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AN UNFINISHED MELODY: MENTAL ILLNESS, WORSHIP MUSIC, AND THE TENSION OF THE PENTECOSTAL “NOW” AND “NOT YET

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AN UNFINISHED MELODY:
MENTAL ILLNESS, WORSHIP MUSIC, AND THE TENSION OF THE PENTECOSTAL
“NOW” AND “NOT YET

MASTER’S THESIS

PRESENTED TO

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BY

BRIANNA TURBEVILLE

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This thesis, written by

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Introduction

According to the National Institute of Mental Health, it is estimated that nearly 20% of adults within the United States suffer from some form of mental illness.¹ With roughly one-fifth, if not more, of the entire U.S. population facing a daily internal battle of some sort, this is an issue that is certainly elemental to the overarching purpose of the Church as an agent of reconciliation of creation with Creator. A prevalent problem requires prevalent solutions. What is something even more pervasive in every culture than mental health? Music. Melodies and lyrics are native to virtually every individual on earth. The field of neuroscience has begun to make headway in showing the positive correlation between listening to music and improved mental health. Also important to the conversation are positive psychology studies that illustrate the vitality of positive emotions in improving mental health. Worship in and of itself is essential to the DNA of the Church with one of its most common manifestations taking place in the form of song. With this in mind, the potential positive effects of worship music should be considered as a tool for those with mental illnesses. This paper explores the idea of worship, neuroscientific research indicating music's effect on the brain, positive psychology's emphasis on positive emotions, the role of lament, certain Biblical texts centered around worship, and current Pentecostal responses to mental illness. As summative illustrations, this paper interacts with insight gained on the use of worship music in a facility for sex trafficking survivors, as well as the Acts 16 story of Paul and Silas' imprisonment. In conclusion, this paper argues that worship music is an effective vehicle with which individuals with mental illness can possibly experience the lessening of symptoms in addition to the presence of God based both upon scientific and Biblical bases.

¹ National Institute of Mental Health, "Mental Health," National Institute of Mental Health, <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics/mental-illness.shtml>.

The Who, Why, and How of Worship

Who We Worship

The purpose of this paper is certainly not to provide an extensive theology of worship. It is necessary, however, to provide a basic understanding of the who, why, and how of Christian worship in order to lay the foundation necessary for the rest of this paper's argument. Constance M. Cherry writes, "The revelation of God's nature forms the basis for all of Christian worship."² The living Triune God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit), who created heaven and earth revealed Himself to Moses and Israel, and through the Incarnation of the Son in Jesus Christ, the image of the invisible God was revealed by Himself. In the fullness of time, He will return in the eschaton to fulfill His plan of salvation.³ Although a list of His characteristics could not be exhausted even by countless volumes, the following give a glimpse of the one true God: good, love, holy, merciful, righteous, transcendent, immanent, and healing.⁴

Why We Worship

As previously alluded to, worship has never preceded revelation.⁵ This is illustrated through the Biblical narrative. Throughout the entirety of the Biblical narrative, worship is always the response of God's people to the saving work that He had done for them.⁶ Revelation is never dependent on worship, but rather a prerequisite of it. Israel's worship was a response to the Exodus Event. God's rescue of His chosen people was the manner by which He revealed

² Constance M. Cherry, *The Worship Architect: A Blueprint for Designing Culturally Relevant and Biblically Faithful Services*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010), 4.

³ Rolf Hille, "Worship--the Source and Standard of Theology," *Evangelical Review of Theology*, (2009): 251-255, <https://search-ebscohost-com.seu.idm.oclc.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=42838706&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

⁴ Simon Chan, *Liturgical Theology: The Church as Worshipping Community*, (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006), 61.

⁵ Cherry, *Worship Architect*, 4.

⁶ Paul Basden, "The Theology and Practice of Worship." *Theological Educator* 57, no. 57 (1998): 85, <https://seu.on.worldcat.org/v2/oclc/205571491>.

Himself. It was after this that Israel's "cultic practices"⁷ were ingrained in their very existence as a nation.⁸ Jesus' death and resurrection served as an even greater revelation of God's character, which we now respond to through our worship.⁹

Nicholas Wolterstorff writes of worship, "In general, worshiping someone is a mode of acknowledging that person's worthiness, that person's greatness or excellence. Thus worshiping God is a mode of acknowledging God's worthiness, the excellence of who God is and the greatness of what God has done, is doing, and will do. More specifically, in Christian worship we acknowledge the unsurpassable excellence of God."¹⁰ However, worship goes beyond merely acknowledging God's worthiness. That is a mere aspect of worship. Wolterstorff argues that worship is also an "orientation,"¹¹ a "attitudinal stance"¹² of "adoration."¹³ Without the deep level of love and even "attraction" in a stance of adoration, the acknowledgment of God's worthiness is of little worth in itself.¹⁴ Wolterstorff argues that we "adore God, in a stance of awe, reverence, and gratitude."¹⁵ Our worship comes from our adoration of God. This adoration is in response to who He has revealed Himself to be and what He has done for us.

Rolf Hille writes, "People in the image of God (*imago Dei*), are completely interrelated to God, so worship of God is essential for their life."¹⁶ Worship is essential to life for Christians. It is the means by which they commune with God. According to Hille, worship also connects

⁷ Cherry, *Worship Architect*, 6.

⁸ Cherry, *Worship Architect*, 6.

⁹ Cherry, *Worship Architect*, 7.

¹⁰ Nicholas Wolterstorff, *The God We Worship: An Exploration of Liturgical Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2015), 29.

¹¹ Wolterstorff, *The God We Worship*, 29.

¹² Wolterstorff, *The God We Worship*, 30.

¹³ Wolterstorff, *The God We Worship*, 30.

¹⁴ Wolterstorff, *The God We Worship*, 30.

¹⁵ Wolterstorff, *The God We Worship*, 31.

¹⁶ Hille, "Worship--the Source," 248.

individuals to their humanity more fully through communion with God. Through seeking and worshipping God, humans, who bear His image are acting upon the innate desire to know both Him and themselves.¹⁷ Chris E. W. Green writes, “To be a creature is simply to be caught up in this communion, primarily in a way that gives us life; ultimately in a way that gives us a share in God’s own uncreated life.”¹⁸ In worship, we commune with God. This communion is transformative and life giving. Without it, we become lifeless. Our physical being may still be alive, but our spiritual being longs to be in active pursuit of communing with our Creator.

Green draws attention to the reality that though our earthly lives occur in a time, which God is beyond. As Christians we live suspended between two different times. We are living in the now, but not yet.¹⁹ We are not yet transformed as we will be. Therefore, we must live in our time as we wait on the eschaton when we can fully live in God’s time beyond time.²⁰ Worship is the way in which we can taste God’s time in the here and now.²¹ Worship brings us into unity with God, His time, and one another through.²² Green writes, “Nothing puts us in rhythm with God’s time and timing like worship ‘on the Lord’s day’, a gathering centered in the prayers of the people, the giving and receiving of the Word, and the call to the altar/ table. This is why Hebrews instructs us not to forsake that regular assembly (10.25).”²³ Providing us a sense of reality beyond our reality, worship makes us more sensitive to God’s ways. It makes us more aware that while we live in the world and within the bounds of its time, we are not of it, nor will

¹⁷ Hille, “Worship--the Source,” 247-248.

¹⁸ Chris E. W. Green, “The Coming of God & the Goings of Time: Refiguring History, Eschatology, & Mission in Conversation with the Letter to the Hebrews,” *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 27, no. 1 (2018), 39, <https://doi-org.seu.idm.oclc.org/10.1163/17455251-02701003>.

¹⁹ The “now” and “not yet” terminology is based upon the Pentecostal understanding that the kingdom of God has simultaneously come, but not in its fullness. There is access to the reconciling power of God through the Holy Spirit, but full reconciliation has not yet occurred, nor will it until the eschaton.

²⁰ Green, “The Coming of God,” 39-40.

²¹ Green, “The Coming of God,” 50.

²² Green, “The Coming of God,” 50.

²³ Green, “The Coming of God,” 50.

we be restricted to it forever (John 17:14-16). Worship connects us with the Giver of true life in a way that nothing else is capable of.

We worship to encounter God. Cherry stresses that worship is never a one way proclamation into an echo chamber, but rather a dialogue between the living God and His people.²⁴ She writes, “True worship is the experience of encountering God through the means that God usually employs, a conversation built on revelation/response.”²⁵ Constance M. Cherry argues that covenantal worship is always relational. Drawing attention back to the covenantal relationship between God and His people, Cherry notes that the revelation of God involved an encounter with Him. Not only was covenant established by the act and revelation of God in both the case of the old Hebrew covenant and the new covenant in Christ, but covenant is sustained through encounter.²⁶ Worship provides us a way to not only respond to God’s revelation and establishment of covenant, but to encounter Him to sustain it. He is always present in our worship. Christ is never not present, but our awareness of His presence can be heightened by focusing our attention upon Him.²⁷ Consequently, worship is not so much an attempt to encounter God, but rather acting intentionally to be aware of the encounter we are always having. Worship allows us to be in tune with instead of ignorant of the reality which exists beyond our typical sphere of perception. Johnathan E. Alvarado “The way a people worships both reveals their understanding of God and contributes to their spiritual formation.”²⁸ Worship forms and transforms the worshippers. It puts them in touch with God, and, therefore, the way

²⁴ Cherry, *Worship Architect*, 9.

²⁵ Cherry, *Worship Architect*, 9.

²⁶ Cherry, *Worship Architect*, 10-11.

²⁷ Cherry, *Worship Architect*, 26-28.

²⁸ Jonathan E. Alvarado, “Worship in the Spirit: Pentecostal Perspectives on Liturgical Theology and Praxis,” *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 21, no 1 (2012), 135, <https://seu.on.worldcat.org/v2/oclc/4959378624>.

we both perceive the world and live in it shifts. Wolterstorff argues that we worship God with hope to be changed.²⁹ If worship does not change us, we must reevaluate it. Encountering the living God should always be transformative and renewing. Cheryl Bridges John argues that the connection to God and each other through Spirit-filled worship is a type of catechesis that transforms the individual and the community of worshippers through the connection to God and each other.³⁰ Alvarado also writes, “Any genuine encounter with God brings about some kind of transformation, but worship in particular has essentially the power to transform people into a different way of being in the world.”³¹ In communion with God and our fellow members of the body of Christ, our vision becomes clearer. Our priorities are realigned with heaven. Our hearts and minds are renewed. In short, we become more like God when we worship Him, particularly in community with others.

Hille writes, “Worship in itself is the history of salvation taking outward form.”³² Our worship bears witness to the salvific work of God through Christ carried out by the Spirit. It is missional through its glorification of God, which is a testimony to the world of His goodness. Simon Chan writes, “If our worship does not reveal God in his holiness and love, transcendence and immanence, as *fascinans et tremendum*--in short, as the triune God--then it has fallen short of the glory of God. If it does not continue the action of the triune God, it is not worship in spirit and in truth.”³³ Our worship not only testifies of, but is an extension of God’s salvific work. The witness of worship is eschatological. Our communal worship is a reflection of the worship taking place in the heavenlies. Cherry emphasizes that worship is a foreshadowing of “the worship to

²⁹ Wolterstorff, *The God We Worship*, 28.

³⁰ Alvarado, “Worship in the Spirit,” 140.

³¹ Alvarado, “Worship in the Spirit,” 148.

³² Hille, “Worship--the Source,” 257.

