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COMMON WORSHIP[1]

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Abstract

People of faith, particularly in the Judeo-Christian tradition, worship corporately at least as often, if not more so, than they do individually. Why do they do this? There are, of course, many reasons, some having to do with personal preference and others having to do with the theology of worship. But, in this paper, we explore one reason, a philosophical reason, which, despite recent work on the philosophy of liturgy, has gone under-appreciated. In particular, we argue that corporate worship enables a person to come to know God better than they would otherwise know him in individual worship.

Introduction

In the past 50 years, philosophers of religion have spent a great amount of time considering questions which relate to the epistemology of religious belief, in particular, to whether such belief is rational, justified, warranted, or, in some other way, epistemically permissible. These are just some of the questions that have generated thousands of pages of journal articles, books and conference papers. However, if we look at the issues of religious belief 'on the street' (to borrow a phrase from Mark Wynn),[2] these are, perhaps, not the questions that occupy the minds of religious believers most of the time, for a commitment to religious belief, at least for many, is more than a commitment to believing certain doctrines or creeds; rather, it is a commitment to a way of life, a way of life typically characterized by attending corporate worship.

For many religious believers, they will spend thousands of hours in their lifetime singing hymns, listening to and saying prayers, and listening to sermons and homilies with other people. What is the point of spending all this time with all these people engaging in all this worship? We expect we are not the first to ask this question, especially when we think of teenagers across the

world being cajoled into going to church by their parents on Sunday mornings, or those who prefer worshipping on their own, by using some kind of liturgy, or by taking a walk on their own through a particularly beautiful part of nature and contemplating the goodness of God.

While there has been significant work recently on the philosophy of liturgical worship,[3] this work does not adequately address the point, or the value, of corporate worship, as above, beyond, or just different from, individual worship.[4] In this paper, we attempt to fill this *lacuna*. There are many answers that could be given which seek to explain the value of corporate worship. For instance, according to J.B. Torrance, corporate worship allows us to become 'truly human' by expressing ourselves in relation God and to our fellow human,[5] or, as Stanley Hauerwas contends, corporate worship provides a 'foretaste of the unity of the communion of the saints'.[6] Whilst it is clearly beyond the scope of this paper to give a definitive answer to this question, we suggest that one such value of corporate worship is a kind of epistemic value. That is, we argue, one way in which corporate worship is better than individual worship is that it gives us the opportunity to know God better than we would otherwise know him in individual worship.[7]

To argue for this conclusion, we begin by reviewing Eleonore Stump's account of what it is to come to know a person and Bonnie M. Talbert's account of what it is to come to know a person well.[8] After explaining Talbert's criteria for what it is to come to know a person well, we aim to show that worshipping God is an opportunity to fulfil the first of Talbert's criteria for knowing a person well, and worshipping God corporately is an opportunity to fulfil, in part, Talbert's other criteria for knowing a person well, though they cannot be completely fulfilled, as we note.

We argue that liturgical worship is a way to come to know God by adapting recent work on experiencing God second-personally in reading Scripture and celebrating the Eucharist.[9] In this way, we argue, worship provides a believer with a mode of, and an occasion for, a second-personal experience of God, so that, in worship, the believer comes to know God second-

personally. This is the first of Talbert's criteria for knowing a person well. We then extend this epistemology of worship to account for the value of corporate worship, as a way of coming to know God better than we would otherwise know him in individual worship. Inspired by C.S. Lewis's discussion of friendship in *The Four Loves*, according to which others bring out aspects of a friend that we could not bring out ourselves, we argue that, in taking part in corporate worship, a person can engage not only with God, as they experience him, but also with other members' engagement with God, that is, how they experience him, thereby bringing out aspects of God that they would not be able to experience themselves. And we then conclude by applying the work of Axel Seemann and John Campbell on mutual perception to argue that corporate worship enables our worship to be shaped by others,[10] thereby providing an opportunity to broaden our knowledge of God and remove any ingrained biases we may have.[11]

Knowing God and knowing him better than we do now

Just as, for the last 50 years, religious epistemology has been dominated by the problems of, and prospects for, the rationality, justification, warrantedness, and so on, of religious belief, for the last 50 years, analytic epistemology has been dominated by the problems of, and prospects for, propositional knowledge, that is, knowledge *that*, such as that Paula knows that Jerome is her friend. Our project concerns something different. It is not concerned with knowing that God exists, but, rather, with knowing God, and more, how we might come to know him better than we do now. We begin our account of what it is to know God well with Eleonore Stump's account of what is required to know a person.

In her magisterial *Wandering in Darkness*, Stump gives an account of a certain kind of knowledge which is irreducible to propositional knowledge. This kind of knowledge she calls 'Franciscan knowledge' in contrast to 'Dominican knowledge', which is either propositional knowledge or reducible to propositional knowledge. Examples of Franciscan knowledge include what we might call 'narrative knowledge', that is, the knowledge you gain from reading a work of

great literature. Part of what makes the work a great work of literature is that you learn something, something about yourself or the world, and this 'something' you just cannot put into words. In a slogan—you have learned something that goes beyond what you can say.

Another example of Franciscan knowledge, according to Stump, is phenomenal knowledge, that is, the knowledge of what-it-is-like-ness, such as what it is like to see a red tomato, to feel the pang of jealousy, to taste the bitterness of a lemon, and so forth. She thinks this phenomenal knowledge is irreducible to propositional knowledge because of Frank Jackson's thought experiment about Mary,[12] the super-smart colour scientist, who knows all the propositional information there is to know about red but has never seen the colour, having lived all her days in a black and white room; one day, she is released from her room and sees, say, a red tomato, and Stump takes it that she has learned something new upon seeing the red tomato. This new piece of knowledge can be neither propositional knowledge nor reducible to propositional knowledge, since she had all that knowledge prior to her release. It must, rather, be Franciscan knowledge, or so Stump maintains.

Innovatively extending Jackson's thought experiment, Stump gives a third example of Franciscan knowledge, namely, personal knowledge, a kind of knowledge that begins with a second-personal experience. On her version of the thought experiment, Mary is brought up in a room in which she has access to only third-personal propositional information about the world. What would Mary learn, Stump asks, when she encounters her mother for the first time, for example? And what does this tell us about what she lacks from her third-person perspective? According to Stump,

> When Mary is first united with her mother, it seems indisputable that Mary will know things she did not know before, even if she knew everything about her mother that could be made available to her in non-narrative propositional form, including her mother's psychological states. Although Mary knew that her mother loved her before she met her,

> when she is united with her mother, Mary will learn what it is like to be loved. . .. [W]hat will come as the major revelation to Mary is her mother. ... What is new for Mary is a second-person experience.[13]

Just as Mary gained phenomenal knowledge in seeing a red tomato, so Mary gains personal knowledge on meeting her mother, both being Franciscan knowledge. What occasions this personal knowledge for Mary is her second-personal experience with her mother.

Generalizing from this thought experiment, Stump claims that Paula has a second-person experience of Jerome only if

(1) Paula is aware of Jerome as a person (call the relation Paula has to Jerome in this condition 'personal interaction'),
(2) Paula's personal interaction with Jerome is of a direct and immediate sort, and
(3) Jerome is conscious,[14]

and it is this kind of experience that is required for Paula to come to know Jerome, that is, for Paula to come to have personal knowledge of Jerome.

