Remembering Faithful Responses to Transformation:

A Reformation of Liturgical Awareness

For the Formation of the Self through Worship with Others

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A plethora of influences in today’s world seek to form the individual in very specific ways. Christians believe that the most important of these influences is God, but with the Western experience of the postmodern turn and the abundance of influences, many Western Christians have forgotten how to respond to God’s influence, especially when it involves loss. Learning faithful responses to loss would encourage Western Christians to dwell more faithfully in the difficult areas of life knowing that in those difficult moments when they are weak, God is strong.\(^1\) Models of response to the Holy breaking through the Void within worship can form the memory of individuals for faithful responses to those transforming moments.

### Shaping Each Other

**The Individual in the Community**

James E. Loder, in his book *The Transforming Moment*, calls theologians to task for leaving the theology of experiences of the Holy that transform an individual’s understanding of the Self undeveloped.\(^2\) These experiences of the Holy happen in the midst of the Void that “has many faces, such as absence, loss, shame, guilt, hatred, loneliness, and the demonic” of which “death is the definitive metaphor.”\(^3\) Experiences of

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1. 1 Cor. 1:27b, 2 Cor. 12:10.


3. Ibid., 84.
the Void challenge the individual’s understanding of the Lived World and the Self, threatening non-being and loss of identity.

When the Holy breaks through the Void and encounters the individual, transformation usually happens. The resulting “convictional knowing is the patterned process by which the Holy Spirit transforms all transformation of the human spirit.”

However, not every entry into the Void results in transformational moments leading to convictional knowing, since the Holy Spirit operates outside of human control. Therefore, any theology exploring transformative experiences of the Holy must also explore the experience of the Void.

As Loder argues, individuals experience the Void as part of life and respond to the threat of the Void by finding ways to incorporate these experiences into the Self. Therefore, individuals construct a Lived World in which to act and a Self for reflection. When the individual encounters the Void, the usual response is to retreat into the Self or ignore the Void by acting in the Lived World—responses which may or may not be faithful. The influences of today’s world normally form the individual to ignore the Void or to dwell in the Void in an unhealthy way. Still, when the Holy shines through the Void, transformation happens. Loder explains, “The Holy by nature means the obliteration of ‘worlds’ designed to screen out the void or ‘worlds’ designed to revel in a perverse fascination with nothingness.”

The unaccountable nature of transformative experiences with the Holy necessitates formation of an anticipatory attitude grounded in the complexity of God

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4 Ibid., 93.
5 Ibid., 90.
within a community formed to welcome and respond to transformational moments. Loder suggests such in his work when he lists five theological guidelines, the last of which brings the need for community together with individual formation and the complexity of God. He states, “Convictional experiences call for a social context whose inner and outer structures sustain and celebrate the continuities of Christ . . . outer confirmation for the private experience of Christ’s presence is necessary.”  

This outer confirmation comes as the individual develops a relationship with a community to develop a faithful response to the Holy breaking through the Void.

The Community in the Individual

Communities, in the various forms they take, influence the formation of the individual starting from birth. The very first community of parents and child shapes the individual’s ability to process data, so much so that these early communal “experiences appear to have a direct effect on the development of explicit memory.” The more modern science studies the brain, the more it proves the importance of the role of community—a lesson that runs counter to the assumptions of the Enlightenment but is still taught in the two-thirds world. “Individuals need a supporting group to accumulate experiences which provide the memories on which they base their learning as to how to act.”

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6 Ibid., 193.

7 Daniel J. Siegel, MD, The Developing Mind: How Relationships and the Brain Interact to Shape Who We Are, Kindle ed. (New York: Guilford Press, 1999). This and all other Kindle Edition books site the Kindle location rather than page number.

8 Peter Atkins, Memory and Liturgy: The Place of Memory in the Composition and Practice of Liturgy (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004), 69.
Communities also form the individual in ways more profound than social development. As the individual grows in a community, the community shapes the way the individual processes information. The functions and dysfunctions of the community form physical connections within the brain of the individual, so “the mind develops at the interface of neurophysiological processes and interpersonal relationships.”

Communities and the responses the individual learns therein, starting with the parents and growing ever more numerous, shape the individual’s construction of both the Lived World and the Self at the neurophysiological level.