³³ Chan, *Liturgical Theology*, 61.

come when Christ reigns. Worship is eternal.”³⁴ As Alvarado puts it, “The Church is principally a worshipping community that mirrors the overarching kingdom of God in an earthly expression.”³⁵ Our worship now is a reverse echo of what is to come and a dim reflection of what occurs beyond our concept of time. It proclaims goodness of the transcendent God to the brokenness of this finite world, extending the truest love to those in need of healing and restoration. In Pentecostal terminology, our worship bears witness to the “now’ and “not yet.”³⁶

How We Worship: Liturgy, Embodiment, and Music

Within the Christian community, the spirit and/or soul is elevated to a more important role than is the body. While it is true that one's spirit will live beyond one's earthly physical body, it is a gross injustice to our created humanity to belittle the importance of our God-created physical bodies. So enters embodiment into the conversation. Mental health is not just mental in that it is centered within and tied directly to one's physical being...one's body. In the words of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, “A human being is a human body. A human being does not ‘have’ a body--or ‘have’ a soul; instead a human being ‘is’ body and soul.”³⁷ Kelly M. Kopic emphasizes the important role in which one's body allows one to not only worship God in word and deed (Colossians 3:17), but to show his love in relationships with others.³⁸ He writes, “As the physical images of God on earth, we worship our creator in a way that reflects and grows out of our creaturely humanity rather than in a way that denies or undermines it.”³⁹

³⁴ Cherry, *Worship Architect*, 5.

³⁵ Alvarado, “Worship in the Spirit,” 137.

³⁶ Nigel Scotland, “From the ‘not yet’ to the ‘now and the not yet’: Charismatic Kingdom Theology 1960-2010,” *Journal for Pentecostal Studies* 12, (2011), 289.
doi:10.1163/174552511X597152

³⁷ Kelly M. Kopic, *Embodied Hope: A Theological Meditation on Pain and Suffering*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2017), 50.

³⁸ Kopic, *Embodied Hope*, 54.

³⁹ Kopic, *Embodied Hope*, 55.

Hille writes, “Worship always takes a physical form.”⁴⁰ Worship takes tactile forms that connect us to God in a way that goes beyond the abstract, connecting with even the most essential aspect of our physical humanity, our senses. From physical gestures to musical sounds, worship involves some sort of concrete, sensible expression. The use of our physicality allows us to go beyond the abstract and cross into the tangible so that our role in the worship service is able to be observed and experienced. Essentially, worship speaks to our embodiment. Encountering God through our humanity, including our natural limitations, allows the finite to encounter a taste of the infinite.⁴¹ Our worship is not merely metaphysical. God does not desire or require worship that forces us to ascend to His level of unknowableness in our worship. Revelation of His unknowable nature is His role. Ours is a response that draws upon the fullness of what we know of our createdness to engage in worship. Commonly, a great deal of embodied worship takes place corporately within the liturgy of worship services.

According to Brad D. Strawn and Warren S. Brown, Christian liturgy is more than cognitive. It is embodied. It weaves the functions of the brain with the movements of the body.⁴² The embodied nature of worship allows it to mold and inform the humanity of participants at a deeper level than mere thinking is capable of. Embodiment, even if that embodiment is the choice or impression to remain motionless, is a crucial component. Strawn and Brown stress just how important embodied liturgy is: “So, humans are deeply embodied and embedded creatures that are formed not as much by what we think or believe, but by the kinds of social and physical interactions with the world that we engage through liturgies....These liturgies are what shape

⁴⁰ Hille, “Worship--the Source,” 249.

⁴¹ Hille, “Worship--the Source,” 249-250.

⁴² Brad D. Strawn and Warren S. Brown, “Liturgical Animals: What Psychology and Neuroscience Tell Us about Formation and Worship,” *Liturgy* 28, no. 4 (2013), 11, doi: 10.1080/0458063X.2013.803838.

humans in unconscious ways and orient them toward a particular telos.”⁴³ There is perhaps no greater example of theology that becomes ingrained in one's being than the songs being sung within these worship services. It is often what is sung and not spoken that influences the way in which individuals view God, others, and themselves.

Gordan Graham argues that music is the one commonality between the liturgy of various Christian traditions. From more traditional liturgical churches to seeker friendly ones, music plays a central role.⁴⁴ Music in itself is not worship, but rather a mode of worship. Graham writes, “The role of music is to fashion and inform the giving, not the gift.”⁴⁵ Music is a vehicle for worship that employs the very tools which God has given us. Graham furthers this argument, writing, “We need to conceive of music as a vital instrument (though not the only one) that at one and the same time unites us in a way that allows us to give back to God the gifts of God in a style appropriate to their giving.”⁴⁶ Graham notes that singing and music invites participation that mere words cannot. It is easier to sing than to speak. Additionally, in the context of worship services, it encourages unity by the communal participation in song.⁴⁷ Andrew Roby points out four different aspects of worship in singing. First, singing in worship is a vehicle by which the theology of that community is expressed. Second, it is a means by which that community's unique cultural voice is brought into the worship service. Third, singing in worship intertwines the spirit of the people with the Spirit of God.⁴⁸ Fourth, it encourages the perpetual pursuit of

⁴³ Strawn and Brown, “*Liturgical Animals*,” 10.

⁴⁴ Gordon Graham, “The Theology of Music in Church,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 57, no. 2 (2004): 140, doi:10.1017/S0036930604000043.

⁴⁵ Graham, “Theology of Music,” 144.

⁴⁶ Graham, “Theology of Music,” 145.

⁴⁷ Graham, “Theology of Music,” 141.

⁴⁸ Andrew Roby, “Worshipful Singing: Four Roles of Song in Worship” *The Choral Journal* 57, no. 3 (2016): 60, <https://seu.on.worldcat.org/v2/oclc/7789819366>.

“meaningful excellence in response to God.”⁴⁹ Using the very breath given by God to worship Him in song, as well as the gifts and talents He has given musicians, is a beautiful way to return back to God that which He has given, while also receiving the beauty that is communing with Him.

Music and the Brain

While few theologians would contradict Graham’s insistence that music is a vital vehicle for worship, it is not only those within Christian academia that would agree that music has the ability to do things that spoken words cannot. Neuroscientists have made great strides in scientifically proving this belief. Lutz Jäncke points out one example of this reality by drawing attention to the benefits of singing in aiding memory recall for individuals with Alzheimer’s disease. They write, “A number of studies have shown that patients with Alzheimer’s disease (AD) recognize lyrics that they heard sung more reliably than lyrics heard in the spoken modality (Simmons-Stern, Budson, & Ally, 2010).”⁵⁰ Neuroscientists and theologians agree that music reaches the mind in ways that mere words cannot.

Donald A. Hodges and Michael H. Thaut write, “The neuroscientific study of music, or neuromusical research as it may be called, has grown and expanded significantly over several decades.”⁵¹ Although “neuromusical research”⁵² is still a rather new field, there is much to be gleaned for the use of music in coping with mental illness. However, before diving into specifics or possible implications, it is important to lay the groundwork for just how music affects the

⁴⁹ Roby, “Worshipful Singing,” 60.

⁵⁰ Lutz Jäncke, “Music and Memory,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Music and the Brain*, ed. Michael H. Thaut and Donald A. Hodges (Oxford, UK, Oxford University Press, 2019), 254.

⁵¹ Donald A. Hodges and Michael H. Thaut, “The Neuroscientific Study of Music: A Burgeoning Discipline,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Music and the Brain*, ed. Michael H. Thaut and Donald A. Hodges (Oxford, UK, Oxford University Press, 2019), 3.

⁵² Hodges and Thaut, “Neuroscientific Study of Music,” 3.

brain. Thenille Braun Janzen and Thaut write, “Just merely listening to music begins the brain on a journey through multiple areas of the brain, engaging a variety of ‘auditory-motor networks.’”⁵³ It is now to this “journey” that we turn.⁵⁴

Mark Reybrouck, Peter Vuust, and Elvira Brattico propose that listening to music can be more than merely cognitive. It can also be an aesthetic experience.⁵⁵ Giving clarity as to how they would define an aesthetic experience, they write, “From the perspective of the mind, an aesthetic experience can be defined as a kind of exploratory behavior, integrating several levels of processing, such as the perceptual, action-related, cognitive, affective and evaluative ones.”⁵⁶ In other words, experiencing music at an aesthetic level engages more than just one aspect of the human being. This has begun to ring true within the neuroscientific community regarding the effect of aesthetic musical experiences on the human brain as evidenced by data collected from fMRI studies.⁵⁷ Early neurological studies on “(aesthetic) music listening” have shown that such experiences engage networks rather than singular structures within the brain.⁵⁸ Janzen and Thaut write, “The term network here implies the notion of a collection of regions that are activated to support a particular function, referencing structural and functional connections between these regions.”⁵⁹ This aligns with the argument Reybrouck, Vuust, and Brattico are making when they write, “The emerging picture is that (aesthetic) music listening is associated with neural

⁵³ Thenille Braun Janzen and Michael H. Thaut, “Cerebral Organization of Music Processing,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Music and the Brain*, ed. Michael H. Thaut and Donald A. Hodges (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2019), 95.

⁵⁴ Janzen and Thaut, “Cerebral Organization,” 95.

⁵⁵ Mark Reybrouck, Peter Vuust, and Elvira Brattico, “Brain Connectivity Networks and the Aesthetic Experience of Music,” *Brain Sciences* 8, no. 6 (2018): 107. <https://doi.org/10.3390/brainsci8060107>

⁵⁶ Reybrouck, Vuust, and Brattico, “Brain Connectivity,” 107.

⁵⁷ Reybrouck, Vuust, and Brattico, “Brain Connectivity,” 112.

⁵⁸ Reybrouck, Vuust, and Brattico, “Brain Connectivity,” 108.

⁵⁹ Janzen and Thaut, “Cerebral Organization,” 89.

connectivity patterns rather than a one-to-one mapping to single brain structures.”⁶⁰ The question then remains: what network(s) are affected and what does that mean for mental health?

R. W. Wilkins, D. A. Hodges, P. J. Laurienti, M. Steen and J. H. Burdette conducted a study to find the effect of listening to music, specifically preferred versus non-preferred music, has on the Default Mode Network (DMN).⁶¹ Before diving into the findings of this study, it is first important to understand what exactly the DMN is. The Default Mode Network or DMN was only discovered a little over 20 years ago.⁶² Much is still to be learned about the DMN. However, some consensus regarding its basic functions have been reached over the past two decades. Hamed Ekhtiari, Padideh Nasser, Fatemeh Yavari, Azarkhsh Mokri, and John Monterosso describe the DMN in the following way:

The DMN is a set of brain regions that exhibits strong low-frequency oscillations coherent during resting state and is thought to be activated when individuals are focused on their internal mental-state processes, such as self-referential processing, interoception, autobiographical memory retrieval, or imagining future.⁶³

To simplify greatly, the DMN is active during internal contemplation and less so during times requiring cognitive activity.⁶⁴ Examples of these two differing states could be listening to music versus doing academic research for this thesis that you are now reading.

⁶⁰ Reybrouck, Vuust, and Brattico, “Brain Connectivity,” 108.

⁶¹ R. W. Wilkins, D. A. Hodges, P. J. Laurienti, M. Steen, and J. H. Burdette, “Network Science and the Effects of Music Preference on Functional Brain Connectivity: From Beethoven to Eminem,” *Scientific Reports* 4, (2014): 1. <https://doi.org/10.1038/srep06130>.

⁶² Kevin J. Manning and David C. Steffens, “Systems Neuroscience in Late-Life Depression.” In *Systems Neuroscience in Depression*, ed. Thomas Frodl (London, UK: Academic Press, 2016). <https://www-sciencedirect-com.seu.idm.oclc.org/topics/neuroscience/default-mode-network>

⁶³ Hamed Ekhtiari, Padideh Nasser, Fatemeh Yavari, Azarkhsh Mokri, and John Monterosso, “Neuroscience of drug craving for addiction medicine: From circuits to therapies,” in *Neuroscience for Addiction Medicine: From Prevention to Rehabilitation - Constructs and Drugs*, ed. Hamed Ekhtiari and Martin Paulus (Amsterdam, Netherlands: Elsevier, 2016), 123.

⁶⁴ Manning and Steffens, “Systems Neuroscience.”