Now, it should be noted, at this point, that Paula's having a second-personal experience of Jerome is necessary, but not sufficient for, knowing Jerome. For all that is required for a second-personal experience is a kind of awareness, and awareness is insufficient for personal knowledge because awareness need not involve what Stump calls 'significant personal presence', which, Stump takes it, personal knowledge requires.[15] Say that you sit next to someone on the bus. You are aware of them, and you interact with them directly and immediately, and the person is conscious (it is not a late-night bus), and so you are having a second-person experience of them, but you do not know them because, even though you are both present, you are not present *to* one another (as in, 'We had dinner together, but she was not present to me, as she was

on her phone all evening'.) To be present to another person, you have to attend to them, and this is what needs to be added to second-personal experience to produce personal knowledge. In other words, for Paula to come to know Jerome, not only must she be aware of Jerome, but also, she must attend to him, and him to her. This kind of mutual attending psychologists call 'joint attention'. More specifically, for Paula to come to know Jerome she must engage in dyadic joint attention with him, where dyadic joint attention consists in Paula and Jerome attending to one another. (Triadic joint attention, which we will discuss later, consists in Paula and Jerome attending to a third object while they attend to one another.) The reason dyadic joint attention is required for personal knowledge is that it is only in the context of joint attention that Paula can reveal herself to Jerome and Jerome can accurately perceive what Paula has revealed to him. So, personal knowledge not only requires second-personal experience but also dyadic joint attention.

Now, it is important to note that personal knowledge comes in degrees. You can know one person better than you know another, and you can come to know a person better as you experience more of them in more contexts and environments. This is something Bonnie M. Talbert's analysis of personal knowledge emphasizes.[16] One way to examine this phenomenon, of knowing someone better, is by considering the end-point of coming to know them better, that is, of what it is to know them well. Knowing someone well, as Talbert describes it, 'is normally the product of a sequence of interactions' that have, minimally, the following features:

(1) We have had a significant number of second-person face-to-face interactions with A, at least some of which have been relatively recent.
(2) The contexts of those interactions were such as to permit A to reveal important aspects of her/himself, and A has done so.
(3) A has not deceived us about him/herself in important respects.
(4) We have succeeded in accurately perceiving what A has revealed – i.e. [our judgement is not impaired] by [our] own biases.[17]

These conditions, as Talbert describes them, help us to 'map out features of interactions ordinarily necessary to ground claims to know someone well'.[18]

Do Talbert's conditions apply to the context of knowing God well? If God is a person, and Talbert has correctly identified the conditions for knowing a person, then we might assume so. But God is a special person. And part of what makes him special seems to make it hard for us to know him, let alone know him well, in this life. [19] To begin, we cannot see God face-to-face, not only because he is incorporeal, but also because, as God said to Moses, 'you cannot see my face; for no one shall see me and live' (Exodus 33.20). Yet, Talbert stresses that face-to-face interaction plays an important role in second-personal knowledge. She writes,

> In face-to-face interaction, we can see, hear, and smell the same things at the same time. The possibilities for joint attention (where two people are paying attention to the same thing, and each is aware of the other's attention) make it possible that not only are we both looking at the same tree, I know you see the tree and you know that I see it, and we both know that we both see the tree. In short, we can jointly attend to objects in our shared environment.[20]

Now, Talbert is undoubtedly correct in stating that face-to-face interaction makes it easier to engage with a person second-personally, but, as we will see in the next section, by considering recent work on sharing attention with God, it is at least possible to engage in joint attention with a person without seeing them face-to-face.[21] Thus, we might think, the condition might be weakened in the following way:

> (1*) We have had had a significant number of second-person interactions with A, at least some of which have been relatively recent.

However, this revised condition is still problematic in the context of knowing God since there appear to be obvious counter-examples: first, someone who knows God well on the first meeting, and secondly, someone who knows God well despite not interacting with him second-personally for a long time.

To begin, it might be thought that someone could experience God for the first time in a significant self-revelation of God, and in that one experience know him well. But this is not possible, at least in this life.[22] For we could come to know God well in one significant self-revelation in this life only if we would know how to understand such a self-revelation. And we would know how to understand such a self-revelation only if we had experienced similar self-revelations of other people very much like God previously, perhaps in increasingly more significant self-revelations. But God is very much unlike people we have come to know, even come to know well. And so, such a self-revelation of God would be discontinuous with our previous experiences of self-revelations of other people. Thus, it would not be possible for us to understand a significant self-revelation of God sufficient to come to know him well. Indeed, such a self-revelation might be painful for us, as St John of the Cross.[23] Consequently, we cannot, at least in this life, come to know God well in one significant self-revelation, and so we cannot remove the requirement that we have had a *significant* number of second-person interactions with God in order to know him well.

But what about the 'recency' element? Must some of those second-person interactions with God be recent if we are to know him well? Consider the case of Mother Teresa, who, for the last 40 years of her life reported experiencing a dark night of the soul in which God felt distant or even absent from her. Could such a person know God or know God well?[24] Surely, if anybody is a candidate for knowing God well, or relatively well, in this life, then someone like Mother Teresa would be a suitable candidate. So how do we deal with cases such as hers?

There seems to be two motivations behind the 'recency' condition. The first has to do with people changing over time. If we have not seen a person over a number of years, it is plausible that we do not know them as well as we used to, or even at all, because what made them the person we knew has changed so much: their beliefs, their desires, their values, their goals, and all the rest may be quite different from what they were when we spent time with them. In such a case, we might say that we used to know them, but we do not anymore. The second motivation has to do with our memories, that memories of experiences of other people can become forgotten or distorted over the passage of time. If we knew a person a number of years ago, even if they have not changed much at all, we might no longer know them as well, or even at all, if we have forgotten our experiences with them or our memories of them are wildly inaccurate.

With these two motivations in mind, let us think about Mother Teresa and God. For many years, she had not had a second-personal experience of God. Yet, even after this time, she still knew him as well as anyone ever did in this life, or so it seems to us. The first motivation for the 'recency condition', that people change, does not seem to apply to God, or at least not as much as it does to human beings. While it is contentious whether God changes at all, it is relatively uncontroversial that he does not change fundamentally. That is, the beliefs, desires, values, and goals God has do not change, or do not change much. So, the first motivation does not seem to apply to this case. But what about the second? Mother Teresa is a human being subject to the cognitive limitations we all have to deal with. In particular, her memory, no doubt, was imperfect. But her memories of her experiences of God had to be present and true, for how else could she have done the work she did with the poor of Calcutta? We find it unlikely that she had forgotten her experiences of God or her memories of these experiences were distorted by time. So, while there is still reason, deriving from the second motivation, to include the 'recency' condition in the analysis, we can add a caveat which will allow Mother Teresa to still know God well despite the many years in which she did not experience him second-personally:

(1**) We have had had a significant number of second-person interactions with A, at least some of which have been relatively recent, unless we have a significant body of memories of second-person interactions with A which have not been distorted.