The individual learns how to interact with the world from the communities encountered through life, all of which have formative impact. The community develops the individual. “Our thinking ability arises from our communal life in a mutual society. We quite literally ‘learn to think.’” Therefore, as much as this rankles modern Western sensibilities, the community is always in the individual. The ways in which a community responds to the Void and the Holy inevitably form the response of the individuals within that community. Atkins notes this reality:

We can only know who we are if we remember to whom we are related. This is a sober reminder to a society that tries to glorify the individual to the point that individuals are encouraged to think that they can cast themselves adrift from the community as a whole. The way our memory accumulates knowledge tells us this is nonsense, and dangerous nonsense at that.

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9 Siegel, *The Developing Mind*, 673.

10 As evidenced by a brief look at the two tables ibid., 903, 1692.


12 Ibid., xii.
The plethora of influences from various communities would overwhelm the individual except for the way the brain keeps track of what matters. As neuropathways form in the brain, their use determines the quality of the connection. Reflecting on an event reactivates the same neuropathways, so the individual constructing a Lived World and a Self strengthens those remembered pathways keeping the response to those memories alive. As a result, “the more we use the [memory] track the sharper the memory becomes. Thus the brain builds up patterns of appropriate responses to a whole variety of thoughts and stimuli.”

The more an individual experiences and reflects on responses to the Void and the Holy both within the Self and the Lived World, the stronger those responses become. “The mind also works on a ‘weighting’ system. What is considered of major significance is given higher priority for retention than the routine or the trivial.” The individual needs at least one community that makes reflection on the Void and the Holy an important part of community life in order to form faithful responses. The individual decides, consciously or unconsciously, which memories from among the plethora of formative communities matters and choose to repeat the memory thus strengthening the neuropathways.

Reflection supported by a community strengthens memory formation in yet another way. The community can reflect together to broaden the memory of the gathered individuals through the memory of the community, thus creating more neuropathways in the individual’s brain and increasing “brain function” by the formation of “the maximum

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13 Ibid., 5.
14 Ibid., 83.
amount of linkage . . .”

This will provide the maximum number of options and the best mechanism for choices to be made. As we allow the brain to work to the maximum we can explore new ways of doing things, and also determine the consequences for oneself and for others of the proposed course of action. 15

The formation of faithful responses calls for intentional construction of the Lived World and the Self through communal and individual reflection because “the linkage of memory patterns has a powerful effect on our interpretation of present events.” 16 Since the mind assigns significance to memories and creates links to other memories, even if unconsciously, a community actively encouraging and practicing reflection and connection forms the individual for faithful responses to the Holy breaking through the Void.

Consistent Worship, Broader Memory

Worship and Memory

Worship is not an accident for Christians or for any faith. “Religion is concrete engagement with Spirit in definite form of ritual, doctrine, worship, spiritual practice. Religious traditions manifest in time, space, and community the address of the Spirit which we attempt to incarnate.” 17 Even those expressions of Christianity that would claim no formal ritual or doctrine still give rise to locally understood ritual and doctrine. This is what communities do—it makes community into community.

When communities of individuals gather for worship, memory plays a significant

15 Ibid., 5.

16 Ibid., 13.

role not just in the experience of worship, but also in the development of that worship. The planning and preparation of worship leaders, the experiences of each individual that gathers, and the complex interactions of Lived Worlds all combine to create a unique situation for each worship. Memory of previous worships in a given community provides a context for the community to reflect and respond.

When worship incorporates communal reflection, each individual’s memory expands to include the shared memory of the community. As Atkins notes, “The experience of the individual is always enlarged by the experience of the whole body which is more than the sum of its parts.”18 The community of individuals gathered for worship has a unique chance to interact and form memories.

Memory moves the gathering from a group of individuals into a community gathered for worship because what happens in worship differentiates its formative influence from other formative communities. The difference is rituals, which “are not just ways of communicating information or representing meaning: they also create new situations. Above all, they make a difference by creating, modifying, or sustaining relationships.”19 Worship offers a chance for the memory of and relationships within the community to be re-examined, reformed, and renewed by the Holy.

**Liturgy and Memory**

Communities that worship using historic liturgies provide the community of individuals more opportunities for reflection within communal memory. Historic liturgies

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bear the memories of the great cloud of witnesses who have gone before us. This communal memory of worship, which reaches back in time, also reaches across the globe because use of historic liturgies connects the particular community together with others who use the same liturgy. Whether a liturgy is historic or not, the repetition of worship ordered by a liturgy assists the community in forming the individual.