During their research with individuals suffering from Major Depressive Disorder (MDD), Charles F. Gillespie, Steven T. Szabo, and Charles B. Nemeroff discovered that there is a connection between the DMN and MDD. They write, “The default mode network is active during periods of self-directed thought or introspection and dysfunction of the default mode network may contribute to rumination and self-preoccupation in patients with MDD.”⁶⁵ This potential link between the function or malfunction of the DMN and MDD is particularly interesting in light of the results of the research conducted by Wilkins et. al., which will be the next focus of discussion.

In their study on the effects of music listening on the DMN, Wilkins et al. had their subjects listen to three different categories of songs: favorite, preferred, and non-preferred. The connectivity of the DMN was measured with fMRI scans as the subjects listened to the three different categories of songs customized to each subject. It was found that listening to favorite and preferred music increased the connectivity of the DMN substantially. Preferred music showed the most connectivity, while non-preferred showed the least. Favorite music elicited less connectivity than preferred, but more than non-preferred. Wilkins et al. speculate that the reason for this could be because favorite songs are more familiar and require less activity to intake and process than less familiar presents the listener with new information not previously experienced or not experienced with as much frequency.⁶⁶ Also significant is the discovery by the Wilkins et al. study that “listening to favorite songs can alter the connectivity between auditory brain areas and the hippocampus, a region responsible for memory and social-emotion consolidation.”⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Charles F. Gillespie, Steven T. Szabo, and Charles B. Nemeroff, “Unipolar depression,” in *Rosenberg’s Unimolecular and Genetic Basis of Neurological and Psychiatric Disease Vol. 2*, ed. Roger N. Rosenberg and Juan M. Pascal (London, UK: Academic Press, 2020).
<https://www-sciencedirect-com.seu.idm.oclc.org/topics/neuroscience/default-mode-network>.

⁶⁶ Wilkins et al., “Network Science,” 5.

⁶⁷ Reybrouck, Vuust, and Brattico, “Brain Connectivity,” 112.

Emotion and music cannot be separated. Wilkins et al, as well as other neuroscientists who have conducted similar studies, confirm this.⁶⁸ This is particularly important in light of research suggesting that when not functioning properly, the DMN could be the root of some mental illnesses and disorders, including depression and post-traumatic stress disorder.⁶⁹ Considering the intake of music directly affects this crucial brain network, there is much room to explore the use of music as treatment or a coping tool for those with mental illnesses and disorders. Wilkins et al. reinforce this point with language laden with neuroscientific terminology,

Based on these findings, it might be possible that listening to preferred music has the potential to engage such brain functions. This has specific implications for neurologic remediation (therapy), where music has been shown to have neurorehabilitation effects, such as improvements in executive function and emotional adjustments, as well as lessening of anxiety and depression.⁷⁰

Music Therapy

Before diving back into less formal, or rather less medical/professional, uses of music to aid individuals in coping with mental illnesses and disorders, music therapy and its proven effects will be discussed. Music therapy is defined by the Cleveland Clinic as the “clinical use of music.”⁷¹ It is conducted by music therapists in a variety of settings, including hospitals, schools, therapist’s offices, and even patient residences. Activities within music therapy can include listening to music, playing a musical instrument, singing, talking through lyrics, and even

⁶⁸ Reybrouck, Vuust, and Brattico, “Brain Connectivity,” 112.

⁶⁹ Wilkins et al., “Network Science,” 4.

⁷⁰ Wilkins et al., “Network Science,” 4-5.

⁷¹ Cleveland Clinic, “Music Therapy,” accessed February 1, 2022, <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/treatments/8817-music-therapy#risks--benefits>.

dancing along to music.⁷² Although music therapy emerged as a discipline near the end of World War II, it was not until the 1990s that it became to be known less as a social science and more as a valid, scientifically proven field of research and affective treatment.⁷³ Since its emergence as a scientifically validated field, music therapy has been shown to be effective in treating trauma survivors,⁷⁴ individuals with depression and anxiety,⁷⁵ and schizophrenic patients.⁷⁶

Karin Mössler, XiJing Chen, Tor Olav Heldal, and Christian Gold reviewed eight different studies in which music therapy was a supplemental factor in the care of individuals suffering from schizophrenia. Based upon their analysis, Mössler et al. found music therapy, when a consistent part of the treatment, helped increase the functionality of these patients.⁷⁷ They write,

Music therapy is a therapeutic method that uses music experiences to help people with serious mental disorders to develop relationships and to address issues they may not be able to using words alone. Studies to date have examined the effects of music therapy as an add-on treatment to standard care. The results of these studies suggest that music therapy improves global state and may also improve mental state and functioning if a sufficient number of music therapy sessions are provided.⁷⁸

⁷² “Music Therapy.”

⁷³ Michael H. Thaut, Gerald C. McIntosh, and Volker Hoemberg, “Neurologic Music Therapy: From Social Science to Neuroscience,” in *Handbook of Neurologic Music Therapy*, ed. Michael H. Thaut and Volker Hoemberg (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2014), 1.

⁷⁴ Matthew Dixon, “Music and Human Rights,” in *Music, Music Therapy, and Trauma: International Perspectives*, ed. Julie P. Sutton (London, England: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2002), 130.

⁷⁵ Jaakko Erkkilä, Marko Punkanen, Jörg Fachner, Esa Ala-Ruona, Inga Pöntiö, Mari Tervaniemi, Mauno Vanhala and Christian Gold, “Individual music therapy for depression: randomised controlled trial,” *The British Journal of Psychiatry* 199, (2011), 136.

doi: 10.1192/bjp.bp.110.085431.

⁷⁶ Karin Mössler, XiJing Chen, Tor Olav Heldal, and Christian Gold, “Music therapy for people with schizophrenia and schizophrenia-like disorders,” *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews* 12, no. CD004025 (2011), 1-2.

doi: 10.1002/14651858.CD004025.pub3.

⁷⁷ Mössler, “Music therapy,” 1-2.

⁷⁸ Mössler, “Music therapy,” 2.

Based upon a study conducted by Jaakko Erkkilä, Marko Punkanen, Jörg Fachner, Esa Ala-Ruona, Inga Pöntiö, Mari Tervaniemi, Mauno Vanhala and Christian Gold, individuals with depression (some of whom also suffered with anxiety) who received music therapy in addition to their other treatment exhibited “significantly greater” improvement than “those who received only standard care.”⁷⁹ Erkkilä et al. argue that “music therapy has specific qualities that enable meaningful non-verbal expression and interaction even in those situations where the client cannot verbally describe their inner experiences.”⁸⁰ Below is an excerpt written by Erkkilä et al. discussing the findings of their study:

This trial has shown that music therapy added to standard care helps people with mild, moderate or severe depressive episodes to improve their levels of depression as well as anxiety and functioning. The response rate was significantly greater in music therapy, compared with those who only received standard care. Effects were clinically relevant, with effect sizes in the medium to-large range (ranging from 0.65 for depression to 0.49 for anxiety). The NNT was four, indicating that one person will change from no response to response for every four people to whom music therapy is offered. These estimates are based on an intention-to-treat analysis, which means that they are likely to underestimate the effects of treatment for those who received it.⁸¹

It is also the course of their study, Erkkilä et al. found that the participation rate and engagement of subjects was high with on average 18 out of 20 sessions attended.⁸²

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) uses the following description of trauma:

⁷⁹ Erkkilä et al., “Individual music therapy,” 136.

⁸⁰ Erkkilä et al., “Individual music therapy,” 137.

⁸¹ Erkkilä, “Individual music therapy,” 136.

⁸² Erkkilä, “Individual music therapy,” 136.

an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual's functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being.⁸³

These necessarily broad parameters of trauma provide some essential groundwork to understanding the vast number of individuals who have been/are affected by trauma. Describing what are considered the three main elements of trauma, Julie Sutton writes, "These three facets – shock, wound and a lasting effect – remain in the literature and are still central to our understanding of trauma."⁸⁴ She goes on to stress that defining trauma or at least the basic elements that comprise traumatic events is a much more simple task than is the describing or defining of the effects of trauma on different individuals. Subsequently, there have been several classifications of trauma developed that are present both in the literature and treatment of individuals who have experienced trauma.⁸⁵ For lack of space and hesitancy to limit the types of trauma discussed, trauma will not be split into different categories in this paper, but rather referred to solely as trauma.

Music therapy has been shown to be a helpful tool in enabling survivors to help process and heal from trauma.⁸⁶ Based upon his experience working with survivors of political violence, Matthew Dixon argues that music therapy provides a form of expression and communication that is helpful to individuals who have been limited in their "ability to interact" as a result of

⁸³ SAMHSA, "Trauma and Violence," accessed February 19, 2022, <https://www.samhsa.gov/trauma-violence#:~:text=SAMHSA%20describes%20individual%20trauma%20as,physical%2C%20social%2C%20emotional%2C%20or>.

⁸⁴ Julie P. Sutton, "Trauma: Trauma in Context," in *Music, Music Therapy, and Trauma: International Perspectives*, ed. Julie P. Sutton (London, England: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2002), 22.

⁸⁵ Sutton, "Trauma," 22.

⁸⁶ Sutton, "Trauma," 28-29.

trauma.⁸⁷ In a sense, music gives voice to the voiceless. Trauma, especially by “human design (Cat),” meaning trauma caused by a human in cases such as human trafficking, often attacks the very humanity of an individual. Music is a vehicle that helps give it back to them.⁸⁸

Whatever Things Are Lovely

Groundwork arguing that music has the potential to positively affect the brain of individuals with mental illnesses and disorders has been laid. However, the argument of this paper is not merely that music is a neuro-scientifically proven tool, but rather that worship music specifically has the ability to improve mental health. In order to do this, it is important to distinguish worship music from all other genres. The most notable defining factor, or at least what should be, would be the lyrics contained within worship music. With this point in mind, this paper will now turn to the field of psychology in order to better understand what practices are crucial in any move towards flourishing mental health.

Broaden-and-Build

The field of positive psychology is devoted to understanding positive emotions and the way they impact mental health. One theory that illustrates just how important positive emotions are is the “broaden-and-build theory.”⁸⁹ Catt Raley, Director of Sexual Assault Services at Sunrise Domestic and Sexual Violence Center, Pasco County, FL. summarizes the core idea of the broaden-and-build theory in the following way: “When you focus on good things your brain gets broader. When you focus on negative things your focus gets narrower.”⁹⁰ Barbara L. Fredrickson further sheds light by writing, “Whereas traditional perspectives have suggested that

⁸⁷ Dixon, “Music and Human Rights,” 130.

⁸⁸ Dixon, “Music and Human Rights,” 131.

⁸⁹ Barbara L. Fredrickson, “The broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions,” *Philosophical Transactions: Biological Sciences* 359, no. 1449 (2004), 1375.
<https://doi.org/10.1098/rstb.2004.1512>.

⁹⁰ Catt Raley, interviewed by Brianna Turbeville, February 18, 2022.

positive emotions mark or signal health and well-being (Kahneman 1999; Diener 2000), the broaden-and-build theory suggests that positive emotions also produce health and well-being (Fredrickson 2001).⁹¹ Essentially, the more attention you give to the positive things the more positive emotions you will experience, and, in contrast, the more attention to negative things you give, the less you will experience. Therefore, it is crucial to “cultivate positive emotions” within oneself and in others around you, not merely for an isolated experience of those emotions, “but also as a means to achieving psychological growth and improved psychological and physical well-being over time.”⁹² The connection between the broaden-and-build theory and Philippians 4:8 should not be ignored. In the familiar verses preceding 4:8, Paul is instructing the Philippians how to respond to the trials of life. Stressing the nearness of the Lord (4:5), he calls them to express their situations and needs to God with gratitude (4:6). It is through this process that the peace of God will be manifested in their hearts and minds (4:7). When arriving at 4:8, Paul is commanding them to structure their entire thought process in a way that honors the Lord, which will reinforce and contribute to the cycle we see presented in 4:5-7. Paul writes, “Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, think about these things (Philippians 4:8 NASB).”⁹³ Thinking on lovely things both has scientific and Biblical basis for its implementation.