A further problem when applying Talbert's conditions to the case of knowing God is that we cannot perceive God accurately in this life; God is too great, and our intellects are too weak.[25] This appears to put pressure on the application of conditions (2)-(4) in knowing God. But, just as knowledge of a person comes in degrees, so does accuracy of perception of a person. That is, just as we can know a person better, so we can perceive what they reveal to us of themselves better. And the latter leads to the former. Even though, in this life, we cannot see God face-to-face, and we cannot perceive what he reveals to us of himself entirely accurately, we can nevertheless come to know him, specifically in worship. Furthermore, we argue, corporate worship provides us with an opportunity to come to know God better (than we would otherwise know him in individual worship) because (i) corporate worship gives God an opportunity to reveal aspects of himself he could not as easily reveal in individual worship, and (ii) corporate worship helps us to perceive what God has revealed to us of himself better (than we would otherwise perceive in individual worship) by removing biases and other impairments that alter our judgment or perception. Thus, even if we cannot know God well, since we can know God better, we see no need to amend conditions (2)-(4).

We propose, then, the following adapted version of Talbert's analysis. Paula knows God well when

(1) Paula has had a significant number of second-person interactions with God, at least some of which have been relatively recent, unless she has a significant body of memories of second-person interactions with God which have not been distorted.

(2) The contexts of those interactions were such as to permit God to reveal important aspects of himself, and God has done so.

(3) God has not deceived Paula about himself in important respects.

(4) Paula has succeeded in accurately perceiving what God has revealed – i.e. Paula's judgement is not impaired by her own biases.

To consider what epistemic value corporate worship might provide, let us now consider the application of these conditions in the context of corporate worship.

Liturgical worship as an opportunity to have second-personal interactions with God

To begin, liturgical worship helps us to come to know God better by providing us with opportunities to have a significant number of second-personal experiences of God, thereby fulfilling Talbert's first condition of knowing a person well, as applied to our knowing God. To explain how corporate worship is able to do this, we first outline Adam Green and Keith A. Quan's discussion of experiencing God through Scripture,[26] before considering its application to the case of corporate worship.

Building on Stump's work on experiencing God second-personally, Green and Quan argue that reading Scripture can give us a kind of interpersonal knowledge of God by allowing us to share attention with God. In giving an account of sharing attention with God through Scripture, Green and Quan attempt to explain the theological claim that God is present in, and speaks through, the pages of Scripture. They argue that, in reading Scripture, a person can engage in 'cooperative activity with the divine in which God uses the text of the Scriptures to reveal Himself dyadically or triadically'.[27] That is, the text not only prompts the individual to the possibility of God's presence, but also, it provides the means of experiencing God's presence. They use the following example to highlight the possibility of sharing attention through text in this way:

> Alex wins a private cooking lesson with Rachael Ray. He is deaf, so Rachael communicates with him using written notes. At a certain point in the lesson, she hands him a note that reads, 'Consider the golden brown crust of this zucchini bake,' at which point he attends with Rachael to the crust. He looks back at Rachael who smiles and holds out a note between them that reads, 'You done good.'[28]

They claim that, '[j]ust as Ray hands Alex a note saying he "done good" that shapes how Alex experiences Ray's kindly smile, so God might elect for the contents of Scripture to shape a dyadic experience of the divine'.[29] What we come to know from reading Scripture, if Green and Quan are right, is not some claim *about* God, but, rather, we come to know God, that is, we come to know him personally.

There is no reason why this account cannot be extended beyond the discussion of Scripture. Straightforwardly, any spiritual practice which uses text would allow for attention sharing in the way that Green and Quan describe. Thus, the use of a liturgical script could allow a person to share attention with God in the way described by Green and Quan. However, we know that liturgy involves not only the reciting of certain words, but also the performing of certain actions. As Cuneo notes, as well as the reciting of a script, liturgical practice involves certain act-types such as 'entering a space of worship, singing, bowing, listening, eating, and the like'.[30] Consequently, the performance of certain actions can also provide the kind of attention sharing Green and Quan claim is possible with texts. As we have argued elsewhere, in our discussion of experiencing the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist,[31] Green and Quan's analysis can also be extended to the use of certain ritual actions. We provide the following application of Green and Quan's thought experiment to illustrate this possibility:

> Alex and Rachael have been married for 50 years. On their first date, Alex cooked Rachael a steak with peppercorn sauce and green beans. Recently, they have been having difficulties in their marriage, but decide to devote the evening to spend together. Alex comes in the room and looks at Rachael, and presents her with a plate of steak with peppercorn sauce and green beans. Rachael looks back at Alex, without saying anything and smiles at him, whilst placing her hand over her ring finger.[32]

In such a case, objects, events, and rituals can play an important role in attention sharing experiences.[33] If this is so, there is an obvious extension to be made to the experience of taking part in the Eucharist. The Eucharist, thought of as a kind of reconciliation meal, can play a similar role in the reconciliation between Christ and a person as it can between Rachael and Alex. The elements provide an object for mutual attention sharing between Christ and the person and, consequently, for shared attention.[34] Thus, in experiencing God second-personally by reading Scripture, or by sharing attention with God by engaging with liturgical worship, it is possible for a person to meet the minimal requirements for knowing God personally, namely, experiencing them second-personally and dyadically sharing attention with them, as discussed in Stump's account of knowing a person.

Moreover, we think, not only can such experiences of shared attention meet the minimal conditions for knowing God, but also, they can improve a person's knowledge of God. Recall that our modification of Talbert's first condition required that to know God, a person must have a significant number of second-person interactions with God. Whilst we will see in the proceeding sections, the content and breadth of these experiences is also important for an improvement in personal knowledge, but by focusing only on this first condition, we can see that the number of second-person interactions, more often than not, brings about an improvement in personal knowledge. In general, the more times we engage with a person second-personally, the more chances we have to get to know them better. The same is also true of God, we think.

Indeed, this might go some way to explaining the importance of repetition in the use of spiritual practices.

One of the reasons that the frequency of experiences of shared attention improves our knowledge of another person, as Talbert explains it, is that these experiences can allow us to gain a certain kind of practical knowledge, that is, a knowledge of how to interact with them. She writes that

> to know another is to know how to successfully interact with him/her over time. Knowing how to interact with a particular person starts with the largely ineffable ability to recognize him/her, which recognition comes to be associated with a more complex mental representation of that individual…Our interactive skills are largely intuitive and difficult to express in propositional terms. For example, when I am talking to Shannon, I find that I pace my remarks differently than I do when I am talking to Deme. Without thinking about it I seem to adjust the pace of my conversation to what I somehow perceive is most suitable to the interaction.[35]

Now, Talbert's analysis of practical knowledge and personal knowledge has an important application to the use of corporate liturgical worship. As Cuneo has argued, '[K]nowing God consists in (although is not exhausted by) knowing how to engage God',[36] where knowing how to engage God consists in knowing a way of acting, that is, 'a sequence of act-types that an agent can perform'.[37] The actions of singing, chanting, prostrating and eating, for instance, can 'count in the context of a liturgical performance as cases of blessing, petitioning, and thanking God'.[38] Thus, he argues, 'if this is correct, the liturgy provides the materials for not only engaging but also knowing how to engage God'.[39]

Following the work of Green and Quan, Cuneo, as well as our earlier work on the Eucharist, we can see that sharing attention with God by singing hymns, saying prayers, or

participating in the Eucharist can contribute to a person's second-personal knowledge of God.[40] Now, for most worshippers, these activities take place corporately, in gathered services involving some sort of leader and one or more congregants. However, much of what we've argued so far could be applied equally to individual and corporate worship, for many cases of reading Scripture alone or saying the daily office could allow one to experience God second-personally. The ways in which corporate worship provides improves upon one's knowledge of God in ways that individual cannot are yet to be specified. And that is what we turn to now.