The rate of change within an individual, a community, and the world in the short time between worships might seem to suggest significant changes in the liturgy from worship to worship, but just the opposite is in fact the case. Atkins states it well when he writes,

> Our minds need to find patterns of familiarity in order to allow the extra energy to be available to tackle the new situations which need attention. Christian worship is designed to allow memory to bring us up to speed so that we can apply the recalled truths about God to our new and critical situations. It is not helpful to begin all things *de novo*. This is because much of life runs to a pattern, and can be dealt with routinely. In addition what is really new needs to be dealt with ‘in context’ of the known.\(^{20}\)

Liturgy gives the community a known pattern for dealing with all the rest of life’s changes and gives a context for response.

Liturgy connects repeated words with repeated actions and sensory events. These connections empower the brain to make more memory connections based on the actions, sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and touches connected with worship. The individual develops, through these repeated expansive connections, a greater capacity to use these memories to interpret the preset outside of worship. By strengthening neuropathways formed in worship shaking hands becomes the passing of the peace, burning candles become reminders of the presence of the Spirit, eating together becomes giving thanks to

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God for the gifts we have received including Christ. Repetition opens the mind to the present. Searle emphasizes this:

But we suffer from the practical heresy of believing that insight comes only with the new and unfamiliar, that repetition breeds only boredom, and that the old is old hat and must be discarded. This is a practical heresy as dangerous as any theological heresy, for it cuts us off from the sources of life in the liturgy. It is only at our peril that we manage it [the liturgy] according to the canons of convenience. For better or for worse, we are shaped by the way we spend our time.²¹

Given the amount of new and unfamiliar in today’s world, it makes sense for worship to follow a set liturgy, to provide a place of stability for the individual, to give time for incorporating the new into the Self and the Lived World, offering feedback from the community in that process.

**Liturgical Formation**

Mark Searle, in his work before his death, defined “rituals” as “pre-arranged patterns of behavior, sanctioned by convention if not by law, that govern human social interaction, especially on occasions fraught with anxiety, such as events of great personal or social importance.” He then used this definition to develop an understanding of liturgy, which is “not the act of a presider alone but an enterprise involving a larger or smaller number of people, many of whom will have specific functions to perform.”²² Therefore, to understand how liturgy forms individuals, the relationships within the community that influence worship must be understood.²³

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²¹ Searle, *Called to Participate*, 66.

²² Ibid., 19.

²³ Cf. Ibid., 25.
Better Relationships, Better Formation

The relationship between God and the community of individuals gathered for worship lays the foundation for formation. God restores the relationship with the individual members of the community through Baptism and the Eucharist. The primacy of the Holy’s relationship with the community of individuals challenges other formative influences that seek something from us instead of giving something to us—regardless of how those influences are marketed. Searle reflects, “The role of the sacraments is not to deliver God to us, not to package the One whom the world cannot contain, not to ‘confer’ grace, but to deliver us to the place where God can be God for us.” God first comes to the individual, establishing relationship with the individual, rather than the individual having to first seek after God. Remembering the formative nature of God’s relationship with the individual “at the Eucharist can cause the brain to recall the presence of Christ for this moment of time while also recognizing that Jesus is part of history and that his presence now foreshadows the coming again of Christ in future glory.” Remembering God’s relationship with the individual in worship begins the formation of the individual for the community and the world.

The individual’s relationship to the Self grounded in the relationship to the Holy moves the individual into community. Atkins emphasizes this:

For the establishment of a relationship in liturgy I must have a sense of self and a sense of other. Liturgy helps me see myself as a child of God and helps me to see my need of a relationship with God and with the community which shares the liturgy. The words of the liturgy recall the corporate memory of our address to

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24 Ibid., 39-40.

25 Atkins, Memory and Liturgy, xi.
God and God’s address to us in worship.\textsuperscript{26}

The God that claims and forms Christians through Baptism and the Eucharist drives individuals into relationships with each other. The memories of the relationships with the Holy and the Lived World become increasingly important as the individual constructs the Self within the community.

