Christ in me.”¹⁵⁴

Portrayals of “Conflict” Emotions

A strengthened identity is realized through the navigation of conflict. This section investigates how CWM depicts conflict emotions as one navigates through internal and external crises.

Sorrow. While comparatively scarce, CWM does utilize explicit language to portray conflict throughout the life of a Christian. In most instances, *sorrow* is momentary because it resolves in Christ. Darrell Evans paraphrases 2 Corinthians 4:8, and describes a temporary time of sorrow, in addition to the experience of pain and sickness:

I’m pressed but not crushed; Persecuted not abandoned;
Struck down but not destroyed . . .
Though sorrow may last through the night; His joy comes with the morning;
I’m trading my sorrows; I’m trading my shame;
I’m laying them down for the joy of the Lord;
I’m trading my sickness; I’m trading my pain;
I’m laying them down; For the joy of the Lord.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵² Keith Getty and Stuart Townend, “In Christ Alone,” CCLI 3350395, Thankyou Music (admin. Capitol CMG), 2001; emphasis added.

¹⁵³ Jason Ingram and Reuben Morgan, “Forever Reign,” CCLI 5639997, Hillsong Music (admin. Capitol CMG), Sony/ATV Timber (admin. Sony/ATV Music), West Main Music (admin. Sony/ATV Music), Spirit Nashville Three (admin. Spirit Music), 2009; emphasis added.

¹⁵⁴ Getty and Townend, “In Christ Alone.”

¹⁵⁵ Darrell Evans, “Trading My Sorrows,” CCLI 2574653, Integrity Hosanna! Music (admin. Capitol CMG), 1998.

While sorrow is attributed to an external circumstance, sorrow at times is associated with sin prior to salvation. The writers of “Death Was Arrested” say it this way:

“Alone in my sorrow and dead in my sin; Lost without hope with no place to begin.”¹⁵⁶

Then with Christ, that sorrow turns to praise: “My mourning grew quiet my feet rose to dance; When death was arrested and my life began.”¹⁵⁷ Believers also experience sorrow

for falling short of their commitments. Matt Redman confesses this conflict as he confronts his self-centered approach to worship: “I’m sorry Lord for the thing I’ve made it; When it’s all about You all about you, Jesus.”¹⁵⁸

In this vein, other writers portray sorrow expressed as shame, guilt, and failures. Kristian Stanfill and his co-authors describe this shame as a heavy burden that once entombed:

I was buried beneath my shame;
Who could carry that kind of weight;
It was my tomb ‘til I met you;
I was breathing but not alive;
All my failures I tried to hide;
It was my tomb ‘til I met you.¹⁵⁹

In “Come to the Altar,” the lyrics similarly reflect on the gravity of sin: “Are you hurting and broken within; Overwhelmed by the weight of your sin; Jesus is calling.”¹⁶⁰ The next verse identifies regret in tandem with sorrow:

Leave behind your regrets and mistakes;
Come today there’s no reason to wait; Jesus is calling;
Bring your sorrows and trade them for joy;

¹⁵⁶ Adam Kersh et al., “Death Was Arrested,” CCLI 7046448, Seems Like Music (admin. BMG Rights [c/o Music Services]) et al., 2015.

¹⁵⁷ Kersh et al., “Death Was Arrested.”

¹⁵⁸ Matt Redman, “The Heart of Worship,” CCLI 2296522, Thankyou Music (admin. Capitol CMG), 1999.

¹⁵⁹ Ingram et al., “Glorious Day.”

¹⁶⁰ Brown et al., “Come to the Altar.”

From the ashes a new life is born; Jesus is calling.¹⁶¹

Symbolism is the preferred approach for addressing conflict in CWM.

“Mountains” and “chasms” symbolically convey the feeling of distance and separation from God, the source of eternal life.¹⁶² “Ashes” convey grief and loss.¹⁶³ “Darkness” is a frequent expression of an unredeemed life. Wickham combines the aforementioned imagery and describes a *spiritual darkness* that separated him and God:

How great *the chasm* that lay between us;
How high the *mountain* I could not climb;
In desperation I turned to heaven;
And spoke Your name into the night;
Then through the *darkness* Your loving-kindness;
Tore through the *shadows of my soul*;
The work is finished the end is written;
Jesus Christ my living hope.¹⁶⁴

Other times, “darkness,” as well as “storms” and “fire,” refer to external conflicts that Christians endure.¹⁶⁵ In the song “Tremble,” the writers employ a number of these metaphors detailing a vivid journey of despair as they petition for relief. In the first verse, they identify as those caught in a raging storm:

Peace bring it all to peace; The storms surrounding me;
Let it break at Your name; Still call the sea to still;
The rage in me to still; Every wave at Your name.¹⁶⁶

Later, the writers identify as cadavers, crying for the breath of life: “Breath, call these

¹⁶¹ Brown et al., “Come to the Altar.”

¹⁶² In “Reckless Love,” Asbury describes what God’s love must overcome in order to save him: “There’s no shadow You won’t light; Mountain You won’t climb up; coming after me; There’s no wall You won’t kick down; Lie You won’t tear down; Coming after me.” Asbury, Culver, and Jackson, “Reckless Love.”

¹⁶³ Brown et al., “Come to the Altar.”

¹⁶⁴ Brian Johnson and Phil Wickham, “Living Hope,” CCLI 7106807, Phil Wickham Music (Fair Trade Music [c/o Essential Music]) et al., 2017; emphasis added. Many other writers employ “darkness” to refer to a state prior to saving faith.

¹⁶⁵ Both appear in “Goodness of God”: “I love your voice; You have led me through the fire; In darkest night; You are close like no other.” Ben Fielding et al., “Goodness of God.”

¹⁶⁶ Andres Figueroa et al., “Tremble,” CCLI 7065049, All Essential Music (admin. Essential Music) et al., 2016.

bones to life; Call these lungs to sing.”¹⁶⁷ In the chorus and bridge, these adversities are personified as foes of “darkness,” “shadows,” and “silence” who tremble before Jesus.¹⁶⁸

Bethel Music attests to the presence of God even through trials:

I love your voice; You have led me through the *fire*;
in *darkest night*; you are close like no other;
I’ve known You as a father; I’ve known You as a friend;
I have lived in the goodness of God.¹⁶⁹

Matt Redman uses the image of a “desert” in the same way:

Blessed be Your name;
When I’m found in the desert place;
Though I walk through the wilderness;
Blessed be Your name.¹⁷⁰

Fear. The literature depicts Christians wrestling with sinful fear in a similar way as sorrow. It is often scarce and always referred to as an unredeemed quality. Two types of fear are addressed: fear of the future and fear of death. Both are resolved in the work of Christ as redeemer and Lord. For example, the final stanza of “In Christ Alone” begins: “No guilt in life no fear in death; This is the power of Christ in me; from life’s first cry to final breath; Jesus commands my destiny.”¹⁷¹ Jesus’s victory over sin resolves the fear of death, and Jesus’s sovereign lordship resolves fear of the future.

Fear is symbiotic to sin. For example, fear is sometimes associated with weakness and personal failures, like in the song, “Mighty to Save”: “So take me as You

¹⁶⁷ Figueroa et al., “Tremble.”

¹⁶⁸ In the bridge of the song, Jesus is the only hope against such despair: “Your name is a light that the shadows can’t deny.” In the chorus, the sufferer calls on the powerful name of Jesus against emotional enemies: “Jesus Jesus You make the darkness tremble; Jesus Jesus You silence fear.” Figueroa et al., “Tremble.”

¹⁶⁹ Ben Fielding et al., “Goodness of God”; emphasis added.

¹⁷⁰ Redman and Redman, “Blessed Be Your Name.” The same song continues, “Blessed be Your name, In the land that is plentiful, Where Your streams of abundance flow.”

¹⁷¹ Getty and Townend, “In Christ Alone.”

find me; All my fears and failures; fill my life again.”¹⁷² A life marked with fear and failure is an empty life in need of renewal and purpose. In another example, the Christian life will encounter the overwhelming challenges of fear and failure. In the song “Oceans,” believers might be overwhelmed by fear and failures, but grace and God’s guidance abounds:

Your grace abounds in deepest waters;
Your sov’ reign hand will be my guide;
Where feet may fail and fear surrounds me;
You’ve never failed and You won’t start now.¹⁷³

Similarly, Ingram and Morgan convey fear as debilitating, and a hindrance to the Christian life: “You are peace You are peace; When my fear is crippling.”¹⁷⁴ Others present fear as a spiritual enemy opposing Christ and his followers. The song “Tremble” paints a vivid picture by personifying fear: “Jesus Jesus You make the darkness tremble; Jesus Jesus You silence fear.”¹⁷⁵ One song employs the captor metaphor and portrays “fear” as an enslaving force: “My fears were drowned in perfect love; I’m no longer a slave to fear; I am a child of God.”¹⁷⁶

Through all these examples, the enemy of fear is confronted by grace, and even Christ himself. The fury of fear is assuaged in the presence of Christ: “In your presence, all our fears are washed away.”¹⁷⁷ The chorus lyrics of “I Raise a Hallelujah” depict the Christian’s resolve in the conflict of fear:

¹⁷² Ben Fielding and Reuben Morgan, “Mighty to Save,” CCLI 451782, Hillsong Music (admin. Capitol CMG), 2006.

¹⁷³ Houston, Crocker, and Ligthelm, “Oceans (Where Feet May Fail).”

¹⁷⁴ Ingram and Morgan, “Forever Reign.”

¹⁷⁵ Figueroa et al., “Tremble.”

¹⁷⁶ Brian Johnson, Joel Case, and Jonathan David Helser, “No Longer Slaves,” CCLI 7030123, Bethel Music, 2014.

¹⁷⁷ Brenton Brown and Paul Baloche, “Hosanna (Praise Is Rising),” CCLI 4662491, Thankyou Music (admin. Capitol CMG), Integrity’s Hosanna! Music (admin. Capitol CMG [IMI]), 2005, 2006.

I raise a hallelujah, with everything inside of me;
I raise a hallelujah, I will watch the darkness flee;
I raise a hallelujah, in the middle of the mystery;
I raise as hallelujah, fear you lost your hold on me.¹⁷⁸

Though Christians wrestle with fear of the future or with fear of death, fear is ultimately resolved in Christ.

Longing. In light of the present brokenness in the world, Christians experience a deep *longing* for God's presence and renewal. Brown and Baloché present longing with a sense of spiritual dependency on the Lord:

Praise is rising; Eyes are turning to You;
We turn to You; Hope is stirring;
Hearts are yearning for you; We long for you;
Cause when we see You; We find strength to face the day;
In Your presence; All our fears are washed away.¹⁷⁹

Similar to fear, the conflict of longing is resolved by Jesus's presence. Thus, even though Christians experience communion with God through Christ, they still experience an aching for his full presence here and now.

This sentiment is consistent with many songs petitioning for an intimate engagement with the Lord. For example, in "Open the Eyes of My Heart," Baloché employs a sense of sight to convey this encounter with the Lord: "Open the eyes of my heart, Lord; Open the eyes of my heart; I want to see You; I want to see you."¹⁸⁰ Other songs convey this longing more explicitly, asking not only to become aware of God's presence, but to experience him deeply in the present:

Let us become more aware of Your Presence;
Let us experience the glory of your goodness . . .
Your glory is what our hearts long for;

¹⁷⁸ Stevens et al., "I Raise a Hallelujah."

¹⁷⁹ Brown and Baloché, "Hosanna (Praise is Rising)"; emphasis added.

¹⁸⁰ Paul Baloché, "Open the Eyes of My Heart," CCLI 2298355, Integrity's Hosanna! Music (admin. Integrity Music), 1997.

To be overcome by Your presence, Lord.¹⁸¹

The language of longing sometimes employs sensory words to communicate longing for God as a rudimentary need. For example, in Marie Barnett's song, "Breathe," she communicates a feeling of desperation by comparing God's presence to the very breath required for life:

This is the air I breath; This is the air I breathe;
Your holy presence living in me . . .
And I, I'm desperate for you; And I, I'm lost without.¹⁸²

Similarly, Redman connects the longing for the presence of God with thirst by paraphrasing Psalm 84:

How lovely is Your dwelling place, O Lord Almighty;
For my soul longs and even faints for You;
For here my heart is satisfied; Within Your presence;
I sing beneath the shadow of Your wings . . .
*My heart and flesh cry out; For you the Living God;
Your Spirit's water to my soul.*¹⁸³

This spiritual discontent and hunger for God cannot be satisfied with anything worldly. In "Graves into Gardens," the writers depict a journey in search of satisfaction. In the end, the offerings of the world are left wanting, compared to knowing God: "I searched the world, but it couldn't fill me; Man's empty praise and treasure that fade; Are never enough." They continue, "Oh there's nothing better than You; There's nothing better than you."¹⁸⁴ Christians are those who have journeyed through a world unsatisfied, until they find Christ.

Finally, Christians long for their worship of God to be undivided, without inhibitions of sin. Reuben Morgan expresses this longing to worship God wholeheartedly

¹⁸¹ Torwalt and Torwalt, "Holy Spirit."

¹⁸² Marie Barnett, "Breathe," CCLI 1874117, Mercy/Vineyard (admin. Vineyard Music USA), 1995.

¹⁸³ Matt Redman, "Better Is One Day," CCLI 1097451, Thankyou Music (admin. Capitol CMG), 1995; emphasis added.

¹⁸⁴ Lake et al., "Graves into Gardens."

very simply: “This is *my desire*; to honour You; Lord *with all my heart* I worship you.”¹⁸⁵

Though Christians are redeemed, their lives have not been fully conformed to the image of Christ. Congregational songs reflect on this reality by examining the shortcomings of the worship experience itself, as well as the worshipers’ longing for their worship to be fully devoted. Redman gets at this in “Heart of Worship”:

When the music fades all is stripped away; and I simply come;
Longing just to bring something that’s of worth;
That will bless Your heart . . .
I’m coming back to the heart of worship;
And it’s all about You, all about You, Jesus.¹⁸⁶

Longing can be experienced as living between the times of tension. On one hand, there is hope in the resurrection of Christ; but on the other hand, life is still met with personal weakness. So, longing is also connected to a desire for renewal, placing God at the center of spiritual and moral transformation. This is often expressed in terms of *waiting* for God’s intervention in the spiritual sense but also in circumstances. In the case of “King of Kings,” the song identifies with saints of the past who wait on the promises of God: “In the darkness we were *waiting*; Without hope without light.”¹⁸⁷ Christians rehearse their longing for the advent of Christ. However, in other songs, Christians are waiting for God’s personal intervention in their circumstances. In Brown’s anthem, Christians are portrayed as those who have experienced his past deliverance and are waiting for his future aid:

Walking around these walls; I thought by now they’d fall;
But you have never failed me yet;
Waiting for change to come; Knowing the battle’s won;

¹⁸⁵ Reuben Morgan, “I Give You My Heart,” CCLI 1866132, Hillsong Music Australia (admin. Capitol CMG), 1995; emphasis added.

