EXPANDING PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION



PHILOSOPHIES OF LITURGY

Explorations of Embodied Religious Practice

Edited by J. Aaron Simmons,
Bruce Ellis Benson & Neal DeRoo

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For all those who have modeled spiritual practice regardless of religious belief, and everyone else who finds philosophy of religion too theoretical.

CONTENTS

List of Contributors ix
Foreword xi
Jean-Yves Lacoste
Acknowledgements xvi

Introduction 1

Part I On Spiritual Practice

1 What is Spiritual Practice? 15
Clare Carlisle

2 Why Philosophy Should Concern Itself with Liturgy: Philosophical Examination of Religion and Ritual Practice 27
Christina M. Gschwandtner

3 Engagement, Immersion, and Enactment: The Role of Spiritual Practice in Religious Belief 47
John Cottingham

4 Liturgical Jellyfish 61
John Sanders

Part II Liturgy and Social Existence

5 Power and Protest: A Christian Liturgical Response to Religious Trauma 77
Michelle Panchuk

6 Religion as a Way of Life: On Being a Believer 97
Bruce Ellis Benson

7 Blessing Things 117
Terence Cuneo

8 Liturgical Groups, Religions, and Social Ontology 135
Kevin Schilbrack

Part III Materiality and Religiosity

9 Material Spirituality and the Expressive Nature of Liturgy 157
Neal DeRoo

10 Dark Times and Liturgies of Truth: The Uses and Abuses of Reason 173
Wendy Farley

11 Compassionate Action: Taking Eckhart, Farley, and the Beguines to Bethany 191
Sharon L. Baker Putt

12 After Metaphysics?: The "Weight of Life" According to Saint Augustine 207
Emmanuel Falque

Part IV Knowledge, Sound, and Hope

13 Knowing God by Liturgically Addressing God 223
Nicholas Wolterstorff

14 Beyond "Belief": Liturgy and the Cognitive Apprehension of God 247
Sarah Coakley

15 Corporate Liturgical Silence 257
Joshua Cockayne

16 "You Have Given Us the Grace to Pray Together in Harmony": Orthodox Liturgical Singing as a Criterion for (Philosophical? Theological?) Aesthetics 271
Brian A. Butcher

17 Liturgy and Eschatological Hope 287
J. Aaron Simmons and Eli Simmons

INDEX 304

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FOREWORD

Liturgy: From Word to Concept

JEAN-YVES LACOSTE
TRANSLATED BY CHRISTOPHER C. RIOS

Not every word is conceptually loaded, nor is every concept always adequately expressed in words. What, then, do we mean when a word without philosophical weight—"liturgy"—is nominated for the dignity of a concept? We mean nothing new, because there is nothing here that has not preceded us for quite some time and has not been investigated abundantly with other words. Luther was not the first to speak of an *esse coram Deo*—of a being facing God or a being in the presence of God—but he set down words that became essential after him. These words survived him, even up to the tripartition of the "*coram* relation" in Ebeling (1979, 346–55). However, other words occupied the intellectual landscape of modern times when, in order to orchestrate this relation, these left the language of "being" (*être*) so as to favor that of feeling (*sentiment*) or of sensing (*sentir*), however precisely we understand these terms.[1] Does being-in-presence require being spoken of and analyzed in this language? Or, more precisely, how was the language of sensing mobilized by those who wanted to say being-in-presence after the privileged mode of presence to God? From Schleiermacher to Herrmann, hell was paved with good intentions. Schleiermacher wanted to revive the living relation of man to the Absolute (or to God) by opposing the "enlightened" rule of the understanding, and against this move there are no objections. Moreover, his project was fed by pietistic memories, and again there are no objections against a tradition that nurtured the best theological book devoted to the religious role of affect, that of Jonathan Edwards (1959). However, with a keen sense of things (*avec beaucoup de flair*), Jaroslav Pelikan (who once had the idea of becoming a new Schleiermacher but refused the temptation) has called attention to a monument of pietistic self-assertion, Zinzendorf's *Twenty-One Discourses or Dissertations upon the Augsburg Confession*, in which the "I sense" is the unmeasurable measure of every Christian doctrine and therefore of the relation to God according to its Christian usage.[2] The monarchy of pious feeling and the monarchy of an impious or agnostic transcendental understanding, Zinzendorf, the *Aufklärung*, Schleiermacher, and so on—these testify to an oscillation whose destiny was disastrous. In the end, there remains an always (and for us still) possible

substitution by which a "religious experience" realized in the element of feeling claims to reveal the entire meaning of man's presence to God corresponding to God's presence to man. It is wise not to accept the god of feeling (*sentir*) too quickly, as it is wise not to accept too quickly the antagonistic divinity, the god of a reason that has no heart.

No one is "in presence" without qualification, for every presence is doubly determined: first, by that (or the one) toward which we make ourselves present, and, second, by that (or the one) which makes itself present toward us. Ebeling speaks of a triple "*coram* relation," and it is at once clear in his text and intuitively obvious that we do not face God like we face the world, and like the world faces us, and so on. Here and there it is a matter of "being": being before God, being before the world, and so on. To speak of being is as necessary as it is prudent. It releases us from every discourse in terms of sensing or of some knowledge (*connaissance*) reflected in words, or in terms of some making present that would be the fruit of a will. To speak of being does not appeal to the prestige of the "act of being," but amounts to taking up the language of fact or factuality. *Esse coram Deo*, of course, does not possess a permanent phenomenality, for we can avoid God—and if it is true that we can avoid the world, it is also true that we know how to avoid ourselves. But it is upon this point that one must insist: even when we manage not to avoid God, even if he made us capable of not avoiding him, we must still take up the language of being or of simple fact in order not to use misleading words. This language is poor, to be sure. Allow us to enrich it.

The *esse* of which we speak is indeed our own: that of the only animal that takes part in the triple *coram* relation, in short, that of the only animal of which one can say that it *exists* (one will allow us to settle upon a fixed usage of the word). What are we saying in this way? Negatively, we are saying that neither angels nor cats participate in the triple relation in the same way that we participate in it. Cats have a world, but this is only a surrounding world: not a *Welt* but an *Umwelt*. Angels, of whom we cannot speak by way of description, are by simple definition strangers to the logic of being-in-the-world. Moreover, angels are not marked by the distinction between reason or the heart, they are strangers also to temporality. It is in the total indivisibility of their spiritual being that they face God. Even when we will have added that cats and angels all (or perhaps all) have a personality or quasi-personality, and therefore have a sort of me (*moi*), we will have said that they have some "way" or "mode" of being, but they do not "exist." It will therefore be wise to maintain a respectful silence regarding what in them takes the place of being in the presence of the world, of self, and of God.

Every presence, in other words, is of and/or for us—to be precise, of and/or for man—and to a certain extent we can prejudge and verify both the presence of God and the presence to God. Hegel said that the experience of the "feeling of absolute dependence" was that of a dog toward its master, which does not do full justice to Schleiermacher. That said, he was right with respect to what is essential: facing God, we cannot reduce man to what he feels or senses (*sent*). Moreover, Hegel (1977), who demolished Jacobi in *Faith & Knowledge* in 1802, shows him

a belated kindness in 1817, which should not be surprising (Hegel 1997, 8–40). After all, Hegel wants more than a felt relation (*une relation sentie*) toward the Absolute, but he does not want less. He is consistent with his project in conceding to Jacobi his part of the truth: if the Absolute that concerns man is eternal Love, it would be strange if the heart (an admittedly popular term, as Hegel says (1997, 25, ln. 10) did not have a role to play in man's interest in this love. We can go further. The *coram* relation is established in time and history, and under one of its forms it is established between God and us, but there will be no shortage of thinkers, philosophers, or theologians to say that what we are, beyond its temporal reality, possesses an absolute future, which will forever not renounce what we are here and now. What we are—here and now—is spirit and flesh, reason and will, freedom and tradition, and so on. There are tendentious descriptions of man from which partial eschatologies easily unfold and of which one finds good examples in the medieval conflict between intellectualism and voluntarism, or in the modern conflict between reason and the heart, and elsewhere. The *esse coram Deo* is one phenomenon among all phenomena, or one domain of experience among others. But if nothing is missing in it today that is essential to the mode of being of the being (*l'étant*) which we are (nothing, that is, which belongs to the essential traits of existence), and if we possess an absolute future, then nothing of the human will be absent from this future.

Liturgy, such as we name it in an almost arbitrary manner in order to steer clear of modern concepts of being-before-God, teaches us what we must seek more than it says what we have already found. It is a totalizing phenomenon. But as to the *how* of this totalization, we cannot respond without summoning to the bar an abundance of opposing phenomena. We cannot put affection between parentheses, whether we find ourselves before God, before the other, or faced with a memory, and so on. Moreover, we know two things from affection: (i) that we are partially its masters, we who affect ourselves, for example, in recalling a memory that we know beforehand is joyful or sad; and (ii) that we are partially subject to it, such as when the memory returns to consciousness without the cooperation of the will. The man who now attends to God (this is one possible way of saying being-before-God) perhaps desires beatitude, but will rarely obtain more than wellbeing; he perhaps wishes to join his song to those of the angels, but will often suffer displeasing church music. He would like God to be perceptible (*sensible*) to him in the heart, but experiences his own fatigue; he wants to be attentive, but must gain attention over the constant threat of inattention. It is in exploring these contrasting phenomena and others that we end up understanding something with liturgical experience. Indeed, the factual, the "it is thus" dispenses with dreaming, and its interpretation warns against every simplification that proposes an enthusiastic reign of feeling, its critique in the name of the accomplishment of rites, or even the establishment of a communion of "I's" in a co-affection where the "we" reigns supreme.

The one who attends to God, of course, wants one thing (whether he says so distinctly or indistinctly): to enter into the knowledge of God. He knows from multiple and quotidian experiences that non-knowledge (*inconnaissance*) always

threatens knowledge, and perhaps when he exists in a liturgical mode he would want, failing the elimination of all non-knowledge, that knowledge to saturate his present and marginalize every other content of experience. *Esse* extends beyond *esse coram Deo*. Certainly, nothing human is absent from the one who in one way or another (we now finally use a word that matters) *prays*. There is nothing exotic in liturgy because it reveals an abundance of manners of existing, and because (it must be noted) there is nothing exotic in existence itself. In a sense that must be restored to favor, despite Heidegger, it is no more a matter here (but also no less) than of "everyday" life. And as we all know, "everydayness" also includes the extraordinary, which is itself permanently within the day to day of man, such as he is.

The real is often richer than the possible, for we often have a narrow understanding of the possible. As a matter of fact, we have understandings of it (in the plural), whether it is in transcendental terms, in terms of verifiability, in analogical terms, or in terms of every received prejudice. We do not lack recourse to a priori when we want to allow man to encounter God in the world's present. When phenomenology (another considerable word to appear late) is interested in this encounter, its interest goes beyond the play of the possible and the impossible. "Religion" and the cortège of phenomena that are joined to it are long-standing philosophical objects. It is characteristic of a philosophical object that it always arouses surprise—more precisely, the surprise of the philosopher. We have been taught that man is *deinotaton on*, but every being is also somewhat *deinon*, on the condition that we consider it with understanding.[3] "Today" (an adverb that the philosopher and theologian should no longer use except with a sense of shame!), if we define this "today" as the age of phenomenology and the age of Wittgenstein, it may be that all phenomena are equal but some are more equal than others. And it may be that "liturgy," a concept of entirely fresh philosophical construction, can be useful to those who wish to consider quite long-standing phenomena in a new way. Concepts are made in order to help us see things. "Liturgy" will be more than an idiosyncratic way of naming what has already received a number of names *if* it helps us to see what these names conceal.

NOTES

1. Unless otherwise noted, *sentiment* is translated as "feeling" and *sentir* in terms of sensing, as when Schleiermacher speaks of true religion as a "sense [*Sinn*] and taste [*Geschmak*] for the Infinite," but also as an "immediate feeling [*unmittelbaren Gefühl*]" of life (Schleiermacher 1893, 39 and 36; for the English, see 1994, 56 and 53).
2. See Nicolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf (1753), as commented upon in Pelikan 1989, 119–30.
3. See Martin Heidegger's commentary on Sophocles' *Antigone* in his *Introduction to Metaphysics*: "The human being is, in *one* word, *to deinotaton*, the uncanniest" (Heidegger 2000, 159).

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Introduction

J. AARON SIMMONS, NEAL DEROO, AND
BRUCE ELLIS BENSON

WHY LITURGY? WHY NOW?

With notable exceptions (including prior research by contributors to this volume), mainstream work in philosophy of religion tends to define and investigate religious existence as *primarily* a matter of belief.[1] Focusing on the doxastic dimension of religion tends to underwrite a cognitivist privilege that has caused religious practice to be seen largely as a secondary concern rather than a central aspect to what "religion" means as a category. Such cognitivism profoundly limits the philosophical study of the cultural traditions historically termed "religions."[2]

Although belief is an important aspect of many religious communities and thus appropriate as a subject in philosophy of religion, many religious persons (and their communities) take their embodied practices to be at least as significant, and in many cases more so, to their religious identity. The expansive field of ritual studies found in more interdisciplinary approaches to the academic study of religion is rarely drawn upon as a resource for mainstream philosophy of religion.[3] Thus, philosophy of religion has often been primarily a philosophy of theistic belief and so has avoided substantive engagement with the idea of religion as *lived*.[4] Rather than suggesting that the doxastic dimension of religion should be ignored, we think that the doxastic dimension could be much better understood by considering how it is enacted in the embodied lives of historical individuals and communities. In so doing, we are able to see how belief is manifested in practice, allowing for a much richer understanding of the relationship between theory and praxis without placing an absolute priority on either, since our beliefs influence our actions and our ways of life yield new beliefs.

However, like other aspects of human life, religious existence is messy. By pushing philosophy of religion into a more sustained consideration of practice, we can help resist the tendency in the philosophical study of religion toward making clean distinctions and attempting rigidly logical analyses detached from lived engagement. The reality is that religious life and its rituals are marked by a degree of mystery, which can easily be lost in the name of philosophical clarity. Rather than focusing so singularly on the content of religious belief, a greater concern with embodied religious practice encourages wrestling with questions of truth as being intertwined with matters of hope and community identity. As such, an increased

focus on practice does not come at the cost of traditional doxastic concerns; instead, it situates religious belief within the lived spaces of historical communities as sites in which the human condition is navigated. We find it highly encouraging that philosophy of religion has begun to devote more philosophical energy to the reality that religious practice is the lived space in which beliefs are not only *reflected* but also actually *emerge* as key components to theological, moral, and social frameworks. In short, theory arises out of practice and practice also reflects theory. Many of the contributors to this volume have been on the vanguard of this shift in the literature. We hope that this volume will help solidify the focus on religious practice as a hallmark of contemporary philosophy of religion.

This practical trajectory mirrors a current trend in contemporary philosophy and cognitive science that has pushed us to consider reason, thinking, and knowing in more embodied ways.[5] In this way, epistemology is increasingly being seen *itself* as an existential activity rather than merely the abstracted condition for such activity. Although there are a variety of ways academics might narrate and map the contours of such shifts of scholarly emphasis—both in epistemology and philosophy of religion—it is already clear that matters of religious faith cannot be separated from embodied cognition. Given that recognition, an obvious and potentially fecund concern for these emerging directions in philosophy of religion is *liturgy*. Emphasizing liturgy offers several profound benefits for contemporary debates.

First, "liturgy" is an expansive notion, since it refers not simply to religious practice but also to a "religious" understanding of existence itself. Liturgy has become an increasing concern for both analytic and continental philosophers and so can facilitate overcoming the cognitivist privilege in a broad sense within the field, rather than merely in one philosophical tradition or methodology. For example, consider just two of the contributors to this volume: Nicholas Wolterstorff and Jean-Yves Lacoste. It might seem that Wolterstorff and Lacoste have very little in common in regard to philosophical approach, methodology, style, or historical appropriation. Yet they are both devoted to thinking through the centrality of liturgy for religious life and Christian community. Wolterstorff's work, operating from an analytic focus on the tacit theological claims assumed in a community's liturgical practice, and Lacoste's work, beginning with a phenomenological investigation of lived experience as eschatologically oriented, can and should be seen as mutually supportive in ways that deserve further consideration. Finding philosophical common cause around the doxastic dimension of religion has the potential to foster deep engagement across divisions that have far too often prohibited rather than encouraged conversation.

Second, a focus on liturgy also brings philosophy of religion into dialogue with religious studies that have tended to pay much closer attention to lived experience. Thinking about embodied religious practice by concentrating on the sociological, historical, theoretical, methodological, and linguistic dynamics at work provides a much richer picture of the contexts in which such communities of practice develop. Indeed, several of the chapters in this volume are directly concerned with the way that liturgy can respond to phenomena such as exclusion, trauma, abuse, and marginalization. Moreover, a philosophical engagement with liturgy requires a careful analysis of a range of categories and concepts operative within religious life,

opening up new paths to understanding doxastic concerns. Work in critical religious theory and research on the very category of "religion" becomes particularly relevant, not merely in terms of understanding doxastic concerns but as a springboard to understanding religions for which doxastic concerns are minimal. In order to achieve thematic unity, this book intentionally focuses on Christian liturgy. Yet it should not be seen as an exclusivist proposal.[6] Instead, philosophy of liturgy invites cross-cultural and comparative approaches to the study of religion as supplements to a singular focus on belief that can easily become too deeply tied to the underlying assumptions of classical theism. The contributions to this volume push philosophers of religion and philosophical theologians to engage more intentionally with the field of ritual studies as a way of expanding and revivifying our understandings of religion, belief, and their relation.

Accordingly, this volume highlights the way in which philosophical analyses of liturgy can serve as an instructive way forward for philosophy of religion beyond the cognitivism, narrowness, and insularity that have frequently characterized the field.[7] By thinking well about liturgy, we hope that we invite ourselves and others to see how liturgical existence is about much more than the structure of weekly religious services within a particular religious tradition. Instead, liturgy extends to every area of the human condition as embodied, relational, and shared. We see this volume as merely a step in that direction, not at all the final step. Others are pursuing similar threads in productive ways and hopefully this emerging orientation helps to facilitate a more expansive, diverse, and inclusive approach to thinking philosophically about religion.

PART ONE: ON SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

This volume is divided into four parts in order to highlight particular thematic foci that emerge within the philosophy of liturgy. Part One features chapters from Clare Carlisle, Christina M. Gschwandtner, John Cottingham, and John Sanders.

Clare Carlisle's chapter, "What is Spiritual Practice?," is a fitting way to open this volume because it is a substantive consideration of the components of spiritual practice as a philosophical concept and a lived reality. Beginning by distinguishing between spiritual practice and religious practice, Carlisle turns to Kierkegaard's distinction between the "how" and the "what" of faith in order to get at the important "ways" in which spiritual practices are enacted. Carlisle suggests that practices are related to habits and "share a conceptual base." Habits, she contends, are characterized by four important components: repetition, receptivity to change, resistance to change, and desire. After explaining the important ways in which practice specifically deploys these four components, Carlisle turns to the "spiritual" qualifier in order to situate spiritual practice as a distinct way of engaging in practice more generally. Carlisle offers three "ways" in which practices can be undertaken: skill practice, art practice, and spiritual practice. This is where the Kierkegaardian framework is crucial. The important difference between these three practices is not located in "what" the practice takes as its content, but "how" the practice is lived into as a formative mode of existence. Spiritual practice is distinguished by an infinite desire and an expansive

notion of agency. Accordingly, when we understand liturgy as a kind of spiritual practice, it is irreducible to art or skill practice, but functions in a mode all its own. Carlisle concludes with a caution that habit can slide into addiction if we are not careful to maintain humility in the face of mystery. As such, an openness to global diversity is important as we enact the broad "how" of spiritual practice in specific "whats" of determinate religious traditions.

Building on the conceptual framing offered by Carlisle, Christina M. Gschwandtner's chapter, "Why Philosophy Should Concern Itself with Liturgy: Philosophical Examination of Religion and Ritual Practice," begins with the recognition that, within the philosophy of religion, both continental and analytic traditions seem to be concerned with investigating the experience of religious practices. Yet, in a critique of Jean-Luc Marion and Nicholas Wolterstorff, Gschwandtner reveals how much of the philosophical analysis of religious experience does not actually consider how religious practice manifests or is experienced, but merely raises epistemic questions around the rationality and language of liturgy. Gschwandtner thus explains how a focus on the embodied dimensions of religious practices (sensory, affective, corporeal, and communal) can draw attention to actions and corporeal and affective engagements—rather than texts, words, or ideas—as the fundamental structures of meaningful liturgical experience. The material, embodied, and affective experience of liturgy are therefore crucial to understanding not simply liturgy, but religion itself, which is not merely a collection of ideas to be believed, but also includes individual and collective experiences and actions as fundamental elements.