The relationships within the community of individuals gathered for worship form the memories of worship for the individual thus shaping the construction of the Self and the Lived World. Those community relationships determine the formative nature of worship, especially if worship is to be a place for calm reflection in a world of change. As Delattre notes:

> If everything is in motion, then ritual, as a paradigmatic articulation of the motions through which we go, can more properly be seen as culturally constitutive. It makes more sense, then, also to see ritual as engaging us with the rhythms of a wider reality than our own humanity.\textsuperscript{27}

The willingness of the individual to participate in the community forms not only the individual’s construction of the Self and the Lived World but also the individual’s relationship to the Holy.

**Worse Relationship, Worse Formation**

Communities that seek to form individuals for faithful responses to the Holy breaking through the Void need to be aware of relationships. Not every community forms faithful responses in individuals. Worship in the form of a historic liturgy cannot

\textsuperscript{26} Ibid., 23.

guarantee positive memory formation. Not every image of God is an accurate reflection of the Holy. Passing on unexplained, non-related tradition does not faithfully form individuals. Communities that seek to form individuals for faithful responses to the Holy breaking through the Void need to beware of relationships.

Ignoring negative, shallow, or destructive relationships prevents faithful formation of the individual and the community through worship. “When the relationships lack depth, or the relationships are broken by conflict, the corporate memory of who the group is and what the group is for is forgotten in the pain of the remembered broken relationships.”28 If there is no response to this pain, faithful formation is not possible and worship embodies the self-destructive “perverse fascination with nothingness.”29 Searle summarizes this beautifully:

It is important to protect the Church against unrealistic promises and expectations of community by recognizing that we are never going to have our longing for community satisfied in this life. Ultimately, our hunger for intimacy, for knowing and being known, is eschatological, and we shall only find the perfect balance between freedom and belonging, between public and private selves, in the life of the world to come.30

This danger and the hope of deep, future relationships in perfection with the Holy must be remembered as the community of individuals gathers for worship.

The community must actively participate in the relationships between the individuals and the Holy developed in liturgy, for “without mindful monitoring, the brain will repetitively take the person through familiar patterned activity.”31 While repetition

28 Atkins, Memory and Liturgy, 73.
29 Loder, The Transforming Moment, 90.
30 Searle, Called to Participate, 74.
31 Loder, The Transforming Moment, 76.
helps the memory, the danger of repetition leading to “morphological fundamentalism” always looms. \(^{32}\) “When religions fall prey to the inevitable human habit of reification, fixating on an object that symbolizes the Holy and equating it with the Holy, then religions dry up because nothing finite can contain the infinite.”\(^{33}\) Liturgy that falls into morphological fundamentalism risks lack of formative relationship and the possibility of passing unexplained to the next generation. When this happens, the liturgy itself becomes the Void, either ignored by the Self or a negative formation of reflection within the Self.

When the relationships within the community of individuals gathered for worship hinder a faithful response to the Holy, worship itself becomes distorted and forms negative memory connections in the individual. These distorted worship experiences “set the focus on the assembly and its members, and not on the nature and activity of God”\(^{34}\) thereby turning the worship into formation of unfaithful responses to an unwanted and unwelcome Holy.

Trying to simplify God in an effort to create a palatable Holy denies the ability of the individual to incorporate an experience of the Holy that reveals the complex nature of God into the Lived World and the Self. “Thus the worshipper, who is capable of integrating a multifaceted presentation of the nature of God, is presented with a trimmed-down theology within the liturgy.”\(^{35}\) The underestimation of the memory making ability

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\(^{33}\) Ulanov, *The Unshuttered Heart*, 816.

\(^{34}\) Atkins, *Memory and Liturgy*, 27.

\(^{35}\) Ibid., xiii.
of the individual’s brain weakens worship and any relational connection possibly 
nurtured thereby. “Our brains call out to be used more extensively and become 
dissatisfied with the limited opportunity to remember God in all God’s fullness.”

The individual knows the complicated fullness of the Self. Presenting “a God that knows 
neither love nor anger” denies not only the complicated fullness of God, but also the 
fullness of the individual. Such a God “would be immobils and not the ‘Deus vivus,’ the 
living God of Scripture,” and such a God cannot be in relationship.

The importance of worship in forming the individual for faithful response to the 
Holy breaking through the Void must not happen at the expense of the relationships with 
the Lived World, the Self, and the Holy. These relationships, and especially the 
relationship with the Holy, must remain central in worship. “However important it [a 
transmittable set of conceptual knowledge] may be, the biblical and doctrinal knowledge 
becomes hollow as soon as it is separated from the worship-centered life.”