¹⁸⁶ Redman, “Heart of Worship.”

¹⁸⁷ Brooke Ligertwood, Jason Ingram, and Scott Ligertwood, “King of Kings,” CCLI 7127647, Hillsong Music Australia (admin. Capitol CMG), Fellow Ships Music (admin. Essential Music LLC), So Essential Tunes (admin. Essential Music LLC), 2019; emphasis added.

For you have never failed me yet.¹⁸⁸

Brown and Riley focus more on the contrast between God’s strength and their own present weakness, and frame this sense of waiting with anticipation in their paraphrase of Isaiah 40:31: “Strength will rise as we wait upon the Lord; We will wait upon the Lord; We will wait upon the Lord.” Matt Maher also captures this sentiment of waiting on the Lord in his plea: “Remember Your people; Remember Your Children; Remember Your promise O God.”¹⁸⁹

Longing for renewal is expressed as *need*. One hymn adaptation expresses the believer’s moral dependency on God:

Without You I fall apart; You’re the one that guides my heart;
Lord I need You, Oh I need you; Every hour I need You;
My one defense my righteousness; Oh God how I need you.¹⁹⁰

As seen in this song, the need is simply God—his presence.

In congregational songs, presence and renewal are not mutually exclusive. Christians long for a renewed sense of devotion which can only come from an encounter with God. For example, “Open Up the Heavens” captures the sense of longing for God’s presence, which will also renew spiritual devotion. In one verse, the writers envision a day of renewed worship:

We’ve waited for this day;
We’re gathered in Your Name;
Calling out to You; Your glory like a fire awakening desire;
Will burn our hearts with truth.¹⁹¹

Additionally, in the second verse, the source of renewal is the presence of the Lord:

Your presence in this place;

¹⁸⁸ Brown et al., “Do it Again”; emphasis added.

¹⁸⁹ Matt Maher, “Your Grace Is Enough,” CCLI 4477026, Thankyou Music (admin. Capital CMG), 2003.

¹⁹⁰ Christy Nockels et al., “Lord I Need You,” CCLI 5925687, sixsteps Music (admin. Capitol CMG) et al., 2011.

¹⁹¹ Andi Rozier et al., “Open Up the Heavens,” CCLI 6304702, Curb Songs (admin. Curb Music) et al., 2012.

Your glory on our face;
We're looking to the sky;
Descending like a cloud,
You're standing with us now;
Lord unveil our eyes.¹⁹²

As they look towards Christ's second advent, Christians are a longing people. Longing language reveals values. Ray Van Nest describes the importance of poetry especially in the current context:

People used to turn to poetry to express their deepest longings, their highest joys, and their darkest grief. But, anesthetized as our culture is by amusement technology, our sorrows and our joys have become so benumbed, so diluted by virtual distractions, we feel little or no need for such outdated things as poetry. It's simply not to our taste.¹⁹³

Conclusion

In this chapter I investigated identity formation from the perspective of psychology. By employing a redemptive hermeneutic, I engaged with Erikson's identity theory and appropriated his language for conflict and resolute emotions. For Erikson, crisis is not an aversion to development. It is necessary. Regarding crisis, Erikson held that the individual must have a sense of continuity in his or her life—past, present, and future. Christians expect to be confronted by the brokenness of the present world prior to the return of Christ. For Christian discipleship, ministry, and authentic worship to be transformative towards Christ-like holiness, Christians must have a robust emotional vocabulary to navigate life.

Within a Christian liturgy, I suggest that Christians express conflict and resolute emotions through confession and assurance. In the liturgy, Christians have an opportunity to practice the language of confession in their prayers. Furthermore, congregational singing serves as a form of ritualization, necessary for believers to realize

¹⁹² Rozier et al., "Open Up the Heavens."

¹⁹³ Ray Van Neste and C. Richard Wells, eds., *Forgotten Songs: Reclaiming the Psalms for Christian Worship* (Nashville: B&H, 2012), 66.

their identity as individuals in Christ, and also their corporate identity as the church. The Christian life is marked by certain hope in uncertain circumstances. Prayers nourish the soul along the journey.

Given the importance of these themes, I argue that they should be expected in the lyrical content of the songs that Christians sing. While current congregational songs in evangelical worship convey a wide range of emotions, the data shows CWM's partiality towards *resolute* emotions, to the neglect of explicit *conflict* emotions. Most of CWM highlights positive affections in the life of the believer. Few songs mention sin explicitly. Evangelical worship's limited vocabulary to portray the breadth of human emotions may present challenges to identify formation. In the next chapter, I will investigate specifically how the journey to understand self-identity is just as important as the destination.

CHAPTER 5

STATUS: EXPLORATION AND COMMITMENT

Amazing grace (how sweet the sound); that saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found; was blind, but now I see . . .
Through many dangers, toils and snares; I have already come;
'tis grace has brought me safe thus far; and grace will lead me home.¹

John Newton's famous hymn paraphrases King David's prayer in 1 Chronicles 17:16–17. Like David, Newton laments over his sinful self while celebrating the grace of God. Dangers and trials meet him along the way, but seeing the sufficiency of grace in the past, he is committed to holding on to God's promises in the future. Newton captures every stage of the spiritual walk, reminding believers that the Christian life is a journey.

These rich descriptions of Christian struggle were typical of early American hymnody.² Edward Mote's hymn, "Our Hope is Built on Nothing Less" provides another example:

When darkness veils his lovely face;
I rest on his unchanging grace;
In every high and stormy gale;
My anchor holds within the veil.³

¹ John Newton, "Amazing Grace" (22), *The Psalms of David: with hymns and spiritual song* (New York: Hodge, Allen & Campbell), 1789.

² For a discussion on the "spatiality" of historic American hymnody of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, see Matthew David Westerholm, "'The Hour Is Coming and Is Now Here': The Doctrine of Inaugurated Eschatology in Contemporary Evangelical Worship Music" (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2016), 105–6; and Stephen Marini, "Hymnody as History: Early Evangelical Hymns and the Recovery of American Popular Religion," *American Society of Church History* 71, no. 2 (June 2002): 273–306.

³ Edward Mote, "Our Hope Is Built on Nothing Less" (358), in *Hymns of Worship: designed for use especially in the lecture room, the prayer meeting and the family* (Philadelphia: William S. and Alfred Martien, 1858); emphasis added.

Even in Mote’s assuring hymn, the Christian encounters storms of doubt and darkness. How one interprets each experience and consequently constructs the experience into his or her identity is significant.

Previous chapters traced the shape of modernity and its influence on identity from sociological and philosophical perspectives. This chapter examines the theme of status coined by psychologist James Marcia, discussing his psychological perspective and the dynamic process involved in identity formation.⁴ The study then considers corporate worship practices that engage the dimensions of *exploration* and *commitment* in identity formation, namely the rituals of lament and dedication. Finally the chapter examines and establishes a taxonomy for evaluating exploration and commitment language in CWM.

The Scriptures present Christian experiences as a *path* (Prov 3:5–6; John 14:6; Jas 1:2–4); however, not all paths lead to the same righteous commitments—some lead to death (Matt 7:13–14). The Word of Christ is necessary for salvation and sanctification; and it is the ministry of the Spirit of Truth that guides, helps, and comforts believers as they sojourn onward in faith. Thus, articulations of identity *exploration* and *commitment* in the context of Christian worship and formation should be guided by “spirit and truth.” For this reason, my study identifies corporate worship practices that engage the dimensions of *exploration* and *commitment* in identity formation: (1) in laments, the church explores grief over the brokenness of the world and the persistence of doubts; and (2) in dedications, the church commits one another to live as God’s redemptive community in the world. As in previous chapters, I conclude by interacting with CWM’s portrayal of the Christian’s spiritual journey through exploration and commitments, finding that modern worship songs tend to highlight commitment language while largely overlooking exploration.

⁴ As in previous chapters, I adapt Trentham’s Inverse-Consistency Protocol: John David Trentham, “Reading the Social Sciences Theologically (Parts 1 and 2): Engaging and Appropriating Models of Human Development,” *Christian Education Journal* 16, no. 3 (October 2019): 458–94.

James E. Marcia and Identity Statuses

This chapter examines the psychological perspective, discussing the dynamic process involved when forming identity. It accomplishes this by surveying the work of Marcia, who continues Erik Erikson's Psychosocial Identity Theory. Marcia further expands on Erikson's work and proposes the concept of *identity status* to designate where people are in their identity development.⁵ In his paradigm, *exploration* and *commitment* are dimensions used to describe classifications of identity statuses.⁶ Marcia holds that identity is achieved when individuals have experienced high levels of both exploration and commitment.

Erikson's primary focus was the development of the ego in adolescents as they transitioned into adulthood.⁷ This emerges from two processes: the individual's affirmation of "childhood identities" to create an "inner identity," and the assimilation of that inner identity within society.⁸ Identity formation is marked by both *conflict* and *resolution*. In Erikson's eight stages of identity development, the "watershed" stage is the Identity-Identity Diffusion stage.⁹ Marcia takes this further by suggesting that identity

⁵ James E. Marcia, "Development and Validation of Ego-Identity Status," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 3, no. 5 (1966): 551–58.

⁶ These terms, as defined by Marcia, are discussed more fully in the "Exploration and Commitment" section below.

⁷ Marcia and Erikson both prioritize the formation of an ego identity as a significant event in the development of personality during late adolescence. James E. Marcia, "The Ego Identity Status Approach to Ego Identity," in *Ego Identity: A Handbook for Psychosocial Research*, ed. Seth J. Schwartz, Koen Luyckx, and Vivian L. Vignoles (New York: Springer New York, 2011), 3.

⁸ He writes, "Young people must become whole people in their own right, and this during a developmental stage characterized by a diversity of changes in physical growth, genital maturation, and social awareness. The wholeness to be achieved at this stage I have called a "sense of inner identity." Erik H. Erikson, *Identity: Youth and Crisis* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1968), 87; see also 87n159. Others have elaborated on Erikson's view of this process. Kroger and her coauthors write, "In Erikson's view, tentative crystallizations of identity occur during childhood; during adolescence, however, a new form of identity emerges in which these identifications of childhood are sifted, subordinated, and altered in order to produce a new identity configuration." Jane Kroger, Monica Martinussen, and James E. Marcia, "Identity Status Change during Adolescence and Young Adulthood: A Meta-Analysis," *Journal of Adolescence* 33, no. 5 (October 2010): 683.

⁹ Marcia, "Ego Identity Status Approach," 5. Marcia observes that some of have misunderstood Erikson as taking an either-or interpretation of the nature of resolution of psychosocial crisis given Erikson's description of a "verses" relationship. However, optimum resolution is a *combination* of these characteristics tilted toward the positive end.

formation continues through adulthood.¹⁰ Additionally, he expands on Erikson by distinguishing *identity formation* from *identity construction*.¹¹ Whereas Erikson's theory of identity formation occurs in cumulative stages, identity construction occurs when individuals make decisions about who to be, groups with which to affiliate, what beliefs to adopt, values to espouse, and which occupational direction to pursue.¹² Thus, a constructed identity is contrasted with a given or *conferred* identity.¹³ While scholars note that Erikson conceived identity as a "sense" or the "observing center of awareness,"¹⁴ Marcia conceives identity structurally, comprising of two components: content and evaluation.¹⁵

Content and Evaluation

Identity as a structure refers to "*how* experience is handled as well as *what* experiences are considered important."¹⁶ For Marcia, the *contents* of identity reorganize

¹⁰ Marcia proposes that adult identity development occurs in repeated cycles of foreclosure/diffusion to moratorium to achievement movements throughout Erikson's adult stages of development. J. E. Marcia, "Identity and Psychosocial Development in Adulthood," *Identity: An International Journal of Theory and Research* 2, no. 1 (2002): 7–28; cited in Jane Kroger, "Identity Development through Adulthood: The Move toward 'Wholeness,'" in *Oxford Handbook of Identity Development*, ed. Kate C. McLean and Moin Syed (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 68.

¹¹ Rather than discuss ego development in age-specific stages, like Erikson, Marcia seeks to understand the individual's experience of having or not having a sense of identity, as well as the experience of a particular style of identity formation. Marcia, "Ego Identity Status Approach," 6.

¹² Marcia, "Ego Identity Status Approach," 6–7.

¹³ Marcia, "Ego Identity Status Approach," 7.

¹⁴ Kroger notes that Erikson chooses the term *ego identity* to denote the psychosocial nature of the "I," formed by a meeting of biological endowment and internal organization with social reality. Jane Kroger, preface to *Identity in Adolescence: The Balance between Self and the Other*, 2nd ed., Adolescence and Society (New York: Routledge, 1996), x.

¹⁵ Identity as a "self-structure," Marcia says, "[is] an internal, self-constructed, dynamic organization of drives, abilities, beliefs, and individual history. The better developed this structure is, the more aware individuals appear to be of their own uniqueness and similarity to others and of their own strengths and weaknesses in making their way in the world. The less developed this structure is, the more confused individuals seem about their own distinctiveness from others and the more they have to rely on external sources to evaluate themselves." James E. Marcia, "Identity in Adolescence," in *Handbook of Adolescent Psychology*, ed. Joseph Adelson (New York: Wiley, 1980), 109.