John Cottingham's chapter, "Engagement, Immersion, and Enactment: The Role of Spiritual Practice in Religious Belief," continues to press on the idea that spiritual and religious are not necessary synonyms. Specifically, Cottingham takes his start by looking at instances where one might participate in spiritual practices without assenting to any particular set of religious beliefs. As examples, he considers Thomas Nagel and Hilary Putnam, who both approach the idea of spiritual practices not from within religious commitment, but from a stance of philosophical curiosity. These case studies, as it were, then lead Cottingham to argue for what he terms "the primacy of practice." Showing how practice can be chronologically prior to theistic belief and also logically independent of such belief, Cottingham then turns to the emotional, embodied, and moral aspects of what it means to engage in spiritual practice. Terming these aspects *engagement*, *absorption, expression*, and *immersion*, Cottingham considers a variety of views ranging from those of Terence Cuneo to those of Emmanuel Levinas regarding the potential assumptions about theistic truth and contact with the divine that might be assumed in such practice. Echoing Clare Carlisle's suggestion that spiritual practice should encourage embodied humility in our theological and social lives, Cottingham similarly concludes by stressing the mystery that must be maintained in the midst of spiritual practice. Despite such mystery, or perhaps because of it, he contends that spiritual practice is essential not only to religious existence, but moral life itself.

In the last chapter of Part One, drawing ideas from the literature of embodied cognition, John Sanders' chapter, "Liturgical Jellyfish," explores how the *human* body, in particular, determines how liturgies are experienced and structured.

He therefore offers a reading of liturgies as particularly anthropogenic practices, reasoning that the conceptual structures used in liturgy to relate to the divine are derived from our *human* bodies. As such, he explains how the specific sensory-motor systems that we ordinarily use to relate to the world are the same systems and senses that enable us to make sense of God, and therefore our reasoning about God, just like our reasoning about other things, cannot be understood apart from an understanding of our specific modes of human embodiment. This, in turn, raises serious questions about the viability of "translating" liturgical practices, either between species (would jellyfish understand God the same way humans do?) or between different human languages and communities—but it also suggests that learning new liturgies may open us to new understandings about God. Because our reasoning about God is dependent on our material embodied situation, varying that situation can provide us new ways of reasoning about God.

PART TWO: LITURGY AND SOCIAL EXISTENCE

Part Two comprises chapters by Michelle Panchuk, Bruce Ellis Benson, Terence Cuneo, and Kevin Schilbrack. Collectively, these chapters touch on a wide range of issues related to what it means to consider liturgy as part of the framework of embodied social life. Although the specific concerns span a framework stretching from individual trauma to social ontology, these chapters offer a compelling look at what it means for liturgy to be socially lived, rather than just theorized.

Michelle Panchuk's chapter, "Power and Protest: A Christian Liturgical Response to Religious Trauma," attempts to consider something that is profoundly personal, existentially rupturing, and yet far too often overlooked in philosophical considerations of religion: *trauma*. For many believers, liturgy is a vital force in their lives and a source of profound joy. But Panchuk reminds us that it can also be a cause of deep wounding, what some recent writers have termed "spiritual violence" and "religious trauma." Such wounding comes from those associated with religion in some way and the abuse is either justified by "religious" motivation or else the perpetrator fails to protect a member of the religious community. The trauma becomes even more acute when the believer sounds as if she is questioning God himself or when the name "God" is so sullied by the abuse that it is difficult for the believer even to keep from associating God with abuse. What, asks Panchuk, does liturgy offer for those who are left traumatized by their experience with God as mediated by their religious communities and even their families? Protesting God's actions and God's failure to prevent abuse are *also* aspects of liturgy. The Psalms are filled with examples of liturgical protest and the Hebrew prophets lament both the ways of God and human beings. Panchuk suggests that we need room in current liturgical practice to voice our protest and lament.

Following on Panchuk's account, Bruce Ellis Benson's chapter, "Religion as a Way of Life: On Being a Believer," begins with the realization that whereas analytic philosophers of religion tend to focus on "doctrinal beliefs" in a theoretical way, continental philosophers of religion are more likely to consider how belief is

manifested in religious life. To make sense of this difference in emphasis, Benson distinguishes between three kinds of "belief": B1, basic belief (what Husserl calls *Urdoxa*); B2, trust in a particular person or group; and B3, doctrinal belief either explicitly religious in nature or simply about "how things really are." He argues that, in early Christianity, there were few specifically "Christian" beliefs (B3). Instead, Jesus' followers committed themselves to *him* in terms of B2 beliefs. Benson contends that the early Christians were known *primarily* for how they lived, that is, their liturgy both on Sunday and throughout the week. Then Benson turns to the Hegelian idea that morality is based in *Sittlichkeit*, the shared ethos of a community. While Kant contends that morality is based on the abstract doctrine of the categorical imperative, Hegel thinks it is grounded in how people *live*, their shared practices. Benson argues that only in a lived context can "beliefs" be understood and grounded. Finally, he turns to research by Jonathan Haidt that supports the idea that religion is first and foremost grounded in belonging to a religious community. Using Haidt as a springboard, Benson argues that a community's B3 beliefs can only be understood *within* its liturgical practices and B2 beliefs, which are more fundamental than its B3 beliefs.

Terence Cuneo's chapter, "Blessing Things," seeks to understand what is happening in the liturgical act of blessing objects. Such acts of blessing are central to liturgical life, and are often equated with mere acts of wishing, petitioning, or commanding. But this misrepresents what is actually going on in such acts of blessing things. Cuneo proposes that "blessing" objects ought to be understood as an agent calling upon God to employ that object in order to realize some state that contributes to the flourishing of that blessing's recipients. Blessing is therefore necessarily social insofar as it is an act of *invoking*—a type of directive in which the invoker exercises her normative standing to call upon an invokee to act in particular ways that implicate the invoker, the invoke, and the recipients within this act of invocation. Hence, invocation coordinates members of a liturgical community with God and with each other, working together to bring about liturgical and eschatological flourishing and the realization of God's kingdom. As such, blessing is revealed to play a unique role in liturgical worship: by binding people together with God in relations of mutual credit and responsibility, blessing—understood as invocation—is able to secure union and intimacy between human beings and God, in ways that praise and adoration—which emphasize the vast difference between human beings and God—simply cannot do.

In the final chapter of Part Two, "Liturgical Groups, Religions, and Social Ontology," Kevin Schilbrack brings realist and non-realist accounts of the social ontology of liturgical groups into dialogue to consider how religious practices are ontologically generative. Worshipping together creates relations between the participants of a liturgical community that bind them together and so create a new entity in the world. This entity—a "liturgical group" or "a religion"—exists as an entity with emergent properties and structures that do not need to be conceptualized in order to operate within social reality. Shared action (and not necessarily joint agreement) is sufficient, in some cases, to produce a new entity in the world. And while a "liturgical group" or "a religion" name such new entities, religion does

not: religion, Schilbrack argues, is not an emergent entity but simply a "genus" that emerges from social life and names the patterns—the ontological entities—that exist independently from the concept.

PART THREE: MATERIALITY AND RELIGIOSITY

Part Three is concerned with the ways in which the philosophical study of religion requires a focus on material existence and the practices of embodiment, and includes essays from Neal DeRoo, Wendy Farley, Sharon Putt, and Emmanuel Falque.

Neal DeRoo's chapter, "Material Spirituality and the Expressive Nature of Liturgy," challenges the common assumption that liturgy names a unique phenomenon that combines the religious and the material. Drawing on a phenomenological account of "expression" and "spirit," DeRoo argues that all phenomena are necessarily materially spiritual, and so "liturgy" cannot be unique simply by incarnating religion. We should instead understand liturgy as *expressing* religion, rather than simply incarnating or materializing it. Further clarifying the relationship between phenomenological understandings of spirituality and religion will show that there are a number of different ways this expressive relation can be understood, leading to multiple different possible understandings of liturgy and its relation to religion, none of which equate liturgy simply with the material embodiment of religion or religious practices. Using the concept of "everyday liturgies" found in the work of thinkers like James K.A. Smith and Richard Kearney, DeRoo then shows that these various understandings of liturgy require new definitions of liturgy, religion, or both.

In her own consideration of the fleshly sense of religious liturgy, Wendy Farley offers a critical and yet constructive account of the way that reason itself can function as a liturgy that can serve to call the church toward the divine by opposing exclusive models of power and authority in "Dark Times and Liturgies of Truth: The Uses and Abuses of Reason." Offering what she terms an "*eros* for truth," such liturgies focus on the role of beauty and suffering in human existence. Farley begins her chapter with a discussion of what she terms the "anti-liturgies" that serve to foster a context of "exclusion," "dark times," and "systemic deception," in which we find ourselves and to which we must respond if we are to think well about the work of liturgy. In response to such difficult existential realities, Farley suggests that two forms of reason (phenomenological and contemplative) might offer important resources for rethinking liturgy and its relationship to a world of truth, beauty, and human flourishing. Focusing on thinkers such as Edmund Husserl, Emmanuel Levinas, Hannah Arendt, Edith Stein, and Gabriel Marcel as exemplifying the phenomenological approach, and specifically on Marguerite Porete as a model of the contemplative mode, Farley argues in favor of what she terms "ethical rationality" as key to a liturgy that pulls us toward a God of love, rather than the idols of human authoritarian power. In conclusion, Farley suggests that liturgies of truth are those that appreciate the way in which relational selfhood is the key to religious practice.

In "Compassionate Action: Taking Eckhart, Farley, and the Beguines to Bethany," Sharon Putt shows how everyday liturgies can be rooted in the

"mystical" life of contemplation of God as exemplified in Eckhart and the Beguine tradition. Orienting her meditations on the lives of contemplation and action exemplified by Mary and Martha, she notes how the former is understood as reach for "transcendence" while the latter engages with "immanence." But this is to miss the point: following Eckhart, she argues that the transcendent God is already there in immanence, since Eckhart reminds us that the ground of the Godhead and that of the human soul are one. The beguine Marguerite of Porete similarly notes that we are unable to "say" anything about the fundamentally incomprehensible God and so it is only when she lets go of all of her attempts to "comprehend" God that she is able to unite with God. So, while Eckhart speaks of three kinds of love—that found in the relation of the Trinity, that found in the act of creation, and that in which God gives birth to the Son in our souls—Putt argues that within Eckhart's text is a fourth kind of love—engaging with the world in love. Hence, Eckhart's belief that there are two births of the soul (the one into the world and the one out of it) and that we experience this second birth only by way of "letting go," which allows for the "letting be" of God in ourselves, is necessarily incomplete. Because of the fourth kind of love, Putt, following Wendy Farley's account in the previous chapter, suggests that we should privilege *both* sisters, both the *via activa* and the *via contemplativa*, for these two attitudes ultimately come together in an embodied mysticism of active loving engagement with the world.

Emmanuel Falque's essay, "After Metaphysics?: The 'Weight of Life' According to Saint Augustine," approaches this "embodied mysticism" of everyday liturgical living from the other direction. While Putt uses Eckhart to argue that mystical union with God must be embodied and actively engage the world, Falque uses Heidegger's (mis?)reading of Augustine to show that embodied engagement with the world must be rooted in God. Falque suggests that Heidegger's analysis of Augustine "cuts out" the connection between sin and grace and thus misses the burden ("I am a burden to myself," says Augustine) by speaking of a "fallenness" that has no connection to sin. This leaves us, according to Falque, with an existence that must make a fundamentally religious and existential choice: Christ or *Dasein*. For Augustine, the "burden" was that of death, a burden that, as we see in the relation of Augustine to his mother Monica, is borne largely by the "third" (God) that mediates between them, since God comes to us where we are in the sense of humanization instead of divinization. Heidegger's approach leaves us with a notion of experiencing "factical life" as a series of burdens and temptations, but Falque reminds us of a double aspect at work in Augustine: the weight of burden (*onus*) and the weight of love (*amor pondus*). To the extent that we are weighed by love, our burden is borne "in the self's place by God" and so becomes a *light* for us that displaces the weight of hatred. To live in beatitude is not simply "repose" but a positive "rest-lessness" that comes only when our embodied living is rooted in God. Life weighs on all of us, but the Christian is able to carry the burden lightly because the Christian recognizes that her life is necessarily bound up with Christ in its most basic and everyday actions.

PART FOUR: KNOWLEDGE, SOUND, AND HOPE

Part Four features chapters by Nicholas Wolterstorff, Sarah Coakley, Joshua Cockayne, Brian Butcher, and J. Aaron Simmons and Eli Simmons, and is designed to illustrate the range of issues that could be pursued in light of a philosophy of liturgy: from epistemology to musicology, and from mysticism to eschatological notions of hope.

Nicholas Wolterstorff's chapter, "Knowing God by Liturgically Addressing God," brings epistemological concerns to bear upon the philosophy of liturgy by suggesting that by participating in liturgy—which he understands to be a "fully compliant" participation in scripted enactments of worship within a community of faith—we are able to gain, deepen, and sustain a knowledge of God. Such knowledge is specifically formed and facilitated by the way in which liturgy often occurs in the mode of "address." By addressing God, Wolterstorff argues, one becomes better attuned to God in bodily practice. Wolterstorff begins by presenting three different types of knowledge: knowing that, knowing how, and objectual knowledge. It is in a specifically personal mode of objectual knowledge that Wolterstorff finds liturgy to be especially fecund. Moving on to consider the way in which practical knowledge can yield such objectual knowledge, Wolterstorff focuses on James Elkins' work on knowing paint through painting. With such preliminaries now in place, Wolterstorff turns to liturgical knowledge of God more directly and considers Matthew Benton's epistemological contributions. After assessing Benton's specific approach, Wolterstorff then moves through a variety of liturgical practices in which knowledge of God is facilitated through attunement occurring via addressing God. He then concludes with an invitation to his readers to "consider participating in addressing God" since it is *one* way they might become attuned to who God is and who we are in relation to the divine.

Sarah Coakley's chapter, "Beyond Belief: Liturgy and the Cognitive Apprehension of God," opens with a story of a child who declares church to be "true" because people sing and walk about in certain ways. She asks: Is this not something *beyond* belief? Expanding on William Alston's use of the notion of "doxastic practice," Coakley claims that liturgy trains our senses so that we are able to come into a relation with God. Whereas secular analytic epistemology has prioritized knowing of everyday objects, if we start with knowing another person as the more basic way of knowing (following Lorraine Code), then we realize that children *begin* with learning what to expect of people long before understanding objects. But the child's basic ability to understand others is analogous to knowing God. Whereas Alston thinks of perceiving in an individualistic and informational way, Lorraine Code shows us that our knowledge of others is embodied and contextual. But how are the sensual dimensions of liturgy sources of truth? Coakley reminds us that Origen spoke of "spiritual senses," but Gregory of Nyssa goes further and speaks of Song of Songs as leading us in a *fleshly* sense. Thus, liturgy is not simply an "affective complement" to propositional content but the way in which we integrate our bodily selves to the resurrected Christ.

Moving from active thinking to participatory hearing, Joshua Cockayne's chapter, "Corporate Liturgical Silence," presents an auditory invitation to liturgical enactment. Often, as in the case of Wolterstorff's proposal of "scripted" communal practice, liturgy is understood to be a matter of embodied vocalization of prayer, song, and worship. Yet, Cockayne suggests that we should also take seriously the idea of silence as its own mode of liturgical enactment. Beginning with an engagement between Evelyn Underhill's account of liturgical silence and Wolterstorff's conception of liturgy as "joint action," Cockayne claims that such participatory silence can open spaces for cultivating receptivity to God's Spirit. Moving into the specifics of such silence, Cockayne distinguishes between silence as a kind of inaction in which there is a withdrawal from a particular form of corporate engagement. Cockayne contends that Eleonore Stump's account of "quiescence" offers an especially productive framework for understanding how silence as inaction can be productive for spiritual growth. Yet, Cockayne does not view this mode of liturgical silence as the only option. Instead, he moves forward by turning to Kierkegaard and Roy Sorensen in order to consider silence as an active mode of engaged listening. After a helpful discussion of the way that John Cage's "4′33″" invites a reflection on such engagement, Cockayne turns to the ways in which liturgical silence also serves to facilitate inclusion to individuals who might, for a variety of reasons, face difficulties in full participation in vocal, or musical, or other modes of non-silent liturgy. In this way, he sees liturgical silence as not only a mode of engaging God but also serving each other and overcoming problematic marginalization that sometimes can occur in traditional religious practice.

Moving from silence to sound, Brian Butcher's chapter, "'You Have Given Us the Grace to Pray Together in Harmony': Orthodox Liturgical Singing as a Criterion for (Philosophical? Theological?) Aesthetics," considers the philosophical and theological dimensions attending to the way in which Orthodox theological practice intersects singing and the experience of beauty. By focusing on Eastern Christian chant as a mode of liturgical practice, Butcher sketches both a phenomenology of beauty and a hermeneutics of Orthodox worship. Drawing heavily on the aesthetic theory of Roger Scruton, Butcher argues that Orthodox singing depends on a specifically communitarian, or unified conception of beauty as occurring within the acoustic contexts of church architecture. Moving on to discuss the specific role of singing in such liturgical practice, Butcher considers a variety of early Church Fathers on the idea of participatory engagement and the role of harmony in the formation of Christian worship. Turning from historical analysis to contemporary aesthetics, Butcher concludes by looking to the paradigms of traditional dialogical patterns, Byzantine music, and harmonized chants in order to suggest that there is a kind of "musical neighborhood" that forms the hermeneutic context by which Orthodox liturgy can be engaged philosophically and theologically.

In the final chapter, J. Aaron Simmons and Eli Simmons (no relation) take up the question of what makes "religious" liturgies distinctive from other forms of communal work and embodied practice in "Liturgy and Eschatological Hope." They begin by considering the way in which "liturgy" is usually understood in contemporary culture as a descriptor of particular sorts of churches, rather than characteristic of the work of the Christian community, as such. Having provided

such a cultural framework, Simmons and Simmons then offer a general summary of the contemporary philosophical accounts of liturgy by looking to the accounts of liturgy offered by Nicholas Wolterstorff, Jean-Yves Lacoste, and Bruce Ellis Benson. Simmons and Simmons contend that these three thinkers offer a spectrum according to which we can map the range of options available in the literature regarding how narrow or how expansive a particular account of "liturgy" might be. They then move from a descriptive analysis of the existing literature to a constructive proposal for how to engage such literature by suggesting that specifically *religious* liturgies can call us to an enactment of the idea of *eschatological* hope (in distinction from *existentiell* hope and *existential* hope). Such a phenomenological proposal, Simmons and Simmons suggest, helps to overcome the idea that some churches are liturgical while others are not. Instead, the eschatological hope cultivated by religious liturgy invites a deeper commitment to God and our neighbors in light of the idea that worldly concerns are crucial, but non-ultimate.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

As we said earlier, we do not take this collection of essays as anything like a "final word." To be accurate, they are not even the *first* word on liturgy and its relation to philosophy of religion, since many of the authors here have already been writing on the topic for years. However, we hope that the new directions explored in this volume will prove fruitful in reorienting philosophy of religion and, eventually, become part of the very fabric of the discipline. Even when philosophers are only really interested in *belief*—and this volume gives good reason to rethink that focus for philosophers of religion—such belief can never be understood without some degree of comprehension of the richness and depth of the experiences of those who hold those beliefs. Those experiences themselves are of such import that perhaps philosophers of religion may even consider studying them for their unique types of meaning and significance, and not simply for how they "embody" or "incarnate" certain beliefs. Indeed, there may be philosophical merit in appreciating their beauty and vibrance apart from epistemic considerations at all. Regardless, we hope this volume will function to push philosophers of religion past their preoccupation with belief to the wider world of what religious practice—embodied, social, and material—has to offer. In that regard, liturgy names both the volume's object of study and its aspirations: a liturgical philosophy of religion by which we can understand anew the depth and breadth of both religion and material living.

NOTES

1. For recent examples of attempts to push those boundaries, by rethinking the limits of and problems with philosophy of religion as primary doxastic, see Hereth and Timpe (2020) and Williams (2020). See also the excellent interviews with philosophers about their religious practices conducted by Helen De Cruz at The Philosophers' Cocoon, https://philosopherscocoon.typepad.com/blog/2015/03/philosophers-and-their-religious-practices-part-1-homilies-for-a-hoping-agnostic.html.

2. We want to acknowledge the importance of philosophy of religion learning from work in critical theory of religion concerning the category of "religion" as a historical phenomenon. Such examples include Smith (1982); McCutcheon (1997); Masuzawa (2005).
3. See, for example, *The Journal of Ritual Studies*, co-edited by Pamela J. Stewart and Andrew Strathern at the University of Pittsburgh.
4. This is meant to indicate a general trend, not a universal characteristic. Many of the contributors to this volume have positioned philosophy of religion in a lived and dynamic way for years.
5. See examples such as Varela et al. (1991); Newen et al. (2018); Shapiro (2014, 2019).
6. It should be mentioned, though, that some of the chapters are not concerned with or limited to any specific religious tradition. For example, Kevin Schilbrack's chapter focuses on the role of practice in relation to religious social ontologies in ways unconstrained by any specific concern for Christianity.
7. Here, we are drawing on Kevin Schilbrack's (2014) threefold critique of traditional philosophy of religion.

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PART ONE

On Spiritual Practice

CHAPTER ONE

What is Spiritual Practice?

CLARE CARLISLE

In their Introduction to this collection, the editors seek to understand "liturgy" in an expansive sense that embraces not simply religious practice, but also "a religious understanding of existence itself." For reasons that will become clear, this essay approaches the theme of liturgy through the category of spiritual practice, rather than religious practice. Clarifying the nature of spiritual practice will bring us closer to clarifying what a religious understanding of existence might involve. This is, I think, true in a double sense. As philosophers, working out how to conceptualize spiritual practice offers a path to understanding that wider and, perhaps, more nebulous target—a religious understanding of existence. And for religious practitioners themselves, traditioned practices of devotion, contemplation, and enquiry both disclose and shape their understanding of themselves and their world.

