Love Takes Practice:
Christian Worship as a Pedagogy of Desire

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I. Getting Dressed Takes Practice
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“Putting On Christ” Takes Practice

12 As God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. 13 Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. 14 Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. 15 And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. 16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God.

Colossians 3:12-16
We clothe ourselves in Christ’s love (vv. 12-14) by letting the word of Christ dwell in us richly, by teaching and admonishing one another, by singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God (v. 16).
II. We Are What We Love: On Liturgical Animals

Heart as “fulcrum” of our desires

Love as our “aim”

“Kingdom” as our *Telos* or target

*Social, communal practices “channel” our love, aiming our affective habits to different ends.*
Those cultural practices that orient our love can be described as liturgies, rituals of ultimate concern that:

• form our loves
• inculcate in us particular visions of “the good life” (or “the kingdom”)
• and do so in a way that means to trump other ritual formations
II. Secular Liturgies as Pedagogies of Desire

• Worship is everywhere: an “apocalyptic” reading of cultural practices
• The social imaginary “carried” in cultural practices
• The habits of love acquired through cultural rituals
What we love is not what we (might) think

Conscious, rational, deliberation: 3-5%

Unconscious, habituated “automated”* behaviors formed by practice

*Automaticities can be acquired unintentionally
Exegesis of secular liturgies:

• What vision of “the kingdom” is implicit in this secular liturgy?
• What story is embedded in this cultural practice?
• What does it envision as “the good life?”
• What does this cultural institution want us to love?
Case Study:

*The Mall as Temple*
The “understanding” implicit in mall worship:

1. I’m broken, therefore I shop.
2. I shop (in competition) with others.
3. I shop (and shop and shop...), therefore I am.
4. Don’t ask, don’t tell.
What “secular liturgies” are operative in your cultural context?

Cathedrals of learning?

The military-entertainment complex?
What “secular liturgies” are operative in your cultural context?

The sacred spaces of narcissism?

The cults of connectivity?
III. Love Takes Practice: Christian Worship as Counter-Formation

Worship is a battle.
An affective “understanding” of God’s kingdom is “carried” in the practices of Christian worship.
The practices of Christian worship are “habitations of the Spirit” (Dykstra).