¹⁶ Marcia, "Ego Identity Status Approach," 3; emphasis added.

constantly through a person's life, but what is important is the *process*. In other words, people will experience identity crisis not just in adolescence, but throughout their life, and a healthy identity structure provides the ability to flexibly adapt to change.¹⁷ The identity *contents* reflect personal value systems and ideologies, including “what one thinks about, cares about, and believes in and the traits or characteristics by which one is recognized and known by others.”¹⁸

The second structural component to identity is *evaluation*, which refers to “the significance one places on various aspects of the identity content.”¹⁹ This speaks to the variety in which differing individuals assess the same roles in society. Barbara Newman and Philip Newman explain, “A person's assessment of the importance of certain content areas in relation to others influences the use of resources, the direction of certain decisions and the kinds of experiences that may be perceived as most personally rewarding or threatening.”²⁰ A well-developed identity structure, Marcia suggests, is flexible and open to changes in society and relationships.²¹ The process involves affirming and negating *components* of identity, which includes—at a minimum—sexual attitudes, ideology, and career direction.²²

¹⁷ There are similarities here to previous discussions on Giddens and reflexivity; see chap. 2 of this dissertation; and Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991), 194–96. Giddens discusses authority versus uncertainty.

¹⁸ Barbara M. Newman and Philip R. Newman, “Psychosocial Theories,” in *Theories of Adolescent Development* (Academic Press, 2020), 166.

¹⁹ Newman and Newman, “Psychosocial Theories,” 160.

²⁰ Newman and Newman, “Psychosocial Theories,” 160.

²¹ Marcia, “Identity in Adolescence,” 110.

²² Marcia, “Identity in Adolescence,” 110.

Exploration and Commitment

To measure this process, Marcia develops four categories of “identity status.”²³ Drawing on Erikson’s concepts, including identity confusion and role experimentation, Marcia assesses identity status based on two criteria: *exploration* and *commitment*.²⁴ These reflect modes of understanding identity defined by the presence (or lack) of a decision-making period (exploration) and the extent of personal investment (commitment).²⁵

The stage of exploration refers to a period of “trying out various roles, reviewing and sorting through one’s options and active decision-making among alternative choices,” according to Newman and Newman.²⁶ This involves individuals taking time to consider other values, ideologies, vocations, and roles.²⁷ In Marcia’s original study, he interviewed college males to assess identity maturity in vocation choices, religious beliefs, and political views.²⁸ The interviews were scored based on cognitive and behavioral cues. In terms of exploration, individuals were assessed for thought patterns and behaviors that reflected efforts to gain knowledge of alternatives, such as different vocations or ideologies while they were in college.²⁹

²³ Marcia, “Identity in Adolescence,” 111. Marcia’s original 1960s study was comprised of interviews of 86 male youth at one college in British Columbia; it focused on occupation, religion, and politics. See Marcia, “Development and Validation,” 551–58.

²⁴ Marcia, “Identity in Adolescence,” 111. Marcia refers to “exploration” as crisis, searching, or uncertainty. See Newman and Newman, “Psychosocial Theories,” 166; see also Jane Kroger and James E. Marcia, “The Identity Statures: Origins, Meanings, and Interpretations,” in *Handbook of Identity Theory and Research*, edited by Seth J. Schwartz, Koen Luyckx, and Vivian L. Vignoles (New York: Springer, 2011), 31–53.

²⁵ Marcia, “Identity in Adolescence,” 111.

²⁶ Newman and Newman, “Psychosocial Theories,” 166.

²⁷ Tiago Baltazar and Ron Coffen, “The Role of Doubt in Religious Identity Development and Psychological Maturity,” *Journal of Research on Christian Education* 20, no. 2 (2011): 183.

²⁸ See Marcia, “Development and Validation,” 551–58; and Baltazar and Coffen, “Role of Doubt,” 183.

²⁹ Newman and Newman, “Psychosocial Theories,” 166.

Meanwhile, an individual's level of commitment explains their decision on an identity trajectory and consists of demonstrating personal involvement and investment in specific content areas.³⁰ A person's commitment reflects how they concentrate energy towards a single role or ideology.³¹ Based on Marcia's interviews, levels of commitment reflect answers that suggest resolution and investment towards a particular identity. In other words, people comprehend "what they are getting into as a result of prior exploration," taking "specific steps to achieve clarity . . . [having] made concrete commitments through investment of time and effort."³² From these two criteria, Marcia expands on Erikson and develops four categories of identity status to assess where a person might be in regards to their identity development: identity achievement, identity foreclosure, identity diffusion, and identity moratorium.³³

Four Identity Statuses

Erikson conceived that a pivotal point in identity formation occurs in the identity-versus-identity diffusion stage. The ego is developed in two steps: breaking away from childhood beliefs (identity diffusion) and then exploring alternative "statuses," while committing to developing one (identity achievement).³⁴ Adapting Erikson's concept of uncertainty and certainty into a two-by-two factorial model, Marcia identifies four identity statuses that provide a methodological tool for empirical studies.³⁵

³⁰ Newman and Newman, "Psychosocial Theories," 166.

³¹ Baltazar and Coffen, "Role of Doubt," 183.

³² Newman and Newman, "Psychosocial Theories," 166.

³³ For a visual representation of each identity status and its criteria, see "Table 6.1: The relationship of crisis and commitment to identity status," in Newman and Newman, "Psychosocial Theories," 166.

³⁴ Marcia, "Development and Validation," 551.

³⁵ Recent scholars note, "According to Erikson (1968) experiencing identity uncertainty is normative in adolescence. However, empirical studies investigating identity uncertainty on a daily basis are lacking. Hence, studying individual differences in daily certainty (i.e., identity commitment levels) and uncertainty (i.e., identity commitment fluctuations and identity reconsideration) in the identity formation process may advance our knowledge about the extent to which adolescents' identity uncertainty is part of

Identity achievement. Individuals marked by high levels of exploration and high levels of commitment are categorized as *identity achievement*. These individuals have explored options to who they can become (cognitively and behaviorally), and have made occupational, ideological, and interpersonal commitments.³⁶ Tiago Baltazar and Ron Coffen note,

While an achieved individual may not have committed to certain values in all areas of identity, the individual has already reflected on the most significant areas and considered multiple options and ideas and made a commitment to what the individual considers to be valid and closest to the truth.³⁷

In addition to achievement, Marcia notes in his original study that those experiencing identity achievement exhibit lower levels of anxiety and higher levels of self-esteem.³⁸ Research using Marcia's standard of identity achievement also describes adolescents with highly adaptive personality profiles as "highly extrovert, emotionally stable, conscientious and open to experience."³⁹ Researchers further describe these individuals as follows:

They demonstrate high achievement motivation and self-esteem . . . high internal locus of control . . . and low authoritarianism; they use planned decision-making strategies . . . and exhibit a high level of moral reasoning. . . . Regarding psychosocial problems, youth in the achievement status display a healthy adjustment characterized by low anxiety and depression and high satisfaction with life.⁴⁰

normative identity development." Andrik I. Becht et al., "The Quest for Identity in Adolescence: Heterogeneity in Daily Identity Formation and Psychosocial Adjustment across 5 years," *Developmental Psychology* 52, no. 12 (2016): 2010–21.

³⁶ Newman and Newman, "Psychosocial Theories," 166.

³⁷ Baltazar and Coffen, "Role of Doubt," 183.

³⁸ Marcia, "Development and Validation," 552, 557.

³⁹ Elisabetta Crocetti and Wim Meeus, "The Identity Statuses: Strengths of a Person-Centered Approach," in McLean and Syed, *Oxford Handbook of Identity Development*, 100–101.

⁴⁰ Crocetti and Meeus, "The Identity Statuses," 101.

An achieved identity status seems to yield psychological and social benefits. In Marcia's words, "They subscribed somewhat less than other statuses to authoritarian values and their self-esteem was a little less vulnerable to negative information."⁴¹

Identity moratorium. Individuals in the exploration period with vague commitments are experiencing identity moratorium. These individuals struggle to find meaningful, identity-defining roles and values.⁴² Marcia describes this kind of person as follows:

Issues often described as adolescent preoccupy him. Although his parents' wishes are still important to him, he is attempting a compromise among them, society's demands and his own capabilities. His sometimes bewildered appearance stems from his vital concern and internal preoccupation with what occasionally appear to him to be unresolvable questions.⁴³

Using the metaphor of a trapeze artist, he describes the moratoriums as holding on to the bar of the past while swinging toward the future with vacillation, fear, intensity, and excitement.⁴⁴ During this time, major changes occur in values that were once held and the person often manifests anxiety.

Adolescents in this status share comparable personality features with peers in the achievement status due to their openness to new experiences. However, they differ since they demonstrate lower extroversion, emotional stability, and conscientiousness.⁴⁵ Research reports that key characteristics of moratorium individuals include "high level[s] of anxiety," since they "are looking for satisfying commitments they cannot find."⁴⁶

⁴¹ Marcia, "Development and Validation," 557.

⁴² Kroger, "Identity Development through Adulthood," 68.

⁴³ Marcia, "Development and Validation," 552.

⁴⁴ Marcia, "Ego Identity Status Approach," 8.

⁴⁵ Crocetti and Meeus, "The Identity Statuses," 101.

⁴⁶ Crocetti and Meeus, "The Identity Statuses," 101.

Consequently, these individuals report high depression and low well-being.⁴⁷

Identity foreclosure. Those who identify with a strong sense of commitment but lack exploration are categorized as *foreclosure*. Marcia distinguishes identity achievement—individuals as those with “constructed identities” —from *foreclosures*, or those who have a “given or conferred identity.”⁴⁸ Not having experienced a crisis or process of questioning, they may demonstrate strong ideological commitments or occupational goals close to those of their parents.⁴⁹

The foreclosed identity can be deceptive, since one’s clarity of vision can be impressive to others as evidence of high-level insight.⁵⁰ These individuals have adopted a lifelong “game plan,” so their future is a prearranged set of ideals, occupational plans, and interpersonal forms.⁵¹ However, their adoption of a script without much depth of self-understanding reflects a tendency to rely on the values and expectations of authority figures to decide what is right and how to behave.⁵² Quoting a hymn, Marcia describes this person’s commitments and beliefs (or lack of authentic conviction) as “the faith of his fathers living still.”⁵³ Other researchers observe “high levels of conformity and authoritarianism . . . and low openness to new experiences.”⁵⁴ Because these subjects

⁴⁷ Crocetti and Meeus, “The Identity Statuses,” 101.

⁴⁸ Marcia, “Ego Identity Status Approach,” 7.

⁴⁹ Newman and Newman, “Psychosocial Theories,” 167.

⁵⁰ Newman and Newman, “Psychosocial Theories,” 167.

⁵¹ Marcia, “Ego Identity Status Approach,” 8.

⁵² Newman and Newman, “Psychosocial Theories,” 167.

⁵³ Frederick William Faber, “Faith of Our Fathers, Living Still,” quoted in Marcia, “Development and Validation,” 552.

⁵⁴ Crocetti and Meeus, “The Identity Statuses,” 101.

often endorse “authoritarian submission and conventionality” to a greater extent than others, they are often close-minded and inflexible.⁵⁵

Individuals categorized in the foreclosure status are characterized by personality features such as superiority complexes, relying on the approval and affirmation of parents and other authority figures.⁵⁶ Marcia observes that their self-esteem is contingent upon the extent to which they “fulfill” the tasks given them; by contrast, those in the identity achievement status have a game plan also, but they see the future as subject to revision.⁵⁷ However, research tends to show that because of their avoidance of crisis and exploration, foreclosures display healthy adjustment levels: “Regarding adjustment, they demonstrate low anxiety, low depression and high satisfaction with life, equal to their peers in the achievement status.”⁵⁸

Identity diffusion. Marcia refers to persons with no firm identity as *identity diffusions*.⁵⁹ By this he means they have not experienced a crisis period (or have had limited exploration), nor have they invested in any commitment regarding their identity. Marcia writes, “He has neither decided upon an occupation nor is much concerned about it. . . . He is either uninterested in ideological matters or takes a smorgasbord approach.”⁶⁰ This individual generally avoids interpersonal relationships, is generally disorganized,

⁵⁵ Marcia writes, “A certain rigidity characterizes his personality; one feels that if he were faced with a situation in which parental values were nonfunctional, he would feel extremely threatened.” Marcia, “Development and Validation,” 552.

⁵⁶ Baltazar and Coffen, “Role of Doubt,” 183.

⁵⁷ Marcia, “Ego Identity Status Approach,” 8.

⁵⁸ Crocetti and Meeus, “The Identity Statuses,” 101.

⁵⁹ Marcia, “Ego Identity Status Approach,” 7. Marcia’s reference to identity-diffuse individuals differs from Erikson with respect to the extent of psychopathology. In Marcia’s model, identity diffusion is considered the anchor point for high-low comparisons with identity achievement. Marcia conceives a wide continuum of identity diffusion, primarily a group of rather cavalier “playboys” on one side and a schizoid on the other. In his view, it is foreclosure, and not the identity-diffusion, that occupies the lowest position on most task variables. See Marcia, “Development and Validation,” 558.

⁶⁰ Marcia, “Development and Validation of Ego,” 552.

and has low self-esteem.⁶¹ Other research report adolescents in the *diffusion* status demonstrate “low emotional stability and conscientiousness and moderate levels of openness to experience.”⁶² The research continues, “Moreover, they report low autonomy and self-esteem . . . a low sense of personal integration . . . low levels of moral reasoning . . . and inadequate approaches to decision-making processes.”⁶³

Recent discussions of the diffused statuses reflect two subtypes: *troubled confusion* and *carefree confusion*.⁶⁴ The former refers to “those who have unrealistic expectations, are afraid of making the wrong kinds of decision, and experience high levels of anxiety about their decisions.”⁶⁵ On the other hand, *carefree confusion* refers to “those who appear to be unconcerned with making any identity.”⁶⁶ Marcia observes this subgroup of diffused individuals functioning relatively well within a college campus.⁶⁷

Among the statuses, the outlook toward the future varies. Referring to identity diffusion status, Marcia argues that those lacking a coherent identity have little future sense:

They are primarily present oriented, with some regrets about a disappointing relationship with their parents. Having no central sense of self, they are subject to the vicissitudes of fortune, and feel, whether optimistically or pessimistically, somewhat out of control of their futures.⁶⁸

Regarding their well-being, researchers observe that “individuals in the diffusion status report moderate levels of adjustment when compared to their peers in the

⁶¹ Baltazar and Coffen, “Role of Doubt,” 183.

⁶² Crocetti and Meeus, “The Identity Statuses,” 101.

⁶³ Crocetti and Meeus, “The Identity Statuses,” 101.

⁶⁴ Newman and Newman, “Psychosocial Theories,” 168.

⁶⁵ Newman and Newman, “Psychosocial Theories,” 168.

⁶⁶ Newman and Newman, “Psychosocial Theories,” 168.