Synthesizing the broaden-and-build theory with religion, Patty Van Cappellen, Megan E. Edwards, and Fredrickson highlight the upsides of “positive emotions (PEs),” which they argue

⁹¹ Fredrickson, “broaden-and-build,” 1374.

⁹² Fredrickson, “broaden-and-build,” 1376.

⁹³ All Scripture references will be from the NASB translation unless otherwise noted.

often are fostered in “religious practices and religious experiences.”⁹⁴ Examples of specific PEs are “joy, love, gratitude, admiration, and awe.”⁹⁵ Drawing upon research of several studies, Cappellen, Edwards, and Fredrickson portray religious practices and experiences as both “means” to experience PEs and catalysts to the pursuit of more.⁹⁶ The connection to God and people in a communal setting allows people to look beyond themselves in order to experience “amplified” PEs, including “unity and shared identity.”⁹⁷ This connection and community is crucial for all individuals, but all the more so for trauma survivors. Raley emphasizes something critical to discussion of trauma, community, and positive emotions: “What trauma does is it isolates us by nature.”⁹⁸ The only real antidote for isolation is community. As Raley says, “When speaking about trauma, it has been proven both scientifically and anecdotally, people who have community do so much better.... Folks that do better and move on with their lives have community.”⁹⁹ When occurring in community, PEs can have all the greater impact than when experienced only individually.

Part of the beauty of weekly worship services is the consistency with which these PEs can be experienced and community can be established. This consistency is key to experiencing the benefits of PEs. Cappellen, Edwards, and Fredrickson once again reinforce the expanded awareness, PEs function to build psychological (e.g. resilience), social (e.g. good quality relationships), and biological (e.g. reduced illness symptoms) resources for survival.”¹⁰⁰ Through

⁹⁴ Patty Van Cappellen, Megan E. Edwards, and Barbara L. Fredrickson, “Upward spirals of positive emotions and religious behaviors,” *Current Opinions in Psychology* 40, (2021), 92. doi: 10.1016/j.copsyc.2020.09.004.

⁹⁵ Van Cappellen, Edwards, and Fredrickson, “Upward spirals,” 92.

⁹⁶ Van Cappellen, Edwards, and Fredrickson, “Upward spirals,” 92.

⁹⁷ Van Cappellen, Edwards, and Fredrickson, “Upward spirals,” 95.

⁹⁸ Raley, 2018.

⁹⁹ Raley, 2018.

¹⁰⁰ Van Cappellen, Edwards, and Fredrickson, “Upward spirals,” 92.

a Pentecostal lens, this principle reaffirms that encountering God leads to joy and love that in turn lead to a greater pursuit of this joy and love that can only be found in Him. Also crucial to this principle is the communal factor of the assembled body of Christ experiencing a heightened level of these emotions. These emotions are not felt or rather experienced in a vacuum but in the presence of God and others. It is also in this setting that the body of believers can become more than a grouping of people with similar interests, but instead, an authentic, supportive community of diverse believers helping one another heal, grow, and minister.

Gratitude

Nicola Petrocchi and Alessandro Couyoumdjian argue that both the disposition and state of gratitude decrease symptoms of depression and anxiety. They use the following definition of “dispositional gratitude” by Wood et al. as a primary guide in their work: “Wood et al. (2010) have described dispositional gratitude as part of a wider life orientation toward noticing and appreciating the positive aspects in one’s life and the world.”¹⁰¹ These “positive aspects” can include a host of things including but not limited to the people in one’s life, the actions of people, the opportunities one has, and even one’s possessions.¹⁰² Engaging several studies, Petrocchi and Couyoumdjian note that dispositional or “trait gratitude” has been correlated to lower levels or symptoms of depression and anxiety. While they acknowledge that the connection between gratitude and lessened anxiety is not yet as well researched, Petrocchi and Couyoumdjian argue that the research supports the positive effect that gratitude has on “psychopathological

¹⁰¹ Nicola Petrocchi and Alessandro Couyoumdjian, “The impact of gratitude on depression and anxiety: The mediating role of criticizing, attacking, and reassuring of the self,” *Self and Identity* 15, no. 2 (2016), 192. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15298868.2015.1095794>.

¹⁰² Petrocchi and Couyoumdjian, “impact of gratitude,” 191-192.

symptoms, in particular depression and anxiety (Emmons & Stern, 2013; for a review see Wood et al., 2010).”¹⁰³

Gratitude not only has to do with the way in which one views the world, but also the way one views oneself. Michael E. McCullough, Jo-Ann Tsang, and Robert A. Emmons propose that when someone has a tendency to recognize and respond with gratitude to the positive actions and/or treatment of oneself by others, that person likely also views themselves as valuable.¹⁰⁴ Summarizing the argument of McCullough, Tsang, and Emmons, Petrocchi and Couyoumdjian write, “Seeing oneself as the recipient of other people’s generosity may lead one to feel valued, esteemed, and with a sense of ‘deservingness,’ which may boost self-esteem, reduces self-criticism and the sense of worthlessness, a key feature of depression phenomenology.”¹⁰⁵ Self-criticism can be devastating to mental health. Moving towards a mindset of dispositional gratitude may be the antidote.

Petrocchi and Coutoumdjian highlight what they call a “paradoxical aspect” to the connection between gratitude and improved mental health.¹⁰⁶ Referencing Emmons and Crumpler, they write, “Gratitude involves a ‘willingness to remain indebted,’ and a sense of safety in acknowledging dependency on the benefactor.”¹⁰⁷ It appears that recognizing one’s need for something or someone beyond oneself actually provides reassurance. The type of gratitude they are referencing is weighty. It is not the type of thankfulness one might feel for someone bringing you a large coffee on a Monday morning, but the type of gratitude one would feel towards someone who covered a debt you could not possibly pay. In the words of Petrocchi and

¹⁰³ Petrocchi and Couyoumdjian, “impact of gratitude,” 192.

¹⁰⁴ Petrocchi and Couyoumdjian, “impact of gratitude,” 193.

¹⁰⁵ Petrocchi and Couyoumdjian, “impact of gratitude,” 193.

¹⁰⁶ Petrocchi and Couyoumdjian, “impact of gratitude,” 193.

¹⁰⁷ Petrocchi and Couyoumdjian, “impact of gratitude,” 193.

Coutomdjian, “Genuine gratefulness is to feel indebted for a gift that is appraised as costly to provide, valuable, and altruistically offered, and that can never be fully repaid.”¹⁰⁸ There is freedom to be found in dependence upon someone offering oneself something “costly” without ulterior motive or manipulation.¹⁰⁹ Although it might be oxymoronic to some, this theme is essential to the Christian life itself. No greater example of this could be found than the finite creation recognizing its dependence on the infinite Creator.

Philippians 4:6-7

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and pleading with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:6-7)

Grant R. Osborne argues that Philippians 4:6 illustrates the reality that prayer is the “antidote for anxiety.”¹¹⁰ However, there is more to this concept than expressing requests to God. Paul notes a very specific posture with which these requests should be given, thanksgiving. This thanksgiving begins before prayer even takes place. Osborne writes, “Thanksgiving permeates every aspect, both of our trial and of our prayer. Obviously this does not mean we are glad that these afflictions have come...Our thanksgiving stems from God’s vigilant watch over us. The presence of God the Father and of his Spirit makes the difference.”¹¹¹ Indeed, practicing gratitude and thanksgiving is not a failure to acknowledge the reality, but to focus on the presence of the Lord in every situation. Peter T. O’Brien emphasizes this important factor by pointing back to Philippians 4:5, which states that the “Lord is near (Philippians 4:5).” It is only after reminding

¹⁰⁸ Petrocchi and Couyoumdjian, “impact of gratitude,” 193.

¹⁰⁹ Petrocchi and Couyoumdjian, “impact of gratitude,” 193.

¹¹⁰ Grant R. Osborne, *Philippians: Verse by Verse*, (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Publications, 2017), 106, eBook Collection (ProQuest).

¹¹¹ Osborne, *Philippians*, 112.

the Philippians that the Lord is present with them, that Paul calls to them in Philippians to 4:6 to not be anxious, but thankful in their prayers.¹¹² O'Brien writes, "When they offer their petitions they are to remember with gratitude God's gift of salvation in Christ as well as their present blessings, and thus show that they are prepared to surrender themselves to God's will in everything."¹¹³

Something also key to highlight is that, as O'Brien highlights, it is not in order to make God aware of their needs that Paul instructed the Philippians to make their "requests" known to God, for He already knows them.¹¹⁴ O'Brien writes: "Rather by bringing him their αιτήματα, which reflect every possible cause of anxiety, they are laying out all their troubles before him, or casting all their cares upon him (cf. 1 Peter 5:7). In doing this the Philippians acknowledge their total dependence upon God, and at the same time they are assured that he knows their earnest desires."¹¹⁵ The "consequence" of this practice of grateful petition is the peace of God.¹¹⁶ There is a clear parallel between the practice of prayer and worship painted in this passage in Philippians and research suggesting that "paradox" between gratitude rooted in dependence and improved symptoms of mental illness.¹¹⁷ Something shifts when one acknowledges one's need for God, and at the same time recognizes one's own value as the recipient of His love and salvation.

Beauty from Ashes¹¹⁸

Lament as Worship

¹¹² Peter T. O'Brien, *The Epistle to the Philippians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), 490.

¹¹³ O'Brien, *Epistle to the Philippians*, 490.

¹¹⁴ O'Brien, *Epistle to the Philippians*, 493.

¹¹⁵ O'Brien, *Epistle to the Philippians*, 493.

¹¹⁶ O'Brien, *Epistle to the Philippians*, 495.

¹¹⁷ Petrocchi and Couyoumdjian, "impact of gratitude," 193.

¹¹⁸ Isaiah 61:3.

The Psalms have an entire genre devoted to lament with over one-third of Psalms falling into that category.¹¹⁹ Bernhard Anderson writes, “Most of scripture speaks to us while the Psalms speak for us.”¹²⁰ Lament was neither an outlier for individual psalmists nor the entire nation of Israel. In fact, R. L. W. Moberly refers to lament being “at the heart of Israel’s prayers.”¹²¹ But what exactly does it mean to lament? More specifically, what does it mean to lament in a theologically correct way and in a way that is actually intrinsically tied to worship? A “lament” is defined as “a crying out in grief.”¹²² But Christian lament is more than this. Stephen Breck Reid writes, “Worship is not merely animated religion; rather it is the dynamic expression of our core relationship with God. Our relationship with God includes the sharing of the trauma of loss.”¹²³ Indeed, lament is worship.

Gabriel Mendy views psalms of lament as statements of faith.¹²⁴ He writes, “We should not be slow, ashamed, or afraid to voice out in prayer our own bitterness and lament before God as long as we are ready and willing like the psalmist to remain faithful even in the face of God’s silence and seeming indifference.”¹²⁵ He describes the posture of the psalmist as one of simultaneous hope in God and acceptance of the reality that the gift of “intervention or

¹¹⁹ Bruce K. Waltke, James M. Houston, and Erika Moore, *The Psalms as Christian Lament: A Historical Commentary*, (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2014), 13.
<https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.seu.idm.oclc.org/lib/seu/reader.action?docID=4859306&ppg=3>.

¹²⁰ Matthew Kaemingk and Cory B. Wilson, *Work and Worship: Reconnecting Our Labor and Liturgy*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2020), 102.

¹²¹ Waltke, Houston, and Moore, *Psalms as Christian Lament*, 13.

¹²² Merriam-Webster, “Lament,” <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/lament>.

¹²³ Stephen Breck Reid, “Laments and Worship,” *Clergy Journal* 82, no. 2 (2005): 9.
<https://seu.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=19887808&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

¹²⁴ Gabriel Mendy, “The Theological Significance of the Psalm of Lament,” *American Theological Inquiry* 8, no. 1 (2015): 71.
<https://seu.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=108711303&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

¹²⁵ Mendy, “Theological Significance,” 71.

deliverance” may not be given.¹²⁶ Lamenting is not without praise, but rather it is praise without naivete. It is trust that God can handle what one has to say about the most painful aspects of life, even if he chooses to not respond in the way one hopes.