Kierkegaard's distinction between the "what" and the "how" of faith is a valuable philosophical tool to bring to our consideration of spiritual practice. One way of specifying spiritual practice is to examine what such practices entail. I just referred to "practices of devotion, contemplation, and enquiry," which covers a range of religious practices. Prayer, for example, combines all three of these components, perhaps to varying degrees. We might be inclined to think that liturgy is primarily a devotional practice, but this too can—and, one might argue, should—also contain elements of contemplation and enquiry: a contemplation of the mysteries of faith, for example, and some self-enquiry into one's emotional and spiritual condition as one prepares to receive communion.

Yet the Kierkegaardian question of "how?" shifts our attention to the way a practice is undertaken. Take a liturgical practice that, considered under the aspect of "what" this practice entails, seems to count uncontroversially as a spiritual practice—the Catholic liturgy of the Eucharist, for example. The question remains of how the practitioner orients herself to this practice. She might do it mechanically, or distractedly, or fervently, or desperately. She might be most conscious of participating in a community, or of bringing herself inwardly to an encounter with God. She might feel a sense of duty or obligation to undertake the practice; she might feel— in a subtle way, or more explicitly—that she is chalking up some moral points with her neighbors, or with God. There are many different ways of inhabiting this practice, which may not be discernible to an observer, nor even to the practitioner herself.

Kierkegaard proposed three overarching categories to define different orientations to the Christian life: aesthetic, ethical, and religious. One might, he suggested, inhabit a Christian identity—and this inhabiting would include holding certain beliefs as well as engaging in certain practices, such as going to church on Sundays—in either of these three ways. We need not go into these Kierkegaardian categories here. For our purposes, the salient point is that differences on the "how" axis may be at least as significant as those on the "what" axis. There may be as much difference between, say, an aesthetic Christian and a religious Christian, as there is between an aesthetic Christian and an aesthetic humanist.

This chapter seeks to accomplish two things. First, it defines a concept of practice, by way of the concept of habit. Practice, I will argue, can be construed as a species of habit, and at the same time practice can be distinguished from the familiar mode of habit, which consists in falling unconsciously and involuntarily into a certain pattern of thought or action. As we shall see, however, this distinction between habit and practice, while philosophically important, is neither binary nor impermeable. Second, the chapter explores what it means to specify practice as "spiritual." I will propose a distinction between three kinds of practice, which I call skill practice, art practice, and spiritual practice. These three kinds are species of "how" a practice is undertaken, rather than "what" the practice is.

HABIT

As I suggested above, practice can be construed as a species of habit. The etymology of the English word "habit" provides insight into both concepts. "Habit" comes from the Latin *habere*, "to have," and corresponds to the Greek *hexis*: both words signify having and holding, acquisition and possession, which suggest the duration or persistence of a certain relation over time (see Carlisle 2014, 18–20). The various uses of the English "habit" include the way a crystal or a plant grows; a pattern of animal behavior, such as a way of finding food and shelter; a psychological pattern of human thinking and affect; a physiological posture or bearing; a frequently occurring and recognizable form of expression, such as a gesture or a figure of speech; and a uniform mode of dress, like a monk's habit or a riding habit. All these uses have in common the notion of shape or form. In each case, "habit" indicates a shape or pattern of growth, a particular way of moving through space and time—a particular way of moving through the world. Considered very generally, habit signifies the holding of a specific form over a stretch of time (see Carlisle 2014, 13–17).

From this very provisional definition, we may proceed to an analysis of habit understood primarily as a mode of human activity, although of course habit is not confined to human life, and perhaps (as William James argued) not even to organic life.

Some years ago, in a book titled *On Habit*, I identified three conditions of habit-acquisition: repetition, receptivity to change, and resistance to change (Carlisle 2014, 11–13, 17–21). Insofar as human beings are "creatures of habit," we are subjects of repetition: beings who are formed and ordered by repetitions occurring both outside and within ourselves. We are modified by our own movements, as well

as by our experiences and encounters.[1] In *Difference and Repetition*, Gilles Deleuze put his finger on the basic question of habit: how does repetition make a difference to us? But while Deleuze (1994, 70), following Hume, focuses on the way repetition produces a modification "in the mind," we need to remember that our bodies as well as our minds are formed by the repetitions we contemplate, experience, and enact.

This process of formation is facilitated by two contrary conditions: receptivity to change, and resistance to change. We acquire habits only because we are susceptible to influence, because we are modifiable; yet the persistent, enduring force of habit testifies to our resistance to change. We might regard these two conditions as transcendental: I am not making empirical claims about how habit operates, but asking how any being must be constituted in order for repetition to make a difference to it, and thus to be capable of habit. This is not to deny that we can regard receptivity and resistance as physiological characteristics. The intriguing combination of receptivity and resistance that conditions habit-acquisition is captured by the relatively modern concept of "plasticity"—the capacity to take on and hold a certain form, which in the twentieth century became a key term in neuroscience. William James (1984, 126) defined plasticity as "the possession of a structure weak enough to yield to an influence, but strong enough not to yield all at once," and argued that "the phenomena of habit in living beings are due to the plasticity of the organic materials of which their bodies are composed" (see Carlisle 2014, 21–7). Yet receptivity and resistance are not limited to physiology or biology. A person's attitude, for example, might be described as more or less receptive or resistant to a certain idea or influence, or to change in general.

After I published *On Habit*, I was for several years engaged in a fruitful research collaboration on the philosophical and theological significance of desire, with philosopher of religion Fiona Ellis and theologian Sarah Coakley. Our shared readings and conversations helped me to see that my previous account of habit was incomplete. Desire was the missing piece, the essential fourth element. It is desire that animates the movements of repetition, receptivity, and resistance (see Carlisle 2017a, 2019). Conversely, each living being's particular pattern of repetition, receptivity, and resistance shapes and channels its desire, expressing its distinctive way of being in the world.

I should have realized this sooner, since one of my key sources for *On Habit* was the French philosopher Félix Ravaisson, author of an 1838 essay titled *De l'habitude*. There Ravaisson suggests that all habit is animated by desire, and ultimately by "the good," a view which indicates the influence on his thinking of both Aristotelian metaphysics and Catholic theology (Ravaisson 2008, 71).[2] Ravaisson (2008, 25) describes habit as a "way of being." This might sound vague, but it is, in fact, a profound claim that conveys both the Kierkegaardian elevation of "how" over "what," and the ontological character of habit and its animating desire. We do not simply have desires, but we are—at least in some sense and to some extent—constituted by desire. Our habits are formations of this desire: the shape desire takes as it is lived. For Ravaisson, desire is always desire for goodness, and ultimately desire for God; he echoes Thomas Aquinas in espousing the Neoplatonic and Augustinian doctrine that all existence, insofar as it participates in God's being,

is good, and thus desirable. Even the habit of a plant—the way it spreads along the ground, or shoots upwards—is its particular way of expressing its need for light and water, which signifies its desire to *be*.

So habit gives form to desire. Habits are specific, particular ways of expressing (and meeting) a desire or a need. For example, we all have a general desire for food, which through custom has been channeled into a desire for food at certain times of day, lunchtime, for instance. This is often particularized further into a habit of eating certain things for lunch, perhaps going to a certain café and ordering a certain sandwich, and even sitting at a certain table in the café. Similarly, we all have a general desire for love and attention, which, through the relationships we form with other people, becomes particularized as a desire to be loved by a specific person, and indeed to be loved by them in specific ways. Proust's novel *À la recherche du temps perdu* (*In Search of Lost Time*) offers a forensic phenomenology of such amorous habit, showing how within an individual's life a universal human desire can be particularized, through habit, in very determinate (and determining) ways (see Carlisle 2014, 82–90).

Habit, then, is a process of formation and a way of being. The concept of habit has four cornerstones: desire; repetition; receptivity; resistance.

PRACTICE

By "practice" I mean the repetition of an activity with the aim of cultivating a certain capacity and proficiency. Clear-cut examples of practice include a musician practicing her instrument, and an athlete training for a competition. Practice can be considered a species of habit, which is a broader category of repeated action. Yet practices are habits we deliberately cultivate, rather than lapse into accidentally, and this difference has effects so significant that practice might be contrasted with habit. Practice tends toward development and growth, while habit—at least in some cases, and certainly in the case of addiction—is a contraction of a person's sphere of activity and experience. We might say that although the acquisition of habit requires that repetition makes a difference to the agent, once a habit sets in, its repetitions no longer make any difference. The repetitions of practice, by contrast, are productive of change.

Having drawn this conceptual distinction between habit and practice, we can see that in real life it may be porous, so that practice morphs into habit. For example, in learning to drive a car, the different elements of this skill must initially be practiced deliberately and with effort. Once a certain level of proficiency is reached, the activity becomes habitual and effortless, no longer a matter of cultivation.

Practice shares with habit the fundamental idea of form, or formation. It also shares its four conceptual cornerstones: desire, repetition, receptivity, and resistance. Practice, like habit, requires a combination of receptivity to change and resistance to change, and in the case of practice this requirement is acknowledged, if only implicitly. We engage in repeated practice because we regard this as a viable means of acquiring a desired proficiency: we know that the practice will make a difference to us, and thus we understand that our nature is modifiable, receptive to change. We

also expect this difference to have some duration; more like the difference you make to the ground when you walk across a muddy field, than the ephemeral difference you make to the surface of a lake when you throw a stone into it. That is to say, we believe that if we practice today, the difference this makes will last until tomorrow, and that any proficiency we acquire will not simply evaporate as soon as we cease practicing. This expectation testifies to our tacit grasp of our resistance to change.

However, the four conceptual cornerstones are configured differently in habit and in practice. A person acquires a habit when her desire for a particular object (and for the experience produced by this object) leads to the repeated pursuit of that object (and of that experience). This repetition produces within her a modification, such as a strengthened inclination and a diminished effort in the activity in question. And this modification signifies the acquisition of a habit. But she has not directly willed the repetition itself, nor did she desire the resulting modification: her continuing desire for the particular drove her repetition, and the resulting habit is simply its unintended consequence. For example, during the lockdown in 2020, I got into the habit of taking my ten-year-old son for a mid-morning walk through our local park in Hackney, East London, to a café called Brunswick East, which had converted itself into a takeaway bakery. I usually ordered a coffee and an Anzac cookie; my son tended to have a cinnamon bun. The first time we did this we enjoyed it, and we found ourselves wanting to do the same thing on subsequent mornings. Although I chose *to go to the bakery* and *order the coffee*, *and so on* on each occasion, I did not decide or even wish *to become a frequent customer at Brunswick East*, nor did I decide or wish *to repeatedly or habitually eat an Anzac cookie*. This structure is even clearer in the case of addiction: people do not intend to become alcoholics, or heavy smokers, but their desire for one particular drink or cigarette—specifically, the *next* drink or the *next* cigarette—generates repetition, which produces modifications, including a condition of physical and psychological dependency.

In practice, by contrast, a person *does* desire a certain modification of herself, and she explicitly wills repetition as a means to this end. For example, she wants to be a safe, proficient driver, or a better performing athlete, or a more accomplished musician, and with this goal in mind she undertakes a regime of practice. On any given occasion, she may or may not want to undertake the particular activity: she might dread the next driving lesson, be tempted to skip today's training session, or not feel like practicing her scales again. But such immediate inclinations are, in the case of successful practice, subsumed under the longer term goal of cultivation. It is, indeed, a common phenomenon of practice to feel resistance to the particular, yet overcome this resistance with the desired outcome in mind. This is why practice, unlike habit, requires discipline, although of course breaking a habit does tend to require discipline.

This brings us to another difference between habit and practice. Although both rest on the twin conditions of receptivity and resistance to change, in each case the balance between receptivity and resistance shifts in different ways. In habit, receptivity has the upper hand at the outset: we find ourselves effortlessly, unintentionally modified by our own actions. Having acquired a habit, however, we may encounter a deep resistance to changing it. Over time, habits can carve

deep grooves into our existence, both inwardly and outwardly, and they can narrow down the range of possible actions open (or apparently open) to us. For example, once established in my habit of going to Brunswick East bakery mid-morning and ordering my coffee and cookie, it did not occur to me to walk in a different direction and try a new place. Similarly, my habit of cycling a particular way to work now prevents me from considering alternative routes. This sort of restriction is one of the great benefits of habit: by imposing certain limits, narrowing our range of possibilities, habit saves us the time and energy it would take to contemplate, weigh up, and choose between all the options available in every situation. Yet sometimes, most obviously in the case of severe addiction, this blessing becomes a curse. An addict's life is narrowed to a single habit, a single channel, carved by the repetition of an absolutely determinate particular, which subsumes all her other desires, orders her days, and dominates her interactions with others. This existential contraction makes addiction pathological, beyond its physical effects. Life becomes a closed loop, allowing no scope for freedom or growth.

In practice, by contrast, resistance predominates at the outset. It often takes considerable effort to persist in practice and cultivate the intended capacity. Over time, however, this process yields continuing development and growth. Receptivity to change—at least within the area of one's life related to the practice—becomes the dominant condition.

Putting habit and practice alongside each other shows how desire, receptivity, and resistance are configured differently in each case. While habit and practice are both formations of desire, habit accomplishes a contraction of desire to concrete particulars, whereas practice allows desire to evolve, mature, and be refined—and the particularities of practice may vary and shift in the course of this process.

SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

I have shown that habit and practice share a conceptual basis. I have also drawn some distinctions between them, suggesting that habit and practice involve different formations of desire. I have established that practice, unlike habit, is oriented by a desire for the expected outcome of the practice, understood as a modification within the practitioner produced by her repeated activity.

I will now take a step closer to the concept of "spiritual practice" by distinguishing it from what I call "skill practice" and "art practice." As I mentioned in my introduction, the distinction between these three kinds of practice is more a matter of *how* the activity is undertaken than *what* the activity consists in. Having said this, some concrete examples may help, in a provisional way, to illustrate my threefold classification. Driving a car is an example of a skill practice. Ballet dancing and parenting are two examples of art practice: this category is not limited to the process of creating works of art in the familiar sense—dances, paintings, poems, and so on. Art practices belong to the art of living, understood broadly as the human pursuit of the good life, which may include artistic, ethical, and intellectual activities—not least the practice of philosophy. Spiritual practice, likewise, might be conceived as

an entire way of life. However, meditation, prayer, and liturgy may provide concrete examples of spiritual practice.

Conceptually speaking, there is a hierarchy among these three kinds of practice. Art practice incorporates skill practice: for example, the art practice of parenting involves mastering many skills, from changing nappies to navigating complex social dynamics with other parents. Similarly, spiritual practice incorporates both art practice and skill practice. In real life, the lines between these three kinds of practice may not be hard and fast, but this threefold conceptual distinction is, nevertheless, philosophically productive.

I have argued that all practice is oriented by a desire for an outcome, and subsumes the repetition of particular activities as a means to this end. However, the three kinds of practice conceive their goal or outcome differently. Skill practice is oriented by a desire for a determinate goal, clearly specified in advance. Once this goal is attained, the practice is complete. Perhaps, as in the example of learning to drive a car, practice then morphs gradually into habit, as repetition of the activity takes on a new significance. At some (possibly indiscernible) point, I am no longer practicing my driving—I am just driving.

Art practice, by contrast, is oriented by desire for an end that is to some extent indeterminate and open-ended. This gives art practice a provisional, uncertain character. These practices are clearly goal-oriented, and often deeply devoted to a sense of the good, yet the precise contours of this good cannot be specified in advance. Cultivating the virtues of parenthood is an excellent example of this kind of practice, as are the creative and intellectual arts. Art practice is what the philosopher Talbot Brewer (2009, 37–67) calls a "dialectical activity": the practitioner's activity and her conception of the good develop in tandem, each shifting in response to the other.

Spiritual practice shares with art practice this indeterminacy of goal. Indeed, spiritual practice is often characterized by a radical indeterminacy. A Buddhist, for example, may orient her practice toward an ideal of formless enlightenment, which cannot be represented in any image or described in any language. In *The Proslogion*, a text structured by liturgical practice, St. Anselm (1973, 97, 99, §15, §20) orients his spiritual and philosophical enquiry toward a God whom he affirms to be infinite, "greater than can be thought," and "beyond all things."

Spiritual practice is further distinguished from art practice by a more expanded sense of agency. Several years ago I interviewed some Benedictine monks and some long-term practitioners of Buddhist meditation about their spiritual lives, and one theme that emerged again and again during these conversations was their sense of an agency at work in their lives that seemed to have its source beyond themselves (see Carlisle 2019). The Buddhists were rather surprised by this way of seeing things, which had emerged from their years of practice, while the Benedictines had ready to hand a theological vocabulary to articulate it: vocation, grace, the will of God, the work of the Holy Spirit. All these practitioners, however, envisaged the good to which their practice aspired not simply as a not-yet-realized and not-quite-specified ideal, but as an already-active power. This exemplifies the notion of "a religious understanding of existence," noted in my opening remarks, which may either shape

spiritual practice (and its animating desire) or emerge from it. Either way, it becomes possible to see desires grounded in the good to which practice aims as reciprocal rather than unilateral, cosmic as well as individual.

Furthermore, although spiritual practice is—like all practice—structured teleologically, a goal-directed mentality and its accompanying ideals of progress and attainment may have limited applicability in this context. They may even become counterproductive. Indeed, the loosening of this mentality is frequently experienced as one of the fruits of spiritual practice, and as a sign of a deepening, maturing understanding. This was another insight that emerged more than once during my interviews with monks and meditators.

The desire at work in both art practice and spiritual practice can be described as an infinite desire. In the first place, "infinite" here means simply non-finite, indeterminate: an infinite desire is an open-ended aspiration or longing for something that cannot be fully specified. This entails at least a degree of apophaticism, not only about the "object" of the desire but also about what it would be to attain this object. Through the course of art practice and spiritual practice, there is the perpetual possibility that the practitioner's grasp of her goal will need to be revised. Talbot Brewer (2009) argues that this kind of indeterminacy is a fundamental feature of ethical life, and Jonathan Lear, another contemporary moral philosopher, has put forward a similar argument. Like Brewer, Lear (2011) proposes a revisionist Aristotelian account of the good life that accommodates the fact that human life, even at its best, is marked by a continuous awakening to the good, not full apprehension of it. Lear has drawn on Socratic and Kierkegaardian philosophies to outline a concept of ethical irony that involves "aspiring" to an elusive, indeterminate ideal (see Carlisle, 2017b). Both Lear and Brewer are, I think, trying to make sense of what I am calling "infinite desire."

LITURGY AND SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

I have distinguished between habit and practice in order to bring to light the configuration of desire, repetition, receptivity, and resistance that is at work in practice, and so to illuminate the concept of practice. I have also distinguished three kinds of practice, characterized by different patterns of desire and agency, to arrive at a conception of spiritual practice.

How does this account of spiritual practice help us, as philosophers, to clarify our thinking about liturgy? Along the "what" axis of liturgical practice, we can parse elements of devotion, contemplation, and enquiry. Along its "how" axis we can discern variable modes of desire—determinate or infinite, goal-directed or radically open-ended—and different accounts of agency. The distinction between determinate and infinite desire can be applied to a devotional orientation, a contemplative orientation, or an enquiring orientation.

One clear lesson we can draw from this analysis is that liturgy, conceived as a spiritual practice, cannot be exhaustively understood according to the paradigms of skill practice or art practice. This will come as no surprise to theologians, but philosophers of religion need to think about its implications. (For example, must we

establish the existence of God, and an account of divine agency, in order to affirm the coherence of spiritual practice? My intuitive answer to this question is "no," although I have yet to work out a philosophical rationale for this response.) Understanding the desire at work in spiritual practice to be radically infinite, oriented to a telos that remains indeterminate and elusive, provides a starting point for enquiring into the relationship between spiritual practice and a religious understanding of existence.

Defining spiritual practice in terms of an infinite desire, coupled with an expansive sense of agency, might suggest that the less determinate (or the more fuzzy) the practitioner's telos is, the more authentically "spiritual" the practice must be. Recall, however, the idea of form that is embedded in the concepts of habit and practice. All practices, like habits, give a particular form to desire. Practices provide ways of channeling our desire, and thereby enacting it concretely. This formal element is carried through the three kinds of practice I have distinguished. It does not drop away in the case of spiritual practice. And in the case of liturgical practice, it does not even loosen: liturgical prayer tends to be strictly formalized, shaped according to a clear pattern of speech and gesture. The liturgy of the Eucharist is at once determinate and infinite, sharply formed and mysterious.

We can see this character of liturgy as a response to a practical tension that arises in spiritual practice, at least as it is conceived in this essay. On the one hand, it is *necessary* to finitize our infinite desire, to channel it through embodied, culturally specific activity—for this is the only way a finite being can express such a desire, and live faithfully to it. Infinite desire must carve some path through the world. On the other hand, there is a *danger* in finitizing this desire, and thereby betraying and falsifying the infinite good to which it aspires. Converting an infinite desire into a finite desire involves a contraction or displacement that theistic traditions have long critiqued as idolatry. In the nineteenth century, theorists of religion began to identify this tendency as fetishism. Perhaps spiritual practices always carry a tendency to lapse into idolatrous or fetishizing modes; to avoid this, their divine telos must remain to some extent excessive and elusive.