**Forming the Liturgy**

Forming the liturgy for the community of individuals gathered for worship is a 
weighty task, but an awareness of all those potential dangers on the part of those planning 
and preparing the worship will help. There is no perfect worship. There is no right rite. 
However, the challenges in forming a liturgy that will form the community of individuals 
to faithfully respond to the Holy breaking through the Void are not insurmountable. The

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36 Ibid.

1917), 113.

38 Ken Christoph Miyamoto, “Mission, Liturgy, and the Transforming of Identity,” *Mission 
question is where to start.

Taking Loder’s understanding of the transformational moment seriously, relationships are the place to start. Christian worship, therefore, focuses on what God is doing starting with the individual’s relationship to the Holy. However, Loder reminds us that to relate to the Holy we first come face to face with the Void.

Making Room for the Void

“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins . . .”39 From the earliest days of the Church, Christians continued the practice received from Judaism of confessing sins, but changed the emphasis, connecting the individual’s self-deception about self-justification with the absence of Jesus, “the Truth.”40 Already within historic liturgies and as part of the preparation for worship, Christians recognize the need for responding faithfully to the Void in community. As John Paul II eloquently writes, "Only those who recognize that their life is marked by the evil of sin can discover in an encounter with Jesus the Savior the truth and the authenticity of their own existence.”41

Faithful formation of liturgy names and responds to the Void because of the dangers. What Christians do in worship is dangerous, not just because of everything that can go wrong, but because of the dangers of everything going right. “Assembling for the liturgy, celebrating the hours and sacraments of the Church, is a calculated act of self-

39 1 John 1:8-9a

40 John 14:6

exposure at the edge of abyss.” The community of individuals gathered for worship and hoping to experience the Holy stands at the edge of the Void without having to enter. But “the emptiness can never change if we refuse to experience it, and in the company of another. We need an other to depend on when we turn our face to see the deadness.”

Together the individuals in the community gathered for worship face the Void—not just of sin, but also of non-being.

This can be an order of confession, which names the Void for how it affects the Self. This can be a point expounded upon in the sermon, which points to the Void acting in the Lived World. This can be a hard word of scripture, which reveals the Void destroying both the Self and the Lived World. But for certain, naming the Void in worship involves a rediscovery of the role of silence. As Searle notes:

We are all too often drowned in words, and silences are awkward, restless intermissions in a constant stream of verbal and kinetic bombardment. For our liturgy to ‘work,’ for the prayer to become the prayer of Christ, for the readings to be heard as word of God, it all needs to float on a sea of silence. Such silence is not the absence of noise; it is the depth dimension of all that is said and seen and done. It had to be restored as the depth dimension of the acclamations and chants of the liturgy, as well as the movements and gestures of the rite.44

Silence, the risk of non-being through non-action, is the Void in worship. Waiting for God to speak, waiting for Christ to come, waiting for the peace from above, waiting for the Spirit, waiting in the Void.

Anselm of Canterbury, as a Benedictine monk, knew the power of silence when encountering the Void. In his “Prayer to St. Nicholas”, he waits in the abyss of the Void.

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42 Searle, Called to Participate, 39.
43 Ulanov, The Unshuttered Heart, 517-18.
44 Searle, Called to Participate, 58.
Truly my sins are an abyss, because their weight and depth cannot be understood, and their number cannot be gauged or bounded. The abyss cannot be redeemed because out of its depths nothing returns unless drawn out by grace, and it is bottomless, because whoever sins willingly merits to fall infinitely, if he is not held back by mercy.

‘Abyss calls to abyss.’ My sins, whatever torments you reserve for me are an abyss, for they are infinite and incomprehensible. Alas, prisons and chains, darkness and the weight of sin, terrify me, but I am made a slave to an evil to which no other is comparable and so I am drowned in an abyss, and with this sorrowful servitude I am buried in one abyss after another. Woe upon woe; fear upon fear; sorrow upon sorrow.

Lo, there is a third abyss and that is yet more terrible. ‘The justice of God is very deep,’ and at the voice of the cataracts my abyss calls to that abyss. The cataracts are dark, the justice of God is dark. Therefore abyss calls to abyss in the voice of the cataracts of God, where the abyss of sin meets the abyss of torment, and they proclaim the justice of God. If my sins were not an abyss, I would still fear greatly the abyss of the great judgments of God, for that is dark beyond human understanding.