Lament as a Way to Reduce the Chasm

Writing out of his own personal experience as he has walked alongside his wife who has struggled with cancer and chronic illness, Kelly M. Kopic attempts to paint a picture of what it is like to grapple with suffering, specifically physical suffering, and God’s role through it all.¹²⁷ Kopic notes that while it is impossible to know all the answers as to why there is suffering, it is not impossible to encounter the presence of God, who is both loving and compassionate.¹²⁸ Encountering God’s presence in the midst of suffering involves dialogue, dialogue that does not shy away from the dark parts of life. Kopic writes, “We need words and ears that understand suffering, that can handle honesty, vulnerability, and questions, and that know how to bring the wounded to sustaining faith, hope, and love.”¹²⁹ In short, individuals who are suffering need to lament.

Neil Pembroke writes, “There is an unrelenting positive tonality in virtually all of our worship services... If we, however, fail to provide people who are experiencing rage, confusion, and anguish with a liturgical expression of how they are feeling, we isolate and alienate them.”¹³⁰ Referring to psychological research, Pembroke is not suggesting that incessant venting in the church building is a solution, but rather the incorporation of the affirmations of theological truths

¹²⁶ Mendy, “Theological Significance,” 71.

¹²⁷ Kopic, *Embodied Hope*, 1-13.

¹²⁸ Kopic, *Embodied Hope*, 21-23.

¹²⁹ Kopic, *Embodied Hope*, 23.

¹³⁰ Neil Pembroke, *Pastoral Care in Worship: Liturgy and Psychology in Dialogue* (London, UK: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2010), 46. <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.seu.idm.oclc.org/lib/seu/reader.action?docID=601908&ppg=54>.

that direct worshippers towards “the direction of a resolution.”¹³¹ There indeed is clear Biblical evidence of humble submission to God even during hardships. However, there is also Biblical precedent for complaint by the people of God in the midst of suffering. As Pembroke stresses, the presence of one does not negate the other, but encourages balance in pastoral care, particularly in the crafting of worship services.¹³² These types of worship services help bridge the chasm between those suffering by allowing them to bring the entirety of their experiences, including their mental illnesses and disorders into the presence of God and the community.

Gratitude in Grief: Lament to Praise

Although, on the surface, lament may appear to be the exact opposite of gratitude, it is in reality, key to avoiding a gratitude rooted in a false portrayal of reality. Bruce K. Waltke, James M. Houston, and Erika Moore propose that lament places the individual and/or the community in a stance of dependence on God. To lament is to acknowledge one’s need for God’s provision, intervention, healing, etc. Acknowledgement for one’s own need for someone or something beyond oneself is somewhat counter-cultural in the age of individualism and technology.¹³³ There is an aspect of gratitude in lament because to express one’s dependence on God is to acknowledge that He has indeed been one’s source of salvation both in the eternal and temporal sense. There is no reason to lament to God if one has not experienced a revelation of His character. It is from this place of revelation and responsive worship that faithful lamenting can occur out of a posture of gratitude. Harkening back to the discussion of Philippians 4:6-7, thanksgiving (i.e. gratitude) was the stance with which Paul encourages believers to make their requests. The result of such grateful petition and even lamentation is peace, not necessarily the

¹³¹ Pembroke, *Pastoral Care*, 46.

¹³² Pembroke, *Pastoral Care*, 56.

¹³³ Waltke, Houston, and Moore, *Psalms as Christian Lament*, 14.

reception of the exact request one makes. Nonetheless, internal peace with eternal hope is the sustenance with which Christians can labor on through life's struggles, including mental illness. This peace is not defined by the absence of struggles, but rather the presence of the Lord. There is always hope in despair for believers.¹³⁴ Because there is always hope in Christ. As Narelle Jane Melton rightly asserts that lament helps move "distress to praise."¹³⁵

The Word in Lyrics

"Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms, hymns, *and* spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God." (Colossians 3:16)

It is clear throughout not only this verse, but the entirety of the New Testament that musical expressions of worship were synonymous with the early church.¹³⁶ Gordon D. Fee writes, "It needs to be noted, first of all, that where the Spirit of God is there is also singing."¹³⁷ As for the purpose of Paul's command here in Colossians 3:16, Fee argues that Paul is encouraging the church in Colossae to worship in song for a two-fold purpose: the worship of God and the encouragement of one another in the faith. Fee writes, "The use of hymns in the NT documents indicates how clearly they also function in this two-dimensional way for the early church. Most of them are about Christ, and such are both in worship of him and for the continuing instruction of God's people."¹³⁸ Singing is clearly a means by which the word of

¹³⁴ Pembroke, *Pastoral Care*, 56.

¹³⁵ Narelle Jane Melton, "Lessons of Lament: Reflections on the Correspondence Between the Lament Psalms and Early Australian Pentecostal Prayer," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 20, no. 1 (2011): 80. <https://seu.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=60312122&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

¹³⁶ Ernest D. Martin, *Believers Church Bible Commentary: Colossians and Philemon*, (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1993), 176.

¹³⁷ Gordon D. Fee, *God's Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul*, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994), 656.

¹³⁸ Fee, *God's Empowering Presence*, 656-657.

Christ can become not merely head knowledge, but to become ingrained in one's very inner being. Murray J. Harris argues that the phrase translated to "dwell in you richly (Colossians 3:16)" (ἐνοικεῖτω ἐν ὑμῖν πλουσίως) is anything but a passive residency of the "word of Christ (Colossians 3:16)." He writes, "The concept is dynamic, not static: "the message of Christ' is not merely to be present as a resident but is to be operative as a powerful force."¹³⁹

There is a connection between the passage in which Colossians 3:16 sits and the Philippians 4:5-7 passage discussed earlier. Immediately preceding 3:16, Colossians 3:15 says "Let the peace of Christ, to which you were indeed called in one body, rule in your hearts; and be thankful." Peace and thanksgiving are once again critical themes. The presence of this connection of peace of Christ and the indwelling of His word in no small part through the singing of it should not be overlooked. Thanksgiving, petition, singing and the peace which follows these actions bodes as a clear indicator that worship through music most certainly influences one's internal state through the reminders to oneself of His goodness, salvation, and nearness (Philippians 4:5). This reflects heavily the themes within positive psychology that stress the importance of practicing gratitude as a form of improving mental illness (citation). Singing songs of worship not only brings glory to God, but His peace to oneself.

Death and Life: Lyrics Matter

To this point the conversation has focused on the reasons behind worshipping, the neuroscience on the effects of music on the brain, the importance of positive emotions and community, and even the critical role lament plays in worship. However, there has been little discussion as to what actually exactly constitutes worship music. A brief discussion of this is essential before moving on to any discussion of implementation of the argument of this paper.

¹³⁹ Murray J. Harris, *Colossians and Philemon*, (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), 167.

This paper argues that theologically and Biblically sound themes which express adoration, thanksgiving, lament, and honor to the triune God should either simultaneously or individually be present within any music deemed “worship music.” As previously discussed, music is one of the most prevalent places in which theology, both good and bad, is expressed. The consistency and length of time which individuals give to singing and listening to worship music more often than not outweighs the amount of time spent reading their Bibles or listening to sermons, making it all the more important that not only the lyrics sung contain Biblical truth, but Biblical truth not taken out of context.

It is worship music that shapes and defines a great deal of both conscious and subconscious theological views, as well as views about oneself and others. Therefore, worship songs both sung corporately and individually should not necessarily be employed just because they have been labeled “Christian” or “worship” by the music industry. As Proverbs 18:21 states, “Death and life are in the power of the tongue, And those who love it will eat its fruit.” Words can bring about life or death. Raley summarizes this principle in terms of songs by saying, “When you listen to a sad song you’re gonna get sadder.”¹⁴⁰ This principle rings true of any type of emotion or messaging conveyed in the form of song. Therefore, any “worship” should be evaluated for its soundness before ever being sung corporately or even personally whether or not one has any form of mental illness or disorder.¹⁴¹

Evaluating Pentecostal Responses to Mental Illness

There are numerous reasons as to why a discussion on mental health is needed within the Pentecostal community, including the need for discussion and definition of the role of the church

¹⁴⁰ Raley, 2018.

¹⁴¹ Much more could be written on the subject of the importance of right theology in the lyrics of worship songs. However, due to lack of time and space a deep dive will not be made into this area of research and discussion.

in aiding individuals with mental illness, as well as the need for a Christian definition or at least parameters of what mental flourishing.¹⁴² However, for the purpose of this paper, the following discussion will frame the dialogue within the context of current Pentecostal responses to mental illness. The goal of this next section is not to disparage the Pentecostal community, but rather to affirm some of its responses and encourage a shift away from others. Also important, is the foundational understanding of current practices in order to move forward towards discussion of how the argument of this paper can be incorporated within the Pentecostal framework of current practices.

Praying for the Sick

Pentecostals view all of their lives and the world within the framework of the “Full Gospel.”¹⁴³ The Full Gospel affirms that Jesus is Savior, Sanctifier, Spirit Baptizer, Healer, and Soon Coming King.¹⁴⁴ Healing is provided in Jesus’ atonement, making healing an extension of Jesus’ work on the cross.¹⁴⁵ For Pentecostals, Jesus’ role as Healer shapes their entire world view. Pentecostals believe that healing is not simply for one’s physical wholeness, but for one’s emotional and mental wellbeing, as well as communal healing. With this framework, it is only natural, or rather supernatural, that Pentecostals affirm that the healing of mental illnesses and disorders is secured in the shedding of Christ’s blood on the cross. Because of this tenet of Pentecostalism, likely the most common treatment or practice to address mental illnesses and disorders is praying and believing for a miraculous healing.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴² Talk to Tackett.

¹⁴³ Wolfgang Vondey, *Pentecostal Theology: Living the Full Gospel* (London, UK: T&T Clark, 2018), 21.

¹⁴⁴ Vondey, *Pentecostal Theology*, 21.

¹⁴⁵ Vondey, *Pentecostal Theology*, 127-128.

¹⁴⁶ John R. Belcher and Caroline Burry, “Charismatic/Pentecostal Christians, Spirituality, and Treatment: The Revival Phenomenon,” *Journal of Social Work Practice in the Addictions* 7, no. 4 (2007): 99-100
doi:10.1300/J160v07n04 06.

Praying for the sick is a Biblically based practice. Pentecostals often reference James 5:14-15, which states, “Are any among you sick? They should call for the elders of the church and have them pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord. The prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise them up; and anyone who has committed sins will be forgiven (NRSV).” In Pentecostalism, praying for the sick, including those with mental illness, is likely to include laying on of hands, anointing with oil, speaking in tongues (glossolalia), intercession, tarrying at the altar, as well as prayers of faith. Participation of the individual being prayed for is encouraged. At times, one may be praying for one’s self alone or in agreement with other believers. The work of the Holy Spirit is highly emphasized in praying for the sick within Pentecostal circles, which is evidenced by glossolalia being a hallmark practice of praying for those with mental health issues.¹⁴⁷

Spiritual Warfare

Using Ephesians 6:10-18 as a framework, Pentecostals commonly view the world in terms of an ongoing spiritual battle with which they are equipped to fight in by Christ’s gift of the Holy Spirit.¹⁴⁸ Gregory A. Boyd proposes a world view that uses the lens of a spiritual battle of good and evil.¹⁴⁹ Crediting natural disasters, diseases, mental illness, and death to demonic forces, Boyd argues that the brokenness and destruction present in the world is all a part of the battle plan of the enemy.¹⁵⁰ Similarly, Martin Lindhardt notes the belief shared by many

¹⁴⁷ Vondey, *Pentecostal Theology*, 110-113.

¹⁴⁸ Kevin G. Smith, “Spiritual Warfare in African Pentecostalism in the Light of Ephesians,” *Conspectus-The Journal of the South African Theological Seminary Special Edition*, (December 2018): 70-71, <https://www.sats.edu.za/smith-spiritual-warfare-african-pentecostalism-ephesians>.