So an infinite desire—desire for communion with God, let's say—should ideally be enacted in a way that somehow preserves its infinity or indeterminacy. Liturgy, along with other traditioned practices of devotion, contemplation, and enquiry, provides a means of particularizing and channeling, and thereby expressing and pursuing, an infinite spiritual desire. Its very form preserves and enacts an element of openness. Performatively affirming the "mystery of faith," the Eucharistic liturgy that is at the heart of Christian liturgical practice provides a highly structured form of life, which gathers a community of people around this mystery, and helps them to receive it.

The account of spiritual practice set out here may help to open up a different kind of mystery, which I, as a philosopher, continue to contemplate: the question of how to think about the plurality of religions, and their truth. Here, I have confined my discussion to Christian liturgy, since that is the general (although not exclusive) focus of this essay collection. But I am not willing to privilege Christianity above other paths of devotion, contemplation, and enquiry. This unwillingness does not rest on a claim or assumption that all religions are equally true. I do not feel entitled

to venture this claim, let alone assume it, on the grounds that if religious practices and beliefs are thoroughly intertwined, mutually formative, then this prescribes at least extreme caution, and probably thoroughgoing agnosticism, about the truth or falsity of beliefs embedded in traditions of which we have little or no practical experience. As long as the philosophy of religion focuses on belief, the validity of diverse traditions remains a question of metaphysics and epistemology. When we turn to religious practice, however, the shape of the question shifts. The problem, as I see it, is how to steer a course between sheer relativism about the truth of different religious beliefs (which might involve arguing that all beliefs must be equally true, or that none of them possesses any objective truth), and the kind of dogmatism that insists that the truth of one religion excludes the truth of others. This problem seems to be configured by the peculiar combination of determinacy and open-endedness, finitude and infinity, that characterizes spiritual practice. If the practices and theologies of each tradition were entirely determinate, then presumably it would be easier to compare them; conversely, if every tradition consisted in sheer mystical apophaticism, then there could be no question of comparison. And if we had infinite time, we might immerse ourselves in every religious tradition, travel along every spiritual path, and then decide which one brought us closest to God. Our finitude means that we can only know one tradition—or possibly, at most, two traditions—intimately, holistically, as committed and experienced practitioners.

We perhaps cede some ground to the dogmatic impulse by recognizing that infinite desire not only *can* but *must* take some particular shape, if it is to be lived. This shaping does not merely propose a determinate means to an indeterminate end, but also gives some imaginative and conceptual shape to the telos itself. Infinite desire thus becomes formed all the way down, so to speak. Yet it would still be a mistake to treat that particular formation as the divine itself, thereby denying God's excessiveness and elusiveness—God's transcendence, in other words. This would be a moral mistake, insofar as it excluded and denigrated practitioners of different traditions. It would also be a religious or theological mistake, insofar as it expressed an idolatrous and fetishizing impulse.

As I have argued, infinite desire must carve some path through the world. It is good to love one's spiritual path, and stay close to it. But when that path is elevated and objectified as the ultimate telos, then it may cease to be a viable path. Spiritually speaking, it can become a dead end. If the "what" axis of religious life seems reassuringly demarcated, the "how" axis is slippery. It is easy to slide from spiritual practice to art practice to skill practice, and from there to lapse from practice to habit, in a movement analogous to the slide from habit into addiction.

NOTES

1. On the concept of repetition, see Deleuze (1994); Pickstock (2013); Carlisle (2013).
2. Aristotle (*De anima*, 433a 27–8) states that desire (*orexis*) is for "the real or the apparent good."

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CHAPTER TWO

Why Philosophy Should Concern Itself with Liturgy: Philosophical Examination of Religion and Ritual Practice

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Philosophers are wary of religion. Unless they are themselves religious believers—and often even then—they generally avoid the topic as too toxic, too dangerous, too "enthusiastic" or emotional, or simply too personal. Yet, even in a discipline known for its high percentage of atheists (by some counts over 90%[1]), some investigation into the topic of religion is undertaken by a narrow slice of the discipline. The most well-known version of this, philosophy of religion from an Anglo-American analytic approach, has generally grappled with epistemological questions: the coherence of religious beliefs, the compatibility of apparently conflicting doctrines (such as God's goodness with the reality of evil), the probability of God's existence, and what can be known about God. A very different philosophical approach, inspired primarily by French thinkers in the "continental" tradition, has employed phenomenology to investigate religious phenomena in the past several decades (roughly since the early 1980s). Many in this tradition reject the possibility (or even viability) of proving God's existence and heavily criticize the modern intellectual project with all its attendant assumptions about subjectivity, linear or foundational approaches to knowledge, and search for certainty, focusing instead on what it would mean to experience divine revelation and how such an experience would manifest.

Yet, even analytic thinkers have recently begun to challenge the heavy emphasis on truth claims and the coherence of religious propositions or faith statements in their tradition of philosophy of religion as an inadequate approach to thinking about religion, given that it misses much about the way in which most religious people

actually experience their faith.[2] For example, Terence Cuneo (2016, 6) suggests that "much of the discussion in contemporary philosophy of religion is detached from religious life in such a way that it threatens to offer a distorted picture of what is important to this way of life."[3] Nicholas Wolterstorff (2018, 1) argues that there is striking divergence "between the priorities of analytic philosophers of religion and the priorities of most religious adherents" inasmuch as analytic philosophy of religion focuses almost exclusively on issues of belief or doctrine rather than practice. In fact, it is not at all clear that the logical coherence of creedal or doctrinal statements is of highest priority to religious adherents. In religious traditions other than (Protestant) Christianity, belief or doctrine is even less essential, and religious affiliation is expressed far more frequently and more explicitly by participation in cultic practices. One might suggest that in some Eastern religions, doctrine matters very little, and worship practices or broader cultural activities (such as festivals) are the main expressions of religion.[4]

All the same, despite the focus on experience in the continental tradition and the recent turn to practice in the analytic tradition, the investigations remain curiously focused on issues of language or text. For instance, despite their critique of the exclusively epistemological approach of much of their philosophical tradition, both Cuneo and Wolterstorff are especially concerned with questions of the sense and meaningfulness of language in their respective examinations of liturgy. Similarly, Jean-Luc Marion, who might be taken as one of the primary—and certainly one of the most well-known—representatives of the continental approach to religion, focuses his examination of a phenomenon of revelation heavily on the "naming" of God. The present contribution will examine and compare these two approaches, juxtaposing them against each other, and arguing that a much more substantive engagement with religious actions and practices is needed in the philosophical study of religion. While Marion and Wolterstorff are almost diametrically opposed in their assumptions and claims about the rationality or logic of religion, both remain predominately preoccupied with such epistemic questions of rationality or language. In contrast, greater attention to the corporeal, affective, and communal dimensions of religious practice—and especially ritual or liturgical practice[5]—would provide a more adequate and more truthful account of what religion means for people's lives and how it shapes them. Psychology, sociology, and anthropology of religion tend to focus on concrete empirical practices of individuals or particular groups. A philosophical approach can instead raise the more fundamental questions about the structures of religious experience and practice as such and examine their meaning for broader human experience.

MARION, RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE, AND THE NAMING OF GOD

Jean-Luc Marion is probably the most systematic and most influential thinker within the group of phenomenologists interested in religious phenomena.[6] He argues that phenomenology helps us investigate what is given, presenting phenomena on their own terms and describing the structures and symptoms by which they manifest

themselves to us (2002a, 7–70). Phenomena are given (or even give themselves[7]) to us and we must simply receive them, rather than determining the conditions under which they are permitted to appear. The phenomenologist seeks to describe the forms and dimensions of this manifestation. Marion is particularly interested in the kinds of phenomena he thinks previous phenomenological approaches have left unexamined, especially rich phenomena, such as historical or cultural events, experiences of great works of art, the intimacy of the human flesh, especially in erotic encounter but also in birth, aging, and illness, and the encounter with the other (human). Marion provides extensive phenomenological analyses of these phenomena, which he calls "saturated" due to their excessive and dazzling nature (2002a, 222–33; 2002b). He insists that this type of phenomenon is not religious at all, but a "banal" phenomenon that can be and is encountered by anyone (2008, 119–44). Many "mundane" phenomena of everyday experience—like listening to an opera, tasting a fine wine, or inhaling the fragrance of a perfume—are "saturated" in his sense, while religious phenomena or "phenomena of revelation" (as Marion usually terms them) are "doubly" saturated (2002a, 234–47), even more excessive and overwhelming than these more simply saturated phenomena.

Yet, curiously, when he focuses on these phenomena of revelation or, more precisely, on *the* phenomenon of revelation, God, he does not provide an analysis of the *experience* of the phenomenon, but instead an examination of *language* about the divine. This is particularly striking in the final chapter of *In Excess* (2002b, 128–62), supposedly devoted to the phenomenon of revelation, but instead an analysis of theological language in the Dionysian tradition, informed by his earlier discussion of Dionysius in *Idol and Distance* (2001, 139–95). It is also true of the culmination of his book on Augustine: although the book as a whole occasionally refers to the liturgical context of Augustine's confessions, made before God and others, this final chapter returns to the question of God's name (2012, 288–306). In both cases, Marion's concern shifts from a description of the phenomenon to an argument that the language employed to speak about the divine is not metaphysical and does not reduce the divine to metaphysical categories. Similarly, in *Negative Certainties*, where he speaks of God as the "impossible" phenomenon, the analysis again focuses on how logic about God undoes the logic of certainty, sufficient reason, and causality (2015, 51–82). And, more recently, his Gifford Lectures similarly focus on Trinitarian language and the ways in which it escapes metaphysical constrictions and idolatry (2016a).

This is also the case for many of Marion's shorter essays (and even his work on Descartes), in which he returns over and over again to claims about the rationality of religious language, a rationality that is fundamentally different from metaphysical rationality and thus can speak of the divine more appropriately (Marion 1981, 1999, 2007b, 2008, 2017). Even his occasional accounts of the Eucharist shift from a description of the experience almost immediately to an analysis of the language employed to discuss the sacrament. We thus do not actually receive an analysis of religious experience or practice, but ultimately an analysis of religious language. This may well be valuable for its own sake, but it is rather ironic, especially given Marion's immense hesitations about hermeneutics, which he judges arbitrary and

only concerned with texts, thus missing the fundamental delineations of experience (2002b, 27–9; 2008, 66–79; 2016b, 59–97). Let us examine this in somewhat fuller detail.

Idol and Distance argues against Derrida that *différance*, that is, an endless deferral, is not sufficient (2001, 215–33), but that a language of distance or prayer, such as that proposed by Dionysius the Areopagite, is necessary to speak of the divine. Nietzsche's announcement of the death of God is productive inasmuch as it eliminates false (metaphysical) idolatries of the divine, now making room for a better, more theological naming of God that preserves the divine distance (2001, 27–78). Marion carries this further in the final chapter of *In Excess* (2002b), where he argues against Derrida, that a language of praise or prayer is not metaphysical, inasmuch as it does not make propositional statements of the divine, but instead addresses God. It is performative rather than descriptive speech: one speaks no longer *of* God but *to* God. This constitutes a denial or undoing of metaphysical language via a higher speech that does not seek to describe or follow a truth or logic of correspondence. At the same time, as in the prior analysis regarding idol and icon in *God without Being* (1991, 17–24), the direction of speech is reversed: instead of describing the divine, the person at prayer is named *by* God (2002b, 156–8). This is a "saturated phenomenon par excellence" because it goes beyond all naming or predication (2002b, 158–62). An interesting slippage occurs at the very end where Marion moves from God as a phenomenon to "the question of God" (2002b, 162).

Marion pushes this further in an article on the "apophasis of love" and in *The Erotic Phenomenon*, where he argues for language of love as equivalent to language toward the divine (2007a, 146–50; 2008, 101–18). In both cases, such language goes beyond locutionary (or descriptive) and illocutionary (or performative) speech to perlocutionary speech that seeks to have an effect. This sort of speech is not logical or rational inasmuch as it does not describe anything, but instead it calls forth a response. This is not to say that it is untrue or meaningless but rather that it functions in an entirely different mode. It is the kind of language that characterizes relationships rather than making statements of fact or stating verifiable truths. Marion suggests that such language might seem nonsensical, even babble incoherently, but that this is an expression of a higher or different kind of meaning, namely the meaning of love, which is always excessive and superabundant. It is an alternative kind of logic, the logic of charity, which is supremely rational in its own way and displaces the logic of metaphysics (2008, 49–65, 145–54). It speaks to our deepest needs and desires and allows us to know through those desires, which constitutes an alternative kind of knowledge with its own logic and meaning.[8] Marion (2008, 49–65, 66–79; 2017, 3–29) often relies on Pascal's distinction between the three orders (of eyes, mind, and heart) as inspiration for this alternative logic, which is incompatible with and quite different from the "logic" of metaphysics. This logic or rationality cannot be judged by the "lower" order of (metaphysical or scientific) rationality because it is invisible to it and inaccessible by it, although it can kenotically descend to it and thus make a difference in the world (2008, 78–9, 151–4; 2017, 66–75).

In his analysis of Augustine's *Confessions*, Marion's analysis culminates in an investigation of the term "ad ipsum," which he contends is a non-metaphysical expression of the divine, which he also earlier describes as a perlocutionary speech

act (2012, 10–55). Just as the rest of the book has aimed to show that Augustine can be read as confirming Marion's own analyses of the saturated phenomenon and the phenomenological self after the metaphysical subject, so the final chapter tries to demonstrate that Augustine's naming of God escapes metaphysical description or causality and introduces "a new play of language" (2012, 290). Marion is at great pains to attest that Augustine does not enclose God in being, even when he appears to do so, but that this is the result of a Thomistic (mis-)interpretation (2012, 292–8). Instead, Marion contends, this name "permits thinking the difference between God and creation without passing through an ontic difference, without inscribing it within the horizon of Being" (2012, 303). This description of ontological language for God as idolatrous goes all the way back to his early and seminal discussion of Descartes' "white theology" (1981), where he argues against the use of equivocal language for the divine (as it appears in Kepler, Galileo, Mersenne, Bérulle, and others) and applauds Descartes' argument for the creation of the eternal truths of math and science, thus refusing to make God subject to them. The same pronounced tendency is also evident in the chapter devoted to God and the discussion of the divine names in his examination of Descartes' metaphysics, which elevates the non-metaphysical name of the "infinite" above those concerning omnipotence or causality (1999, 206–76). That particular treatment closes with a dramatic positing of Pascal as the one who "destitutes" the Cartesian metaphysics, especially in regard to language about the divine, via the order of charity (1999, 277–345).

Interestingly, Marion focuses on this element of knowing or saying (rather than experiencing or manifesting) even in some of his analyses of the Eucharist. The Eucharist is, of course, first of all a liturgical practice that is exercised and experienced. Yet even here Marion emphasizes issues of meaning, sense, and language. He argues that the Eucharist imposes its own hermeneutic, provides its own interpretation, which is the "correct" meaning, because it speaks from God's point of view (1991, 139–58). Celebrating the Eucharist allows for the priest to assume Christ's position and to reveal the divine via the breaking of the bread, such that the Word becomes recognized and "comes to the community" "on the condition that the community itself be interpreted by the Word" (1991, 152). The disciples on the way to Emmaus recognize Christ in the breaking of the bread because he provides his own interpretation of the events and gives the meaning to them (2017, 136–43).[9] In a different analysis of the Eucharist, he maintains that "faith is the mode of knowledge suitable for the saturated phenomena of the mode of Revelation" and interprets this to mean that the phenomenon of the Eucharist gives itself so fully and absolutely that God can become visible in it (2017, 113, 115). The Eucharist has its own kenotic logic that must be provided by its divine source and can be received only by those able and willing to receive it (2017, 133–5). Again, these two types of logic or rationality and the two kinds of phenomenality are incompatible with and invisible to each other. The "phenomenality suitable to Christian and Jewish Revelation" is a "phenomenality proper to holiness, which can only be manifested for those who have experienced it, that is to say, who have passed into it and who do not come back from it, thus disappearing for the eyes of those who have not yet passed into it" (2017, 151), just as Pascal claims about the orders of knowledge.

This reaches its height in his Gifford Lectures that begin with a long condemnation of the enclosure of the divine in metaphysics—mostly blamed on Suárez and Vasquez, while Aquinas is for the most part exonerated—to argue, yet again, that the "knowledge" appropriate to God cannot be grasped in epistemological terms but is only about love: "Does God reveal himself in order to make himself known and take a place within our rationality? Or does he instead reveal himself in order to allow himself to be loved, and to love us?" (Marion 2016a, 29). Marion develops further this idea of loving as a kind of rationality (2016a, 30–48), which recognizes Christ as a supremely saturated phenomenon in order "to free the concept of theology from every metaphysical hold and every epistemological interpretation" (2016a, 60). Revelation occurs entirely on its own terms, setting up its own parameters of logic, providing even its own conditions of knowing the divine (2016a, 88). Here also the concern to name the divine in non-metaphysical ways overwhelms any attempt to depict a phenomenon as experienced.

Why this strange slippage from depicting or examining the experience or manifestation of a phenomenon of revelation to analyzing or justifying the language employed to speak of the divine? Here Marion's heavy apophatic leanings apparently get the better of him. It is such an axiomatic theological presupposition of his entire thought that God's transcendence and alterity must be maintained at all costs, that anything short of utter ineffability smacks of idolatry and blasphemy and that as a result it becomes by definition impossible to conceive of an experience of God. Rather, all of the energy is focused on erecting a fence around any such possibility so that this distance and ineffability will not be trespassed at any cost. But that is a steep price to pay: it makes it essentially impossible to give any sort of account—or even indication—of what *experiencing* religious phenomena might actually entail.[10] The way Marion concludes his book on Augustine is telling: "Supremely Christian and a thinker, Saint Augustine does not think God as Being—so as not to turn Being into a god" (2012, 306; trans. mod.). Similar passages identifying true Christianity with a fundamental commitment to God's transcendence and ineffability and with eschewing any ontological or metaphysical language for the divine could easily be multiplied (e.g., 2007b, 79; 2008, 16–17, 49–65, 79; 2016a, 116–17; 2017, 30–44, 66–75). It is Marion's deepest and most determinative conviction; the impetus that drives all of his thought.[11] This is precisely why the saturated phenomenon is described in such excessive, overwhelming, and utterly dazzling terms: if it were possible to predict it in any way, put any sort of conditions on it, even prepare for it in some manner, it would become subject to the observer or experiencer and therefore no longer remain ineffable.[12]

WOLTERSTORFF, LITURGY, AND LANGUAGE

Wolterstorff's work seems almost diametrically opposed to this and not only because he is committed to an Anglo-American, analytic approach. Could any connection, or even comparison, be possible here? Yet, there are actually some intriguing parallels between their handling of religious experiences and practices.[13] Wolterstorff's *Acting Liturgically* (2018) turns deliberately to a religious practice, and the book's

title emphasizes the desired focus on *action*.[14] The shift to examining liturgy, rather than reflecting on doctrinal statements, is a significant departure from traditional analytic approaches to religion. This does not mean, however, that the epistemic focus is abandoned. Although Wolterstorff would presumably neither share Marion's antipathy to metaphysical language nor regard it as a threat to the divine transcendence, like Marion he focuses primarily on questions of rationality. While Marion opts for an "alternative" kind of rationality grounded in love rather than certainty, for Wolterstorff it is more simply a concern to investigate the rationality of the language employed in liturgy, to which he applies usual analytic assumptions about logic and verifiability.[15] Despite the title's stress on "acting" liturgically, the book ironically focuses almost exclusively on the analysis of liturgical *texts* (and, oddly, mostly those of a tradition other than his own, that is, one of which he presumably has little if any existential experience).[16]

Throughout his discussion of liturgy, Wolterstorff expresses grave doubts that people at worship actually mean what they say, because it is so exorbitant and extraordinary. He is concerned with the fact that many people at worship may not be fully or sincerely engaged, due to being distracted or doubtful about some aspects of what is being said. He also thinks that many statements in the texts employed in worship cannot possibly be taken literally. When texts claim, for example, that Christ is born or risen "today" or that some event is occurring "at this moment," it is patently obvious to him that this cannot be literally true. We cannot be "immersed" in an event that occurred centuries ago, or at least not in the way liturgical theologians claim (or he thinks they claim).[17] There are at least three difficulties in regard to the meaning of liturgical language for him and all are concerned on some level with its truth: whether people truly mean what they say when they are in liturgy, whether liturgy is "enacting" an event or merely repeating it, and whether its use of the present tense can make sense.[18]

Wolterstorff is especially interested in the meaning of liturgical language. He suggests that liturgy follows a script: "Within a liturgical tradition there are some who are 'experts' in the meanings and references of the words used in the liturgical enactments of the tradition" and that it means what the "liturgical experts" say it means: "When those of us who are not experts follow the liturgical script from the tradition, the words we say or sing have the meanings and references they have when the liturgical experts use them" (Wolterstorff 2018, 43; see also 2015, 3–9). Thus, we do not have to understand every word or be fully aware of how it is supposed to function within the overall liturgical structure. We also are not required to intend deliberately and literally every sentiment expressed by a liturgical text or script; rather, these texts or scripts are employed because they express worship of the divine in better terms than we could muster on our own or on the spur of the moment. Via its script, liturgy enables "correct enactment" (2015, 7), such that the church is manifested and actualized (2015, 11) and worshippers are aligned with "God's bringing about God's kingdom" (2015, 125).