Truly there is the abyss of the judgments of God, the abyss of my sins, and the abyss of torments that are my due. The abyss of judgments above me, the abyss of hell below me, the abyss of the sin in which I am, and which is in me. I fear that which threatens me from above, lest it fall upon me, so that I may be thrown into myself and buried with my abyss in that which is revealed below, where the torment of sin never ceased, and sin is always torment.

But you, Lord, behold the depth. Whither shall I go then from your spirit, or where shall I flee from your presence? Certainly, where I now am, you are not absent, for when I descend into hell you are there. And therefore if in my wickedness I flee from you and hide myself in my abyss as one who is damned, even there you behold me. For who, except you, can move my soul to penitence, and how could you move it, if in the abyss you could not see it?45

Worship that includes intentional silence, that leads individuals to and gives space for the Void, forms the community of individuals gathered for worship by acknowledging the need for the Holy to initiate the relationship that draws the individual out of the Void, as Anselm’s prayer acknowledges. Such worship shows a faithful way of responding to the Void by bringing the individuals to the edge as a community. For those individuals already experiencing the Void, public acknowledgement of the Void reminds them of the

community supporting them and gives them the freedom to faithfully exist there. For those not experiencing the Void, being guided into silent reflection draws forth memories of others who have supported them in the Void and so encourages a similar faithful response to others.

Making Room for the Holy

No individual can make the Holy active. No community can control the movement of the Spirit. God’s self-revelation is a matter of God’s own choosing. Individuals and communities can however create space for the Holy, anticipating God’s arrival. Faithful formation of liturgy names and responds to the Holy from within the Void.

Nothing comes between the Holy and the individual in the presence of God. Liturgy seeking to form faithful responses to the Holy must start with the ultimate Void—death.

Liturgy would deliver us from this futile and self-defeating campaign of self-justification by offering us an alternative: that of dropping the illusions we cling to, rehearsing the trust that will enable us to let go in the end of life itself and to surrender ourselves one last time into the hands of the living God.\footnote{Searle, \textit{Called to Participate}, 40.}

Making room for the Holy in worship necessitates the cross of Christ. Baptism binds the individual to that cross and from there the individual discovers life. “To be united to Christ is both to share in his victory over sin and death and to share in his mission to the world. In the midst of trial and tribulation it is vital to recall that Christ has triumphed over all kinds of death.”\footnote{Atkins, \textit{Memory and Liturgy}, 43.}
From the cross of Christ, the individual rediscovers relationship. The Holy’s relationship to the individual reframes the Void as the place where the Holy might be encountered, the Self as intrinsically valuable, and the Lived World as the place were God is active and leading. Looking with Christ from the cross, the individual sees “people and things, not as objects to be used for our own purposes, but as they are in themselves. It would be to know the truth of things instead of being blinded by our own projects and preconceptions.”

Liturgy that creates space for the Holy through the Void creates the possibility for this remarkable transformation.

Scripture and historic liturgies open even more room for the Holy by expanding the meaning of the cross of Christ to include the Eucharist, the expansion of memory connections discussed earlier. This expansion, which can be incorporated into almost any worship, provides more places for the activation of memory and memory formation.

Connecting the bread and the wine to the presence of God gives physical reminders of the promise of the Holy breaking through the Void. This helps memory because, as Atkins writes:

> The mind is more satisfied when it is able to allocate a ‘name’ to an experience, especially when that experience involves an element of mystery within it. Once the mystery is named the mind is able to react with respect rather than with fear of the ‘unknown’. The emotion of awe is still present, but that awe is not filled with fear as long as we are able to relate to the object out of our respect. The mind associates the feelings of holy with the mystery and with the material object to which it is attached. Such an experience of the holy is carried forward in the memory.

This attachment of memory and physical elements to the cross of Christ through the

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49 Atkins, Memory and Liturgy, 99.
Eucharist forms the individual in a new way of being. Making room for the Holy in the liturgy will form the community of individuals for faithful response to the Holy.

**Welcoming Transformation**

Christians believe in the necessity of transformation, not just the possibility. When the community of individuals starts to focus on relationships, beginning with the Holy, the liturgy might not change. When the Holy does break through the Void however, changes may be necessary due to the convictional knowing that results. Formative worship that makes room for the Holy also forms the community of individuals to make room for convictional knowing and therefore the possibility of new liturgy.