Corporate worship as an opportunity for God to reveal aspects of himself

Let us turn to consider our second condition in the context of corporate worship. Our claim is that corporate worship provides a context for interactions with God which permit him to reveal more aspects of himself than he would otherwise have an opportunity to do in individual worship. To argue for this, we begin by considering a point made by C.S. Lewis namely, that different friends bring out different aspects of a mutual friend, to argue that different worshippers, that is, different friends of God, bring out different aspects of God in the shared world of corporate worship, so that each worshipper gets to experience more aspects of God than they would otherwise experience if they were worshipping alone.

Consider C.S. Lewis's discussion of friendship from *The Four Loves*. For Lewis, an important part of a person's friendship with other people is their experience of them communally. He imagines,

> [I]f, of three friends (A, B, and C), A should die, then B loses not only A but 'A's part in C', while C loses not only A but 'A's part in B'. In each of my friends there is something that only some other friend can fully bring out. By myself I am not large enough to call the whole man into activity; I want other lights than my own to show all his facets. Now that Charles is dead, I shall never again see Ronald's reaction to a specifically Caroline

> joke. Far from having more of Ronald, having him 'to myself' now that Charles is away, I have less of Ronald. Hence true Friendship is the least jealous of loves. Two friends delight to be joined by a third, and three by a fourth, if only the newcomer is qualified to become a real friend. They can say, as the blessed souls say in Dante, 'Here comes one who will augment our loves.' For in this love 'to divide is not to take away'. Of course, the scarcity of kindred souls—not to mention practical considerations about the size of rooms and the audibility of voices—set limits to the enlargement of the circle, but within those limits we possess each friend not less but more as the number of those with whom we share him increases.[41]

Lewis's point seems to be right. We know from experience that most of our friendships are interdependent on other friendships and relationships. As social creatures, our experience, and subsequent knowledge of persons, is interwoven into specific contexts and environments, as well as into wider relationships. We know that different of our friends bring out different aspects of our personality, including some aspects we thought we had long ago left behind, such as when old school friends make us regress into acting like immature teenagers. So, when you are with a friend, and you meet other of their friends you have not met before, you can come to see a different side to them you have not seen before, say you were tagging along with them as they met their old school friends. One of the values of having such an experience of your friend, is that in seeing them act like an immature teenager, you come to know them better, namely, by revealing more of that person to you and so being able to share more of their world with them. Consequently, following Talbert's account of what it is to know a person well, it seems reasonable to think that the more we encounter a person with other of their friends the more opportunities we have to come to know them better.

By drawing on Talbert's work, as well as literature on the shared attention, we think that there are at least two ways of construing Lewis's point in more specific terms. The most natural

reading of Lewis's point concerns the objects of our experience—by sharing attention with a person in a broader social sphere, we are able to experience more of that person as the object of our attention. We consider this interpretation of Lewis's thought first, in this section. After this, in the next section, we consider another aspect of Lewis's thought, although, admittedly this second reading is less obviously Lewis's concern. As we will show, one way of understanding the effects of experiencing a friend in broader social spheres is that we are able to allow others to shape our attention in ways which allow us to perceive other aspects of our friend, previously unavailable to us.

Let us first consider how social experiences can broaden and deepen our perception of the object of our experience. As we have seen, amongst Talbert's concerns for knowing a person well is something similar to this first reading of Lewis's thought—that to know a person well, we must have a deep and broad experience of that person in different contexts and environments. Talbert argues that to ground our personal knowledge of another person and thereby allow them to reveal important aspects of themselves, that we must have a certain shared experience, or shared world, with that person. She writes,

> Many of the factors determining the reliability of our knowledge of other people have to do with the extent of our shared worlds. We can talk about shared worlds in two senses: the wide and the narrow. In the wide sense, typical humans share a tremendous amount of background information about their worlds that arises out of their shared physiologies, cultural membership, and other sources…In the narrow sense, two or more individuals can be said to have shared worlds to the extent of their shared experiences—e.g. similar memories of past episodes of joint attention.[42]

As Talbert goes on to note, the extent of our shared worlds and shared experiences with another person can make a difference to how well we know that person.[43] These depth and breadth

requirements are met when people come to share a world, that is, share a world not only in a 'wide sense' which a person shares with many other people based on widely shared characteristics, but also in a 'narrow sense' where a person shares a world with another based on interactive, shared experiences. These interactive, shared experiences help generate a shared history and a body of common knowledge, which enables each person to interpret the mental states of the other person reliably. She cites the example of a couple who share in an intense six-day romance; although such couples 'often believe that they know each other well', she notes that they 'are almost entirely wrong'.[44] A part of what is lacking from such a romance, Talbert argues, is the lack of a shared world.

One way of construing Talbert's depth and breadth requirements in Lewis's terms, then, is to focus on the world two people who know each other share. Whilst there is surely more to a shared world than shared relationships, this seems to be a vital part of sharing worlds with another person. When a couple meet each other's families, for instance, the depth and breadth of their second-personal knowledge of each other will increase because they will see aspects of the other person brought out by their family that they had not seen before. Not only will they learn new things *about* each other, and new ways of engaging with each other, but also, they will share more of their world with each other because they will come to see aspects of their characters that were hidden before, or dispositions that were dormant. This will no doubt make a difference to the character of their attention sharing with each other, and subsequently, increase the depth and breadth of their personal knowledge of one another. They will, in short, know each other better now that they have met each other's families.

Assuming this application of Lewis's observation is correct, let us now consider the implications for corporate worship. If a good way of knowing another person well is to engage with them in a variety of contexts and environments, so that we see more of them and build up a shared world together, and, if engaging with them with other people helps to do this, then the same might be said of our coming to know God better: by engaging with God with other people,

we have an opportunity to come to know more of God and come to share more of his world, and so come to know him better. Lewis makes this point himself, continuing from the passage quoted above:

> In this [possessing each friend not less but more as the number of those with whom we share him increases], Friendship exhibits a glorious 'nearness by resemblance' to Heaven itself where the very multitude of the blessed (which no man can number) increases the fruition which each has of God. For every soul, seeing Him in her own way, doubtless communicates that unique vision to all the rest. That, says an old author, is why the Seraphim in Isaiah's vision are crying 'Holy, Holy, Holy' *to one another* (Isaiah 6:3). The more we thus share the Heavenly Bread between us, the more we shall have.[45]

If it is true that different people bring out different characteristics and aspects of a person, then we might think that by engaging in a community of believers who are also engaging with God, we are able to see different aspects of God than were available alone. Unless we are fundamentalists about our own tradition or spirituality, most of us would admit that we benefit from partaking in different kinds of worship. More formal, contemplative worship allows us to engage with God's holiness and approach God with awe, for instance. And more informal worship might allow us to appreciate God's closeness and the normality of God's presence in the everyday, for example. If this is the case for traditions, then surely it is the case for individuals. If Lewis is right in thinking that only Ronald can bring out a certain aspect of Charles, then we should think of corporate worship as playing a similar role in the spiritual life. The same might be the case on a smaller scale. Worshipping God alongside someone whom we know to be overcome with guilt, for instance, will bring home aspects of God's grace and mercy. It is possible in such an experience that, in engaging with someone who is engaging with God in

a way radically different from our own, we see aspects of God which were not available to us alone.[46]

Corporate worship as enabling us to perceive God better

Assuming that God cannot deceive us, and, therefore, that condition (3) of Talbert's analysis (God has not deceived Paula about himself in important respects) is fulfilled,[47] let us turn to condition (4):

> (4) Paula has succeeded in accurately perceiving what God has revealed – i.e. Paula's judgement is not impaired by her own biases.