Wolterstorff is particularly concerned with people who might not understand or not fully believe what is going on in liturgy. Authenticity or truthfulness seems the governing concern here.[19] Some people also might not "intend" the liturgical acts as

they are supposed to be intended (as in the case of children). Wolterstorff (2018, 107) concludes that such acts or gestures still count as worshipful or liturgical, as long as the person does not explicitly intend for them *not* to mean in this way. Because the gestures are prescribed, we "cut more slack" for people performing them with active intention. In regard to the overall meaning of liturgical action, "Christian liturgical enactments are for worshipping God—not for placating God, not for appeasing God, not for 'centering oneself'—but also not for expressing worshipful feelings" (2018, 118). Words and acts count as such worship, even when people are distracted or harbor some doubts, unless they explicitly intend otherwise.[20]

A second, but different, concern with the truth of liturgy consists in the pronouncements liturgical texts make about what is occurring within it. Wolterstorff thinks that there is very little in the way of real "enactment" in liturgy, by which he seems to mean something like a theatrical restaging of an original event. Rather, much of it is instead a repetition of a type. He distinguishes between act- or event-tokens and act- or event-types, arguing that most of liturgy is repeating a "type" rather than a "token," that is, a specific instantiation of the type.[21] That is, the Eucharist does not literally repeat the last supper Jesus celebrated with his disciples in the first century, but it repeats or instantiates the type, while being closely linked to the "token" of that event: "Rather than being a reenactment of what took place at Christ's last meal, a celebration of the Eucharist is (in part) a complex, layered, token-guided repetition thereof" (2018, 163).[22] It seems right to say that a Eucharistic ceremony is not a theatrical staging of what happened two thousand years ago, although I am not aware of any liturgical theologian who would actually claim this.[23] Most liturgical theologians would agree that although the present celebration is linked in a significant fashion to the original event, it is not an identical reproduction of it. Be that as it may, neither defining it as repetition nor speaking of it as enactment really responds to the question of what it means or why it is significant to repeat or reenact it (or why it would matter that it is one rather than the other).

Wolterstorff also wonders about what is going on when other biblical accounts are narrated within a liturgical context. He thinks that especially Orthodox texts are "astonishingly unrestrained" in their use of the biblical material (2018, 153) with very heavy use of imagination to depict the events. They "leave rehearsal behind and go all the way toward imagination" (2018, 155). Yet, he insists that this is still an imaginative depiction rather than an actual reenactment, which would be a restaging of the original event. Although the Orthodox Holy Friday ceremony of entombment might be validly interpreted as enactment (2018, 165), this is not the case for most liturgical uses of scripture or references to scriptural events. Symbolic interpretations of liturgical episodes as reenactments of biblical narratives "are not defensible" (2018, 166). In this respect, he disagrees with Cuneo (2016, 66–87), who argues that enactment is for the purpose of immersion into the narratives. Cuneo (2016, 87) contends that reenactment of the Eucharist or other biblical events allows one to identify "with the person on behalf of whom one is acting by imitating him." This permits us to enter into the narrative and to immerse ourselves more fully in it by imitating its characters: "The dominant purpose of immersion is to let participants open themselves up to and appropriate the riches of the narrative,

often by identifying with its characters in such a way that they construct and revise their narrative identities" (Cuneo 2016, 87). Wolterstorff harbors hesitations about this. Often it seems more a matter of emulation than of immersion (2018, 167). Commemorations or "memorial" events make this particularly clear. They are not meant for strengthening memory or for repeating an event, but rather for honoring the people who are being commemorated (2018, 180–1).

Wolterstorff's strongest consternation is reserved for the use of the liturgical present, which he repeatedly calls "extraordinary," by which he seems to mean something like unbelievable or untrue (2018, 191). He rejects all attempts to interpret this in terms of a reactualization of the original event or an entry into a "mythic" time (or really any time different from ours).[24] Wolterstorff (2018, 201) argues instead that these instances must be interpreted in the mode of speaking "as if": "It's not metaphor; it's not simile; it's not personification; it's not synecdoche. It's a *sui generis* trope." Comparing it to a boy speaking to his dog "as if" it were his best friend, or a slave owner treating a slave "as if" he were an animal or tool, he argues that this is not meant literally (both the boy and the slave owner know this) but instead expresses an attitude and at the same time serves to strengthen and justify that attitude (positively in the case of the dog, negatively in the case of slavery). The use of the present in liturgy is not meant literally, but "Christians feel intuitively that the right language for hymning Christ's birth and resurrection is not language whose resonance is that of distance but language whose resonance is that of immediacy" (2018, 207). Thus, we are not entering into some sort of historical event when we celebrate Christ's birth or resurrection, but we are merely reinforcing the attitude that these events still matter to us and are meaningful for us today. Liturgical theologians are wrong when they think that more is going on or that the event is in some form reactualized within the celebration (2018, 192).[25]

Such concerns with truth also inform Wolterstorff's earlier liturgical theology. Although explicitly theological in focus, he frequently raises questions about the appropriateness or truthfulness of what liturgical texts imply about God. For example, Wolterstorff (2015, 44–6) investigates whether it makes sense to speak of God as someone who can be wronged or what it might mean to "bless" God (2015, 50–1). Repeatedly, he defines his project of making explicit what is implicit in liturgical language in terms of the consideration whether it is "appropriate" or a "correct" use of language (2015, 14, 53, 58). He appeals to speech act theory in order to support the apparently "astonishing" contention that God listens to us (2015, 72–81) and wonders whether such talk is "unacceptably anthropomorphic" (2015, 88). Distinguishing between using terms literally, figuratively, metaphorically, and analogically, he argues that liturgy works by "analogical extension" (2015, 91). That is, referring to God as hearing, speaking, and listening is appropriate because we mean that God "does something a good deal like that" (2015, 106). At other points, he presses the reader to understand more fully what various liturgical speech acts—such as asking God to listen favorably—could possibly mean (2015, 108–9, 127). The sense that liturgical language might be meaningless, nonsensical, inappropriate, incorrect, deceptive, or at the very least easily misinterpreted, seems to drive his treatment throughout.

LITURGY AND PRACTICE

Wolterstorff's worries about the "truthfulness" of liturgy—whether in terms of citations of biblical texts, affirmations of superlative statements, use of the present tense, or implicit claims about God—seem far removed from Marion's analyses of the truth or rationality of faith. Yet both approaches might fruitfully be brought to bear on each other. On the one hand, despite his use of speech act theory, Wolterstorff is primarily operating with a propositional or correspondence account of truth. If the liturgy "today" cannot correspond to the historical event, then it must be simply untrue. If the lector cannot read a text such that the first-person use within the text means the same thing in the lector's reading of it, he or she must be lying. If the person at worship does not literally believe every statement in a hymn sung on a particular occasion, he or she might be suspected of dishonesty. These assumptions and suspicions—even if Wolterstorff allays some of them—seem strange. They miss something about the way in which language functions differently in the liturgical setting (and in many other dimensions of human experience), where literalism is not the main concern. Liturgical speech is not propositional speech, and it is not declaring statements it wishes for us to verify or show to correspond to specific historical events or facts. Here, Marion's contention that many such liturgical pronouncements are meant to have an effect on us rather than make verifiable claims seems much more appropriate for liturgical language and is actually in line with Wolterstorff's own conclusion that liturgical language is performative inasmuch as it is about praising God (2015, 23; 2018, 28, 118).

Yet, on the other hand, surely Wolterstorff is right to assume that the truth or rationality of liturgy cannot be completely foreign to how we think of meaning or truth in other contexts and cannot be entirely incompatible with it. Marion's distinction between "orders" or types of rationality sometimes appears so absolute that it is hard to see how they could have any interaction with each other and how it would not leave someone maintaining both of them in a rather schizophrenic position. While Wolterstorff's dismissal of the liturgical theologians' claims that in some form we "enter" into the event of a feast seems too strong, the question of what this means and how one might validly speak of Christ being born "today" or ascending "before our eyes" requires some response, if one is concerned with understanding what liturgy means. How is such superlative language to be interpreted? This matters not only because it seems unbelievable in a literal sense, that is, as a literal repetition of the original historical event, but because we assume liturgy functions in some way, that it does something, or effects some change in us. To participate in it is meaningful for the lives of those who attend and enter into worship. How is it meaningful? How does it affect or even transform them? What difference does worship make to people's lives? Why is liturgy something worth doing for people who adhere to a religious tradition and seek to carry it forward? In the context of considering memorials, Wolterstorff (2018, 175) points out that "something deep about ourselves is manifested by our repeatedly engaging in memorial activities and by our surrounding ourselves with memorial objects; something of great importance to us would be lost if we ceased doing so." This

seems right, but it calls for some unpacking why such ritual commemorating (even in a broader cultural sense) or other ritual practice is so deeply meaningful to and even essential for people in a way that goes far beyond a preoccupation with language or the specific words uttered at the event.[26]

There is an interesting and telling slippage in Wolterstorff's account of Orthodox liturgy in several places: he often assimilates the choir and the people, claiming that a particular text sung by the choir expresses the prayer of the people and therefore can be interpreted as their claims or convictions. This then presents the difficulty that not everyone present may mean those words or even understand them fully. But how do we know that the words sung by the choir are also the words of the people assembled? Theologically speaking, this is obviously true on at least some level: the choir chants on behalf of the people and represents the congregation as a whole. But most people in Orthodox services do not have the text in front of them, and the choir is by no means always easy to understand. While many people who attend regularly may have most of the Sunday morning liturgy memorized, very few people will know all (or even many) of the texts for festal services, which are precisely the services presenting most of the problems of truth Wolterstorff discusses.[27] How do we know that the people "mean" these words? How do they participate in them?

The most obvious form of such participation is not, in fact, singing along or knowing the texts and assenting to them mentally, it is the actions the congregants undertake. In the case of Orthodox services, this extends from frequently crossing oneself and bowing on many occasions, to kneeling, prostrating, venerating icons or the burial shroud, processing, holding or lighting candles, receiving communion, and so on. That is to say, the people "speak" or "worship" with their bodies and affect. What makes it possible for someone to "enter" into a liturgical occasion are less the specific words that are spoken, although those are obviously not irrelevant, but the whole mood: the lighting, the incense, the music, the icons, the attitudes of veneration, and all the concrete ways in which those are embodied in gestures, postures, and movements.

The question of whether it is literally "true" that Christ is born "today" somehow misses the point of what is going on in liturgy, not only by disregarding the poetic nature of the texts but by focusing far too exclusively on texts in the first place. The texts of liturgy are not anywhere near as important as philosophers tend to think. Rather, the actions and one's corporeal and affective engagement within the liturgical event are far more significant. One might say that the spirit or mood and the meaning of a liturgical occasion, while maybe pronounced explicitly in the texts, is conveyed by the entire liturgical experience: the way in which the liturgical space is organized, the implements used, the postures adopted, the gestures performed, the music intoned, the movements undertaken, the emotions evoked. The point is not necessarily whether we can utter a particular sentence truthfully or whether we believe every word of what we say (or the choir sings for us) on a given liturgical occasion, the point is to participate in the liturgical actions such that our attitudes and dispositions are shaped by them. The question of meaning is more appropriately asked of the event and all the affective, corporeal, spatial, and temporal dimensions of its practices as a whole rather than of individual lines or particular phrases of text.

The penitential dimensions of Orthodox liturgy are a particularly good example of this on multiple levels. On one level, the regular practices of confession, prayers before communion and other daily confessional practices say many things that in a purely rational sense cannot be literally true. For instance, many of these prayers acknowledge oneself as the worst of sinners, far worse than anyone else, which cannot be the case, objectively or literally speaking, of every single person saying the prayer.[28] Or one admits to a whole host of transgressions, which presumably not everyone saying the prayer has committed at every moment of the day before saying those words. But the literal meaning of the words is really beside the point here; they induce an attitude of contrition or penitence. And it goes far beyond the words: saying "I am the worst of sinners" probably matters considerably less than bowing and prostrating or kneeling before a cross or icon in confession or contrition. Similarly, many ascetic or monastic texts that informed later Orthodox liturgical practices make exorbitant claims about one's own sinfulness and counsel lifelong penitence.[29] Copious tears and extensive mourning are often recommended. The goal here, precisely through the superlative poetic language, is to induce attitudes of contrition and postures of penitence, which shape an interior attitude through its corporeal and affective expression.

The extensive and intensive penitential period of Great Lent (and in the Orthodox tradition other fasting periods throughout the year) carries this to another level. Here, similarly highly poetic language is used in the various lenten services, and some of the chants sung by the choir are superlative in their expressions. But, again, penitential attitudes are shaped far more by corporeal practices like kneeling, bowing, and prostrating and by the many affective dimensions induced by the mournful music, by the quiet atmosphere of services often held at night and with very little light (frequently consisting mostly of the flickering light of candles), and by the various fasting practices that exhort to the abstention from meat, dairy, eggs, fish, olive oil, and wine for weeks at a time. The questions Wolterstorff raises about truth and authenticity can surely also be raised about such practices: is one honestly sorry for one's sins when prostrating during a service, and is one participating in a fasting abstention with a pure heart? Indeed, this was a frequent question already for the patristic preachers who constantly exhorted their congregations to fast not only from food, but to abstain also from slander, swearing, uncharitable thought, and so forth.[30] In some sense, the very structure of liturgy acknowledges this problem: if we could do all this perfectly the first time around, we would not need to repeat it so frequently. The prayers of confession are said over and over again, Lent comes around again each year, and we prostrate and abstain from certain foods anew every time. It is partly the constant repetition that enables the formation of certain attitudes over a lifetime. All of these practices, including their corporeal and affective dimensions, work together to create a penitential attitude in the person participating in such ritual and to form the whole community in a particular way.

This obviously applies not merely to penitential practices but also to the joys of feasting and many other dimensions of liturgical experience. What is "done" in liturgy is as important as what is said or what texts are read or chanted. Furthermore, the relation between them matters, not only for ascertaining meaning but for shaping

behavior, forming identity, forging communal bonds, and cultivating religious adhesion. The actions and practices of liturgy in all their rich variety, then, must be interpreted as part of any exploration of liturgical "meaning." The meaning or sense of liturgy is not only verbal but corporeal, sensory, and affective. It makes sense precisely through the senses, through hearing, seeing, smelling, tasting, and touching. Its meaning is "inscribed" on the body, expressed in its postures and movements, conveyed via its gestures. To understand this meaning, not just the language but the actions of liturgy must be examined.

Similarly, the *experience* of liturgy is informed at least as much by the communal, corporeal, and affective experience than by any words that are pronounced. The melodies of the chants and the broader harmonic world within which they function often affect and shape us more profoundly than the words of these chants. Their locus in the liturgical year, the ways in which they are remembered and anticipated, shape important expectations about how liturgy is understood and felt to function—especially dramatically in the celebrations of great annual feasts. Religious commitment is fostered in fundamental ways by these ritual practices that have shaped particular communities and whole cultures for centuries. When bodies and affects are so deeply engaged in communal practices—especially those involving the sharing of food and feasting together—they are far less likely to be abandoned than when faith consists only in propositions to which one mentally assents or which one must defend intellectually. They shape identity in profound, and largely non-rational, ways. A philosophical examination of religion must take all of these dimensions into account and investigate them seriously. While—like sociology and anthropology of religion—it must be attentive to concrete empirical practices and frequently check its insights against the particularity of embodied experience, philosophy must go beyond the empirical and enable us to examine and describe the fundamental structures of such experience more broadly and thus to think about its implications for the meaning of human religious experience per se. Philosophy cannot afford to focus only on the words of religious, doctrinal, or even liturgical texts, or on speculations about the divine or even approaches to naming God, or it will, on the one hand, miss many of the important ways in which religion functions and is experienced by those who participate in it, and, on the other hand, be unable to consider the meaning of religious experience and practice for human life and identity on personal and communal levels.

NOTES

1. For a slightly lower estimate, see Bourget and Chalmers (2014).
2. For a summary of some of those challenges (from both analytic and continental quarters), see "Faith: Belief or Practice" (Gschwandtner 2015).
3. Cuneo (e.g., 2016, 148) also suggests repeatedly that philosophy of religion has never focused on issues of religious experience or practice, which is obviously untrue, given that this is what philosophy of religion from a continental perspective has been doing for several decades. It is the case, however, that issues of liturgy or communal

worship have not been considered as much (although several continental figures have written on the Eucharist for years).

4. For this reason, some scholars have argued that religion is not an appropriate term there at all, because it tends to be defined in "Christian" terms, modeled on Western (usually Christian) conceptions of religion rooted in doctrine. Sociologists and anthropologists of religion have long ago abandoned an examination of religion focused primarily on doctrine or belief and focus almost exclusively on practices in their research. See, for example, Riesebrodt (2010). One might also mention the so-called "material turn" in the study of religion and the strong focus on the study of "material culture" in examinations of religious forms of expression (including aesthetic and architectural ones). For the "material turn," see Schilbrack (2019) (with thanks to the editors for this last reference).
5. One might think that Jean-Yves Lacoste would be the better source here, given that his work calls this "being-before-God" "liturgical," but he is actually far more interested in ascetic religiosity and acknowledges repeatedly that he is employing the term "liturgy" only in the broad sense of our experience "before the Absolute" and not in the sense of ritual or cultic practices. He does provide some (more theologically informed) analyses of the Eucharist and does seem to think that his work has implications for ritual practice, but he does not engage in an analysis of liturgy in the sense of ecclesial practice. For a fuller argument that continental philosophy should focus on ritual practices, see "Phenomenology and Ritual Practice" (Gschwandtner 2019a). For a critique of Lacoste and an attempt at a phenomenological analysis of liturgy, see *Welcoming Finitude* (Gschwandtner 2019b).
6. Marion has also been engaged in this project the longest; his first published writings on the topic date back to the mid-1970s. The dates provided for the English translations are misleading in that respect, as there is often a significant delay between original publication in French and translation into English.
7. The French *se donner* can connote passive, reciprocal, and reflexive, thus meaning "being given," "giving to each other," and "giving oneself." Marion does, however, frequently stress the "self" of the phenomena, thus privileging the third connotation.
8. See also one of his crucial essays on Pascal who, in Marion's view, posits a similar alternative way of knowing to Cartesian metaphysics (2007b, 63–79).
9. See also his very similar interpretation of Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well of Sychar, which also culminates in a discussion of the Eucharist (2017, 125–35).
10. As briefly indicated at the start of this section, Marion rarely employs the language of "religious phenomenon" but prefers speaking of an experience of "revelation" instead. The supremely saturated phenomenon is a "phenomenon of revelation" concerned with the experience of Christ (2002a, 234–41). No distinction is made between an experience of the divine and religious phenomena more broadly. He returns to the topic of revelation even more fully in the expanded French version of the Gifford Lectures (Marion 2020).

11. For a more detailed analysis of this, see "Jean-Luc Marion's Spirituality of Adoration and its Implications for a Phenomenology of Religion" (Gschwandtner 2017).
12. I have criticized this in detail for several of the saturated phenomena Marion proposes in *Degrees of Givenness* (Gschwandtner 2014).
13. They are not entirely gratuitous: Wolterstorff (2018) relies heavily in his book on Nathan Mitchell's account of liturgy, which refers to Marion extensively. Wolterstorff never acknowledges this, and Marion is not mentioned in his book.
14. Wolterstorff's earlier *Hearing the Call* (2011) includes five essays on liturgy and justice, concerned primarily with delineating the relationship and overcoming the opposition many see between worship and ethical action. He claims there already that "Christian liturgy is an interchange between actions of proclamation and actions of worship" (2011, 36). His Kantzer Lectures in Revealed Theology (*The God We Worship* 2015) propose a *theology* of worship, although they certainly also touch on philosophical issues. This present essay will focus primarily on his most recent work (2018).
15. On this, see also chapters 4–8 (that is, the majority of the chapters) of the Kantzer Lectures (2015, 53–145), which focus on God's listening, hearing, talking, and participating in dialogue. The book as a whole is focused on what liturgy tells us about the nature of God.
16. This is also the case for the liturgical theology (2015), which examines liturgical texts in order to discern their implications about the nature of the divine. In the more recent work, Wolterstorff does devote an entire chapter to the "bodily dimension of liturgical action" (2018, 78–96), yet his overall examination of the meaning of liturgy in the subsequent chapters focuses almost exclusively on texts and rarely mentions gestures or actions. He justifies this in opening by saying he will focus on liturgy that is "easily accessible in published texts" because "field research" is "not for me" (2018, 8). But this has the slightly odd result of quoting heavily from Orthodox liturgy with little awareness of how those texts are actually performed or instantiated. Wolterstorff (2018, 84–7) argues strongly against both ritual theorists and "postmodernist" accounts of signification because he thinks they do not give an account of how words or gestures actually worship God but only of how they express worshipful feelings or thankful thoughts.
17. See also a related concern about the appropriateness of liturgical language in the blessing of animals in order to discern whether addressing God is appropriate (Wolterstorff 2015, 57–60).
18. In the earlier text, Wolterstorff (2015, 80–1) also discusses various difficulties related to how liturgy speaks about God, such as whether it is appropriate or pointless to address God and whether it even makes sense to say that God listens (2015, 61–2, 87–106).
19. In another context, Wolterstorff (2015, 15, 68, 83, 124) identifies as "deviant" a participation in liturgy that seeks to be "morally strengthened, psychologically calmed, centered, drawn to beauty" or that is undertaken for the purpose of "self-improvement," rather than for addressing God.