⁶⁷ Marcia, “Development and Validation,” 558; see also Newman and Newman, “Psychosocial Theories,” 168.

⁶⁸ Marcia, “Ego Identity Status Approach,” 8.

other statuses.”⁶⁹ Instead of constructing their self-identity, they look to others to define their sense of self and purpose.⁷⁰

Meanwhile, those who are in transition from *no sense of identity* or from a *conferred identity to a constructed identity* are referred to as “moratorium.”⁷¹

For Marcia, identity is experienced where value and meaning are projected into one’s world. This can be given by others or constructed by oneself.⁷²

In summary, this discussion surveyed neo-Erikson theories of identity formation. In Marcia’s model of identity status, identity is a structure, comprised of experiences and how those experiences are interpreted. Of particular interest to Marcia and other research is the cycle of experience and commitment throughout one’s life that influences one’s construction or adoption of ideologies, as well as someone’s adaptability for the future. By operationalizing identity formation, stages of identity maturity can be measured more easily, including spirituality and anxiety. Understanding the statuses can allow researchers to understand how each status relates to one another. For example, moratorium is a prerequisite to achievement, while foreclosure is the antithesis to achievement.⁷³ Thus, in his assessment, Marcia viewed status on as a hierarchy of maturity (i.e., from least developed—diffusion, foreclosure; to more developed, moratorium; to most developed, achievement). What emerges is also the hierarchy of constructed identities through exploration over conferred identities, prioritizing

⁶⁹ Crocetti and Meeus, “The Identity Statuses,” 101.

⁷⁰ Newman and Newman, “Psychosocial Theories,” 168.

⁷¹ Marcia, “Ego Identity Status Approach,” 7.

⁷² Marcia summarizes, “One can trace one’s history in a meaningful way to one’s present situation and can extend that line into probable futures. Individuals with *either* a conferred or constructed identity have this sense of inner coherence. However Individuals who construct their identity, modifying or rejecting some conferred elements, also possess a sense of having participated in a self-initiated and self-directed process. They know not only who they are, they know how they became that, and they had a hand in the becoming.” Marcia, “Ego Identity Status Approach,” 7.

⁷³ Baltazar and Coffen, “Role of Doubt,” 188.

commitment. For Marcia, identity is achieved when conferred elements have been refined and identity is constructed after exploration.

In the following section, I appraise Marcia's identity status, specifically the role of doubt as exploration through the lens of a biblical worldview. Following the inverse-consistency protocol (as with Erikson), I locate aspects of Marcia's theory that are inconsistent with Christian understandings of identity, and I offer a redemptive vision for exploration in identity formation.

Patterns of Inverse

Christians attempting to read Marcia must be careful not to place authority in individual consciousness as the starting point for identity, especially when reconciling modern ideas of identity with the pre-Enlightened context of Scripture.⁷⁴ For Marcia, the construction of identity is phenomenological.⁷⁵ Identity is achieved when individuals grow in self-awareness and make decisions about who they want to become. Marcia describes an identity in experiential terms: "The experience of having an identity is that one has a core, a center that is oneself, to which experience and action can be referred."⁷⁶ However, Christians understand that the noetic effects of sin have corrupted the conscience and self-understanding (see 1 John 1:8; Heb 3:13). Sin influences every aspect of human functioning, including cognitive faculties (Rom 1:21–23; 10:3; 1 Cor 8:1–2; 2 Cor 3:14; 4:4; Eph 4:17–18).⁷⁷ In the language of the Bible, cognition—"the ability to think, to acquire knowledge, to process information, to believe certain

⁷⁴ See Baker's discussion on the use of social identity theory for biblical interpretation. Coleman A. Baker, "Social Identity Theory and Biblical Interpretation," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 42, no. 3 (2012): 129–38.

⁷⁵ See Marcia, "Ego Identity Status Approach," 7–8.

⁷⁶ Marcia, "Ego Identity Status Approach," 7.

⁷⁷ Jeremy Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life: Connecting Christ to Human Experience* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth, 2016), 60.

propositions as true, and to interpret new information based on those beliefs”⁷⁸—is often referred to as occurring in the heart. Referring to this aspect of human experience, Jeremiah 17:9 teaches, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?” Jeremy Pierre refers to the heart as a “cataloging system,” which interprets human experiences and actions within human consciousness.⁷⁹ This interpretive ability is limited and requires external perspective. Jeremiah 17:10 reveals the ultimate source for understanding the self: “I the Lord search the heart and test the mind.” For Christians, viewing their experiences (past, present, and future) from God’s perspective is what ultimately shapes their core beliefs, values, and *commitments*.⁸⁰

Also, Marcia does not distinguish between moral and immoral *exploration*. Because identity achievement is measured as a *psychosocial task*, it is predicated on individual exhibitions of the two variables, exploration and commitment.⁸¹ However, like Erikson, Marcia does not distinguish ontological change from ethical change. Constructing an identity does not always mean it will be a healthy identity. On Marcia’s hierarchy, foreclosed individuals (those with high commitments and low exploration) are considered to possess less identity achievement than moratorium individuals (those who are high on exploration, and low on commitment). However, Christians understand that not all paths are equally moral or lead to a moral identity. There are paths worth exploring that lead to a moral and spiritual life (Pss 16:11; 25:4; Jer 6:16); in contrast, there are paths destined for destruction and corruption (Matt 7:13; Prov 14:12).

In Marcia’s perspective, self-identity develops when individuals become

⁷⁸ Pierre, *Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, 18.

⁷⁹ Pierre uses the metaphor of a library catalog system to describe how people control beliefs and interpret events throughout their lives. He states that an interpreting God designed human hearts to interpret, however faith is the key which allows people to understand their lives in the light of God’s purposes. Pierre, *Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, 166–67.

⁸⁰ Pierre, *Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, 167.

⁸¹ Marcia, “Development and Validation,” 551.

progressively aware of their “given or conferred identity.” After separating from that given identity, they can construct their self-identity.⁸² However, Christians with a theological worldview of a sovereign creator God receive the given identity, both the universal and particular elements, as an essential component of their identity.⁸³ Pierre warns that constructing an identity apart from, or in conflict with, God’s given identity results in “estrangement from self.”⁸⁴ The psalmist understands that the God who created him is the only true source for self-understanding: “Your [Yahweh’s] hands have made and fashioned me; give me understanding that I may learn your commandments” (Ps 119:73).

Patterns of Consistency

For Christians, a true identity is founded on God’s truth (cognitive), but it is also expressed (behavior). Marcia’s taxonomy of exploration and commitment reflects the role of doubt and faith in the life of Christians. Recent studies have sought to apply Marcia’s identity framework for understanding religious identity.⁸⁵ In these studies, researchers ask what role exploration plays in the development and resolution of people’s

⁸² Marcia, “Ego Identity Status Approach,” 7.

⁸³ Pierre writes, “All human beings share in this design, though specific variances in capacity and context are unique to every individual. God sovereignly orchestrates both the original design and the unique context of every individual” (*Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, 130).

⁸⁴ He writes, “Human beings are born estranged from themselves—each have an internal mechanism of self-critique that comes from being made to image God but failing to live consistently with that image. That mechanism of self-critique is called the conscience: people’s internal witness against their own hearts, making them aware that things are not functioning properly. The result is shame and self-condemnation. It is the dissociative pain of knowing something is wrong, but being unable (and often uninterested) in finding a resolution. . . . But the internal witness was placed there as a conduit of God’s opinion of sin, and only God can allay it.” Pierre, *Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, 136.

⁸⁵ See Bruce Hunsberger, Michael Pratt, and S. Mark Pancer, “A Longitudinal Study of Religious Doubts in High School and Beyond: Relationships, Stability, and Searching for Answers,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 41, no. 2 (2002): 255–66; Hunsberger, Pratt, and Pancer, “Adolescent Identity Formation: Religious Exploration and Commitment,” *Identity* 1, no. 4 (2001): 365–86; Keith A. Puffer et al., “Religious Doubt and Identity Formation: Salient Predictors of Adolescent Religious Doubt,” *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 36, no. 4 (December 1, 2008): 270–84; Baltazar and Coffen, “Role of Doubt,” 182–94; Laura Upenieks, “Changes in Religious Doubt and Physical and Mental Health in Emerging Adulthood,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 60, no. 2 (June 2021): 332–61.

faith ideology. In one study, those identified in the identity achievement category for their religious beliefs were found to access both belief-confirming and belief-threatening sources, which suggest that these individuals are firm in their beliefs and are willing to consider and debate different perspectives on issues related to their religious commitment.⁸⁶ In these studies, religious doubt and periods of questioning one's faith is a catalyst for identity achievement.⁸⁷ Baltazar and Coffen explain, "Doubt is a part of the process of exploration and crisis and therefore an important element in attaining identity achievement."⁸⁸ Christians serve a mysterious God in a fallen world. They presume that uncertainty and questions will arise that challenge their faith and the totality of their commitments. The Scriptures, which speak honestly regarding human experience, distinguish between two kinds of doubt.

Doubt and Faith

Doubt as unbelief. Doubt as unbelief (or "to disbelieve") refers to a "willful refusal to believe or a deliberate decision to disobey [God]" according to Os Guinness.⁸⁹ This form of doubt conflicts with faith. Pierre writes, "Faith is described as dedication in trial (1:3) as well as *the lack of doubt*, the opposite of being double minded and unstable

⁸⁶ See Husberger, Pratt, and Pancer, "Adolescent Identity Formation."

⁸⁷ Baltazar and Coffen, "Role of Doubt," 187. Baltazar and Coffen summarize this body of research: "Doubt was positively correlated with moratorium (a status which must be worked through prior to achievement) and negatively correlated with foreclosure (a status antithetical to achievement). Thus, doubt is part of the process of exploration and crisis and therefore an important element in attaining identity achievement. The same studies also affirmed that individuals in foreclosure had lower levels of doubt after 2 years—evidence of a lack of exploration. Diffuse individuals have low levels of doubt, which is also evidence of a lack of exploration. Nevertheless, the fact that these two groups have some level of doubt shows that they are not completely closed to exploration. Achieved individuals exhibited no significant levels of doubt; however, when doubt emerges, these individuals explore by 'consulting both belief-confirming and belief-threatening sources for assistance, showing a willingness to understand both sides of an issue.'" 188.

⁸⁸ Baltazar and Coffen, "Role of Doubt," 188.

⁸⁹ Os Guinness describes doubt as the "condition of doubleness." Os Guinness, *God in the Dark: The Assurance of Faith beyond a Shadow of Doubt* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1996), 23, 25. Pierre refers to this form as *conscious* doubt. Jeremy Paul Pierre, "'Trust in the Lord with All Your Heart': The Centrality of Faith in Christ to the Restoration of Human Functioning" (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2010), 232.

(1:6).”⁹⁰ This kind of doubt works against faith and is a conscious suppression of the truth. Instead, Christ calls people to have faith in him: “Have faith in God. Truly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, ‘Be taken up and thrown into the sea,’ and *does not doubt in his heart*, but believes that what he says will come to pass, it will be done for him” (Mark 11:22–23).⁹¹ Unbelief veils saving faith in the Son of God. This kind of doubt caused Jesus to rebuke his disciples on the road to Emmaus: “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! . . . Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts?” (Luke 24:25, 38). Unbelief is foolish, suppressive of revelation, and sinful.

Doubt as uncertainty. Guinness suggests there is another form of doubt that is a state of suspension between faith and unbelief.⁹² Puffer et al. similarly describe this form of doubt as a “hesitant reaction, a temporary and divided state of mind created ‘by the collision of evidence with prior belief or one belief with another.’”⁹³ This form of doubt is not deliberate or volitional suppression of revelation. This distinction can be seen when the father of the demoniac boy cries out to Jesus: “I believe; help my unbelief!” (Mark 9:24). Jesus validates this doubter’s prayer by answering him and healing his son.⁹⁴ Guinness writes, “The heart of the Christian view of doubt is a healthy

⁹⁰ See Pierre’s analysis of faith from Jas 2:14–26 (“Trust in the Lord,” 158).

⁹¹ Emphasis added. Jesus calls his followers to this kind of undivided faith when they pray and seek forgiveness from the Father (Mark 11:24–25).

⁹² “Doubt is a hallway state. To be in doubt is to be in two minds, to be caught between two worlds, to be suspended between a desire to affirm and a desire to negate.” Guinness, *God in the Dark*, 26–27.

⁹³ G. W. Allport, *The Individual and His Religion: A Psychological Interpretation* (New York: Macmillan, 1957), 100, quoted in Puffer et al. “Religious Doubt and Identity Formation,” 270.

⁹⁴ This may be similar to what occurs with Jesus and his disciple Thomas, a skeptic who grappled with doubt about God’s redemptive plans. Jesus offers Thomas his hands as evidence and says, “Do not disbelieve, but believe” (John 20:27); see discussion in Puffer et al. “Religious Doubt and Identity Formation,” 271.

combination of an analysis of the nature of doubt and an awareness of where it leads.”⁹⁵ Guinness notes that psychological certitude is not epistemologically the same as absolute certainty,⁹⁶ an argument that would challenge Marcia’s conception of commitment, since self-confidence should not be mistaken for certainty. However, Guinness would agree with Marcia and others that doubt maintains value for a healthy faith identity.⁹⁷

Redemptive Exploration

Given that exploration—questioning one’s beliefs, and examining the alternatives—is an essential component to identity achievement, Marcia demonstrates that identity in modernity emphasizes the role of doubt. Anthony Giddens similarly writes, “Modernity institutionalizes the principle of radical doubt and insists that all knowledge takes the form of hypotheses: claims which may very well be true, but which are in principle always open to revision and may have at some point to be abandoned.”⁹⁸ For Giddens, trust is a means to an end. Without doubt, the self is passive. Similarly, Marcia views exploration and commitment as two sides of the same coin. Both provide the centrifugal dynamic for identity achievement.

Christians do not regard trust and faith in such pragmatic ways. Neither do they disregard the reality and potential aid doubt can have in their formation. For the Christian, trust is not simply a means to an end, but is the substance of life. Paul describes Christians as those who “walk by faith, not by sight” (1 Cor 5:7). The author of Hebrews

⁹⁵ He writes, “The two-ness or double-ness is the heart of doubt and the deepest dilemma it represents. *The heart of doubt is a divided heart*. This is not just a metaphor. It is the essence of the Christian view of doubt, and human language and experience from all around the world also bear it out.” Guinness, *God in the Dark*, 23–24.