¹⁴⁹ Talk to Tackett.

¹⁵⁰ Godfrey Harold, ‘An Interlocutory Engagement on Barth’s Shadow Side of Creation and Boyd’s Warfare Theodicy as it Relates to the Origin of Natural Evil,’ *Pharos Journal of Theology 101*, (2020): 6, <https://seu.on.worldcat.org/oclc/8668195178>.

Pentecostals that there are demonic forces which attack their minds.¹⁵¹ He writes, “Pentecostals further believe that Satan and his demons attack people directly (that is, not via human others) by manipulating with the human mind.”¹⁵² While many more mature, as it relates to practicing their faith, Pentecostals believe themselves to be mostly unsusceptible to these attacks, they still view them to be somewhat of a threat if even only on a minor level.¹⁵³ The demonic forces attacking the mind are believed by Pentecostals to be aimed at not only getting them to sin, but getting them distracted by inflicting mental conflict, including mental illnesses.¹⁵⁴ This mentality can often play into the narrative that those suffering from a mental illness or disorder are in some way compromised in their faith, making them more susceptible to an attack of the enemy, which can be incredibly damaging and isolating to individuals with mental illnesses and/or disorders.¹⁵⁵

The belief that demonic activity is the root cause for mental illness makes another common practice of Pentecostals in treating mental illness spiritual warfare, which can include such Pentecostal practices as prayer, speaking in tongues, fasting, laying on of hands, reading/quoting Scripture, and exorcisms.¹⁵⁶ Exorcisms are for the purpose of casting out the demonic entity believed to be the source of the mental ailment. A person may either be possessed or oppressed by the demonic force tormenting them mentally. Therefore, evicting the demon

¹⁵¹ Martin Lindhardt, “Mind, Self and the Devil: Satanic Presence in Internal Conversation Among Chilean Pentecostals,” *Nordic Journal of Religion and Society* 23, no. 2 (2010): 193, <https://seu.on.worldcat.org/oclc/4596521007>.

¹⁵² Lindhardt, “Mind, Self, and the Devil,” 182.

¹⁵³ Lindhardt, “Mind, Self, and the Devil,” 182.

¹⁵⁴ Lindhardt, “Mind, Self, and the Devil,” 177-178.

¹⁵⁵ Please note that this author is not arguing against demonic attack or possession being the cause of some cases of mental illness. However, the pervasive nature of this belief far outweighs the circumstances in which such an approach to mental illness is appropriate, making it an issue that needs to be addressed.

¹⁵⁶ Knut Rio, Michelle MacCarthy, and Ruy Blanes, “Introduction to Pentecostal Witchcraft and Spiritual Politics in Africa and Melanesia,” in *Pentecostalism and Witchcraft Spiritual Warfare in Africa and Melanesia*, ed. Knut Rio, Michelle MacCarthy, and Ruy Blanes (London, UK: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014), 7-9.

from inside or around them is the only solution with any sort of finality.¹⁵⁷ Even in cases where a person is not believed to be possessed by a demon, Pentecostals often still practice spiritual warfare to combat symptoms of mental health because often the belief is that although the person is not possessed, they are still suffering demonic attack, which is attempting to distract and debilitate them.

Pastoral Counseling

Another common method of treating mental health issues in Pentecostalism is pastoral counseling. Pastoral counseling ranges across a variety of different formats. Some pastors have little to no education, while others have higher education degrees with a counseling emphasis. More often pastoral counseling takes the form of spiritual counseling instead of therapy. It is typically situational in which a Pentecostal seeks guidance from their pastor as a direct result of a specific occasion or issue. Typically, pastoral counseling does not extend past a small number of sessions.¹⁵⁸ In most cases, the overall goal of pastoral counseling is to point the individual to the “Word of God, theology, and morality.”¹⁵⁹ Most often individuals receive Biblical advice which they can apply to a specific situation or area of life, which does not necessarily address the entirety of someone’s mental health struggles. Though pastoral counseling in and of itself is not a negative thing, when used as a substitute for therapy facilitated by a professional mental health counselor it can leave an individual at a disadvantage without the tools and treatment that they need.

Aversion to Professional Mental Health Treatment

¹⁵⁷Moses Kumi Asamoah, Joseph Osafob, and Isaac Agyapong, “The Role of Pentecostal Clergy in Mental Health-Care Delivery in Ghana,” *Mental Health, Religion, & Culture* 17, no. 6, (2018): 604-605, <https://seu.on.worldcat.org/oclc/5566387594>.

¹⁵⁸Oliver McMahan, “Spiritual Direction in the Pentecostal/Charismatic Tradition,” in *Spiritual Direction and the Care of Souls*, ed. Gary W. Moon and David G. Benner (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press), 163.

¹⁵⁹McMahan, “Spiritual Direction,” 163.

John R. Belcher and Caroline Burry analyze the tendency of what they refer to as “Charismatic/Pentecostal Christians,” or “CPCs” for short, to seek “revival” as the cure for their mental health issues.¹⁶⁰ While acknowledging the potential benefits of religious connection, they also note the challenge of social workers to treat CPCs within their religious context because of their dependence upon healing and deliverance, as well as their traditional resistance to seeking outside treatments, such as therapy.¹⁶¹ Belcher and Burry note that CPCs typically only turn to treatments outside of the CPC community as the very last resort. This is in part to a commonly held belief that one is suffering due to a lack of faith or distance from God. This mentality leads many CPCs to believe that their mental health challenges are a direct result of their failure to pursue or maintain a proper relationship with God.¹⁶² Blaming themselves for what they perceive to be their own spiritual inadequacies, can be extremely damaging in the journey of finding healing and support along the mental health journeys of CPCs.

Richard D. Dobbins notes the somewhat prevalent skepticism of psychotherapy to Pentecostalism's historical ties to Fundamentalism, which itself developed out of a cultural shift towards reason and naturalism.¹⁶³ This transition within the culture, particularly in higher education, diminished the influence of Christianity in somewhat of a notable way. Explaining things logically and/or scientifically became the desired response instead of what were deemed as over-spiritualized explanations of things occurring within the natural realm.¹⁶⁴ This skepticism of therapy, particularly non-Biblically based counseling, has translated to a significant extent into

¹⁶⁰ Belcher and Burry, “The Revival Phenomenon,” 93-94.

¹⁶¹ Belcher and Burry, “The Revival Phenomenon,” 96.

¹⁶² Belcher and Burry, “The Revival Phenomenon,” 100-103.

¹⁶³ Talk to Tackett.

¹⁶⁴ Richard D. Dobbins. “Psychotherapy with Pentecostal Protestants,” in *Handbook of Psychotherapy and Religious Diversity*. ed. P. Scott Richards and Allen E. Bergin, (Washington, D. C.: American Psychological Association, 1999), 156-157.

modern Pentecostalism. There is often apprehension that their therapist may not accept their faith or that fellow members in the Pentecostal community will regard them as weak Christians.¹⁶⁵

Further breaking down the stigma of receiving professional mental health treatment, Dobbins notes that a sizable portion of Pentecostals experience guilt and fear surrounding the idea or action of seeking and receiving professional mental health treatment, which he argues is rooted in a false doctrinal teaching that holy and righteous living leads to a life without problems, or at least sizable problems. Pentecostals in turn believe that their mental struggles are evidence that they are in some area of their lives not living in a way pleasing to God. This doctrinal misconception is refuted with Biblical examples of righteous people who endured great suffering such as Job.¹⁶⁶

Dobbins proposes that in recent years the stigma around receiving therapy has begun to gradually diminish by pointing out the development of a community of mental health professionals within Pentecostalism. Despite the development of this community, Dobbins draws attention to the reality that many Pentecostals feel guilty for seeking help.¹⁶⁷ Arguably the greatest reason for this is that many Pentecostals tend to believe that seeking professional mental health care indicates a lack of faith and trust in God to heal or deliver them of their “problem or condition.”¹⁶⁸ Louis G. Santos and Zornitsa Kalibatseva address the strong aversion that Pentecostals, particularly Hispanic Pentecostals with depression, have to seeking help for mental illness as a result of these feelings of guilt and shame. They note that the stigma around seeking help for depression is greater among Hispanics than whites in Pentecostalism, adding race as an

¹⁶⁵ Dobbins, “Psychotherapy with Pentecostal Protestants,” 168.

¹⁶⁶ Dobbins, “Psychotherapy with Pentecostal Protestants,” 168.

¹⁶⁷ Dobbins, “Psychotherapy with Pentecostal Protestants,” 168.

¹⁶⁸ Dobbins, “Psychotherapy with Pentecostal Protestants,” 168.

additional factor to be considered when reviewing the others to be covered in this essay.¹⁶⁹ It is most certainly not the purpose of this paper to contribute to the stigma of mental illness within the Pentecostal community. In actuality, the purpose of this paper is to do quite the opposite by encouraging individuals both suffering from and supporting those with mental illness to step out in a great act of faith to find help and healing both within (Spiritual care and practices) and outside (professional mental healthcare) the church.

Incorporating Pentecostal Praxi and Professional Treatment

Equipping Pentecostals with better understanding and tools with which to help those suffering from mental health issues of all kinds is vital to ministry not only to those within the Pentecostal community, but to those outside of it who may turn to the Pentecostal community for help. A 2014 Pew Research survey indicated that around 40% of individuals suffering from mental health problems sought help or guidance from clergy.¹⁷⁰ This reality makes it vital that Pentecostals have a response which does not damage those struggling with mental illness by perpetuating guilt and shame, but instead encourages them to find wholeness. This is not impossible. In fact, the toolkit with which Pentecostals work can be used to help individuals with mental health struggles if it is used in the healthy and proper context.¹⁷¹ Knut Rio, Michelle MacCarthy, and Ruy Blanes write, “They fully embrace the invisible world and take control of it.”¹⁷² This perspective of taking authority over the unseen can be coupled with other aids to those facing mental health challenges to create a holistic treatment plan.

¹⁶⁹ Louis G. Santos and Zornitsa Kalibatseva, “Perceptions of Depression Among Hispanics with Pentecostal Beliefs,” *Mental Health, Religion, and Culture* 22, no. 8 (2019): 779-782, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13674676.2019.1644305>.

¹⁷⁰ Santos and Kalibatseva, “Perceptions of Depression,” 780.

¹⁷¹ Rio, MacCarthy, and Blanes, “Introduction to Pentecostal Witchcraft,” 10.

¹⁷² Rio, MacCarthy, and Blanes, “Introduction to Pentecostal Witchcraft,” 10.

Dobbins champions his belief that many practices within Pentecostalism, such as prayer both in one's own native language or glossolalia, can help alleviate some of the symptoms of anxiety. He affirms the need for Pentecostals to incorporate their beliefs and practices within any professional mental health treatments.¹⁷³ Proposing treatment of mental health conditions for Pentecostals to be a combination of their personal beliefs and professional mental health care, Dobbins encourages education and communication between Pentecostal ministers and therapists in order to destigmatize seeking treatment and properly equip therapists with an understanding of Pentecostal perspective.¹⁷⁴

Pentecostals' are committed to their belief that the work of the Holy Spirit transforms lives.¹⁷⁵ Most Pentecostals not only believe this, but have experienced the supernatural in nearly every aspect of their lives. Because of this reality, Oliver McMahan encourages psychotherapists to be receptive of the existence of the spiritual gifts and the miraculous in order to ease fears that their belief system is thought to be invalidated in their therapist's eyes.¹⁷⁶ Pentecostals have a deeply theologically rooted desire to become more Christ-like and to grow in their relationship with God. This is an enroute for therapists to encourage emotional growth simultaneously with spiritual growth.¹⁷⁷ Incorporating prayer and Scripture into the professional treatment of Pentecostals is helpful in developing a holistic treatment for the entire being of the individual.¹⁷⁸

Proposing a theologically rooted approach, Dobbins suggests that reframing Pentecostals' understanding of God, their identity, and mental health is vital to destigmatizing mental health issues. Remembering that God is a God of love who sacrificed His Son so that they might be

¹⁷³ Dobbins, "Psychotherapy with Pentecostal Protestants," 174-176.