As we suggested, there are (at least) two ways of specifying the point of Lewis's example. The first, which we explored in the previous section focused on the fact that that the presence of others can have an instrumental effect on our experience of God as the object of our attention and, thereby, broaden and deepen our knowledge of God.

Now, we turn to consider the second possibility, that the presence of others in corporate worship can have a causal impact on what we attend to. That is, the presence of others can dictate how we experience our friend. As we will suggest, one way of expanding this thought is by focusing on our joint engagement with God in corporate worship.

Evelyn Underhill, an Anglo-Catholic spiritual writer of the first half of the twentieth century, writes, 'Christian worship is never a solitary undertaking' because, as she argues, worship is part of a tradition forged in community, a tradition that stretches back to when Christ himself taught us to pray beginning with '*Our* Father'.[48] And so 'the worshipping life the Christian', according to Underhill, 'whilst profoundly personal, is essentially that of a person who is also a member of a group'.[49] Consequently, she maintains, '[t]he Christian as such cannot fulfil his spiritual obligations in solitude'.[50] Furthermore, she argues,

> [n]o one soul—not even the greatest saint—can fully apprehend all that this has to reveal and demand of us, or perfectly achieve this balanced richness of response. That response must be the work of the whole Church; within which souls in their infinite variety each play a part, and give that part to the total life of the Body.[51]

Here we can see that it is not merely that others in the congregation colour our own experience of God, but, rather, our experience of God, and, thereby, our knowledge of God, is bound up in our relation to the Church. As Underhill describes, liturgical worship requires a kind of 'joint action' of the 'Christian group'.[52] In light of Underhill's theology of the Church, one of the implications of taking corporate worship to be a collective act is that we must consider not only the relationship between an individual congregant and God, but also the relationship between each of the congregants. Consequently, worship should not be taken to be a facilitation of many individual engagements with God which are enhanced by the environment of the Church, but, rather, as Underhill emphasises, worship is importantly social, where there is a collective engagement with God in and through the Church.

To further explore this understanding of worship as a social phenomenon, we turn to considering worship as an opportunity for mutual object (that is, God) perception, and we begin by noting that, whilst liturgical worship might allow us to share attention with God, this is not the only kind of shared attention which takes place in worship. Worship also involves sharing attention with other members of the congregation. Indeed, many points in liturgy seek to draw our attention not only to the presence of God, but also to our fellow worshippers. Take the opening of one of the Eucharistic prayers from the Church of England's *Common Worship,* for instance:

> The Lord is here.

All **His Spirit is with us.**

Lift up your hearts.

All **We lift them up unto the Lord.**

It is right to give praise to the Lord our God

All **It is right to give thanks and praise.**[53]

Whilst this dialogue seeks to make the congregation aware that God is present in their worship, there is also a sense in which the congregation must be aware of one another in grasping the meaning of the statement, 'His Spirit is with *us*'. That is, the individual congregant is not only made aware of God's presence, but also, God's presence acts as the object of a kind of mutual attention sharing between congregants. Let us expand this observation more precisely.

First, it is important to note that, whilst discussions of shared attention often focus on attention sharing between two persons, this does not preclude the possibility of much wider groups of people, say, a Church congregation, from engaging in joint, or shared, attention. As John Campbell notes, 'Joint attention requires an object to which to attend and two or more people to attend to it. In principle there seems to be no limit to the number of people who could be jointly attending to the same object'.[54] Secondly, whilst there is there is no consensus on the nature of joint attention,[55] certain views of joint attention lend themselves better to our consideration of jointly attending to God in liturgical worship. More specifically, the relational view defended by Axel Seemann and John Campbell will lend itself well to our present discussion.[56]

As Campbell outlines the relational view,

> joint attention is a primitive phenomenon of consciousness. Just as the object you see can be a constituent of your experience, so too it can be a constituent of your experience that the other person is, with you, jointly attending to the object. This is not to say that in

> a case of joint attention, the other person will be an object of your attention. On the contrary, it is only the object that you are attending to. It is rather, that, when there is another person with whom you are jointly attending to the thing, the existence of that other person enters into the individuation of your experience. The other person is there, as co-attender, in the periphery of your experience. The object attended to, and the other person with whom you are jointly attending to that object, will enter into your experience in quite different ways.[57]

On the relational view of joint attention, attending to an object in the presence of another person alters the kind of experience one has. Or, as Campbell puts it,

> the individual experiential state you are in, when you and another are jointly attending to something, is an experiential state that you could not be in were it not for the other person attending to the object. The other person enters into your experience as a constituent of it, as co-attender, and the other person could not play that role in your experience except by being co-attender.[58]

Thus, to take an example from Seemann, when you are driving with a passenger, 'his focus of attention will have a particular kind of impact on yours';[59] when he looks in a certain direction at the road, 'your focus of attention will quite automatically realign with his'.[60] What is remarkable about this, as Seemann notes, is that, 'although the other person is not what you are look at…her focus plays this controlling role' in the focus of your attention.[61] Mutual awareness, as Seemann notes, requires 'each involved creature to be causally sensitive to the thing in his or her own focus of attention and behaviour, and second, for each creature to be casually sensitive in this way to the other's focus of attention and behavior'.[62]

Yet, to play this experience-shaping role, there must be some means of communication between those who are jointly attending to an object. Seemann notes that, 'when we are jointly looking at an object, we are usually able to (and often do) point out the object of our attention to each other. We can direct each other's focus to particular aspects of the scene we are considering'.[63] As Melinda Carpenter and Kristen Liebal note, this communication between perceiver might occur via some kind of verbal communication, 'e.g. isn't that great?!',[64] or perhaps, some form of non-verbal communication, 'just a meaningful, expressive look',[65] for instance.

The important point for our purposes, then, is that, if the relational view of joint attention is right, there is a structural difference in cases of mutual object-focusing and individual object-focusing. The co-attender structures and guides your perception of the object in important ways. This gives us the resources to begin to explain the thought behind Lewis's friendship example. One of the things that is lacking after the death of Charles is not only Charles's ability to alter instrumentally Ronald's perception of all his other friends, but also his role in sharing attention with Ronald to jointly perceive objects in the world. Just as the experience of the road as an object of joint attention between car passengers involves being related to the other perceiver, A's perception of B as an object of joint attention involves a certain relation between A and B. If Seemann is right, then A and C can actively shape one another's perception of B as an object of their attention. As Seemann puts it, individuals who engage in jointly attending to some object are 'not only perceivers but also agents who shape the experiences of those others with whom they attend to objects in their environment'.[66]

The implications for corporate worship should now be obvious. Whilst it might be true that your environment can shape your perception, only those who are jointly perceiving can act in the agential way that Seemann describes. And, thus, only those who are present in worship and engaging in mutual object-focusing can take this active role in shaping your perception. In this understanding of corporate worship, it is not that the congregants serve to enhance one

another's personal experiences of God, but rather, the congregants mutually guide one another's experience of God, shaping one another's focuses of attention through their interactions (whether verbal or non-verbal) through the liturgy. Whilst it is possible for such attention guiding merely to enhance each individual's experience of God in the liturgy (such as in the instrumental way described at the end of the previous section), there's a way of resisting such an objection here. As Carpenter and Liebal note, in triadically sharing attention with another person and mutually focusing on some object, it is possible to gain a kind of mutual perceptual knowledge.[67] On their account of mutual knowledge, it is not merely that the presence of the other person shapes one's own experience and thereby one's own knowledge, but rather, they note, if attention is shared on some object and there is communication between the two perceivers, then they mutually know something about the object of their shared attention.