⁹⁶ Os Guinness, *Two Minds: The Dilemma of Doubt and How to Resolve it* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1976), 45.

⁹⁷ Puffer et al. conclude that their study found doubt to have an adaptive and purposeful side for identity formation. They write, “doubt is a contributing variable in the psychosocial maturity process and prod many Christians to begin to shed their ‘pathologically only’ bent in interpreting doubt.” Puffer et al., “Religious Doubt and Identity Formation,” 281.

⁹⁸ Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, 3.

emphasizes faith as the defining feature of the Christian worldview: “By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible . . . and without faith it is impossible to please him [God] for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him” (Heb 11:3, 6).

At the same time, the Christian life is not void of doubt. Guinness contends, “If ours is an examined faith, we should be unafraid to doubt. If doubt is eventually justified, we were believing what clearly was not worth believing. But if doubt is answered, our faith has grown stronger. It knows God more certainly and it can enjoy God more deeply.”⁹⁹ Many Christian leaders throughout history have had an intimate relationship with doubt and faith.¹⁰⁰ Doubt presents the Christian with plentiful opportunities to examine deep truths of God. If Christian life is a proverbial highway, faith is at the steering wheel. Or as C. S. Lewis put it,

Faith is the art of holding on to things your reason has once accepted, in spite of your changing moods. . . . That is why faith is such a necessary virtue: unless you teach your moods ‘where they get off’, you can never be either a sound Christian or even sound atheist.¹⁰¹

In this sense, doubt can be a helpful passenger who questions the route and watches for potential dangers.¹⁰² However, doubt can be a terrible backseat driver when it subverts

⁹⁹ Guinness, *Two Minds*, 16.

¹⁰⁰ Jesse Carey curates a list of reflections by prominent Christians on this interplay between faith and doubt. See Jesse Carey, “Seven Prominent Christian Thinkers Who Wrestled with Doubt,” *Relevant Magazine*, June 9, 2021, <https://relevantmagazine.com/faith/seven-prominent-christian-thinkers-who-wrestled-doubt/>. For example, Charles Spurgeon once preached, “I think when a man says, ‘I never doubt,’ it is quite time for us to doubt him. It is quite time for us to begin to say, ‘Ah, poor soul, I am afraid you are not on the road at all, for if you were, you would see so many things in yourself, and so much glory in Christ more than you deserve, that you would be so much ashamed of yourself, as even to say, ‘It is too good to be true.’” Charles Spurgeon, “The Desire of the Soul in Spiritual Darkness,” *New Park Street Pulpit*, vol. 1 (1855), quoted in Carey, “Seven Prominent Christian Thinkers.”

¹⁰¹ C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: HarperCollins), 140–41.

¹⁰² Guinness notes that one of the values of doubt is that it can be used to detect error (*Two Minds*, 47).

faith.¹⁰³ In other words, doubt can be a useful tool to propel a person deeper into faith, however one should be aware of its inherent spiritual dangers.

Exploration as seeing as Christ. Because sin has impacted self-understanding, Christians ought to “explore” aspects of their identity with the “mind of Christ (1 Cor 2:16). In this sense, they investigate, reflect, even scrutinize their environment and their understanding of themselves, but with a “Godward perspective.”¹⁰⁴ In times of crisis or in uncertainty, Christians interpret their circumstances through the grid of truth, seeking a godly exploration towards biblical faith. This godly exploration is a ministry of the Holy Spirit. Describing the ministry of the Spirit, Jesus says, “When the Spirit of Truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come” (John 16:13). Christians therefore must also have their “mind governed by the Spirit” (Rom 8:6). Pierre describes this work as involving both Scripture and the Holy Spirit’s instigation in order to overcome the established structures of false beliefs.¹⁰⁵

Exploration as testing and examination. How ought Christians pursue godly exploration and honor Christ in periods of doubt? With the guidance of the Scriptures, Christians carry their doubts to the Scriptures. The Bible supports the testing and examination of everything (1 Thess 5:21). John encourages thoughtful skepticism and charges Christians, “Do not believe every spirit,” exhorting them instead to “test the spirits” (1 John 4:1). Guinness suggests Christians follow the example of the Bereans

¹⁰³ Guinness warns against two particular forms of doubt that are detrimental to Christian faith: (1) doubt from insistent inquisitiveness; and (2) doubt from impatience or giving up (see *Two Minds*, 251–99).

¹⁰⁴ Pierre writes, “If believers’ understanding of life is shaped by their culture’s ideas of what is meaningful—comfort, prestige, safety—then they will respond to their circumstances wrongly: perhaps in bitterness and discontent, perhaps in pride and manipulations” (*Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, 169–70).

¹⁰⁵ Pierre, *Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, 79.

who studied “to see whether it was as . . . said.”¹⁰⁶ As Christians navigate existential questions, they must practice discernment as Paul instructed the Ephesians (see Eph 5:10; cf. Heb 5:12–14). When various forms of doubt or alternative ideologies arise for individuals, Christians strive to be mature in thought (1 Cor 13:11; 14:20; Eph 4:14–15). The prayer is that throughout life, regardless of their status, believers would grow in the grace and knowledge of their Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Pet 3:18).

Liturgical Discussion: Lament and Dedication

Aspects of corporate worship ought to reflect the themes of exploration and commitment. Liturgies rehearse the past and look towards the future, presenting a redemptive narrative that interprets present individual circumstances through embodied practices; therefore, this section discusses two liturgical practices—*lament* and *dedication*—that express exploration and commitment motifs.

Lament

Lament expresses liturgical exploration, and presents suffering and crisis as realities in the Christian life. According to *The Worship Sourcebook*, in lament “the worshipping community expresses grief and frustration at the brokenness of the world, even in situations in which the community is not directly culpable or blameworthy.”¹⁰⁷ This practice is closely associated with confessions of sin, but it is also distinct. *The Worship Sourcebook* states, “A lament is an implicit act of faith in which the community of faith turns to God as its only source of hope and comfort.”¹⁰⁸ Corporate lament teaches and encourages believers to bring circumstantial suffering before God. It embodies the exhortation of Romans 12:15 to “weep with those who weep.” In addition to providing

¹⁰⁶ Guinness, *God in the Dark*, 88.

¹⁰⁷ *The Worship Sourcebook*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Calvin Institute of Christian Worship, Faith Alive, Baker, 2013), 111.

¹⁰⁸ *The Worship Sourcebook*, 111.

biblical patterns of response, Wendy J. Porter suggests that expressions of lament and suffering give place for authentic expressions of sorrow, and even prepare believers for future suffering.¹⁰⁹

The precedent of lament in the psalms provides a template of expressing exploration and commitment. For example, the psalmist asks, “How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I take counsel in my soul and have sorrow in my heart all the day? How long shall my enemy be exalted over me? Consider and answer me, O LORD my God; light up my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death” (Ps 13:1–3).¹¹⁰ John Witvliet notes how the lament psalms form a pattern for Christian living.¹¹¹ These patterns reflect exploration and commitment (doubt and faith):

Laments, to be sure, begin with a cry against the deplorable human condition, a cry against the painfulness of individual tragedy, a cry against the injustices of society. But laments almost never stay there. Having voiced our pain and struggle [exploration], laments then recite God’s mighty deeds on our behalf [commitment]. Remembering these deeds—even in the face of pain and struggle—brings us to praise and thanksgiving for God’s fidelity and compassion.¹¹²

Stephen Yuille also commends the psalms as a practical tool for spiritual formation. He notes, “As we lament along with the psalmists several things begin to happen. First we draw near to God. . . . Second . . . we talk to ourselves [and] remind ourselves that God has set us apart. . . . Third . . . we discover that confusion gradually gives way to

¹⁰⁹ Wendy J. Porter, “Trading My Sorrows: Worshiping God in the Darkness—The Expression of Pain and Suffering in Contemporary Worship Music,” in *The Message in the Music: Studying Contemporary Praise and Worship*, ed. Robert Woods and Brian Walrath (Nashville: Abingdon, 2007), 77.

¹¹⁰ See also Pss 6; 10:38; 42; 43; 130; Jer 20:7–10.

¹¹¹ He writes, “Laments give voice to our pain but lead us out of that pain by God’s strength. Laments are our great prayers of hope, for they remind us that we belong to God, that God’s care will sustain us and protect us, and that God’s justice will—in the fullness of time—restore justice. This is the very pattern of our everyday living: from struggle to praise, from pain to remembering God’s faithful goodness, from injustice to awe and wonder at the divine.” John D. Witvliet, *The Biblical Psalms in Christian Worship: A Brief Introduction and Guide to Resources* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 32.

¹¹² Witvliet, *Biblical Psalms in Christian Worship*, 32.

confidence.”¹¹³ Using language supplied by the Scripture, believers are able to “express in words” what they otherwise “struggle to articulate.”¹¹⁴ Thus, lament within the liturgy offers a valid example of exploration redeemed.

Dedication

The dedication expresses liturgical commitment. *The Worship Sourcebook* describes various practices of dedication, including benedictions and sending. The dedication functions like the “charge” at the end of the service, “as a response to the gospel proclaimed both in Word and sacrament.”¹¹⁵ Psalm 116:16–19 provides an example of this type of response:

O LORD, *I am your servant; I am your servant*, the son of your maidservant. You have loosed my bonds. *I will* offer to you the sacrifice of thanksgiving and call on the name of the LORD. *I will* pay my vows to the LORD in the presence of all his people, in the courts of the house of the LORD, in your midst, O Jerusalem. Praise the LORD!¹¹⁶

Here and elsewhere in the Psalter, the psalmists express personal commitment to who they are and what they offer in worship of YHWH.

Dedications can also refer to blessings and sendings, often at the close of a worship service. These function as a call to service, discipleship, or witness to the world, as the *The Worship Sourcebook* suggests:

Worship does not end when we leave a worship service. A clear call to discipleship reminds us that our worship continues through obedient and grateful living. . . . The call to discipleship should convey two important convictions: that we live in faithful service not so that God will love us, but because God has loved us first; that we live by the power of the Spirit and thus does not need to rely on our own strength.¹¹⁷

¹¹³ J. Stephen Yuille, introduction to *The Path of Life: Blessedness in Seasons of Lament* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2019), xvi.

¹¹⁴ Yuille, introduction, xv.

¹¹⁵ *The Worship Sourcebook*, 138.

¹¹⁶ Emphasis added; see also Pss 30:1; 51:13.

¹¹⁷ *The Worship Sourcebook*, 138.

This can include closing prayers of gratitude, such as those found in Colossians 3:15: “Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful.”¹¹⁸ A sending could also be prayers for God’s blessings, like in Psalm 67:1: “May God be gracious to you and bless you and make his face shine upon you.”¹¹⁹ Finally, dedications can be expressions of comfort, like the words of the apostle Paul in Philippians 4:7: “And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”¹²⁰ Dedications express hopeful commitment as disciples of Christ. They reinforce one’s conception of themselves as revealed in Scripture.

Identity Status Language of CWM

This section applies Marcia’s taxonomy of exploration and commitment to a core repertory of the most popular CWM songs from 2005 to 2020. The previous study of identity formation concluded that an achieved identity in Christ involves both strong commitments and reflective exploration. As I suspected, most congregational songs sung in evangelical churches convey Christian commitment to the neglect of the exploratory aspects of the Christian life.

Portrayals of Commitment

CWM songs, by their nature, are used for congregational praise and worship in gathered assemblies. Therefore, articulations of Christian commitment to the Lord Jesus and the worship of God are a defining feature of CWM.¹²¹

¹¹⁸ See also Rev 5:12–13; 2 Cor 13:11; 14; Eph 3:20–21; 2 John 3.

¹¹⁹ See also Num 6:24–26; 3 John 1:2; Phil 4:7; Gal 6:18; Eph 3:17–19; 1 Thess 3:12–13; 5:23–24.

¹²⁰ See also 2 Cor 9:8; Eph 3:20; Rom 8:38–39; 15:5–6; 15:13; 2 Thess 2:16–17; Jude 24–25.

¹²¹ See a discussion on emotions and the “commitment” language of CWM, see Westerholm, “The Hour is Coming,” 151–54.

Commitment as faithful worship. Commitment language references a believer’s total faithfulness to worship God alone. This is most frequently conveyed through the image of a singing Christian, exemplified by Tim Hughes, who outpours commitment to God: “So here I am to worship; here I am to bow down; Here I am to say that You’re my God.”¹²² Physical postures, like bowing, and singing are gestures that indicate commitment. In “10,000 Reasons (Bless the Lord),” the committed Christian is one who is endlessly supplied with reasons to sing God’s praises every day.¹²³ The totality of commitment is reflected when numbered days end and believers spend eternity singing God’s praise:

And on that day when my strength is failing;
The end draws near and my time has come;
Still my soul will sing Your praise unending;
Ten thousand years and then forevermore.¹²⁴

Smith similarly says, “I could sing of Your Love forever.”¹²⁵ The Christian’s devotion to God is enduring. Matt Redman and Beth Redman resolve to bless God’s name, even in difficult circumstances: “You give and take away; My heart will choose to say; Lord blessed be your name.”¹²⁶

Christian commitment is a response to God’s enduring commitment to his people. In Cory Asbury’s song, God is the one who “chases,” “fights,” “leaves the ninety-

¹²² Tim Hughes, “Here I Am to Worship,” CCLI 3266032, Thankyou Music (admin. Capitol CMG), 2000.

¹²³ Jonas Myrin and Matt Redman, “10,000 Reasons (Bless the Lord),” CCLI 6016351, Atlas Mountain Songs (admin. Capitol CMG) et al., 2011. They write,

The sun comes up it’s a new day dawning;
It’s time to sing Your song again;
Whatever may pass and whatever lies before me;
Let me be singing when the evening comes.

¹²⁴ Myrin and Redman, “10,000 Reasons (Bless the Lord)”; emphasis added.

¹²⁵ Martin Smith, “I Could Sing Your Love Forever,” CCLI 1043199, Curious? Music UK (admin. Capitol CMG), 1994.