Humans create all liturgies—even historic liturgies. Losing sight of this reality can lead to morphological fundamentalism. The reality is that “traditions evolve over time, but also can be quite suddenly altered or transformed.” The community formed to respond faithfully when the Holy breaks through the Void will be open to the possibility of changes in the liturgy that results from the incorporation of experience by the individual and the community.

Communities formed in such a way will welcome transformation because of “mental state resonance” that connects the individuals within the community through a common emotional state. Bringing every individual in a community gathered for worship to the same emotional state may seem impossible. Thankfully, “mental state resonance”

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51 Siegel, *The Developing Mind*, 1620ff.
does not require the entire community to feel the same. It only requires one individual connecting with another individual to recognize the resonance in a way that will activate the brain and expand memory. Implicit in this understanding of the formative nature of worship is the dual meaning of “participation” that “first, the liturgy is the action of the assembled people as a whole; and second, not everyone is required to do everything at the same time.”  

52 This dual meaning of participation is necessary. The freedom to participate in worship in different ways welcomes transformation and seeks “the discernment of spirits.”

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Emotion has always had a tenuous connection with religion in the Western world, and Christianity coming out of the Enlightenment is no exception. The fear of making room for the Holy reflects the very real awareness that “Yahweh, the true and living God, sometimes withdraws from present experience. In sum, God does not always move us, and everything that moves us is not God.”

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This fear, however, cannot allow the removal of all emotion from worship. Worship that forms individuals to respond faithfully to the Holy breaking through the Void needs emotion and discernment. Emotion is usually the first sign of presence of the Holy. To deny emotion denies any kind of faithful response. This is why “mental state resonance” matters in worship. If an individual believes they are experiencing the Holy in worship and no one else resonates with them, discernment may be the faithful response. Welcoming transformation does not mean abandoning reason but holding reason and

52 Searle, Called to Participate, 20.

53 1 Cor. 12:10

54 Thomas G. Long, Beyond the Worship Wars: Building Vital and Faithful Worship (Bethesda: Alban Institute, 2001), 32.
emotion in tension—recognizing the breadth of existence for individuals and communities.

Models of response to the Holy breaking through the Void within worship can form the memories in individuals for faithful response to transforming moments. Acknowledging the reality of the Void and the power of the Holy to break through the Void will help individuals construct their Lived World and their Self more faithfully. As communities of individuals are formed to make room for the Holy and welcome the resulting transformation and convictional knowing, the individuals and the communities will be drawn into deeper relationships with God, with the world, and with each other.
Bibliography


Cranmer upholds the central importance of the Eucharist for Christian worship but rejects sacrificial conceptions of the sacrament. Field excoriates the 1559 Elizabethan religious settlements, lamenting congregants’ lack of biblical knowledge. 4. A Balade of a Preist that Loste His Nose for Sayinge of Masse as I Suppose (London: 1570). The Reformation’s impact swept through the world with far-reaching implications. Initially, the pioneers of Reformation were castigated, brutalized, ostracized from the church, branded heretics and even burnt at the stake. This movement as it later became, brought a great transformation to many parts of the world. It started by liberating Christianity from the shackles of religious bigots who think that every other person’s religious views are wrong except theirs; and created a brand new world where opinions and views of individuals are accepted even when they are not in accordance with the formal religious order of the day. The movement literally transformed the religious order. Martin Luther, the professor of Wittenberg, was at the center of this movement. Self-awareness, self-regulation, and self-transcendence (S-ART): a framework for understanding the neurobiological mechanisms of mindfulness. David R. Vago* and David A. Silbersweig. Functional Neuroimaging Laboratory, Department of Psychiatry, Brigham and Women's Hospital, Boston, MA, USA. Although the contemporary view of the concept, “mindfulness” is increasingly becoming part of popular culture, there remains no single “correct” or “authoritative version” of mindfulness and the concept is often trivialized and conflated with many common interpretations. In the first place, on the eve of reformation the church suffered from numerous evil practices which greatly undermined the reputation of the church and the churchmen. The entire organization of the church right from Pope down to the priest were corrupt and vicious. They neglected their dioceses and took keen interest in politics. Some of the clergy men had amassed huge wealth and were living a luxurious life. ADVERTISEMENTS: They often indulged in hunting expeditions and drinking parties and completely neglected their religious duties. In short the church consisted of ‘unholy men in holy orde