¹⁷⁴ Dobbins, "Psychotherapy with Pentecostal Protestants," 182.

¹⁷⁵ McMahan, "Spiritual Direction," 156.

¹⁷⁶ McMahan, "Spiritual Direction," 159.

¹⁷⁷ McMahan, "Spiritual Direction," 160.

¹⁷⁸ Dobbins, "Psychotherapy with Pentecostal Protestants," 168-169.

redeemed realigns a right view of God as loving and not impossible to please. Pentecostals should also remember their identity as “joint-heirs with Christ (Romans 8:17, NRSV).” This identity is not conditional upon any mental health struggles, but only upon the acceptance of Christ as Savior.¹⁷⁹ Additionally, Pentecostals should remember that depression is represented in the Bible, for example David and Elijah.¹⁸⁰ These individuals served God and were greatly loved by Him, but still experienced mental suffering. Reminding individuals of these Pentecostal theologically affirmed truths both within Pentecostal communities and within the professional treatment of Pentecostals refutes false doctrinal beliefs that cause guilt and shame for experiencing mental illness.

Spirit and Science

Despite the existence of some damaging responses to mental illness within Pentecostalism, the positive influence of Pentecostal practices are certainly not to be negated.¹⁸¹ Pentecostals firmly believe that in some way or another, whether directly or indirectly, demonic forces contribute to mental distress.¹⁸² It is then only a natural conclusion that spiritual causes must be met with spiritual treatment, particularly practices empowered by the Holy Spirit.¹⁸³ However, the reality that the brokenness of the world is spiritually rooted does not mean that God always works through spiritual practices alone to resolve mental health issues. Sometimes, He chooses to have individuals walk out extremely difficult struggles with mental illness with the help of professional mental health workers. Because of such cases, the Pentecostal community should work to reduce stigma around receiving outside help in order to

¹⁷⁹ Dobbins, “Psychotherapy with Pentecostal Protestants,” 170.

¹⁸⁰ Dobbins, “Psychotherapy with Pentecostal Protestants,” 171.

¹⁸¹ Talk to Tackett.

¹⁸² Amos Yong, *The Spirit of Creation: Modern Science and Divine Action in the Pentecostal-Charismatic Imagination* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2011), 176.

¹⁸³ Vondey, *Pentecostal Theology*, 110-113.

encourage individuals to get the help they need without feeling as if they have abandoned their faith in God.¹⁸⁴ Nonetheless, seeking professional help should never be done at the expense of abandoning Pentecostal practices, at least those which are not deemed harmful to the individual, such as exorcisms on those who are not possessed. God is a God who is not limited to healing people through only obvious Pentecostal practices, but a God who works through whatever He sees fit. “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. (Isaiah 55:8-9, NRSV)” God is more than capable of healing mental illness, but this does not mean that He always chooses to. Accepting the reality that God’s ways are not our own, means that praying and believing for a miracle can coexist with receiving professional mental health treatment.

Survivors of Sex Trafficking

Sex trafficking is a widespread global and national tragedy that often hides in plain sight. The United Nations defines human trafficking as the following:

The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸⁴ Dobbins, “Psychotherapy with Pentecostal Protestants,” 156-169.

¹⁸⁵ Cathy Zimmerman and Ligia Kiss, “Human trafficking and exploitation: A global health concern,” Accessed March 3, 2022, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5699819/#:~:text=The%20United%20Nations%20defines%20trafficking,or%20of%20the%20giving%20or.>

Of an estimated 24.9 million individuals in forced labor globally, an estimated 4.8 million are exploited in the sex trafficking industry. Of this number 99% are women.¹⁸⁶ Although every sex trafficking survivor's story is different, each one has experienced trauma by "human design" in which one individual has intentionally coerced and abused them.¹⁸⁷

Survivors have experienced severe trauma, specifically complex trauma which is the result of extended exposure often to "several forms of interpersonal trauma."¹⁸⁸ Once escaping the exposure, survivors must overcome varying difficult challenges, ranging from their physical and mental wounds to the stigma within society of being a "victim." There is often a sense that the imprisonment and trauma they have experienced is in some way their fault, which in and of itself can cause more mental wounds.¹⁸⁹ This reality makes it all the more important for sex trafficking survivors to find activities that link them to a community of people for support. Such deep wounds require a great deal of intentionality in crafting an atmosphere where both the practical and spiritual needs of these individuals can be met along the journey of healing. The following insight was obtained through an interview with two individuals that work as program directors at a post-safehouse facility for girls who have been rescued or escaped out of sex trafficking. This facility is a place that helps address the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual needs of these girls. They receive tools, including counseling, education, and training, that will help them begin new lives in which they can find hope and a future. Names and locations will be changed and/or withheld for the safety of both the victims of trafficking and

¹⁸⁶ International Labor Organization, "Forced labor, modern day slavery, and human trafficking," accessed March 2, 2022, <https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/forced-labour/lang--en/index.htm>.

¹⁸⁷ Raley, 2018.

¹⁸⁸ Christine A. Courtois and Julian D. Ford, *Treatment of Complex Trauma: A Sequenced, Relationship-Based Approach* (New York, NY: Guilford Press, 2013), 3.

¹⁸⁹ Raley, 2018.

those who work with them. Miriam and Phoebe will be the names used for the two directors spoken with during this interview.¹⁹⁰

“The sex industry uses music to groom women, buyers of women, and to groom pimps,” said Miriam. Music plays a large role in stripping away and mutilating the identity of these girls. However, music has the power to help restore identity and self-worth as well. Miriam summarized this powerfully by the following statement: “Music is used both as a weapon and a form of healing.” To further illustrate this point, this paper will refer to the lyrics found in two well-known 2013 songs. Robin Thicke’s “Blurred Line” contains the following lyrics: “Tried to domesticate ya/ But you’re an animal/ Baby it’s your nature.” The messaging both subliminally and explicitly influences listeners to view themselves in one of two roles: owner or possession/pet. It is neither unknown nor an anomaly. “Blurred Lines” spent a little over three months in the top spot on the Billboard Hot 100 in 2013. Another example of harmful misogynistic lyrics can be found in Eminem’s “Love Game” feat. Kendrick Lamar, in which the 2022 Super Bowl performer sings, “Snatch the b*tch out her car through the window, she screamin’ / I body slam her onto the cement, until the concrete gave and created a sinkhole / Bury this stink h* in it, then paid to have the street re-paved.”¹⁹¹ There is no lack of popular music that continually conditions pimps, johns, and victims into the sex trafficking industry. This abhorrent reality makes the need for an antidote to such music all the more apparent.

“Why does it feel so peaceful here?” According to Phoebe, this is a common statement from girls at the facility. Both Phoebe and Miriam strongly believe that the reality that the facility is bathed in prayer and worship music is critical to setting the atmosphere for healing.

¹⁹⁰ There will be no specific citations of this interview for safety reasons.

¹⁹¹ Michelle Lulic, “12 Songs with Lyrics that are Actually Super Misogynistic,” accessed January 24, 2022, <https://www.bustle.com/articles/137558-12-songs-that-are-actually-full-of-super-misogynistic-lyrics>.

Playing only worship music “decreases triggers” for the girls. The contrast between conditioning misogynistic lyrics to worship music that both speaks of a loving God and speaks an identity of value and worth over the girls sets the tone that reinforces the reality that the girls are in a “safe environment” not only physically, but mentally and spiritually. Miriam describes the importance of this by saying, “When we exchange what has been degraded for what is holy, we use worship music as the vehicle to express value and dignity.” Worship music gives back these girls their humanity.”¹⁹²

Worship music might could be described as soundtrack for healing for these sex trafficking survivors. It is what they listen to during times of work, recreation, and devotions. However, the influence of worship music does not end there. The girls and the program directors participate in corporate worship at a small local church in their community, as well. They experience songs of worship in the context of the gathered body of Christ. Worship for them is not simply an auditory experience, but one mode in which they can find community critical to their healing. Worship music is a vehicle for community both in the facility and in the church. Additionally, worship music is an aid to practices, such as prayer walks and trauma-informed yoga, that help the girls connect to their bodies in ways that are critical to recovering from such violent physical trauma. Worship services are also a time of embodied worship in that the girls can worship through singing, playing instruments, raising their hands, and the like.

Summary

Although this is not a case study by any means, the reality that worship music is being used as a key component of the recovery of these specific girls now free from the sex trafficking industry poses the need for greater discussion and research. The directors of this facility show a

¹⁹² Dixon, “Music and Human Rights,” 131.

clear belief that worship music is not a small factor in the journey from shattered to whole. This belief system aligns with research out of the fields of both neuroscience and psychology discussed earlier in this paper. Music has the ability to improve neural connectivity.¹⁹³ Practicing focusing on positive things, including positive portrayals of oneself as valuable, are vital to moving toward mental flourishing.¹⁹⁴ Worship music, when containing positive messaging about God and people, harnesses the power of both the melody of the music and the positive psychology of the lyrics.

Even more essential, worship music, both in corporate and individual contexts, invites or rather acknowledges the presence and power of the one true, omniscient, and omnipotent God. It transforms and forms worshippers.¹⁹⁵ In worship, there is space for honest conversation with God about the highs and lows of life, lament and gratitude. It provides a vehicle for the development of a community that is tied to something greater.¹⁹⁶ Worship itself puts worshippers “in rhythm”¹⁹⁷ with God. Worship leader Brooke Ligertwood describes what takes place during worship by saying, “When we worship and join that song (the worship taking place both in the heavenlies eternally and on earth for generations), we are drawing down some of the reality of what is in heaven.”¹⁹⁸ This is true of all worship, but there is something unique when worship takes place in the form of song.

¹⁹³ Wilkins et al., “Network Science,” 4-5.

¹⁹⁴ Petrocchi and Couyoumdjian, “impact of gratitude,” 193.

¹⁹⁵ Alvarado, “Worship in the Spirit,” 135.

¹⁹⁶ Van Cappellen, Edwards, and Fredrickson, “Upward spirals,” 95.

¹⁹⁷ Green, “The Coming of God,” 50.

¹⁹⁸ Brooke Ligertwood, “Episode 369: Brooke Ligertwood + Seven,” February 28, 2022, in *That Sounds Fun with Annie F. Downs*, produced by Annie F. Downs, <https://open.spotify.com/episode/0Xmq6LKMCiMey2x8VXd4M8?si=780f3b54f27d4e81>.

Sutton writes, “Part of music’s unique potential as an art form is that it is always in a state of becoming.”¹⁹⁹ Furthering this line of thought, Peter De Backer writes, “*the music anticipates something, which is not yet there, a type of structure within which the patient can enter [into].*”²⁰⁰ Though Sutton and De Backer were referencing the use of music in music therapy with trauma victims, the same principle of music “anticipat(ing) something, which is not yet there”²⁰¹ does not change whether in a therapist's office, church sanctuary, or a car. This aspect of music simultaneously inhabiting a future state of fullness of melody resembles the Pentecostal belief that the kingdom of God exists now, but has not yet reached fruition.²⁰² The “now” and “not yet” speaks directly to mental illnesses and disorders in that healing is not always promised in the present, but is still within grasp.

Conclusion

Wounds for Healing: Acts 16

25 Now about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them; **26** and suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone’s chains were unfastened. **27** When the jailer awoke and saw the prison doors opened, he drew *his* sword and was about to kill himself, thinking that the prisoners had escaped. **28** But Paul called out with a loud voice, saying, “Do not harm yourself, for we are all here!” **29** And *the jailer* asked for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear, he fell down before Paul and Silas; **30** and after he brought them out, he said, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”

¹⁹⁹ Julie Sutton, “A Flash of the Obvious: Music Therapy and Trauma,” in *Case Examples of Music Therapy for Event Therapy*, ed. Kenneth E. Bruscia (Gilsum, NH: Barcelona Publishers, 2012), 67.