¹²⁶ Beth Redman and Matt Redman “Blessed Be Your Name,” CCLI 3798438, Thankyou Music (admin. Capitol CMG), 2002.

nine” to make a foe his own.¹²⁷ Similarly, Bethel Music conveys God’s commitment to his people through his enduring love: “Your love never fails; It never gives up; Never runs out on me.”¹²⁸ In response to God’s inspiring commitment to redeem at the cross, Christ Tomlin concludes he owes his life:

At the cross at the cross; *I surrender my life;*
I’m in awe of You I’m in awe of You;
Where Your love ran red and my sin washed white;
*I owe all to You I owe all to You (Jesus).*¹²⁹

God’s faithfulness inspires Christian faithfulness, and singing becomes a metaphor for the outpour of believers’ lives. The song “Goodness of God” explains,

All my life you have been faithful;
All my life You have been so so good;
With every breath that I am able;
*I will sing of the goodness of God.*¹³⁰

Commitment as true-heartedness. Christian commitment is described as whole life commitment to Christ’s values and teachings. Keith Getty and Stuart Townend describe the Christian’s complete commitment to Christ from birth to death in their final stanza: “From life’s first cry to final breath; Jesus commands my destiny.”¹³¹

CWM frequently depicts commitment using the language of *surrender*. For example, Joel Houston describes total commitment as both inward and outward

¹²⁷ Cory Asbury, Caleb Culver, and Ran Jackson, “Reckless Love,” CCLI 7089641, Cory Asbury (admin. Bethel Music) et al., 2017.

¹²⁸ Brian Johnson, Christa Black Gifford, and Jeremy Riddle, “One Thing Remains (Your Love Never Fails),” CCLI 5508444, ChristaJoy Music (admin. Bethel Music), Mercy/Vineyard (admin. Vineyard Music), Bethel Music, 2010.

¹²⁹ Chris Tomlin et al., “At the Cross (Love Ran Red),” CCLI 7017786, Countless Wonder (admin. Brentwood-Benson Music) et al., 2014; emphasis added.

¹³⁰ Ben Fielding et al., “Goodness of God,” CCLI 7117726, Capitol CMG Paragon (admin. Capitol CMG) et al., 2018; emphasis added.

¹³¹ Keith Getty and Stuart Townend, “In Christ Alone,” CCLI 3350395, Thankyou Music (admin. Capitol CMG), 2001. Dennis Jernigan similarly professes that Christ is everything to him in his song, which says, “You are my strength; When I am weak; You are the treasure that I seek; You are my all in all.” He continues, “Seeking You as a precious jew’l; Lord to give up I’d be a fool; You are my all in all.” Dennis Jernigan, “You Are My All in All,” CCLI 825356, Shepherd’s Heart Music (admin. PraiseCharts), 1991.

surrender:

In my heart in my soul; Lord, I give You control;
Consume me from the inside out Lord;
Let justice and praise; Become my embrace;
To love You from the inside out.¹³²

In another song by Houston, commitment is a public confession. In “The Stand,” Houston commits his heart, which refers to the totality of himself, his values, and ambitions, to Christ. He says, “So what can I say; And what can I do; But offer this heart O God; Completely to You.”¹³³ The totality of his surrender is publicized in the chorus as he stands and surrenders heart and soul for all to acknowledge:

So I’ll stand; with arms high and heart abandoned;
In awe of the One who gave it all; I’ll stand;
My soul Lord to You surrender; All I am is Yours.¹³⁴

Commitment as trust. In CWM, Christians express commitment by trusting in God’s sovereignty. In the song “Oceans,” Christian commitment is without bounds. Believers sing, “Spirit lead me where my trust is without borders; Let me walk upon the waters; Wherever you would call me.”¹³⁵ Christians also express trust in the finished work of Christ. In the song “Build My Life,” Christians devote themselves to resting on the love of Christ:

¹³² Joel Houston, “From the Inside Out,” CCLI 4705176, Hillsong Music Australia (admin. Capitol CMG), 2005; emphasis added. Reuben Morgan reflects something similar ten years earlier, with each “breath” symbolizing total surrender to the Lord:

Lord I give You my heart; I give You my soul; I live for You alone;
Ev’ry breath that I take; Ev’ry moment I’m awake; Lord have Your way in me.

Reuben Morgan, “I Give You My Heart,” CCLI 1866132, Hillsong Music Australia (admin. Capitol CMG), 1995.

¹³³ Joel Houston, “The Stand,” CCLI 4705248, Hillsong Music Australia (admin. Capitol CMG), 2005.

¹³⁴ Houston, “The Stand.”

¹³⁵ Joel Houston, Matt Crocker, and Salomon Ligthelm, “Oceans (Where Feet May Fail),” Hillsong Music Australia (admin. Capitol CMG), 2012. David Ruis’s song similarly declares fealty and trust in God: “I will trust you (I will trust You); Trust You Alone (You Alone).” David Ruis, “You’re Worthy of My Praise,” CCLI 487976, Shade Tree Music (admin. Brentwood-Benson Music), 1991.

I will build my life upon Your love;
It is a firm foundation;
I will put my trust in You alone;
And I will not be shaken.¹³⁶

The song “Cornerstone,” similarly expresses trust, but with more explicit reference to the finished work of Christ for salvation:

My hope is built on nothing less;
Than Jesus’ blood and righteousness;
I dare not trust the sweetest frame;
But wholly trust in Jesus’ Name.¹³⁷

Commitment as following Christ. As Christians commit to trusting in Christ, they will also follow him as his disciple. In CWM commitment is portrayed as totally surrendering oneself to follow Christ. In response to the salvation of Jesus, Ben Fielding and Reuben Morgan pledge their whole lives to Him:

So take me as You find me; All my fears and failures; Fill my life again;
*I give my life to follow; Ev’rything I believe in; Now I surrender.*¹³⁸

Similarly in “Alive,” in response to the love of Christ, Alexander Pappas and Aodhan King commit to the way of Christ:

You are more than my words could say;
I’ll follow You Lord for all my days;
Fix my eyes follow in Your ways;
Forever free in unending grace.¹³⁹

Commitment as dedication and declaration of faith. Finally, songs commonly portray commitment through formal dedications and declarations of the

¹³⁶ Brett Younker et al., “Build My Life,” CCLI 7070345, Kaple Music (admin. Bethel Music) et al., 2016.

¹³⁷ Edward Mote et al., “Cornerstone,” CCLI 6158927, Hillsong MP Songs (admin. Capitol CMG) et al., 2011.

¹³⁸ Ben Fielding and Reuben Morgan, “Mighty to Save,” CCLI 4591782, Hillsong Music Australia (admin. Capitol CMG), 2006; emphasis added.

¹³⁹ Alexander Pappas and Aodhan King, “Alive,” CCLI 6605212, Hillsong Music Australia (admin. Capitol CMG), 2012; emphasis added.

Christian faith. For example, “The Blessing” adapts God’s divine blessing recorded in Numbers 6:24–26: “The Lord bless you; And keep you; Make his face shine upon you; And be gracious to you; The Lord turn his; Face toward you; And give you peace; Amen.”¹⁴⁰ Christians dedicate one another as committed members in God’s covenant community. This covenantal blessing is extended over future generations: “May his favor be upon you and a thousand generation; And your Family; And your children; And their children.”¹⁴¹

Commitment is also portrayed in affirmations of the faith once for all delivered. Fielding and Crocker utilize the Apostles’ Creed for congregational singing with “This I Believe (The Creed).” Like the ancient creed affirmed by the Christian church throughout the centuries, the song affirms the triune nature of God, and other tenants of orthodox Christianity.¹⁴² Using a series of “I believe,” statements, believers affirm Christian doctrine with thanksgiving: “I believe in God our Father; I believe in Christ the Son; I believe in the Holy Spirit; Our God is three in One.”

Portrayals of Exploration

While status language of commitment is conveyed in a myriad of ways in CWM, descriptions for “exploration” are few and briefly mentioned. This section discusses the expression of exploration in the following ways: (1) sin; (2) wandering or lostness; and (3) doubt or unbelief. Depictions of exploration lead to greater affirmations of faith and commitment.

¹⁴⁰ Chris Brown et al., “The Blessing,” CCLI 7147007, Capitol CMG Paragon (admin. Capitol CMG) et al., 2020.

¹⁴¹ Brown et al., “The Blessing.”

¹⁴² They write, “Our Father everlasting; The all creating One; God Almighty; Through Your Holy Spirit; Conceiving Christ the Son; Jesus our Saviour.” Ben Fielding and Matt Crocker, “This I Believe (The Creed),” CCLI 7018338, Hillsong Music Australia (admin. Capitol CMG), 2014. In the second verse, they expound on the work of Christ: “Our judge and our defender; Suffered and crucified; Forgiveness is in You; Descended into darkness; You rose in glorious life; Forever seated high.”

Exploration as sin. In CWM, “exploration” is expressed through wrestling with sin and rebellion.¹⁴³ Encouragingly, the newest songs in this body of work have been the most explicit regarding sin. Asbury describes a period of his spiritual rebellion and its effects on his view of himself prior to finding God’s grace: “*When I was Your foe* still Your love fought for me . . . *When I felt no worth* You paid it all for me.”¹⁴⁴ Elevation Music calls to both the unbelieving, and those who believe but have walked away, to find forgiveness in Christ:

Are you hurting and broken within;
Overwhelmed by the weight of your sin;
Jesus is calling;
Have you come to the end of yourself;
Do you thirst for a drink from the well;
Jesus is calling.¹⁴⁵

Matt Maher likewise describes the Christian’s struggle “when sin runs deep” with desperation:

So teach my song to rise to You;
When temptation comes my way;
And when I cannot stand I’ll fall on You . . .
Lord I need You.¹⁴⁶

Exploration takes on *journey* language, in a variety of ways. For example, exploration is portrayed as separation from God.¹⁴⁷ Brian Johnson and Phil Wickham describe the path to saving faith as an impossible journey: “How great the chasm that lay

¹⁴³ Matt Maher describes God being the one wrestling with a sinner’s restless heart. Matt Maher, “Your Grace Is Enough,” CCLI 4477026, Thankyou Music (admin. Capitol CMG), spiritandsong.com, 2003.

¹⁴⁴ Cory Asbury, Caleb Culver, and Ran Jackson, “Reckless Love,” CCLI 7089641, Cory Asbury (admin. Bethel Music), Richmond Park (admin. Essential Music LLC), Watershed Worship (admin. Watershed Music Group (admin. Capitol CMG), 2017; emphasis added.

¹⁴⁵ Chris Brown et al., “O Come to the Altar,” CCLI 7051511, Music by Elevation Worship (admin. Essential Music), 2015; emphasis added. This song paints the crises/exploration as full of “regrets” and “mistakes.”

¹⁴⁶ Christy Nockels et al., “Lord I Need You,” CCLI 5925687, sixsteps Music (admin. Capitol CMG) et al., 2011.

¹⁴⁷ Elevation Music describes this period as a search for worldly treasures: “I searched the world but it couldn’t fill me; Man’s empty praise and treasures that fade; Are never enough.” Brandon Lake et al., “Graves into Gardens,” CCLI 7138219, Brandon Lake Music (admin. Bethel Music), 2019.

between us; How high the mountain I could not climb.”¹⁴⁸ Similarly, Hillsong Music explores the mysteries of God and the uncertainty of life using the metaphor of the ocean:

You call me out upon the waters;
The *great unknown* where feet may fail;
And there I find You in the mystery;
In oceans deep my faith will stand.¹⁴⁹

Exploration as wandering or lostness. One common expression of exploration is portrayed as spiritual *wandering or lostness*. Believers reflect on a period of uncertainty when they were spiritually wandering and hopeless. In Tomlin’s adapted version of Newton’s hymn, he characterizes that period of time as spiritual blindness until grace found him:

Amazing grace how sweet the sound;
That saved a wretch like me;
I once was lost but now I’m found;
Was blind but now I see.¹⁵⁰

Fielding and Morgan describe themselves in a similar way; for before they were “welcomed” in by God, they were “lost.”¹⁵¹

Some songs describe exploration as a past event. However, believers still wander into uncertainty or patterns of unbelief. Exploration language can also portray Christian experience as periodic trials and confusing circumstances. The Redmans employ the journey metaphor this way:

¹⁴⁸ Brian Johnson and Phil Wickham, “Living Hope,” CCLI 7106807, Phil Wickham Music (Fair Trade Music [c/o Essential Music]) et al., 2017.

¹⁴⁹ Houston, Crocker and Ligthelm, “Oceans (Where Feet May Fail),” 2012; emphasis added.

¹⁵⁰ Chris Tomlin, John Newton, and Louie Giglio, “Amazing Grace (My Chains Are Gone),” CCLI 4768151, sixsteps Music (admin. Capitol CMG), Vamos (admin. Capitol CMG), worshiptogether.com (admin. Capitol CMG), 2006; emphasis added. It is notable that Tomlin eliminated Newton’s verse that depicts exploration in greater detail: “Through many dangers, toils, and snares; I have already come; ‘Tis grace that brought me safe thus far; and grace will lead me home.”

¹⁵¹ Ben Field and Reuben Morgan, “Who You Say I Am,” CCLI 7102401, Hillsong Music Australia (admin. Capitol CMG), 2017. It is noteworthy that they credit God’s initiative for their salvation, not their personal commitment: God “welcomed me” and “ransomed me.” They are committed *by* God: “I am chosen not forsaken; I am who You say I am.”

Blessed be Your name;
When I'm found in the desert place;
Though I walk through the wilderness . . .
On the road marked with suffering;
Blessed be Your name.¹⁵²

Ingram and Morgan describe a time of confusion by contrasting their uncertainty with the constancy of God's character:

You are good You are good;
When there's nothing good in me;
You are love You are love;
On display for all to see;
You are light You are light;
When the darkness closes in . . .
You are true You are true;
*Even in my wandering.*¹⁵³

Exploration as seasons of doubt and unbelief. In CWM, Christians engage with exploration via seasons of doubt and unbelief. However, exploration is viewed as temporary, and faith is fortified through it. In Hillsong Music's adaptation of Mote's hymn, they depict doubt as darkness eclipsing the goodness of God:

When darkness seems to hide His face;
I rest on His unchanging grace;
In every high and stormy gale;
My anchor holds within the veil.¹⁵⁴

The momentary experience of crisis fosters greater commitment: "Christ alone cornerstone; Weak made strong in the Saviour's love; Through the storm He is Lord; Lord of all."¹⁵⁵ Similarly, Bethel Music reaffirms commitment to Christ as they explore opposition and unbelief: "I raise a hallelujah in the presence of my enemies; *I raise a*

¹⁵² Redman and Redman, "Blessed Be Your Name"; emphasis added. This song reflects both exploration and commitment language. While it acknowledges periods of exploration in the Christian life, the motif of the song is a strong commitment to God by blessing his name.