20. He is also rather worried about what people might be doing when they are reading from the Bible, employing first- or second-person pronouns, because they are obviously not the authors of these texts. This seems to present almost unsurmountable difficulties of truth for him: "In many cases, however, it's not at all easy to know what the people are saying, or should be saying, when vocalizing a psalm" (2018, 38). The whole framing of this and other questions seems odd, to say the least. There are similar statements in the earlier books. For example, regarding address of God, Wolterstorff remarks: "Nowhere in the liturgy is this stated, and hence nowhere is there an explanation as to what it is about God that makes it appropriate for the people to address God. They just go ahead and address God" (2015, 14). Most of the presuppositions and questions Wolterstorff brings to the liturgical texts are utterly foreign to the worship experience, as he acknowledges at one point (2018, 8). (My experience of reading Wolterstorff parallels how Cuneo [2016, 2] describes his experience reading patristic and medieval descriptions of liturgy: "For me, the experience of reading the commentaries just mentioned is that of entering into a philosophical world profoundly different from ours, animated by concerns and presuppositions that are often baffling. Connecting my own experience of the liturgy with what they have to say about it is challenging.")
21. For what it's worth, it seems to me that the ancient notion of mimesis held both of these together: it is both imitation and representation. Ricœur's account of threefold mimesis captures some of the ambiguity of the ways in which a novel, play, or even historical account "configures" what is "prefigured" by life (and in turn influences and "refigures" it). It thus holds together elements of imitation and representation without separating them artificially.
22. On the topic of the Eucharist, see also Wolterstorff (2015, 146–62), which is concerned primarily with the understanding of God implied in it.
23. For an extensive discussion of this, and the views of contemporary liturgical theologians on the matter, see Chapter 1, Temporality, in *Welcoming Finitude* (Gschwandtner 2019b, 31–56).
24. Wolterstorff (2018, 195) contends that Eliade claims of ancient myths: "To that time, our time bears no relation; the events that occur in mythic time bear no temporal relations to events that occur in historical time" and thinks that this cannot be true: "The view that Eliade attributes to archaic persons concerning the relation between myth and reality could not possibly be true" (2018, 196). It is perhaps not coincidental that Eliade was Orthodox, given that most of Wolterstorff's consternation is reserved for Orthodox texts.
25. His artificial distinction between "token" and "type" seems to guide his interpretation here. I am not at all convinced that liturgical theologians actually claim (or think) that the event-token (as Wolterstorff defines it) "that was Christ's birth is reactualized every Christmas day, made present again" (2018, 192). It seems more the separation of type from token (and attributing to them a repetition of token) that leads to the interpretation appearing strained or unbelievable. See also his analysis of Calvin's understanding of the Eucharist (2015, 146–62). Throughout the earlier

book, he frequently employs the term "enactment" to refer to what liturgy does (e.g., 2015, 4–12, 156–60, 164).

26. On liturgical language and the meaning of liturgical action, see also *Reading Religious Ritual with Ricoeur* (Gschwandtner 2021).
27. This parallels the participation in a worship service in Protestant traditions where one might not agree with what the person leading the service is saying, whether in terms of prayer, preaching, or musical performance.
28. Such claims are abundant in the (personal) prayers to be read in preparing for communion or the rite of confession, but also in the (communal) liturgies for Great Lent and especially in the Great Canon of St. Andrew of Crete, an immensely popular service celebrated (since approximately the tenth century) in four parts on each of the first four days of Great Lent and in its entirety on the Thursday of the fifth week. For a much more detailed study of such prayers and practices of penitence and their impact on formation of "liturgical subjects" (in Byzantium), see Derek Krueger's important study (2014). He devotes an entire chapter to discussing the Great Canon (2014, 130–63).
29. These are particularly prominent in Symeon the New Theologian, to give just one example.
30. This is a constant theme of John Chrysostom and the Cappadocians, but shows up frequently in homilies across the centuries. For example, Chrysostom repeatedly exhorts his congregation in Antioch on this point: "Abstinence from food, after all, is undertaken for this purpose, to curb the exuberance of the flesh and bring the beast under control. The person fasting ought most of all to keep anger in check, learn the lesson of mildness and kindness, have a contrite heart, banish the flood of unworthy passions, keep before one's eyes that unsleeping eye and that incorruptible tribunal, avoid becoming enthralled by money, be lavish in almsgiving, drive all ill-will to one's neighbor from the soul" (*Homilies on Genesis* 8.14, 1986, 113). The liturgical texts themselves also frequently insist that the point is not simply abstaining from food but practicing an overall attitude of abstention from any passions or vices.

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CHAPTER THREE

Engagement, Immersion, and Enactment: The Role of Spiritual Practice in Religious Belief

JOHN COTTINGHAM

INTELLECT IN SEARCH OF FAITH: THE CASES OF NAGEL AND PUTNAM

How is spiritual praxis related to religious belief? Most of those working in philosophy of religion in academia today are believers, already committed to a religious worldview. For such people, religious praxis is, so to speak, *already in place*, before the philosophizing. Following in a long tradition going back to St. Anselm, they might see their philosophical inquiries under the rubric of *fides quaerens intellectum*: starting from an initial position of faith they look to philosophy to provide some kind of intellectual support for it.

But what about those approaching things from the other end, as it were—those who are not believers, not involved in religious practice, but who start from the standpoint of neutral philosophical inquiry? (Whether any philosophical inquiry can, in fact, be wholly neutral is an interesting question, but I shall leave that on one side.) The group of philosophical inquirers into religion who are non-believers divides, I suggest, into at least three subgroups. First, there those whose inquiries have convinced them that the religious outlook is untenable. This group regards religious faith as a mistake and, thus, has no desire to adopt it. A second group comprises those whose inquiries seem to them to leave it open whether there is a

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case for accepting a religious worldview, and who put the matter aside, adopting an agnostic stance. Third, and perhaps most interesting, there are those who share with agnostics the sense that the religious worldview is not proven from an intellectual point of view, but who are not content with that, and would like to have faith—they regard the lack of faith in their lives as to some degree regrettable. If we want a label for this group, we could think of them as falling under the heading not of *fides quaerens intellectum*, but of *intellectus quaerens fidem*: instead of pre-existing faith seeking intellectual backing, they exemplify the unconvinced intellect that regards faith as something desirable.

Why should someone who is intellectually unconvinced harbor a desire for faith? In the seventeenth century, Pascal (1962 [1670], no. 418) suggested one motivation: the desire to live on in eternal bliss after death, coupled with the belief that faith is a prerequisite for this. Perhaps there may be some who are motivated in this way by after-life considerations, but I suspect a more widespread, and more philosophically interesting, reason for the intellectually unconvinced to hanker after faith has to do with the universal human desire for *meaning*. Thomas Nagel (2010, 3–4), in an important essay, argues that a central component in the religious temperament is what he calls a "yearning for cosmic reconciliation" or "completion," the desire to "achieve a kind of understanding that would connect … every human being to the whole of reality – intelligibly and, if possible, satisfyingly."

Religious belief, Nagel suggests, is one way of satisfying this human desire for meaning, and for "completion." For the person of faith, there is an "all-encompassing mind or spiritual principle in addition to the minds of individual humans beings and other creatures," a mind that is "the foundation of the existence of the universe, of the natural order, of value and of our existence, nature and purpose" (Nagel 2010, 5). The reason that Nagel's characterization interests me here is that he is describing a position that *he himself is unable to take*. And hence, while acknowledging that he feels the pull of the religious temperament, the desire to be connected to a source of meaning and value, he is obliged to cast around to see if there is something *other* than religious faith that will give him what he wants.

Nagel admits to sharing the religious temperament to the extent of being dissatisfied with what he calls "resolute secularism," the view that there is nothing missing, nothing left out, from a description of the world in purely scientific terms. And he goes on to speculate that there may be some "non-accidental fit between us and the world order." Perhaps Darwinism is not the whole story, and there is some natural, impersonal, but irreducibly teleological process at work in the universe, so that we are "part of the lengthy process of the universe gradually waking up" (a similar suggestion has recently been made by Tim Mulgan (2016; see also Nagel 2013). However, Nagel (2010, 16–17) ends up doubting that cosmic teleology, without a God, would do the job in helping us makes sense of our lives. "Does it really make any difference," he asks, "whether we are the products of natural teleology or of pure chance?" He ends with the pessimistic conclusion that since the desire for cosmic reconciliation will not go away, the only response left to us may after all be one of existentialist despair.

This is the classic human situation of someone who yearns for cosmic reconciliation or completion but who, in Pascal's words, "cannot see the road ahead." Yet, of course, Pascal (1962 [1670], no. 418) famously suggested a remedy in such cases: if theoretical speculation and argument are inconclusive, turn to praxis. If you can't believe, start going to church: "this will train you, this will make you believe." It is probably fruitless to speculate on why this is not even an option for Nagel. He might well be repelled by the suggestion of praxis as opening the door to faith, since he is elsewhere on record as declaring that he is not only an atheist but that he hopes theism is not true, since he "doesn't want the universe to be like that" (Nagel 1997, 130). Yet, in a certain way, one could say that Nagel *does*, on his own admission, have an interest in becoming a believer; he admits to having the temperament that is at the root of the religious impulse, the desire for completion, and comes close to conceding that the alternative, non-theistic vehicles for satisfying that temperament do not really work.

It is interesting to compare the case of Nagel with that of an equally eminent American philosopher, Hilary Putnam, who describes how he embarked on the path of religious praxis at the age of fifty. When one of his sons unexpectedly announced that he wanted to have a bar mitzvah, Putnam explains that he made the decision to start attending weekly services at a local Jewish congregation and to continue doing so for a period of one year. This decision seems to have involved something of an experimental approach to religious praxis—try it and see what happens. And what emerges from Putnam's account is just how important engaging in the relevant practices turned out to be, in his eventual transition to becoming a regular adherent to the Jewish faith. In another telling anecdote from the same period (the mid-1970s), Putnam recalls that at that time so-called "transcendental meditation" was all the rage, and the advocates of this new cult were suggesting to him that he should give it a try, setting aside twenty minutes a day for the purpose. Putnam (2008, 3) describes how he thought to himself:

> well, in *twenty minutes* I can *daven* (say the traditional Jewish prayers). Why do I need to try something that comes from another religion? So I started to *daven* every morning (or afternoon, if I didn't have time in the morning) … I appreciate that what 'davening' does to or in one's soul must be very different from what Transcendental Meditation does; be that as it may, I found it to be a transformative activity, and it quickly became an indispensable part of my 'religious activities.'

To draw any specific inferences from the cases of Nagel and Putnam would, of course, require far more detail about the personal lives and circumstances of both philosophers than is available to us. But they do give us examples of two outstandingly gifted analytic philosophers, both clearly highly competent in evaluating and assessing the philosophical arguments for and against theism, both evidently possessed of the religious temperament in the broad sense of being sympathetic to the search for cosmic solutions to the human predicament, and both, until middle age, holding aloof from any theistic allegiance. And what appears to tip the scales, in the one case and not the other, is not further philosophical reflection, but the transformative effect of

actually engaging in spiritual praxis. In the rest of this chapter, I want to look at how this kind of transformative process might work, and in so doing indicate what I take to be some important lessons for the philosophical understanding of the relation between religious belief and spiritual practice.

THE PRIMACY OF PRAXIS

One possible lesson may perhaps already be suggested by the discussion so far, namely that the adoption or rejection of a theistic worldview may not be as dependent on purely intellectual assessments and arguments as is often implicitly supposed by philosophers of religion. This connects with a certain disquiet I have expressed elsewhere about the way philosophy of religion is standardly practiced in much of the Anglophone world—a disquiet that seems to be shared by a small but growing number of writers in recent years. The problem connects with what Eleonore Stump (2010, 24–5) has called the "cognitive hemianopia" of many philosophers; the way their philosophical thinking about religion involves only "left brain" skills (to use a problematic term, but a useful shorthand),[1] meaning that their thinking has become curiously detached from the involved imaginative and emotional modes of awareness that are manifest in religious texts and religious life generally.

In my own work, I have also emphasized the widespread failure to recognize what I call the "primacy of praxis" in religion (Cottingham 2005, 5ff., 2014, 153). When we leave the seminar room and look at religious forms of life as they actually operate, we are likely to be struck by the pivotal importance of spiritual practices and disciplines, as opposed to intellectual debate, for developing and deepening religious understanding. One does not have to be a card-carrying Wittgensteinian to recognize the seminal importance of his thesis that understanding the meaning of a given utterance requires us to understand the human practices and forms of life within which it operates. So, rather than assuming, as much philosophy of religion has tended to do, that we can analyze and dissect the "cognitive content" of religious claims, and evaluate their truth in isolation from the religious practices that give them life and meaning, may it not be worth starting at the other end, as it were, and look at what religious people *do*, in their liturgy, in their religious practices, rituals, and activities, before we presume to extract the supposed doxastic ingredients and pronounce on their tenability or otherwise?

Any advocate of the primacy of praxis must face the obvious initial objection: the praxis can hardly be prior to the beliefs in any philosophically important sense, since one cannot engage in any given form of religious praxis without already having the relevant religious beliefs in the first place. Straightforwardly understood, however, what this objection says is simply false; for clearly one can, for example, attend a church service, stand up, sit down, kneel, sing the hymns, recite the prayers, all without subscribing to belief in God. But surely, replies the critic, the words used in the liturgy *assert* the existence of God, so cannot be recited by a non-believer, except in an empty, parroting way that means nothing, and so is not genuine participation in the praxis? Again, the assumption here is false, or at least misleading. If we take the singing of Psalms as an example, the sentences recited are typically not, or not

very often, claims about the truth of certain religious doctrines, or even assertions of the existence of God; they are cries of remorse, desperate pleas for help, shouts of praise, songs of thanksgiving, expressions of hope and trust, and so on (Cottingham 2014, 153). But don't the utterances implicitly *presuppose* that God exists? That cannot be denied, at least in a large number of cases. But here it's important to remember that the God of mainstream theism, in all three Abrahamic faiths, is standardly regarded as incomprehensible to the human mind, the mysterious ultimate source of all being and goodness, or (to quote Nagel's phrase cited earlier) "the foundation of the existence of the universe, of the natural order, of value and of our own existence, nature and purpose."

To engage in forms of worship that presuppose the existence of such a source or foundation actually allows participants a great deal of *cognitive latitude* in how they formulate their conception of God before they incur a charge of insincerity or mere parroting when they use a given form of words as part of their liturgical praxis. In order for them to engage authentically in theistic liturgy and spiritual praxis, so far from their idea of God having to conform to the standards of precision and exactitude beloved of philosophers and scientists, insisting that God be subjected to exact classification and definition may actually stand in the way of proper religious reverence—a point stressed by many theologians from Augustine of Hippo (*Sermons*, 52, vi, 16 and 117, iii, 5) right down to Jean-Luc Marion (1999, 34). The ineffable God who dwells in "light inaccessible," as Paul's letter to Timothy has it (1 Timothy 6:16), or to whom our language can refer only "lightly and poetically," in Michael Leunig's phrase (2008, 237, quoted in Williams 2014, 34), is thus utterly unlike a precisely defined object in the world. God is nothing like the undetectably small china teapot orbiting in space between Earth and Mars, to use the comparison once introduced by Bertrand Russell (1997 [1952]) and gleefully revived by Richard Dawkins in *The God Delusion* (2016, 75). Hallowed rituals and practices presupposing the existence of the cosmic teapot could scarcely be engaged in without immediately incurring charges of mindless irrationality or insincerity; but the same is, to say the very least, not obviously true of practices that presuppose an ultimate source of being and value, a source that transcends the physical world yet which is also immanent, manifest in everything that exists.

HOW SPIRITUAL PRAXIS WORKS

The discussion so far suggests a number of conclusions about the relationship between spiritual praxis and theistic belief. First, as is illustrated in the case of Hilary Putnam, praxis can be *chronologically* prior to belief, that is, it can be engaged in by someone who is not yet a convinced believer. Second, it can to a considerable extent be *logically* independent of belief: a great deal of the language used in liturgical practice does not consist of explicit assertions of doctrinal or theological claims. Here one might well apply to liturgy a comment made by Rowan Williams about Dante's *Divina Comedia*: it is "not a versification of doctrinal propositions but an attempt to allow the being of … God to become transparent and actively transformative in the words recited and read or heard" (Williams 2017, commenting on Montemaggi

2016). And third, even when the language is phrased in such a way as to presuppose the reality of God, what is presupposed is not an existing thing in the world ("God is no thing," as Rupert Shortt (2016) has recently underlined), but more like a foundational or grounding presence that is the source of being and goodness.

This latter notion, however, suffers from a certain vagueness, and this raises the worry that in the effort to vindicate the priority of spiritual praxis over belief, we have risked blurring or eroding the doxastic component of religious allegiance to vanishing point. To show that this worry is misplaced, I want to look in more detail at the way in which spiritual praxis actually works, and in particular how—not immediately, but as they progressively immerse themselves in the program of ritual and repetition that is the vital core of spirituality—it enables the participants to enter and begin to inhabit a framework of interpretation, a new way of looking at the world.

The first step in seeing how this works is to focus on the *multilayered* character of spiritual practices—the way they engage our awareness and our attention at many levels. These include, for example, the physical and behavioral level (where bodily movements and ritual performances are involved), and the sensory and aesthetic level (consider, for instance, the visual, olfactory, and auditory features found in traditional Orthodox and Catholic spirituality, including the sight of sacred vessels and rich vestments, the smell of incense, the music sung by cantor and choir). We are here a world away from the flat, single-layered domain of literal factual assertion, and are caught up in a dynamic structure of mutually resonating meanings and modes of communication that appeal not just to the intellect, or even to the intellect plus the emotions, but to the whole person, and which have the power to change our perception in a host of ways, many operating below the threshold of explicit awareness.

Perhaps because these resonances are often so elusive and fragile, compared to the solid domain of explicit propositional content, many analytic philosophers implicitly downplay the importance of these aspects of human awareness, or even ignore them entirely. Yet without appreciating their importance, one cannot begin to understand whole swathes of human life and experience—those involving poetry, literature, art, and music, for example, not to mention personal relationships, love, friendship, and much else besides. In all these domains, human beings continue, to be sure, to exercise their cognitive powers—what they do goes far beyond mere reflex, or animal response, and involves a rich grasp of the relevant properties and relations in all their complexity and interrelatedness. But the kind of awareness involved cannot be achieved by the detached analytic intellect; we know, for example, that those suffering from certain kinds of autism can be among the most intellectually gifted of people, but can be strangely incapacitated when it comes to the empathetic perception needed for detecting someone's feelings and forming a close relationship. To allow scope for the richer and deeper kinds of awareness just mentioned, a kind of empathetic openness and engagement is required, and it is precisely this kind of openness that spiritual practices have the power to trigger and foster.

One cannot just *will* oneself to be open to a given segment of reality. The right kind of sensitivity needs to be in place, and this will often require, apart from innate

capacities and endowments, careful cultivation and training. And often this training will begin not with intellectual investigation, scrutiny of evidence, or learning of facts, but with performances and activities, initially perhaps done by rote, or by imitation. If, for instance, we consider the early stages of moral development, a young child cannot just be ordered to feel sorry for his little brother or sister whom he has pushed over. Typically, he will be encouraged to go up and say "I'm sorry," and perhaps put his arm round the distressed sibling, subconsciously imitating gestures of comfort he has seen his parents perform. In due course, these words and actions become "reinforced," as the behavioral psychologists say; and in their train, certain feelings and beliefs, if all goes well, start to form. The child starts to become responsive to the moral realities of family life and interpersonal contact. And the act of putting one's arm round someone to comfort them starts to take on a rich symbolic significance that weaves itself into the growing child's outlook and starts, again if all goes well, to shape its awareness and color its perception.

But the importance of practical performances and routines extends far beyond these simple examples of childhood training and extends into every aspect of adult life. One of the problems of the secularized milieu in which increasing numbers of people now live is that it does not provide anything in the way of symbolic and resonant repertoires and rituals designed to nurture and reinforce our moral and spiritual sensibilities. Apart from the threat of external enforcement in extreme cases, our moral growth, our responsiveness to the good, is often left hostage to the haphazard interplay of chance, the vagaries of group conformity, or the random chatter of social media. It would be rash in the extreme for academics to suppose they are rational enough to be themselves immune from this unwholesome daily diet. But spiritual praxis, as traditionally conceived, is supposed to provide a *counter-diet* to that on offer from the secular world. The dietary metaphor is particularly apt here in the light of what William Wainwright has called the "ingestion" of sacred texts—a process of complete absorption, into the psyche of the participants, of the scriptural readings that form an integral part of most liturgies. As Paul Griffiths has pointed out, in the history of Christianity (and many other religions) before the invention of printing, repeated reciting, chanting, memorizing, and reflecting on the scriptures had the effect of making the text enter "into the fabric of [one's] intellectual and emotional life in a way that makes deep claims upon that life" (1999, 45–7; quoted in Wainwright 2016, 50).