²⁰⁰ Sutton, “Flash of the Obvious,” 68.

²⁰¹ Sutton, “Flash of the Obvious,” 68.

²⁰² Scotland, ““now and the not yet,”” 289.

In Acts 16:16-34, Paul and Silas found themselves in a desperate situation in Philippi after the exorcism of a slave girl. Because of her freedom from demonic bondage she was no longer valuable to her owners, who only viewed her as “an economic object of gain.”²⁰³ Her owners and a mob emboldened by the support and solidarity of the magistrates saw to their beating and imprisonment.²⁰⁴ Their obedience and commitment to carrying the Gospel (the full-Gospel) to the world had left them in bondage and pain. Their response? To pray and sing hymns in the midnight hour. It was after they had begun to pray and sing that the prison was shaken, the prison doors opened, and not only their shackles, but the shackles of every prisoner were loosed.²⁰⁵ Despite the freedom they now had, they did not flee immediately, but rather stayed and continued ministering until the jailer and his family became believers in the one true God who had freed Paul and Silas. God used the pain inflicted upon them because of their faithfulness to Him for a purpose that not only brought about their freedom, but the freedom of all those in close proximity to them, including the very one in charge of overseeing that their imprisonment was maintained.

This story can serve simultaneously as a critique and an encouragement to the response of the Pentecostal community to individuals with mental illnesses and disorders. First, the pain and bondage that individuals suffer from mental illness should not be blamed on them. In the case of sex trafficking survivors, their mental wounds they are overcoming are the result of the literal “human design.”²⁰⁶ In cases perhaps not viewed as obviously non self-inflicted, not blaming the individual with mental illness or disorder is still crucial. It is even not unreasonable to consider

²⁰³ J. Bradley Chance, *Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary: Acts* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys Publishing Inc., 2007), 286.

²⁰⁴ Chance, *Acts*, 286.

²⁰⁵ James D. G. Dunn, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Grand Rapids, MA: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996), 197.

²⁰⁶ Raley, 2018.

that someone's mental pain and imprisonment is not due to a moral failing or lack of faith, but, like Paul and Silas, it possibly be tied to something they have done right. The connection between empathy and mental disorders such as anxiety and depression are being explored with some signs that individuals with higher levels of empathy may in some cases be more likely to struggle with depression and anxiety.²⁰⁷ If this is true, then those with a greater sense of compassion and caring for others might just be more at risk. Regardless, blaming an individual for their suffering or pain is not the right response, and can be damaging and isolating, leaving them in more pain and cut-off from the believing community that should come alongside them as the earthly, tangible example of the love of God.

Power is paramount to Pentecostalism. From Acts 2 to Azusa, baptism in the Holy Spirit has often been synonymous with signs and wonders. Subsequently, the desire to see individuals miraculously freed from the weight of mental illness is an appropriate and even necessary response to witnessing brokenness. However, any such desire should not and must not turn into an attack on the individual. As William J. Seymour argued, glossolalia, miracles, and the like are not the main evidence of true transformation by baptism in the Holy Spirit. In the words of Seymour,

The baptism in the Holy Ghost and fire means to be flooded with the love of God and power for service, and a love for the truth as it is in God's word. So when we receive it we have the same signs to follow as the disciples received on the day of Pentecost. For

²⁰⁷ Erin B. Tone and Erin C. Tully, "Empathy as a "risky strength": A multilevel examination of empathy and risk for internalizing disorders," *Development and Psychopathology* 26, Special Issue (2014), 1559. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0954579414001199>.

the Holy Spirit gives us a sound mind, faith, love and power (2 Tim. 1:7). This is the standard Jesus gave to the church.²⁰⁸

Love must be the motivation in every response both to those within and outside of the walls of the Church suffering from mental illnesses and disorders. It is with the lens of love that those with mental health struggles must be viewed and treated. From prayer for healing to ensuring them that seeking treatment from licensed medical professionals, love should never be absent.

Second, something that should not be overlooked is that although the assumption when reading the text is that the earthquake was a Divine act, the text itself does not state this. It might actually be argued that, as J. Bradley Chance suggests, the earthquake appears to be portrayed as a “naturalistic” cause for the opening of the prison doors and the loosening of the fetters binding the prisoners.²⁰⁹ There is a parallel that could and arguably should be made here to acknowledge that God can work through things that might not necessarily be deemed “miraculous” to bring about freedom and healing. For example, individuals with mental illness and/or disorders who receive clinical treatment, including but not limited to professional therapy and medication. Just because the means of healing do not originate in a church, does not mean they are not Divinely ordained or inspired.

Third, this story of Paul and Silas serves as an incredible reminder that singing the praises of the Lord is not a new phenomena, but rather a Biblical example of what to do when one finds themselves bound. It is no coincidence that singing preceded their freedom. Worshiping in the form of song is both scientifically proven and Biblically illustrated to unlock something. In the case of mental illnesses and disorders, singing lyrics that reinforce themes of gratitude can

²⁰⁸ Paul N. Van der Laan, “Towards a Pentecostal Theology of Compassion,” *JEPTA: Journal of the European Pentecostal Theological Association* 31, no. 1 (2011), 38.

doi: 10.1179/jep.2011.31.1.004.

²⁰⁹ Chance, *Acts*, 288.

alleviate or improve symptoms of depression and anxiety. Music in and of itself has been shown to be a powerful tool to help individuals with schizophrenia, depression, anxiety, and even trauma survivors. All of this is proven in the “natural,” a reality which should not be negated. However, God is not limited to the explainable as is testified in Acts 16. Despite the reality that the earthquake in the Acts 16 text is not explicitly proclaimed as Divine intervention, there are other places in Scripture, including at YAHWEH’s revelation at Mt. Sinai (Exodus 19:18) and when Christ’s redemptive work was finished on the cross (Matthew 27:51), where an earthquake indicative of much more than shifting of the soil, but a shifting from bondage to freedom found in the Triune God. Healing of mental illnesses or disorders can and may be healed in a way that is explainable by no other means than the miraculous work of God. This reality must never be negated even as the Pentecostal and greater Christian community makes shifts away from damaging framing of miraculous healing being available to anyone if they are able to attain the required and acceptable level of faith. In fact, singing while bound is a beautiful statement of faith in and of itself that a shaking can take place at any minute leaving the captives free from whatever is restraining them, including mental illness and disorders.

Fourth, the text in Acts 16 makes a point to acknowledge that though the prison doors were opened and all the shackles of those within the prison loosed, Paul and Silas’ did not flee from the prison. By remaining, they were able to prevent the jailer from taking his own life and lead him and his entire family to Christ. This is in direct contrast from Peter’s escape from prison in Acts 12 in which following his waking by an angel, he fled immediately. After Peter’s escape, the guards were killed for their failure to keep him locked away. After Paul and Silas’ choice to remain, the jailer and his family were saved.²¹⁰ Their choice to not run from the place of their

²¹⁰ F. Scott Spencer, *Acts* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 168.

imprisonment despite the literal open doors speaks something to experienced Pentecostals reluctant to remain in or revisit places in which their perceived weaknesses, such as mental illnesses and disorders, are easier to see or remember. Freedom does not mean forgetting. It can be in the remaining and in the remembering that one's own testimony of healing or even coping can serve as a lifeline to others.

Fifth and finally, pivotal to the relevance of the Acts 16 text to the discussion on worship and mental health is the reality that their wounds were not healed when the earthquake loosed their chains. Abraham Smith writes of Paul and Silas' condition, "To be stripped was to be degraded; to be whipped, and thus to lose the body's integrity, was to be marked with visible violability, and thus the markings of the enslaved (Philo, Flacc. 10.75)."²¹¹ These markings of not only physical pain, but degradation did not vanish after the earthquake. In fact, these wounds were a part of the salvation testimony of the jailer and his family. In response to the Gospel, the jailer brought Paul and Silas to his home to care for them. F. Bruce writes, "The jailor bathed the wounded backs of the two missionaries before he took them into his house, possibly at a well in the prison courtyard, and there too he and his household received baptism at their hands. "He washed and was washed," says Chrysostom: "he washed them from their stripes and he himself was washed from his sins" (Homily xxxvi.2)."²¹² Had these wounds been healed in an instant when they were freed, the jailer would have been robbed of this experience.

The jailer's experience in washing Paul and Silas' wounds is not the only one relevant here. F. J. Foakes Jackson and Kirsopp Lake point out an interesting conclusion regarding the

²¹¹ Abraham Smith, "Incarceration on Trial: The Imprisonment of Paul and Silas in Acts 16," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 140, no. 4 (2021), 809.
doi: 10.1353/jbl.2021.0037.

²¹² F. F. Bruce, *Commentary on the Book of the Acts* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1984), 338.

Greek phrase (ἔλουσεν ἀπὸ τῶν πληγῶν) translated in the NASB to “washed their wounds (Acts 16:33 NASB).” They write, “But more probably we should regard it as a pregnant construction, ‘he bathed them so that they were relieved from their stripes.’”²¹³ It was in the sharing of their wounds that Paul and Silas found healing. The healing did not come because the wounds were hidden, but rather because they were exposed and washed by another. This should spark either conviction or relief that hiding mental illnesses and disorders because of shame and fear should never be normative or the status quo. The solution for such a problem is two-fold. First, spaces within the church (not only the church building, but the people) should be created that encourage and enable vulnerability. This is critical because, as research with individuals within the Pentecostal and charismatic communities with depression conducted by Joy Allan illustrates, when pressure to manufacture a “performance” is present, worship services can actually be damaging.²¹⁴ Second, those suffering from mental illnesses and disorders should take the incredibly brave step to share in places where they feel supported and seen. One without the other will be lacking and even damaging.

By His Wounds

There is power in wounds...uncovered, unhidden wounds. After all, if it is by Jesus’ stripes that we are healed (1 Peter 2:24), why would we think that by anything else but our wounds we could help others and ourselves find healing and freedom? “Jesus wept (John 11:35)” and worshiped (Matthew 6:9). Why would we believe these two things are mutually exclusive? Jesus suffered. Why would we be ashamed of or shame for suffering? Kopic points to an

²¹³ Kirsopp Lake and Henry J. Cadbury, *The Beginnings of Christianity Part 1: The Acts of the Apostles*, ed. F. J. Foakes Jackson and Kirsopp Lake, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1965), 199.

²¹⁴ Joy Allan, “Sertraline, Suffering, and the Spirit: How do Pentecostal/Charismatic Christians respond faithfully to depression?” (PhD diss., University of Aberdeen, 2018), 256.

interesting text in order to rightly emphasize the role that Jesus' suffering played in His salvific work. Kopic writes:

“And being made perfect [through his sufferings], he became the source of eternal salvation” (Heb 5:9. Salvation is here linked to Jesus' whole life: his moment of solidarity *with* us concludes with his sacrificial death for us. Many stumble over the words *made perfect*, wondering how it is that Jesus the Son of God was not already perfect. Perfect here does not mean sinless, as if he were previously sinful, but refers rather to *fullness* or *completeness*. He lives a full or complete life, one filled with joy and delight, but also one plagued by pain and struggle.²¹⁵

The thought of Jesus' height of solidarity and completeness of His humanity reaching its fullness through His suffering should provoke us to realize that suffering, indeed, can move us closer to the fullness of being like Christ. There should be no shame in struggling with the pain of mental illnesses and/or disorders, which are in reality the result of a fallen and broken world. Instead, that suffering can be a place in which to encounter the love of God at a deeper level than possible in the places that are not in need of healing. Worshiping in song in the darkest moments, the midnight hours, is a beautiful, yet powerful way to invite others into the suffering, the gratitude, and the hope. Even more so, it is a way in which to come into agreement that though healing may not be yet, it will be whether now or in eternity.

²¹⁵ Kopic, *Embodied Hope*, 93.

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broaden-and-build motif by writing, "With the repetition over time of these moments of