¹⁵³ Jason Ingram and Reuben Morgan, "Forever Reign," CCLI 5639997, Hillsong Music (admin. Capitol CMG) et al., 2009; emphasis added.

¹⁵⁴ Mote et al., "Cornerstone," 2011; emphasis added.

¹⁵⁵ Mote et al., "Cornerstone."

*hallelujah louder than the unbelief.*¹⁵⁶ In these songs, doubt serves as an opportunity to invigorate faith. Redman describes his period of exploration more subtly. By highlighting his return back to his faith commitments, he indicates his worship is purer and rightly motivated:

I'm coming back to the heart of worship;
And it's all about You all about You Jesus;
I'm sorry Lord for the thing I've made it;
When it's all about You all about You Jesus.¹⁵⁷

Conclusion

This chapter considered more nuanced views on psychosocial theories through surveying recent neo-Erikson scholarship and Marcia's research on identity statuses. Marcia argues that healthy identity achievement results from adequate exploration of alternatives prior to making commitments towards any set values and ideology. Like Erikson, Marcia lacks distinction between ontological exploration (i.e., uncertainty) and ethical exploration (i.e., unbelief). The Christian worldview challenges Marcia's lack of clarity on sources of exploration and his treatment of the constructed identity over the given identity. For believers, identity is constructed on the truth of God's Word—with the help of the Spirit of Truth. The Spirit guides believers to interpret their circumstances through the lens of Scripture and God's redemptive narrative. In modernity, doubt is pitted against conferred faith. The Christian worldview is more nuanced. It recognizes that doubt as unbelief is a state of rebellion and sin, which requires confession and repentance. Only through the means of grace can unbelief be turned into saving faith. However, believers know that they are not impervious to other forms of doubt, such as

¹⁵⁶ Jake Stevens et al., "Raise a Hallelujah," CCLI 7119315, Bethel Music, 2018; emphasis added. Their resolve intensifies, looking to God to settle their crisis: "Sing a little louder in the presence of my enemies; Sing a little louder, louder than the unbelief; Sing a little louder my weapon is a melody; Sing a little louder Heaven comes to fight for me."

¹⁵⁷ Matt Redman, "The Heart of Worship," CCLI 2296522, Thankyou Music (admin. Capitol CMG), 1999.

crisis and uncertainty, in a fallen world. Christian liturgies have historically expressed lament for such encounters. The brokenness of a world yet to be fully restored is portrayed in songs and prayers of lament, often closely connected to confessions of sin. Christian liturgies also express firm commitments by sending believers out, dedicating and blessing them for the work of God's kingdom.

This chapter's application of the taxonomy from the study to a core repertoire of CCLI-derived songs for worship concluded that the majority of CWM songs express commitment with vibrant language. By contrast, instances of exploration were few and mostly portray a period of exploration prior to saving faith. According to Marcia's model, this lack of balance poses a danger for Christians, who may end up in identity foreclosure—connected to a sense of “spiritual conformism” as opposed to sincere achievement. Interestingly, my analysis also found that the most recent songs in the repertoire were the most explicit about the nature of sin. Other expressions of exploration focus on the Christian journey and its encounters with trials, periods of wandering, and moments of uncertainty. These serve as catalysts for the reinforcement of faith and one's commitments.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Recent scholarship has not only expanded the field of practical theology, but has forged new bridges between various disciplines. Some of those bridges have connected the fields of counseling and worship studies.¹ For example, Eric Johnson views worship and counseling as two forms of Christian soul care.² Writing from the perspective of counseling and psychology, Johnson sees the end goal of soul care as *doxological*. Johnson writes, “The soul that sees something of God’s infinite beauty cannot help but utter praise, feel drawn toward that beauty, desire to participate in it and resemble it, and seek to live to exalt it.”³ Similarly, worship practitioners have voiced a growing emphasis on worship as discipleship.⁴ The intersection of these fields can be summed up in their dialogical contexts. Soul care practitioners provide biblical language and counsel for the experiences and relationships of parishioners, individually. Meanwhile, corporate worship practitioners provide similar language and expression that inform and shape parishioners, but in a corporate context. The research of this

¹ For example, Pierre argues that the primary function of the heart is for worship, and applies counseling methods toward reorienting people’s identity as worshipers of God (in their thinking, feeling and choices). See Jeremy Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life: Connecting Christ to Human Experience* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth, 2016), 22–23; see also Pierre’s treatment of worship as *imitation and submission* (104–44).

² Eric Johnson, *Foundations for Soul Care: A Christian Psychology Proposal* (Wheaton, IL: IVP Academic, 2014), 291.

³ Johnson, *Foundations for Soul Care*, 291.

⁴ Some books that reflect this emphasis include Mike Cospers, *Rhythms of Grace: How the Church’s Worship Tells the Story of the Gospel* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013); Matt Boswell, ed., *Doxology and Theology: How the Gospel Forms the Worship Leader* (Nashville: B & H, 2013); Zack Hicks, *The Worship Pastor: A Call to Ministry for Worship Leaders and Teams* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016); Matt Merker, *Corporate Worship: How the Church Gathers as God’s People, Building Healthy Churches* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2021)

dissertation hopes to continue these efforts and offer theological and philosophical insights for church ministry.

By framing sociological, philosophical, and psychological discussions of identity formation within a theologically-driven perspective, this dissertation traces the important relationship between congregational songs and self-identity. In worship, individuals receive and participate in the formation of their unique identity in Christ through the Spirit. Songs shape identity by orienting worship around the triune God, and by expressing ways of relating to him, others, and the self.

Chapter 1 introduced the goal, methodology and argumentation of the dissertation. Chapter 2 mapped the unique social context of modern identity, evaluated the work of Anthony Giddens, and argued that, in corporate worship, self-identity is both received and shaped. Given the reflexive and receptive role of Christian liturgy, congregational singing presents a unique opportunity for identity formation. Chapter 3 discussed the importance of relationships in identity formation by surveying Charles Taylor's *Sources of Selfhood*. It established the necessity of a relationship with God, which informs one's corporate identity (social) and one's individual identity (self). These relationships are rehearsed in the liturgical practices of adoration and passing of the peace. Finally, chapter 3 evaluated the language of relationships in Christian worship by applying the taxonomy of relationship—"God, social, and self"—to a core repertoire of the most popular CCLI-derived worship songs between 2005–2020; I found that the majority of CWM focuses on the individual's relationship with God. Less frequent were songs that portray a believer's corporate identity as the church or the believer's self-identity. Chapter 4 utilized the field of identity theory to explore the importance of emotions, with particular attention to the theories of Erik Erikson. The concept of conflict and resolution towards identity formation is understood from a redemptive framework. Both of these emotions are rehearsed in the liturgical practices of confession and assurance. Finally, chapter 4 evaluated the language of emotions portrayed in Christian

worship by applying the taxonomy of emotions, “conflict and resolute,” to the established core repertoire of CWM. I found that CWM is partial towards resolute emotions, with few mentions of sin and need of repentance. Building on the psychological models of chapter 4, chapter 5 argued that the dynamic of identity involves elements of uncertainty and certainty, gleaned from the works of James Marcia. After distinguishing between uncertainty and unbelief, the liturgical practice of lament offers expressions of uncertainty and crisis in worship. Finally, chapter 5 evaluated identity status aspects in CWM by applying the taxonomy of status, “exploration and commitments,” to the established core repertoire of CWM. I concluded that expressions of commitment were frequent, to the neglect of mentions of exploration, uncertainty and crisis.

Implications of the Study

A study on identity formation and practical theology should strengthen both how individuals understand themselves and how church leaders minister to church members. This section briefly examines implications for two areas of spiritual life: (1) corporate worship, and (2) individual discipleship.

Implications for Corporate Worship

First, one of the implications from this study is a greater emphasis on soul care in corporate worship practices. If the dance of modernity moves increasingly to the beat of individualism, the role of corporate worship and “thick practices” become increasingly necessary for each Christian.⁵ Each week, Christians *receive* their identity from the Word of God, rehearsed and embodied by a local community of believers. They are reminded of who they are from God’s perspective, and how they relate to God, others, and to themselves. Through elements such as calls to worship and passing of the peace,

⁵ James K. A. Smith refers to “thick practices” as rituals and routines that “shape, mold, and direct our love.” James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009), 80.

Christians practice heavenly realities on earth. In lament, Christians explore past and present brokenness in the world, in order that they might renew their hope in God's promise of future restoration. Through spoken and sung dedications, Christians commit to their new covenant identities and send one another out proclaiming the kingdom of God. Gathered worship is not simply for Christians to offer gifts and thanksgiving to God for his grace; in the process, believers are also *receiving* from the triune God the gift of his grace and more—the gift of their true selves.

In corporate worship, Christians are transformed in the context of a community as they examine their constructed identities against their given identities. Reflexivity is an individual's exercise of *imago Dei* and the outflow of sanctification. While contemporary society views reflexivity as a private project, Christian public worship makes reflexivity a social event through confession, repentance, assurance, and thanksgiving. Christian reflexivity is informed by the received identity, guided by Spirit and truth, and flourishes in the context of a corporate community.

Therefore, worship service planners ought to consider those aspects of the divine assembly that form identity. While attention to the theological content of worship songs continues to grow, attention must be raised for the *manner* in which songs nourish and form the identity of worshipers. By evaluating a core repertory of the most popular songs in American churches, this dissertation demonstrates both the strengths and weaknesses of CWM in this endeavor. To my surprise, the most recent CWM contained the richest expressions of identity. Alternatively, I was not surprised that CWM is limited in its vocabulary of identity formation, providing an incomplete picture.

Churches should not expect songs alone to bear the weight of shaping identity. Thus, one of the implications this study is that church leaders must make extra efforts to investigate and adapt elements or new songs which facilitate identity formation in ways their current repertoires do not. Based on this study, it can be assumed that many churches do not explore rich language for their corporate identity; most churches likely

do not fully address the self in corporate worship in the way exemplified by the Psalms (see Ps 103). Conflict and exploration dimensions are also likely neglected by many churches, where congregational songs fail to identify sin or the effects of sin in the lives of the people.

By applying some of these categories to their liturgical design and song selection process, church leaders can curate songs, elements, and other practices for their local context with theological and formation goals in mind. Throughout the history of Christian gatherings, between movements, revivals, and weekly gatherings, Christians have sung *together*. In fact, collective sung prayer is a subversive act against the grain of individualism. With a clearer vision of its role in identity formation, corporate singing can be a balm for the wounds of overt individuality in society—loneliness, isolation, and radical anxiety.

Implications for Individual Discipleship

Second, worship practices can inform soul care and interpersonal ministry. For example, soul care ministries might consider incorporating liturgical rhythms into their practices. Identity formation and Christian worship are inescapably connected. Identities are shaped by rhythms, images, morals, and virtues transmitted within a community. However, identity is disintegrated in the modern era. In contemporary society, individuals are removed from their ancestral, cultural, and traditional contexts. Rich faith traditions and practices can help construct a foundation for healthy identity and behavior. These traditions—such as prayer, confession, lament, and assurance—can also shape counseling practices for ministers and believers involved in discipleship relationships.

The structure of identity is comprised of content (belief, values, and worldview) and evaluation (meaning and significance). In Christian discipleship, the Word of God (content) and the redemptive work of the Spirit (evaluation) takes precedence. Structured liturgies and liturgical language, which are repeated in counseling

practices, might provide a helpful methodology for soul care and interpersonal ministry, while also reinforcing the spiritual benefits of corporate gatherings.

Additionally, understanding how identity is formed ought to equip Christians and Christian ministers with empathy, particularly towards adolescents and new believers. Much of the study on identity formation focuses on periods of crisis and confusion among young people. If discipleship aims to cultivate strong faith commitments unto Christ, the Christian church must also be willing to patiently journey with young believers (physically and spiritually) as they explore, question, and doubt aspects of their faith and identity. In addition, young believers need to try out different roles to discover their individuality within their corporate identity. Christian discipleship can look a lot like an apprenticeship, where young believers work out their identity and faith while leading, serving, coordinating, teaching, as well as various other roles and responsibilities in the church alongside other mature believers.⁶

Suggestions for Further Research

This dissertation surveyed recent scholarship on identity formation across different disciplines and applied concepts to a specific core repertory of CWM. The scope of the study was broad, leaving opportunities for future research, such as (1) different scopes of the study, or (2) the relationship of corporate worship to other human experiences.

Different Scopes of the Study

This dissertation evaluated the language of a CCLI-derived repertoire of the top twenty-five songs between 2005–2020. Given the diverse nature of how

⁶ In an effort to engage with Gen Z, some churches strategically involve young people in the operations of the church. In one Singaporean church, the average age of its congregants is 22 years old, with teens as young as 12 years old serving in various capacities. These young teens are paired with older members of the church for one-on-one ministry. See Pearlyn Koh, “To Keep Gen Z in the Pews, One Singapore Church Lets Them Run the Service,” *Christianity Today*, February 10, 2023, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2023/february-web-only/singapore-youth-church-gen-z-ministry.html>.

congregational songs are consumed today, future research might explore different congregations and their typical resources.

Virtual church study. Since Monique Ingalls's study on the formation of congregations influenced by CWM, digital congregations have expanded in complexity. Future study might evaluate the contours of identity formation for the online congregation, based on the most viewed songs on YouTube. This study might also weigh-in on visual elements that pertain to the type of video being used, such as lyric videos, live videos, or produced videos that stage worshipers or a congregation.

Local church study. This study focused on 93 songs derived from CCLI, across a fifteen-year period. One critique of this kind of scope has been that these lists are influenced by market forces and do not reflect accurately which songs are being used by individual local churches.⁷ One future study might narrow the scope to a group of local churches from various denominations or church networks over a short time span. By evaluating the language of identity in the repertoire of a subset of particular churches, one might reveal a more accurate picture of identity formation in a church's repertoire, or the differences across traditions and contexts.

Wedding and funeral congregation study. Modernity has removed some of the most sacred rituals in society from the oversight of an ecclesial body. Of those rituals include weddings and funerals. How does identity formation of congregational singing function within the context of a wedding or a funeral? What songs are sung at Christian weddings and Christian funerals? How are the paradigms of relationships, emotions, or status revealed in the repertoire?

⁷ Glen Packiam, *Worship and the World to Come: Exploring Christian Hope in Contemporary Worship*, Dynamics of Christian Worship (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2020), 110–11.