Such an analysis provides an interesting way of thinking about the essentially *joint* actions of Christian liturgy which Underhill describes. Take the line of liturgy cited above, for example. In reciting the words, 'The Lord is here. His Spirit is with us', the script prompts a kind of mutual object-focusing on the presence of God through the use of verbal communication. That is, the congregant is made aware, by the script, not only of an object of perception (the presence of God), but also of their fellow perceivers (the rest of the congregation). This is one way of understanding what Underhill means when she states that 'joint action is impossible without an agreed pattern, a liturgy; even though this pattern be of the simplest kind'.[68]

How does the above account relate to Talbert's condition concerning the *accuracy* of one's perception? In allowing others to shape and guide our perception of God in the worship in the way we have outlined, one of the results is that our own biases and impairments can be corrected by sharing attention with others. Whilst alone, we might have the tendency to focus on certain aspects of God's character, and thereby build up a biased picture of God, in worship, it is possible to be guided by the focus of another's attention.[69] This change in our focus might simply be by means of the emphasis another person places on certain words, the shape and

posture of their body, or even the focus of their gaze (on, say, the altar, or the cross, for example). All these ways might serve as pointers to redirect our own attention and thereby to experience some different aspect of God, thereby removing our biases in important ways.

We can appreciate this point when we consider our practice of reading and interpreting Scripture, something we have discussed above, as a way of sharing attention with God, and a typical activity in corporate worship. Underlying that discussion is an assumption that when we read and interpret Scripture, we are doing it faithfully, for an unfaithful interpretation will not reveal God to us but rather serve as a mirror for our own individual biases. Reading and interpreting Scripture in community serves as a corrective to our biases and helps us come to perceive God better than we would on our own. Hauerwas makes this point, in his characteristically provocative style:

> No task is more important than for the Church to take the Bible out of the hands of individual Christians in North America. Let us no longer give the Bible to all children when they enter the third grade or whenever their assumed rise to Christian maturity is marked, such as eighth-grade commencements. Let us rather tell them and their parents that they are possessed by habits far too corrupt for them to be encouraged to read the Bible on their own.[70]

To argue for his point, Hauerwas maintains that reading and interpreting the Bible faithfully requires spiritual and moral transformation, something that happens in the Church, where people become Christians and learn to read and interpret the Bible, not as answerable to 'common sense', but rather to the authority of a truthful community constituted by the Eucharist.[71] If Hauerwas is right, we can then readily see how corporate worship helps us to perceive God better than we otherwise would in individual worship: for in our reading and interpreting Scripture, as done typically in corporate worship, we learn how to read Scripture

together, as a truthful community constituted by the Eucharist, where our own readings are informed not only by the readings of present members but also of past members, especially of spiritual masters, and this then corrects the biases inherent in our own readings that would lead us away from God rather than into significant presence with God, as Green and Quan describe.

However, whilst Lewis's example is helpful to explain how corporate worship might allow for a broadening of a person's knowledge of God as well as providing a correction for our biases, there are some potential shortcomings to corporate which position also highlights. First, it is important to acknowledge that our social interactions with another person can have a detrimental effect on our knowledge of a person, as well as a positive effect. Certain social environments might cause a friend to retreat into herself, or bring out misleading aspects of her character. Furthermore, our attention might be misleadingly directed towards certain aspects of our friend's character which result in a strengthening of our own biases, and not a correcting. Similarly, just as corporate worship can allow us to experience more of God and give God an opportunity to reveal more aspects of himself, there might also be detrimental effects to corporate worship. Some worship gatherings, for example, might emphasise only God's wrath, and entirely ignore his love, by, say, ignoring some passages in Scripture. If corporate worship can alter our experience of God as an object of our attention, then such a possibility must be admitted. Whilst there is not space here to explore fully the epistemic costs of corporate worship, it is important to recognise that corporate worship can misleadingly shape one's experience of God. Indeed, in extreme cases, a person's experience of God in certain contexts can give rise to what Michelle Panchuk describes as 'religious trauma' in which individuals wrongly feel shame towards God, and often lose their faith.[72]

As we have now seen, there are at least two ways of thinking about the phenomena involved in the kind of case Lewis suggests, both of which have some application in outlining the epistemic value of corporate worship in allowing us to know God better than we might by engaging only in individual worship. We first suggested that the corporate dimension of worship

might firstly dictate the breadth and depth of our experience, and thereby our knowledge of God. We then claimed that corporate worship might also play a causal role in our sharing attention with God, through a kind of mutual object focusing. It is important to see that these two features of corporate worship, whilst connected, can come apart. We can imagine, for instance, an evil neuroscientist having a causal influence on our experience, whilst playing no role as an object of our experience. It also seems possible that those who are objects of our experience, and able to shape and colour our attention, might play little or causal role in our experience, if, say, we attend a social gathering in which everyone is staring at their iPhones, disengaged from the goings on in the room. We have argued that corporate worship can both colour the phenomenology of our experience of God and also play a causal role in how we experience God. We've also seen that these two concepts are often connected—many of the examples we've given feature something of both phenomenon—in pointing our attention towards as aspect of God's character for instance, our fellow congregants might both shape the phenomenology of our experience of God, as well as playing a causal role in what we attend to.

This is particularly important when we consider how difficult it is for us to be significantly present to God, that is, to put ourselves in a position to experience God second-personally and to share attention with him. In such a context, the importance of co-perceivers is all the more apparent. Tanya Luhrmann makes this point vividly when she writes,

> Human interaction—real human interaction, with two people together in a room—is remarkably dense. We move, touch gesture mimic…we scan people's faces intently as we talk, and what we see in their faces affects what we say…. But God has no face. You cannot look him in the eye and judge that he hears you speak. He does not make the little phatic grunts we make to each other on the phone, to show we're still listening. Even when people learn to pick mental events out of their mind that they attribute to

> God, it can be difficult for them to shake their doubts without that more fibrous quality of the human back-and-forth.[73]

As we have seen previously, without face-to-face interaction, shared attention then becomes difficult with God, not only because of God's incorporeality but also because of our own sinful states of mind, being typically disinterested in God and distracted from him. In such a state, we need one another to help us come to know God, and to know him better, second-personally.[74]

Conclusion

We have argued that an individual's second-personal knowledge of God is, in important ways, bound up in the community. To many theologians, this will not be a surprising conclusion to have reached; Scripture places an important emphasis to the community in relating rightly to God. Yet, often in discussions of religious epistemology and religious experience, this corporate dimension to our relationship with God is overlooked. In this paper, we have shown how a focus on the community of faith can enrich and expand our discussions of knowing God and experiencing God. Yet, there is still much more to be done. For instance, whilst our focus has been on the importance of attention sharing in liturgical worship, we know that many neuro-atypical individuals struggle to participate in this kind of activity. And so, more needs to be said to provide a properly inclusive account of common worship.[75] Moreover, whilst we have touched on important issues relating to the shared experiences of worshippers, it also seems that beliefs are in some way shared in the Church; '*We* believe in God…' begins the Nicene Creed, which is recited in the majority of church liturgies weekly. But what does it mean for the Church to believe in this way? Or what is the relationship between individual believers and the gathered whole? The shared nature of the actions and beliefs of the gathered Church, along with the question of just what metaphysical status the gathered Church has, are questions which provide ample material for important developments in the philosophy of worship and Church practice.[76]

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NOTES

[1] We borrow this title from the name given to the series of services authorised for use in the Church of England, *Common Worship,* a liturgical alternative to the *Book of Common Prayer*. In this article, we attempt to give a broad account of liturgical worship, but, for the simple reason of familiarity, our discussion is primarily informed by the practice in the Church of England.