The moral dimension, the sense of one's life being subject to *claims* or *demands*, is of course a recurring element in the Judaeo-Christian scriptures, and crucial to their role in liturgy and worship; and it also underlies and informs many other aspects of spiritual praxis. Secularists may say that the demands of goodness and justice are operative anyway, as it were, and can be adequately validated without any recourse to religious categories. But even if such secular validations of morality work (a subject for another paper), it is doubtful if they could energize our moral imagination in the right way. For as humans we need, in order to flourish, not just to act rightly, not just to exercise our "practical reason" or "rational choice," but to have acquired and thoroughly absorbed a conception of goodness that guides and irradiates our lives. Moreover, as we saw even in the simple case of childhood

training, the process of interior absorption is inseparable from the acts of outward expression that cement and reinforce what is being learned. As Robert Adams has argued, in order to live well, human beings need to have outward ways of *expressing their allegiance to the good*:

> Something of ethical importance can be done in worship that we cannot accomplish except symbolically … Getting ourselves dressed in the morning, [going] to work, and then home again to dinner, we try on the way and in between to do some good, to love people and be kind to them, to enjoy and perhaps to create some beauty. But none of this is very perfect, even when we succeed; and all of it is very fragmentary … Symbolically we can do better. Symbolically I can be for the Good as such, and not just for the bits and pieces of it that I can concretely promote … I can be for the good by articulating or accepting some conception of a comprehensive and perfect or transcendent Good and expressing my loyalty to it symbolically … The symbolism provides something for which there is no adequate substitute. Theists find this value of symbolism supremely in worship.
>
> (Adams 1999, 227)

This theme has been taken up in an interesting study by Terence Cuneo, entitled *Ritualized Faith* (2016). Cuneo here reveals that he himself followed an unusual religious trajectory: he was baptized a Roman Catholic, but his family switched to the local Evangelical Free Church when he was very young, and although initially enthralled by this brand of Protestantism, he later became disillusioned. As a student he became interested in returning to Catholicism, but it "just didn't take," and a series of events led to his deciding to become Orthodox. One such event was being invited by a friend to attend an Orthodox Paschal liturgy where he "sensed, for the first time ever, a fit between the actions being performed in an Easter service and the significance of that which was being celebrated" (Cuneo 2016, 207, 210). The stress on actions here is highly significant. The seven petitionary litanies in the early fifth-century Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom, for example, provide a way of "develop[ing] and enact[ing] an ethic of outwardness … understood to include not only … opening ourselves up to the needs of others but also standing in solidarity with them." Or in the Eucharist, the celebrant's blessings over the gifts are a way of "affirming their goodness": they "affirm and treat the natural world, as symbolized in the bread and wine, as being a means of communion, a point of contact with God" (Cuneo 2016, 33, 48).

Much more is involved here than understanding liturgy as having moral significance through its symbolic power. The Easter liturgies that are so important in Catholic and Orthodox worship, the foot washing on Holy Thursday, the dramatized passion narrative on Good Friday, and so on, are, for those who participate in them, highly emotional and involved enactments or reenactments of pivotal events described in scripture, where the participants are not just pretending or playing a role, but engaging with it at a deep imaginative level: they fundamentally alter their relation to the episode being reenacted by imaginatively *inhabiting* it in such as way as to appropriate it (Cuneo 2016, 84, 87). One of the key dispositions here is *receptivity*, and one is reminded here of Martha Nussbaum's seminal

account, in *Love's Knowledge* (1992), of how our powers of moral discernment and understanding can be developed by engaging with a literary text with the right kind of attentive openness. But the additional dimension that liturgy supplies, in contrast to literary engagement with a novel or poem, is that the participants are called upon by the liturgical script to *commit* themselves to certain moral and religious ideals, including, as Cuneo (2016, 104) puts it, "being like, or aspiring to be like, the characters presented in the … script."

WHAT ABOUT THE BELIEFS?

So spiritual praxis involves a number of significant elements. In the first place, it works on us not just intellectually, but emotionally and physically, in a multilayered holistic way that *engages* the whole person. Second, it allows us to *absorb* certain ideas at a deep level that colors our outlook on the world and opens our eyes to aspects of reality that may before have been occluded. Third, it allows us to *express* certain fundamental moral attitudes in a powerful symbolic form that pays a vital role in sustaining and supporting them. For I'd venture to suggest here that without a living tradition of spirituality in which we can immerse ourselves, and which will sustain us in reaching up toward the good, we will be left gasping in the cold outer space of theological speculation, or struggling across the arid plain of secular ethical calculation. And finally, through imaginative identification and receptivity, it allows us, instead of assessing and scrutinizing a worldview from a distance, to *immerse* ourselves in it, to inhabit it, so that it becomes a fundamental part of who we are.

If we put together all these related elements of spiritual praxis, *engagement*, *absorption*, *expression*, and *immersion*, how does this bear on the thesis of the primacy of praxis discussed earlier—the idea that spiritual praxis can be chronologically and logically prior to explicit religious belief? Certainly, as we saw earlier, it's clear that you do not have to start from a position of belief in order to embark on the praxis: any serious study of religious communities and forms of life is likely to show that achieving secure faith is often a long and arduous journey, where spiritual disciplines and observances like prayer, meditation, fasting, worship, and so on are the means on the way to the desired, but not yet achieved, destination of secure faith (compare Cuneo (2016, 214) on "watchfulness" in the Orthodox tradition).

Nevertheless, the various features of spirituality we have been examining all seem to make sense only on the assumption that there is a genuine divine reality that is the object of our spiritual quest. Here, the position of Terence Cuneo is interesting, since despite his patently wholehearted commitment to the liturgy and worship of the Orthodox tradition, he admits, with disarming honesty, that "on most days" he finds himself "not believing many of Christianity's core claims." He goes on to say that he finds "beauty, forgiveness, redemption, and meaning" in the Christian vision of the world, acknowledges that this vision is inextricably bound up with a theistic framework, and "hopes with all [his] being that what the tradition says is true" (Cuneo 2016, 214).

Some hardline believers may be very suspicious of the idea of commitment to the praxis without doxastic commitment to the doctrines, but I think this corresponds

to how many sincere religious practitioners think and feel about their outlook. But I want to move the discussion toward a close by asking whether there may not be scope for a stronger position than this—one that does not merely emphasize the dynamic and potentially beneficial effects of theistic spiritual praxis in human psychological and moral development, and which does not merely rest content with the pious hope that the underlying theistic framework may be true, but which construes the praxis as actually *constitutive* of making contact with the divine reality in question.

This stronger position is suggested by some of the things Cuneo himself says. He claims at one point, for example, that "knowing how to engage in religious ritual is, when all goes well, *a way in which we know God*"; and he also suggests that "engaging in the liturgical activities … is not primarily a *means* to forming beliefs about God, but … knowing God … *consists* in engaging in them." This strong constitutive claim in turn hinges on the idea that the liturgical practices handed down in the tradition "provide the materials for … *knowing how* to engage God" (Cuneo 2016, 162–3, emphasis added). And elsewhere, Cuneo (2016, 148) compares the kind of knowing he has in mind with having a *rapport* with someone. An objector may reply that there is a logical gap between engaging in the practices on the one hand, and, on the other hand, engaging with God, or "engaging God." The latter notions, like having a rapport with someone, or making contact with someone, are what Gilbert Ryle (1954) called "success verbs," they automatically carry the sense of a relation *accomplished*, which in turn implies the actual existence of the persons involved. So all sorts of assumptions are presupposed here; for example, that there are good reasons for thinking that the prescribed rituals are indeed an effective way of making contact with the divine, and that there is indeed something or someone to be made contact with.

So can the advocate of spiritual praxis with integrity take this stronger position, and boldly assert that such praxis simply is our human way (or a human way) of making contact with the divine? Not, I think, if this is taken to mean there can be some logically guaranteed or magical route from liturgical praxis to contact with God. But what I think we *can* say is that, although it is not within our human capacity to build a guaranteed bridge from our phenomenal world to the divine reality beyond it, there can come a point where the epistemic worry ("how can I know my spiritual praxis is really directed toward a real divine object?") simply ceases to have any purchase.

By way of analogy (although it obviously a partial and imperfect one; I shall return to this in a moment), consider a more straightforward case where praxis plays a constitutive role. Alice prefers Bertrand's company to that of others, she enjoys talking and eating with him, she comforts him when he is depressed, she visits him in hospital when he is ill, she weeps when he is sad, she rejoices at his successes, she defends him when attacked, she calls him daily when they are separated, her face lights up when she sees him. If this list goes on long enough, it becomes clear that the performances listed are not merely the *accompaniments* of Alice's loving Bertrand; they are the very embodiment and enactment of love; and vice versa, in the case of Bertrand and his love for Alice. There is theoretically a question as to whether it is not conceivable that there is no love, that it is all an act, that one

of the parties is a robot or a zombie; but without getting into the sillier recesses of academic skepticism, there comes a point when there is no serious doubt that Alice and Bertrand's behavior, and their disposition to continue behaving in a similar manner no matter what, actually constitutes their loving each other. The performances constitute their loving engagement with each other.

I have described this example in a somewhat idealistic or rose-tinted way, and in a real human relationship, such loving commitments are learned over time, tested through crises and joys and sorrows, and only if all goes well do they become inseparable from the outlook and character of the parties involved. And this is equally true in the case of spiritual praxis. There may be setbacks and disappointments, but if all goes well, repeated patterns of spiritual praxis should, in the long run, tend to foster the kind of focused receptivity that leads to new perceptions and commitments. And these new perceptions may prompt further engagement, which, as it becomes absorbed into a repeated pattern of behavior, in turn opens the door to deeper perception and deeper commitment.

If the traditional religious praxis prescribed in the Christian rite of the Eucharist functions as it should, it involves the participants in a regular structured process where, among other things, they open their hearts on each occasion to reflecting on their failures and weaknesses and asking for help to overcome them; where they listen attentively and receptively to morally uplifting readings that are progressively absorbed into their day-to-day reactions and ways of perceiving the world; where they participate in sacred rituals that embody and enact their receptivity to the gifts of life, the power of goodness, and the hope of redemption; where they associate themselves with all their fellow communicants who are in similar need of grace to themselves; where they reach out to them in physical gestures of goodwill and peace; where they receive a blessing and go out of the building resolved to construe all life as a blessing.

Of course, it is not always like that: spirituality can go stale, praxis can become routine, engagement can turn sour. But when all goes well, when the life of the individual is progressively renewed and uplifted by immersive, committed, absorbed engagement in transformative spiritual praxis at its best, then to continue to ask "are you sure of the validity of what you are doing?" ceases to have any purchase. From the epistemic point of view, the transformations undergone by the subject have triggered new modes of awareness, in turn triggering new receptivity and openness, so that it becomes no more possible for the subject to doubt the authenticity of the reality that they have encountered than it is possible for Alice or Bertrand to doubt the authenticity and reality of the love flowing between them in the scenario just described.

But, of course, there is a crucial difference in the divine case, namely that one of the parties to the relationship is behind the veil, as it were, never directly seen. So, however deep the perceptual transformations undergone through spiritual practice, however epistemically confident the spiritual practitioner feels that they have encountered a divine reality, there still remains the ontological question of whether there is really a two-way encounter as opposed to an unrequited commitment, or a commitment directed to the void. So we come back to our original question: can

we plausibly say that spiritual praxis of the kind described *constitutes* an encounter with the divine?

Emmanuel Levinas, who famously argued for the primacy of morality over metaphysics, would presumably say no: for him there can be no access to God, no encounter with God, except through ethical action. Theological claims about the infinite transcendent God dissolve into the absolute demands placed on me by the vulnerable face of the other:

> The face signifies in the fact of *summoning me* – in its nudity or its destitution, in everything that is precarious in questioning, in all the hazards of mortality … The Infinite in its absolute difference withholds itself from presence in me … It is in calling me to other men that transcendence concerns me … The idea of the Infinite is to be found in my responsibility for the Other.
>
> (Levinas 1983, 113)

Levinas's position is in tune with much contemporary theological thinking that rejects traditional "ontotheology." And it may seem, on the most radical interpretation, that this approach replaces religion with morality, inviting us to bring the transcendent down to the human ethical domain; and that that traditional "divine worship" thus loses its point, giving way to the imperatives of ethical action. But if the arguments of this paper have been on the right lines, this is a false antithesis. In the first place, the forms of spiritual praxis just mentioned—self-examination, cultivation of receptivity, acceptance of vulnerability, sharing of the consecrated gifts, reaching out to fellow worshippers—are from start to finish *ethically focused*, geared toward allegiance to the good, and compassion to others. In the second place, in the Jewish theistic tradition that colors so much of Levinas's underlying outlook, the very idea of sacred and inviolable ethical commandments or requirements depends on God. In the Hebrew Bible, recapitulated in the teachings of Christ, the second commandment, to love one's neighbor, ranks alongside, but does not replace, the first commandment, to love God. And much spiritual praxis, in actions and words, enacts and expresses just that love.

Yet for a Levinasian, presumably, that love is a one-way street, since the Infinite, in its "absolute difference," "withholds itself from presence." But I will conclude with a final comment that takes issue with this, but which I think is broadly consistent with the spirit of Levinas. Sacramental worship may be thought of as a process whereby the finite creature *enacts* the search for the infinite perfection, which it cannot fully grasp. In the Mass or the Eucharist, those who participate *orient themselves*, through liturgical practice and ritual, *towards that for which they long*. Thus the drama of the Mass begins with a *journey*: in the opening antiphon, the priest intones *Introibo ad altare Dei*, "I will go up to the altar of God"—note the future tense—which is a quotation from Psalm 43 [42], a song of longing to be "brought up to the holy mountain of God," and this is embodied in ritual as the celebrant processes up the altar steps. What is expressed in all this, and in many other related spiritual practices and rituals, is the longing of the finite creature for communion with the infinite—that which cannot be comprehended, cannot be grasped, but whose presence neither Levinas nor anyone else is in a position to declare is always withheld. For what

cannot be comprehended can nevertheless be glimpsed, through the transformations worked by spiritual praxis. It is glimpsed as holy—holy (as Levinas might put it) in its difference, as the unreachable object of our longing, but also holy in the awe it calls forth as the sacred source of normativity—precisely that inescapable summons that Levinas identifies us as experiencing in our encounters with our fellow creatures.

I conclude that so far from being a redundant extra tacked on to the requirements of the ethical life, spiritual practice is the life blood not just of religious faith, but, ultimately, of morality itself. By enacting our human longing for the good, and expressing our responsiveness to it, spiritual praxis embodies and constitutes our engagement with the divine, and enables us to encounter, insofar as our finitude allows, the infinite perfection that passes all understanding.

NOTE

1. For more on the respective role of the brain's hemispheres, see the controversial but, to my mind, brilliantly persuasive account in McGilchrist (2009), and, for some of the implications for religious belief, his monumental later work, McGilchrist (2021, vol. 2).

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CHAPTER FOUR

Liturgical Jellyfish

JOHN SANDERS

If jellyfish worshipped God, their Nicene Creed would not say they "look forward" to the resurrection of the dead because their bodies lack fronts and backs. Nor would they speak of meeting "face to face" with God. Christian jellyfish might not say their savior "came down from heaven" (the sky) if they are the type of jelly that lives deep in the ocean darkness. Jellyfish and most marine life would not think of water as baptism that "washes away" their sins, and they would have no concept of being "sprinkled" with the blood of Jesus. Muslim jellyfish would not think of their spirituality in terms of the "straight path" or practice ablutions before prayer.[1]

Liturgical crabs might say they look sideways (not "forward") to the resurrection. A few animals live inside shells so they might understand being "clothed in Christ" or "putting on Christ," yet, most animals lack this concept. Nocturnal animals would not likely refer to their savior as the light of the world or think of goodness in terms of light. Bats would not have stained glass windows or icons in their sanctuaries. Some animals sit and so would understand that Christ is "seated" beside God but perhaps not seated at the "right hand" of God.

These examples are a fun way of getting at the idea that each species is going to have its own distinctive liturgy even if there is some overlap between species. Even animals that share some of the same sensory-motor capacities still will have particular ways of relating and so will have a species-specific liturgy as well. Many scholars are rightfully paying attention to embodiment. This chapter encourages us to attend to the fact that it is not simply embodiment in general, but the particular types of bodies humans have that shape our liturgies. Human liturgies are anthropogenic in that they derive from human conceptual structures developed from our species-specific bodies. Humans have distinct sensory-motor capacities that enable us to interact with our world. These capacities shape the way we understand the world and how we construe God, truth, and morality. Human cognition arises from particular sensory-motor capacities humans have as we interact with objects and forces in the world. This means that humans can relate to and understand God only in anthropogenic ways. We do not know what a dog is in itself. We know what a dog is in relation to us as we interact with it via human sensory-motor capacities.

In short, we do not know other entities as they are in themselves. Although some philosophers claim we know the truth "as God sees it" and we can believe the same

truths about God that God believes, such claims fail to grasp that one is using the human conceptual metaphor KNOWING IS SEEING when one says, "as God sees it" (Sanders 2016, 95–100). Does God have retinas and the same number of color cones that humans have? An embodied cognition approach holds that any entity humans understand, including God, is always according to the ways that humans are able to interact with it. God relates to jellyfish and humans in ways they can comprehend and so the worship of jellyfish and humans will proceed according to each species' cognitive structures. Attending to this can help us in a couple of ways. First, it enables us to practice epistemic humility, in that our truth claims are always "as humans are able to understand the situation" (Sanders 2016, 81–114). In addition, as we become more aware that human liturgies are anthropogenic, we can more intentionally develop liturgies that foster deeper understanding and better facilitate worship.

I will first explain what it means to say our liturgical concepts are embodied, and I will then provide numerous examples to show how humans make use of our sensory-motor systems to engage and worship God.

HUMAN EMBODIED COGNITION

Religions use ordinary human mental tools. Whether religious adherents think of God or Nirvana, they make use of the common cognitive structures that humans use for understanding non-religious realities (Sanders 2016, 5, 98, 243–75). There is no "God module" in our brains, and there is no cognitive tool used exclusively to think about religious realities; rather, we use the same mental tools employed to contemplate mundane topics such as relationships and containers to reason about the divine (Barrett 2004). That is why it is commonplace for liturgies to understand our relationship to the divine in terms of ideas such as space, movement, verticality, light, and bodies.

Behind this claim is the idea that human concepts are dependent upon our sensory-motor capacities; others argue for this and here I simply seek to show how an embodied mind approach illuminates many of our liturgical practices. This approach begins with the observation that the specific types of bodies we have allow us to interact with our environment in particular ways. The key claim is that our human sensory-motor capacities shape the cognitive tools we use to perceive, reason, and emote (Johnson 1990; Gibbs 2005)—in short, human embodiment shapes and constrains our concepts. A couple of examples may help. For instance, humans have basic notions such as up-down, front-back, part-whole, near-far, balance, containment, and source-path-goal. These are possible because of our specific types of visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and tactile processes—repeated patterns of experiences in early childhood produce these conceptual building blocks known as "image schemas" (Sanders 2016, 45–9). For example, because we have eyes on one side of our body and typically interact with other entities by turning to look at them, we form the front-back image schema. If we say, "the phone is behind or to the side of some object," it is due to our capacity to cognize in this way. Another example is that human bodies experience forces pushing us, pulling us, or baring our way, and

humans can enact such forces themselves. Leonard Talmy (1988) showed how these embodied experiences produce concepts such as permission, hindering, possible, and must.

Our reasoning does not function independently of our sensory-motor capacities; rather, our neuroanatomical systems function as a whole, such that when we read "grasp the hammer," we activate the parts of our brains used for physically holding a hammer. When someone says they shot the basketball and it went through the hoop, we activate our vision and motor systems to simulate the described actions. That is, we use the parts of the brain used for motion and enacting force to simulate the concept—even when we are not actually grasping a hammer or playing basketball (Bergen 2012). Our mind constructs the situation virtually via an embodied simulation. The ordinary cognitive tools used to move, perceive, and engage our world are the same ones we use to reason about abstract concepts such as morality and politics (Lakoff and Johnson 1999; Boroditsky and Ramscar 2002).

In the *Phaedo*, Plato took a very different approach. He says:

> In truth and in fact no thought of any kind comes from the body … It is impossible to attain any pure knowledge with the body … While we live, we shall be closest to knowledge if we refrain as much as possible from association with the body and do not join with it more than we must, if we are not infected with its nature but purify ourselves from it.
>
> (Cooper 1997, 57–8)

Plato was quite unaware that many of the very concepts in this paragraph such as "in," "comes," "closest," "join," "infected," and "purify" depend on our human bodies. Although Plato and many others believe the human body is irrelevant to how we reason, I agree with the embodied cognition approach. Applied to liturgy, this means that we worship and enact liturgy not only where our bodies happen to be at that moment; rather, our liturgical concepts themselves are epistemically dependent upon our species-specific bodies. We think according to the bodies we have.

EMBODIED LITURGY

Our embodied conceptual processes construe God via the same ordinary structures we use to reason about other entities and relations. Our liturgies do the same. This section begins with rather obvious examples of the use of the physical senses and then moves on to liturgical use of conceptual metaphors that derive from embodied cognition. Most of the discussion will feature Christian practices, although some examples from other religions occur.

All places used for worship make use of the senses, yet some buildings and practices activate more of the senses. The sense of vision occurs in the very architecture of many buildings with steeples, crosses, furniture—such as pulpits and altars that are usually elevated above the congregants (more on this below)—stained glass windows, candles or lamps, and paintings and statues of Jesus or saints. In many congregations, the clergy wear robes or stoles of different colors that correlate to the seasons of the Christian calendar. We activate our sense of sound via singing, bells, prayers,

sermons, and reciting liturgies. Touch occurs most commonly in greeting others, such as when passing the peace, and it happens as well during the Eucharist and baptism. Taste occurs when people eat and drink the Lord's Supper. Finally, some congregations activate the sense of smell by using incense. Because human cognition is embodied, liturgical practices that activate more of the senses should have greater impact on people. In this regard, the Hindu puja, the most common form of worship performed daily by Hindus, is exemplary because it involves each of the five senses. Thus, Christians should pay greater attention to how bodies are engaged in worship because employing more of the senses and using them intentionally will foster greater neural connections that situate liturgical concepts and practices more deeply in our cognitive structure (Brown and Strawn 2012; Senn 2016). In the same way that the embodied mind approach enhances the way we educate today such that students learn and retain more, so we can enhance the way people worship.