Corporate Worship's Relationship to Other Human Experiences

The impetus for this project was an interest in the intersection between corporate worship and counseling. It began with a concern for how Christian practices might respond to the experience of identity crisis. Several other areas related to human experiences were of interest that could be further investigated.

Worship and gendered identity. While this dissertation focused on the self-identity, a future research could take one step further to explore specifically how worship songs function in a congregation's conceptualization of individual gendered identity. How are men and women addressed and portrayed in songs? Using this study's core repertory, one might ask if gendered identity is important in the context of worship given the rare mentions of it, aside from "son" and "daughter." Though outside the scope of this dissertation, it is notable that specific mentions of female identity in congregational songs were even more rare.

Worship and trauma. A growing body of work in the discipline of neuroscience is helping explain the effects of trauma on the brain. This has led to investigations on various forms of therapy, including music therapy. One future study might be on the relationship between corporate worship and trauma. If worship presents a redemptive narrative, and singing stimulates neurological changes, can corporate worship be used as a form of "doxological therapy" for trauma?⁸ This study might explore how worship can support the healing of past suffering or mental illnesses.⁹

⁸ Dan Allender explains how stories regulate bodily struggles with trauma, and reveals that music changes the brain. He argues, "When you worship, you have a chance to be in the presence of beauty, and your body begins to change." "Dr. Dan Allender Explains How Music Heals Trauma," *Exodus Cry*, May 31, 2017, YouTube video, 2:01, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mY4uJxLi2Zc>.

⁹ Eric Johnson, "The Church's Role in Healing Mental Illness," *Hope for Mental Health*, August 19, 2014, YouTube video, 6:44, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U8x66ifrLIs>.

Worship and intimate relationships: friendship and marriage. This study briefly mentioned how corporate worship interacts with relationships. Other works have discussed worship in terms of vertical (God) and horizontal (others) aspects, with much attention on how worship informs one's theology.¹⁰ However, further study can be done on corporate worship and how it shapes relationships, namely friendships and marriage. The gospel provides a framework for reconciliation between God and individuals. Applying the same lens to the shape of corporate worship, it can investigate how public worship provides a framework for friendship, and for restoring fractured relationships. One aim from such a study would be to design a methodological tool for counseling practices for relational reconciliation through worship and liturgy.¹¹

Conclusion

Christians are a people prone to forget who they are. Congregational songs remind God's people that they are created, fallen, redeemed, and waiting. This has powerful implications for the church's worship and weekly gatherings. Congregational songs provide language for people to dialogue with God, relate to each other, and view themselves properly. In song, believers experience the conflict of sin and their sinfulness, but also can express the joy, delight, and confidence they have because of Christ's redeeming work. Songs imbued with truth and guided by the Spirit can escort believers through a wary and wayward Christian journey that is hopeful but not overly idealized. Songs can also consecrate believers in their covenantal commitments as new creations

¹⁰ John Frame, *Worship in Spirit and Truth* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 1996), 7–8; Bob Kauflin, *Worship Matters: Leading Others to Encounter the Greatness of God* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), 175–80.

¹¹ For a helpful resource in this approach see Robert K. Cheong, *Restoration Story: Why Jesus Matters in a Broken World* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth, 2021). Cheong uses Creation-Fall-Redemption-Consummation as a framework to understand personal stories within God's redemptive story, and to show how the gospel informs and transforms broken relationships. Cheong leads a care organization for ministers with an emphasis on reconciliation called Gospel Care ministries. One of the services of the ministry is a marriage intensive retreat called "Redeem" aimed at marriage restoration. In the intensive, couples receive counseling, but also engage in relational reconciliation in the context of a specifically designed liturgy.

sent into a broken world.

Christians find their true identity not by looking inward, but by looking upward, to a Triune God who cares deeply about them. God created each individual identity. The church ought to care about self-identity because along with the body it is was purchased by God with the blood of His son: “You are not your own, for you were bought with a price” (1 Cor 6:19b–20a; see also 10:31). The Spirit reveals to the believer the glory of the Lord Jesus, conforming them into his perfect image (2 Cor 3:17–18).

Worshipping communities therefore must navigate the shifting tensions of modernity with timeless truth.¹² The worshipping church must battle against the impulses of individualism by emphasizing their corporate identity in worship. Similarly, Christian institutions must work to create a subversive culture that values sacrifice and service as virtues against a society that values consumerism and competition.

To this end, Christian worship presents the believer with a counternarrative that grounds their constructed identity with a historic faith identity. Robert Webber explains,

Classical Christianity was not an accommodation to paganism but an alternative practice of life. Christians in a postmodern world will succeed, not by watering down the faith, but by being a countercultural community that invites people to be shaped by the story of Israel and Jesus.¹³

More than ever, Christians must be clear confessionally about their identity. Spirituality, separated from God's story, is often characterized by “legalism, mere intellectual knowledge, an overly therapeutic culture, New Age Gnosticism, a dualistic rejection of this world, and a narcissistic preoccupation with one's experience.”¹⁴ Similarly,

¹² Robert Webber's “Ancient Future Worship” paradigm attempts to rekindle the formative role of a Christian history and tradition. See Robert E. Webber, *Ancient Future Worship: Proclaiming and Enacting God's Narrative*, Ancient-Future (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008).

¹³ Webber, *Ancient-Future Worship*, 7.

¹⁴ “A Call to an Ancient Evangelical Future,” *Christianity Today*, September 1, 2006, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2006/september/11.57.html>.

psychosocial models may be able recognize the *numinous* in each person, but the Church is tasked with teaching and discipling people in the name of the Father, Son and Spirit, the source and telos of the *numinous*. Without Christianity the numinous is vacuous.

Songs don't have the power to change circumstances; nor are they sacramental. Christians don't sing to open up the heavens or invoke the presence of God. But with the power of the Word of Christ dwelling richly, God's Spirit can use songs *powerfully* to change us.

APPENDIX 1

A COMPILATION OF CCLI'S 2005–2020 TOP 25 LISTS

Table A1. A compilation of the CCLI's 2005–2020 Top 25 lists

<i>Song Title</i>	<i>Contributors (Authors)</i>
10,000 Reasons (Bless the Lord)	Jonas Myrin, Matt Redman
Above All	Lenny LeBlanc, Paul Baloche
Alive	Alexander Pappas, Aodhan King
Amazing Grace (My Chains Are Gone)	Chris Tomlin, John Newton, Louie Giglio
At the Cross (Love Ran Red)	Chris Tomlin, Ed Cash, Jonas Myrin, Matt Armstrong, Matt Redman
Awesome God	Rich Mullins
Beautiful One	Tim Hughes
Better Is One Day	Matt Redman
Blessed Be Your Name	Beth Redman, Matt Redman
Breathe	Marie Barnett
Build My Life	Brett Younker, Karl Martin, Kirby Kaple, Matt Redman, Pat Barrett
Come Now Is The Time To Worship	Brian Doerksen
Cornerstone	Edward Mote, Eric Liljero, Jonas Myrin, Reuben Morgan, William Batchelder Bradbury
Days Of Elijah	Robin Mark
Death Was Arrested	Adam Kersh, Brandon Coker, Heath Balltzglier, Paul Taylor Smith
Do It Again	Chris Brown, Mack Brock, Matt Redman, Steven Furtick
Draw Me Close	Kelly Carpenter
Everlasting God	Brenton Brown, Ken Riley
Forever	Chris Tomlin
Forever (We Sing Hallelujah)	Brian Johnson, Christa Black Gifford, Gabriel Wilson, Jenn Johnson, Joel Taylor, Kari Jobe
Forever Reign	Jason Ingram, Reuben Morgan
From The Inside Out	Joel Houston
Give Thanks	Henry Smith
Glorious Day	Jason Ingram, Jonathan Smith, Kristian Stanfill, Sean Curran
Glory To God Forever	Steve Fee, Vicky Beeching
God Is Able	Ben Fielding, Reuben Morgan
God Of Wonders	Marc Byrd, Steve Hindalong

Table A1 continued

<i>Song Title</i>	<i>Contributors (Authors)</i>
Good Good Father	Anthony Brown, Pat Barrett
Goodness Of God	Ben Fielding, Brian Johnson, Ed Cash, Jason Ingram, Jenn Johnson
Graves Into Gardens	Brandon Lake, Chris Brown, Steven Furtick, Tiffany Hudson
Great Are You Lord	David Leonard, Jason Ingram, Leslie Jordan
Great Things	Jonas Myrin, Phil Wickham
Hallelujah	Brenton Brown, Brian Doerksen
Happy Day	Ben Cantelon, Tim Hughes
Here I Am To Worship	Tim Hughes
Holy Is The Lord	Chris Tomlin, Louie Giglio
Holy Spirit	Bryan Torwalt, Katie Torwalt
Hosanna	Brooke Ligertwood
Hosanna (Praise Is Rising)	Brenton Brown, Paul Baloche
How Deep The Father's Love For Us	Stuart Townend
How Great Is Our God	Chris Tomlin, Ed Cash, Jesse Reeves
How Great Thou Art	Stuart Wesley Keene Hine
How He Loves	John Mark McMillan
I Could Sing Of Your Love Forever	Martin Smith
I Give You My Heart	Reuben Morgan
I Love You Lord	Laurie Klein
In Christ Alone	Keith Getty, Stuart Townend
Indescribable	Jesse Reeves, Laura Story
Jesus Messiah	Chris Tomlin, Daniel Carson, Ed Cash, Jesse Reeves
King Of Kings	Brooke Ligertwood, Jason Ingram, Scott Ligertwood
King Of My Heart	John Mark McMillan, Sarah McMillan
Living Hope	Brian Johnson, Phil Wickham
Lord I Lift Your Name On High	Rick Founds
Lord I Need You	Christy Nockels, Daniel Carson, Jesse Reeves, Kristian Stanfill, Matt Maher
Lord Reign In Me	Brenton Brown
Mighty To Save	Ben Fielding, Reuben Morgan
No Longer Slaves	Brian Johnson, Joel Case, Jonathan David Helser
O Come To The Altar	Chris Brown, Mack Brock, Steven Furtick, Wade Joye
O Praise The Name (Anástasis)	Benjamin Hastings, Dean Ussher, Marty Sampson
Oceans (Where Feet May Fail)	Joel Houston, Matt Crocker, Salomon Ligthelm
One Thing Remains (Your Love Never Fails)	Brian Johnson, Christa Black Gifford, Jeremy Riddle
Open The Eyes Of My Heart	Paul Baloche

Table A1 continued

<i>Song Title</i>	<i>Contributors (Authors)</i>
Open Up The Heavens	Andi Rozier, James Macdonald, Jason Ingram, Meredith Andrews, Stuart Garrard
Our God	Chris Tomlin, Jesse Reeves, Jonas Myrin, Matt Redman
Raise A Hallelujah	Jake Stevens, Jonathan David Helser, Melissa Helser, Molly Skaggs
Reckless Love	Caleb Culver, Cory Asbury, Ran Jackson
Revelation Song	Jennie Lee Riddle
See A Victory	Ben Fielding, Chris Brown, Jason Ingram, Steven Furtick
Shout To The Lord	Darlene Zschech
The Blessing	Chris Brown, Cody Carnes, Kari Jobe, Steven Furtick
The Heart Of Worship	Matt Redman
The Lion And The Lamb	Brenton Brown, Brian Johnson, Leeland Mooring
The Stand	Joel Houston
The Wonderful Cross	Chris Tomlin, Isaac Watts, J. D. Walt, Jesse Reeves, Lowell Mason
This I Believe (The Creed)	Ben Fielding, Matt Crocker
This Is Amazing Grace	Jeremy Riddle, Josh Farro, Phil Wickham
Trading My Sorrows	Darrell Evans
Tremble	Andres Figueroa, Hank Bentley, Mariah McManus, Mia Fieldes
Way Maker	Osinachi Kalu Okoro Egbu
We Fall Down	Chris Tomlin
What A Beautiful Name	Ben Fielding, Brooke Ligertwood
Who You Say I Am	Ben Fielding, Reuben Morgan
Whom Shall I Fear God Of Angel Armies	Chris Tomlin, Ed Cash, Scott Cash
You Are My All In All	Dennis Jernigan
You Are My King (Amazing Love)	Billy J. Foote
You're Worthy Of My Praise	David Ruis
Your Grace Is Enough	Matt Maher
Your Love Never Fails	Anthony Skinner, Chris McClarney
Your Name	Glenn Packiam, Paul Baloche

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ABSTRACT

SINGING THE SELF: EXPLORING THE ROLE OF CONGREGATIONAL SONG IN IDENTITY FORMATION

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This dissertation evaluates aspects of identity formation research, drawn from the social sciences, and interprets the findings from a Christian theological perspective. I argue that liturgical practices provide believers, individually and corporately, an avenue for identity-formation within the context of worship, for in worship Christians rehearse the past and hope for the future with a redemptive lens. Finally, the dissertation analyzes the themes of self-identity in an identified core repertory of the most-used contemporary congregational worship songs in evangelical churches from 2005 through 2020, and argues that congregational songs play a unique role in identity formation in a post-modern society.

Chapter 1 introduces the argument of the dissertation. Chapter 2 charts the landscape of contemporary self-identity by evaluating Anthony Giddens's concept of the "reflexive self," which liberates individuals to construct self-identity apart from tradition and culture. Then, exploring the opportunities and limitations of reflexivity, it presents an alternative vision of reflexivity that locates the necessity for Christian gatherings, liturgies, and congregational singing. It concludes by suggesting Jeremy Pierre's paradigm of the dynamic heart, and the role of faith provides the biblical basis for how self-identity is both received and shaped.

Chapter 3 traces the role of relationships in identity and engages with

reflections on selfhood through the works of Charles Taylor. In addition, the chapter discusses relational practices within the liturgy. Portrayals of relationships are also examined in Contemporary Worship Music (CWM) in three categories—God, others, and self. Chapter 4 examines the role of emotions in identity by surveying Erik Erikson’s human development and psychosocial identity theory, explores the liturgical implications, and establishes a taxonomy for evaluating “conflict” and “resolute” emotions in CWM. Chapter 5 examines the theme of status coined by psychologist, James Marcia, discusses lament and dedication as liturgical expressions of status, and establishes a taxonomy for evaluating “exploration” and “commitment” language in CWM.

Chapter 6 proposes general implications for worship planners and suggested areas for further study related to this topic.

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