[2] Wynn, *Renewing the Senses,* 12.

[3] Nicholas Wolterstorff, *The God We Worship;* Terence Cuneo, *Ritualized Faith.*

[4] Both Wolterstorff and Cuneo frame their discussions of liturgy in a corporate setting. For instance, Wolterstorff writes that 'the church enacts the liturgy not to satisfy the needs and desires of individual congregants but to worship God. The church blesses God, praises God, thanks God, confesses her sins to God, petitions God, listens to God's Word, celebrates the Eucharist. It is not the individual members who do these things simultaneously; it is the established body that does these things' (Wolterstorff, *The God we Worship*, 11). Additionally, Cuneo provides an account of collective singing in liturgy in which individuals jointly-intend to sing the liturgical script (Cuneo, *Ritualized Faith*, 135-140). Yet, what is lacking from this literature is a detailed account of why this setting makes any difference to the epistemology of liturgy.

[5] Torrance, *Worship*, 28.

[6] Hauerwas, *In Good Company*, 157.

[7] While this kind of corporate knowledge of God may be available through other corporate spiritual practices, such as group Bible-study or group prayer-meetings, we are concerned, in this paper, solely with the spiritual practice of worship, and arguing that corporate worship has a particular epistemic value over individual worship that has not been sufficiently appreciated yet in the philosophical literature on liturgy. That is, we hold that knowing God through corporate worship is a species of the genus of knowing God corporately.

[8] Stump, *Wandering Darkness,* 64-83; Talbert, "Knowing Other People".

[9] Green and Quan, "More than inspired propositions"; Cockayne et al., "Experiencing the Real Presence of Christ". Here we adopt the view that all who participate in the Eucharist, both the congregation and the president, are celebrants of the Eucharist: 'Holy Communion is celebrated by the whole people of God gathered for worship' (*Common Worship*, 158).

[10] Seeman, "Joint Attention; Campbell, "Joint Attention".

[11] These conditions concern Talbert's remaining criteria for knowing a person well.

[12] Jackson, "Epiphenomenal Qualia".

[13] Stump, *Wandering in Darkness,* 52-53.

[14] Stump, *Wandering in Darkness*, 75-76.

[15] Stump, *Wandering in Darkness,* 110.

[16] Talbert, "Knowing Other People".

[17] Talbert, "Knowing Other People", 194.

[18] Talbert, "Knowing Other People", 196.

[19] Perhaps we can know God well in the life to come (cf. 1 Corinthians 13.12).

[20] Talbert, "Knowing Other People", 193.

[21] The best way of defending this condition, we think, assumes that God is omnipresent in the way defined by Stump (*Wandering in Darkness*, 117). For Stump, God's omnipresence consists, in part, in his being available for significant personal presence, which includes second-personal experience and dyadic joint attention, always and everywhere, and so in (places of) worship. Thus, rather than thinking of God as fundamentally located at all places, Stump thinks God's omnipresence requires that he be derivatively located at all places by means of his always willing to share attention with us. It might be objected, as an anonymous reviewer has, that this assumption, that God is available for significant present to us always and everywhere simply denies the phenomenon of divine hiddenness. As a divine phenomenon, that is, of God hiding himself from us, yes, we do deny that God does that, but, as a human phenomenon, of us, most

of the time and in most places, being unable, because we are distracted, and unwilling, because we are disinterested, to be significantly present to God ourselves, we affirm it. As Stump writes,

> Given divine omnipresence, the only thing that makes a difference to the kind of personal presence, significant or minimal, that God has to a human person is the condition of the human person herself. If Paula wants Jerome to be significantly present to her, she alone will not be able to bring about what she wants, because the relationship she wants is up to Jerome as much as it is up to her, and, for one reason or another, Jerome may fail to meet the conditions requisite for significant personal presence. But, on the doctrine of omnipresence, things are different when it comes to God's being significantly present to a human person. If Paula wants God to be significantly present to her, what is needed to bring about what she wants depends only on her, on her being able and willing to share attention with God. Because God is omnipresent, then, if Paula is able and willing to share attention with God, the presence omnipresent God has to her will be significant personal presence. If she is not able and willing, then God will have only minimal personal presence with respect to her. (Stump, *Wandering in Darkness*, 117)

This approach to the problem of 'divine hiddenness', as it is known, is broadly in the tradition of St John of the Cross. As Sarah Coakley explains John's perspective on this phenomenon, '[T]he appearance of divine "hiddenness" is the effect of a human *epistemological* and *moral* condition, not an ontological state of affairs that bespeaks any divine failure to communicate or self-disclose, let alone to effect an intentional withdrawal or abandonment' (Coakley, "Divine Hiddenness", 231; emphasis in the original). We return to this theme of 'divine hiddenness', or, on our account, 'human distractedness and disinterestedness', toward the end of the paper, when we discuss the importance of co-perceivers for better perception of what God has revealed of himself to us.

[22] It may be that a person could know God well in one significant self-revelation of God in the life to come, particularly in the beatific vision. We leave for another occasion the exploration of this possibility, as we are concerned in this paper with the value of corporate worship in this life, and not in the life to come.

[23] Cf. Coakley, "Divine Hiddenness".

[24] With thanks to an anonymous referee for raising this objection.

[25] Following Aquinas, we take it that we will be able to perceive God accurately in the life to come when God grants us this knowledge by joining our intellects (*Summa Theologicae,* 1a 12.4.co).

[26] Green and Quan, "More than Inspired Propositions".

[27] Green and Quan, "More than Inspired Propositions", 427.

[28] Green and Quan, "More than Inspired Propositions", 422.

[29] Green and Quan, "More than Inspired Propositions", 426.

[30] Cuneo, *Ritualized Faith*, 10.

[31] Cockayne et al., "Experiencing the Real Presence of Christ".

[32] Cockayne et al., "Experiencing the Real Presence of Christ", 17.

[33] Cockayne et al., "Experiencing the Real Presence of Christ", 17.

[34] This account of coming to know God second-personally has also been extended to non-verbal or non-text based practices too. David Efird and Daniel Gustafson ("Experiencing Christian Art"), for instance, have argued that Christian art can allow for second-personal experience of God.

[35] Talbert, "Knowing Other People", 196-197.

[36] Cuneo, *Ritualized Faith,* 149.

[37] Cuneo, *Ritualized Faith*, 151.

[38] Cuneo, *Ritualized Faith*, 163.

[39] Cuneo, *Ritualized Faith*, 163. Nicholas Wolterstorff, in "Knowing God Liturgically", agrees with him that the knowledge gained in liturgy is objectual knowledge, and the object is not a

proposition, but whereas on Cuneo's account, the object is a way of acting, on Wolterstorff's account, the object is a person, namely, God, and the knowledge gained in liturgy is knowledge of what God is like. According to Wolterstorff, in the use of liturgy, we address God as being a certain way, for instance, that is he is worthy of praise and adoration. The repetition of our addressing God in this way, allows us to gain a knowledge of what God is like. Wolterstorff writes that,

> [t]o participate in engaging God liturgically in the form of addressing God is to take God to be a 'thou' whom it is appropriate to address, to take God to be capable of listening, to take God to be worthy of praise and adoration, to take God to be capable of listening, to take God to be worthy of praise and adoration… (Wolterstorff, "Knowing God Liturgically", 13.)

Wolterstorff sees his position as complementing the insights of both Stump and Cuneo in explaining how person knowledge can be involved in liturgical practice.

[40] Of course, there may other benefits of shared attention experiences other than personal knowledge. As we state in the opening section, our focus here is on the epistemic value of corporate worship in allowing us to know God better. For this reason, we only consider the role of shared attention in allowing us to know God personally.

[41] Lewis, *The Four Loves,* 73-74.

[42] Talbert, "Knowing Other People", 199.

[43] Talbert, "Knowing Other People", 199-200.

[44] Talbert, "Knowing Other People", 200.

[45] Lewis, *The Four Loves,* 74.

[46] However, whilst Lewis's example is helpful, it might be objected that there are some disanalogies between Lewis's case and the case of corporate worship. In Lewis's example, the

object of our experience (our friend) might be altered in a variety of different ways. For instance, in experiencing a friend, Ronald, laugh at a particularly Caroline joke, that is, a joke that Charles, also a friend, would have told or appreciated, we see a different aspect of his character, thereby shaping our experience of him. However, we might also think that, in seeing Charles react to Ronald's laughing, we come to see something of our friend which we had previously disregarded. In terms of corporate worship, the first possibility corresponds with a person experiencing God differently by engaging with others' engagement with God, and the second possibility corresponds with a person seeing a member of the church respond to God and so bringing them to see something new about God. Now, while the second possibility looks like it will occur more frequently in corporate worship, the first could happen, too.

Consider, for instance, participating in corporate worship alongside a friend whom you know has been suffering with depression. Suppose you are aware of God's presence and are sharing attention with him throughout the liturgy, whilst also being aware of your friend. After receiving communion, you notice that something has changed in your friend—his shoulders are lifted, his eyes are brighter, and he manages a contented smile to you across the pew. As you become aware of this, you suddenly come to the realisation that God has brought some kind of healing to your friend. In seeing God's interaction with your friend (albeit in an indirect way), corporate worship has allowed you not only to see your friend's perception of God, but in some way, you see more of God as an object. Your knowledge of God as a person has been deepened and broadened by such an experience.

We might still think that the point is still too general to explain the specific value of corporate worship, at least as we have explained it so far. More specifically, on the account considered so far, a person's experience of other members of the congregation plays a purely instrumental role; thus, just as our experience of other congregants might shape our experience, so too might the comfortableness of the pew, the weather, the choice of altar flowers and one's mood and emotions. Those who are not present might have a similar effect on our worship.

Seeing an empty chair where a friend used to sit, or walking past a homeless beggar on the street on the way to Church might also alter our experience of God. Since we do not think, however, that corporate worship is the only thing which can broaden and deepen our knowledge of God, nor do we think the epistemic value of corporate worship is the only value, this does not seem too problematic.

[47] It is important to clarify (as an anonymous referee has suggested to us) that whilst it is not possible for God to deceive us, this does not mean that it is impossible to be deceived about God. Yet, the question of whether we can be deceived about God relates more directly to condition (4), which focuses on our misperception of God, and so we will consider this objection later in the section.

[48] Underhill, *Worship,* 81.

[49] Underhill, *Worship,* 83.

[50] Underhill, *Worship,* 83.

[51] Underhill, *Worship,* 85.

[52] Underhill, *Worship,* 99.

[53] *Common Worship,* Holy Communion.

[54] Campbell, "Joint Attention", 287.

[55] Seemann, "Joint Attention", 183.

[56] Seeman, "Joint Attention"; Campbell, "Joint Attention".

[57] Campbell, "Joint Attention", 288.

[58] Campbell, "Joint Attention", 289.

[59] Seeman, "Joint Attention", 184.

[60] Seeman, "Joint Attention", 184.

[61] Seeman, "Joint Attention", 184.

[62] Seeman, "Joint Attention", 199.

[63] Seeman, "Reminiscing Together", 7.

[64] Carpenter and Liebal, "Joint Attention, Communication", 167.

[65] Carpenter and Liebal, "Joint Attention, Communication", 167.

[66] Seeman, "Reminiscing Together", 7.

[67] Carpenter and Liebal, "Joint Attention, Communication", 167.

[68] Underhill, *Worship,* 99. It might seem to some that, rather than focusing on God, the primary focus of attention sharing in the liturgy is the object of the priest and the liturgical script. Wolterstorff puts this point succinctly:

> To whom are the people listening? To the minister, obviously the celebrant, the leader, the readers, the musicians. But is that all? In the Episcopal liturgy, at the conclusion of the first and second readings from Scripture, the reader says "This is the Word of the Lord." …Said or assumed in each of these cases is that the people have been listening not just to the speaker but to what God said or says. (Wolterstorff, *The God We Worship*, 63-64)

Whilst it is true that the direct object of shared attention is the script and the celebrant, it is by means of this object that the congregation can mutually focus on God. In listening to a sermon, as Søren Kierkegaard describes it, the role of the listener is not to pay attention only to the words of the preacher, but rather, the 'listener during the speech has the task of paying attention to how he is hearing, whether through the discourse he within himself is secretly speaking with God' (Kierkegaard, *Upbuilding Discourses,* 125).

[69] As an anonymous referee helpfully points out—this kind of attention-shaping might occur by means of the conscious collective actions of those present in the liturgy, but there may also be some kind of collective consciousness present at a lower, subconscious level. In the scientific research on quorum sensing in animals and bacteria (see Waters and Bassler, "Quorum Sensing", for instance), it has been shown that some organisms communicate using chemical signals which

allow bacteria to monitor its environment and alter its behaviour. A similar kind of communication might occur between humans in worship through a kind of subconscious responsivity to social cues which makes it possible for individuals to in some sense perceive God together and guide one another's attention.

[70] Hauerwas, *Unleashing the Scripture*, 15.

[71] Hauerwas, *Unleashing the Scripture*, 23.

[72] Panchuk, "The Shattered Self". We expand this point, on the dark side of corporate worship in Cockayne, Efird and Warman, ms..

[73] Luhrmann, *When God Talks Back*, 73.

[74] An anonymous referee asks, 'Can there be genuine interaction with God without the worshipper feeling, for instance, forgiven by God or spoken to through the homily?' Our answer is that there are surely many more ways of experiencing God in corporate worship than we have space to explore in this paper. Our focus is narrow in scope to account for instance of shared attention and personal presence in worship. Yet, as we have seen in section one, there is more to knowing a person than just experiencing his or her presence. Our claim is not that this is the only experience of God a worshipper could have during worship, nor that this is the only benefit of corporate worship. To give an exhaustive account of corporate experiences of God would far surpass what we have space to discuss in this paper.

[75] For a discussion of this, see Cockayne, forthcoming.

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