Less obvious are the ways our worship uses concepts grounded in human embodied experience: liturgy draws upon many image schemas such as verticality (up/down), proximity, containment, and source-path-goal. Because image schemas are important building blocks for human reasoning, using them liturgically aids in immediate and deep understanding. Oftentimes, we activate the neural connection to an image schema through a conceptual metaphor—a metaphor occurs when we understand A in terms of B. When someone says "I see your point," we think of understanding in terms of vision. When we say "He is crazy about her," we construe love in terms of insanity. If we say "She is in trouble," we understand the situation as containment in a physical location. Although some refer to such metaphors as "dead," this is erroneous because we are actively reasoning (understanding) by means of metaphor, since we use metaphors to draw inferences about how to understand a situation and what we should do. The appropriate name is "conceptual metaphors" because we use them to reason about most things in life including relationships, physics, mathematics, morality, and God (Lakoff and Johnson 1999; Sanders 2016, 49–69). Liturgies make tremendous use of conceptual metaphors that arise from our embodiment. Several examples will help us see this is the case.

The first example is the concept of verticality (up/down). God is typically construed as existing above all else. Many liturgies use expressions such as "Glory to God in the highest," "Hosannah in the highest," and "Lift up your hearts to God." Biblical texts say God is high over all nations (Ps. 113:4) or that our prayers rise up to God (Ps. 141:2), as God is associated with "heaven" (the sky above us). These concepts might lead us to ask, "What's up with God?" Why do we not conceive of God as below us? The reason is that it seems that all human languages construe authority in terms of up—linguists are not aware of any language in which authority is down (Dancygier and Sweetser 2014, 166). High status is up, while low status is down. Thus, we refer to the head of the clan or company. In addition, humans construe good as up, happiness as up, and healthy as up. In various religions, a good path is upwards, while an evil path is downwards. Researchers find that people habitually think that God is up, while the devil is down, and that metaphors for the divine consistently employ higher vertical space in both Christianity and other religions (Meier et al. 2007). Cognitive linguists believe that what motivates these

concepts is our embodied experiences: for instance, when we are young those in authority are taller than we are (up), and when we are ill, we tend to lie down, so being upright is our normal, healthy state of being.

The notions that God and goodness are up help explain several liturgical practices: the Nicene Creed speaks of the Son of God "coming down" and that he "ascended to heaven," and some baptismal liturgies invoke the Holy Spirit to "come down" upon the initiate. Given the way humans construe authority and goodness, it is inappropriate for us to think of God as coming up from beneath us. In addition, the altar and pulpit are typically elevated to symbolize their higher status. Prostrating, kneeling, or bowing in worship increases the height of God in relation to the worshipper, and raising our arms to God signifies that God is above us. Architecture makes use of these conceptual metaphors as well. Steeples on houses of worship and the interior height of cathedrals communicate that God is up. The architecture and artwork of both Chartres Cathedral and the Buddhist temple at Borobudur, Java use the conceptual metaphors GOOD IS UP, HOLINESS IS UP, SALVATION/DELIVERANCE IS UP, and AUTHORITY IS UP (Stec and Sweetser 2013). The shape of the Borobudur temple is a lotus flower: the conceptual metaphor infused in both the architecture and practice is that just as a lotus grows out of the muck in the bottom of a pond into a beautiful flower on top of the water, so, too, the pilgrim begins from the soil and ascends upwards to the open sky of Nirvana at the top of the temple.

The second example is that of a journey. This involves an embodied being at a location, a goal or destination, and movement along a path to reach the destination. Infants and toddlers have repeated patterns of embodied experience that produce image schemas such as source-path-goal (Mandler 1992). Humans develop this basic schema into elaborate reasoning via metaphor and apply it to areas such as education, career, and dating/marriage. For example, we think of our relationships as having come a long way or having overcome obstacles in our path or as currently facing a crossroad. We use the experience of traveling on journeys to understand and decide how to behave in our relationships.

Biblical writers construe the Torah (instruction of God) via the journey metaphor with three different roles. The Torah is the path to walk, the light to see the path, and the guide directing us on the path (Sanders 2016, 214–18). In the New Testament, Jesus, as the new Torah, takes on these same roles since he is "the way, the truth, and the life" (Jn. 14:6): he is the path (way), the guide (truth), and the destination (life). Sometimes, we combine the concepts of journey and verticality so that good paths are up, while evil paths are down. Movement is part of a journey, and this notion occurs in Christian texts. The Nicene Creed says the Holy Spirit "proceeds from the Father." It describes the Son of God as traveling from the Father to humanity, ascending to heaven, and says the Son will "come again." The New Testament and some denominational liturgies say that Jesus "takes away the sins of the world" (Jn. 1:29)—Jesus travels to humanity and removes our problem by taking it somewhere else. The Lord's Prayer invokes God's kingdom to "come"—to travel towards us and arrive.

Other religions make use of the metaphor or the journey as well. The Qur'an says both that God is the guide on the path and that the Sunna and Qur'an are guides

(El-Sharif 2018, 288). The "straight path" is a widely used metaphor in Islam. In Buddhism, good paths are up, while evils paths are low: one has the potential to be born into a "higher" life form as one travels the road of reincarnation, and, eventually, the person "crosses the stream" on a raft to reach Nirvana (Gao and Lan 2018, 246).

For people with sight, a journey involves seeing objects as we travel. When we travel, we see what is in front of us, so we seldom notice the conceptual metaphors derived from our embodied experience when we say "The end is in sight" and "I look forward to the holidays." The Nicene Creed uses this concept, derived from human bodies, when it says, "I look forward to the resurrection of the dead." Many humans take the idea that the future is in "front of us" for granted. Yet, some languages conceive of the future as "behind" the individual (Núñez and Sweetser 2006; Sanders 2016, 111–12). Thus, a commencement speaker in such a language might say to the graduates "You have a great future behind you." Moreover, speakers of such languages gesture behind them to indicate the direction of the future and point in front of them to indicate the past. Languages that construe the future as behind the body employ a different conceptual metaphor to think about past and future. Most Indo-European languages employ the idea of a journey to understand past and future. In this metaphor, the past is where we have been, and the future is where we are going. Yet, there are languages that use vision (not a journey) to understand the past and future. They use the KNOWING IS SEEING metaphor (for example, "I see the point of the argument"). We know the past but not the future, so we can say that we "see" the past, but we cannot see the future. Since we can see what is in front of us, the past is in front of us, and since we cannot see the future, it is behind us. This way of thinking makes sense once we understand the different conceptual metaphor (vision) used.

It is important to note that whether we conceive of the future as in front of or behind the human agent, what they have in common is that both use the human body that has a front and a back to cognize past and future. Complicating the matter are people groups that employ allocentric rather than egocentric reasoning (Sanders 2016, 112). For instance, the Yupno and Selepet peoples of Papua New Guinea conceive of the future as up and the past as down. Unlike most humans, they do not use the front of the human body to indicate either the past or the future; rather, when facing uphill, they point in front of them for the future, and when facing downhill, they point behind them for the future. For the Australian Pormpuraaw people, the east is always the past and the west is the future; therefore, to reference past or future in this language, one must always know which cardinal direction one is facing—if the person is facing north, then the future is to their right. These are vastly different ways of thinking about past and future, but each way of conceiving depends upon the specific types of bodies humans have. They are all anthropogenic ways of understanding. Even so, this cultural variation makes it challenging to translate the Bible and the Nicene Creed into languages for which the future is behind the person, or uphill, or west; however, translating them into ways that are understandable to jellyfish is even more daunting due to the very different ways of embodied cognition between the species.

The third example is colors and light. Humans have distinctive light sensors and color cones that allow us to perceive an array of colors. In most religions, light and bright colors are associated with purity, goodness, joy, and innocence. Darkness and dark colors connect to impurity, evil, sadness, and corruption. Being in the light yields understanding, while darkness is ignorance. Religious texts are lamps (light) for our journey. Christians refer to Jesus as the "light of the world" and light candles or lamps in churches to celebrate his advent during the dark winter months. A study of people from twenty countries showed that all the participants used these associations (Adams and Osgood 1973). We often make moral evaluations of people or situations by using metaphors of light and color—black is the color of sin, while white is the color of righteousness (Meier and Robinson 2005, Sherman and Clore 2009). The prophet Isaiah says whiteness is the absence of sin (1:18), and the Book of Revelation says that the Christians who remained faithful through the tribulation wore white robes (7:13–14). During the early centuries, some Christian communities performed baptisms at dawn when light overcame darkness and, when they emerged from the baptismal font, the initiates put on white robes.

Again, these examples help us understand the widespread use of concepts dependent upon the types of bodies humans have. Humans and many other species experience light and darkness; yet there are species that live in total darkness in caves or deep in oceans that would not cognize in terms of light and darkness. How would such species understand the biblical statements "God separated light from darkness" (Gen. 1:3–4) or that "Jesus is the light of the world, and the darkness did not overcome it" (Jn. 1:5)?

Before leaving the discussion of light and color, we should note that Christians use human embodied concepts such as containment, verticality, color, and spatial location to depict God. Artists depict the Trinity by means of these concepts (Barcelona 2018). See, in Moscow, for example, Andrei Rublev's famous painting (icon) *The Trinity*, the persons of the Trinity sitting at a table robed in different colors. Other paintings depict the Trinity via one human body with three faces, or as the Father and Spirit in light above (verticality) with the dying Jesus in darkness, or as two human figures facing one another horizontally with a dove between them, with its wings spread touching the faces of Father and Son. The concepts used in the artwork, such as vertical, horizontal, spatial location, light, color, and the age of human bodies, all draw upon ordinary ways of thinking that derive from the specific types of bodies we have.

A fourth example is that of cleansing an object, often by water. Many biblical texts speak of God washing away our sin by water (Ps. 51; Acts 22:16) and cleansing our hearts by sprinkling or washing (1 Jn. 1:9; Eze. 36:25; Heb. 10:22). Methodist, Episcopal, and Roman Catholic baptismal liturgies speak of "washing away their sin" or being "cleansed from sin." Psychology experiments on the so-called "Macbeth effect" reveal several fascinating findings. Subjects who read stories of immoral actions purchased more cleansing products (Schnall et al. 2008); while subjects who wiped their hands with an antiseptic prior to evaluating a list of moral actions rated the actions as more immoral than the subjects who did not use a wipe (Zhong et al. 2010); Physically cleaning oneself lowered feelings of guilt over previous moral failures (Lee and Schwartz 2011).

Each of these examples uses the MORALITY IS CLEANLINESS conceptual metaphor: this construes morality in terms of the human experience of a clean body. Conversely, immorality and sin are being dirty. Christians typically conceive of baptism this way, Hindus ritually bathe in water to remove impurities, and Muslims practice ritual ablutions with water prior to prayer to cleanse the soul (El-Sharif 2018, 275). Some Hindu and Buddhist rituals involve bathing the icon of a deity or Buddha with water to cleanse it. In addition, because human feet have the most contact with dirt, many religions consider them ritually impure; thus, this is part of the symbolism involved with the ritual of foot washing practiced by some Christians and the Muslim practice of removing shoes and washing feet before entering a mosque.

Here are some more examples, but with less detail, of Christian concepts used in worship that connect to human bodies. First, we experience being in physical proximity to others: liturgies commonly say that "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you" and that the risen Christ or God is "with us." Humans have the experience of putting items into baskets or into our bodies—the baskets and our bodies become the containers for the items. In the Eucharist, people eat and drink (even if symbolically) the body and blood of Jesus, such that Christ is in us—we become the container of Jesus when we say Christ is "in us." The New Testament speaks of Christ, God and the Spirit residing "in us" (Col. 1:27; 1 Jn. 4:13; 2 Tim. 1:14), and thus believers are the "temple of God" in which the "Spirit dwells" (1 Cor. 3:16). Of course, eating is an embodied experience, so eating and drinking the Lord's Supper and the Hindu practice *Prasada* (eating food that has been offered to a deity) draw upon this physical activity. Humans have the experience of some objects being available or open to us while others remain hidden. The Collect for Purity used in Anglican and Methodist churches employs the embodied experience of open/closed, when it says that all hearts are "open" to God and that no secrets are "hidden" from God—it then invites God to "open our hearts." Since we have bodies that can stand or sit, we readily understand liturgical expressions such as "We stand before God" and the Son of God is "seated" at the right hand of God the Father. We experience the human body as well as other entities as wholes or unities, so we think of believers as "one body" and "one loaf"—obviously, the very concept of the "body" of Christ uses an embodied concept. Finally, some liturgies draw on the human experience of birth to reason about the experience of becoming a believer when they say we are "born through the water and the Spirit."

At this point, some may inquire about gender and people with disabilities. Unlike English, languages such as Spanish and German require users to assign a gender to all nouns. Experiments indicate that our native language influences the way we think about such objects (Boroditsky et al. 2003). For instance, the word for "key" is masculine in German and feminine in Spanish. German speakers described keys as hard, heavy, and jagged, while Spanish speakers said they are intricate, shiny, and little. Conversely, the word for "bridge" is feminine in German and masculine in Spanish. German speakers said bridges are beautiful, elegant, and fragile, while Spanish speakers described them as big, dangerous, and sturdy. If gendered thinking about keys and bridges influences our representations of them, then thinking about

God as masculine via metaphors such as "father" and "king" will certainly shape our understanding of God. Although God is construed as mother in the Bible, far more often God is described as Father. A good explanation for this is that in ancient Israelite society, fathers and kings were the only ones allowed to dramatically change one's status for things such as adoption, inheritance, and citizenship. The biblical writers who wanted to ascribe such actions to God had to use their culturally assigned male examples (DesCamp and Sweetser, 2005; Sanders, 2016, 223–5). In many societies today, females can perform such tasks so our liturgies can reflect this. A final word about gender is that both male and female humans can use our reproductive systems to conceptualize God as, for example, giving birth (Deut. 32:18) and nursing its young (Isa. 66:12–13). Yet, I am not aware of research on whether the physical reproductive systems we have leads to different ways of cognizing between males and females.

Regarding people with disabilities, those who are blind or deaf have the sensory-motor capabilities that give rise to image schemas such as up-down, in-out, balance, containment, near-far, and source-path-goal. Consequently, they can have a rich array of concepts for interacting with the world. What they may have difficulty understanding are conceptual metaphors based on vision or hearing. For instance, in English we construe true and false ideas in terms of what "rings true, sounds right, and looks right." Yet, we also say that something "feels wrong" or "smells rotten," which are readily understandable to the blind or deaf. Although the KNOWING IS SEEING metaphor is extremely pervasive in different languages, there are languages in which knowing is understood primarily as hearing, smelling, tasting, or touching (Gibbs 2005, 36–9). Hence, someone might say "I smell your point." What these different languages all share is the KNOWING IS SENSING metaphor grounded in the various senses available to human bodies.

A blind person could be told that the fire is being lit for a Hindu puja and a deaf person could see that the priest is striking bells (but not hear them) in the Hindu temple. But exactly what such people understand is not clear to me. Blind people can learn that religions typically associate good with bright colors and light and evil with dark colors and darkness but exactly what they understand by color and light seems to be by using examples drawn from sensory modalities to which they have access. The biblical statements "God separated light from darkness" (Gen. 1:3–4) and "Jesus is the light of the world and the darkness did not overcome it" (Jn. 1:5) may not have the same meaning for all people.

TRANSLATING THE NICENE CREED FOR JELLYFISH

With these examples of embodied cognition in mind, we can attempt to "translate" a Christian liturgy, the Nicene Creed, into the cognitive structures used by jellyfish. Although I am sure that those with more experience with jellyfish will communicate better with them, this thought experiment should illustrate how the specific sensory-motor capacities that enable a species to interact with the world shape our species-specific liturgies. My "translation" in English (which is not an actual translation) and comments will appear in brackets after each line of the Creed.

We believe in one God, [This can stand as is because they should have the concept of oneness and identity. However, their concept of God is going to be much more like a jellyfish than a human being in terms of actions, goals, and ways of relating.] *the Father, the Almighty,* [The Progenerator Almighty. They don't have "fathers," but they do have males who produce sperm to fertilize eggs. They do not have hierarchies and patriarchy. They may have the concept of "almighty" since they experience forces that move them, and they generate force to move themselves and find food.] *maker of heaven and earth,* [Progenitor of all ocean and life. Maker means to fabricate so this would not be available to jellies. Heaven as the sky or source of light would make sense to those jellies that live near the ocean surface, but not to those who live deep in the ocean. Ocean, not earth as dry land, is their habitat.] *of all that is, seen and unseen.* [of all that is sensible and unsensible or felt and unfelt. Some jellyfish have a degree of vision, but vision is not the dominant mode of sensation for jellies.]

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, [I do not know how to translate this line because both Lord (master) and Messiah involve human social concepts not present among jellies.] *the only Son of God,* [the only being with a special connection to God. Jellyfish should have the concept of only, but they do not have sons who represent the affairs of fathers.] *born of the Father before all ages,* [spawned from God the Progenitor before the oceans existed. They have the experience of before-after as well as life spans so the concept of "before" should make sense. They are spawned, not begotten/birthed.] *God from God,* [God from God should make sense in that they can differentiate themselves from other species] *Light from Light,* [Jellyfish from Jellyfish. Although some jellies sense light, it does not seem that light would function as a source of authenticity for them.] *true God from true God,* [true God from true God or genuine God] *begotten, not made,* [spawned from God. Again, they do not manufacture objects, so I do not believe this distinction is meaningful to them.] *of one Being with the Father.* [of one being with the God the Progenitor.] *Through him all things were made.* [The special being from God is the source of all things.]

For us and for our salvation [For the benefit of all jellies and for our deliverance from predators and harmful entities.] *he came down from heaven:* [the special being came from God. Although humans perceive jellies moving up and down, it seems to me that they experience movement in different directions rather than up-down. For humans, "came down from heaven" communicates authority since authority is up in human cognition. I am not sure of a way to communicate authority to jellyfish.] *by the power of the Holy Spirit* [by the power of the Holy Water. For humans, spirit is connected to breath, which is needed for life. For jellies, it would have to be something needed for them to exist.] *he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary,* [the special being became a jellyfish without being fertilized.] *and was made human.* [and became a genuine jellyfish.]

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; [For our sake he was killed by another jelly. Or perhaps killed by a human depending on how much jellies understand humans. Crucifixion would not make sense to them.] *he suffered death and was buried.* [he suffered death and drifted in the current (or went to the

ground in the sea). "Seabed" and "seafloor" will not work since jellies do not have beds or floors and "bottom of the ocean" presupposes the human image schema up-down.]

On the third day he rose again [Sometime later he came to life again. Three days may make sense to some but not all jellies since only some experience day and night. Rising is something humans do after sleeping or being sick.] *in accordance with the Scriptures;* [in accordance with our stories.] *he ascended into heaven* [the special being returned to God.] *and is seated at the right hand of the Father.* [and resides next to God. Jellies have no seats, no right hands, and lack the concept of authority that "right hand" denotes.]

He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, [He will return in glory/radiance and the interactions of all living and deceased jellies will be assessed by him. I think that glory could make sense even to jellies that live deep in the ocean.] *and his kingdom will have no end.* [and his range of operation will have no limits. Ocean currents can push huge numbers of jellies together, but they have no social or political structure akin to a kingdom.]

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, [We believe in the Holy Water, the giver of life.] *who proceeds from the Father and the Son.* [who originates from God and the special being connected to God. Note that "and the Son" was added to the Creed by Western churches without the approval of the Eastern Church so this phrase might not be included.] *With the Father and the Son he is worshipped and glorified.* [The Holy Water is worshipped and glorified the same as God and the special being connected to God.] *He spoke through the prophets*. [The Holy Water communicated through the ancient jellies.]

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church. [We believe in one holy universal group that originated from jellies who were taught by the special being from God.] *We affirm one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.* [We affirm one ritual for inclusion in the group. I do not believe "sin" and "forgiveness" would make sense to jellies. Baptism via water would not make sense to them.] *We look forward to the resurrection of the dead,* [We live in expectation of the resurrection of the dead. Jellies do not have faces that "look forward."] *and to life in the world to come. Amen*. [And to life in the ocean to come. Truly.]

CONCLUSION

Human reasoning about all aspects of our experience is anthropogenic: our ability to perceive and conceive depends on the distinctive human sensory-motor capacities. We use embodied concepts to comprehend our environment, and we use the same cognitive tools to understand and practice religion as well. Our reasoning about God, just like our reasoning about atoms and morality, makes heavy use of concepts that depend upon embodied cognition—we use our ordinary embodied cognition to understand and worship God. Far too often religious believers follow Plato by believing that our reasoning about God and truth is entirely independent from the specific types of bodies humans have. Attending to our species-specific cognition will enable us to understand how humans reason about God and enable us to better

worship God. Fortunately, religious texts such as the Bible and the Qur'an, as well as our liturgies, are full of everyday concepts such as containment, journeys, visions, colors, and verticality. The many examples in this essay show how commonplace it is for religious people to employ ideas that depend upon the specific types of bodies humans have.

Although humans share a common embodiment, this does not necessitate which embodied concepts a community will use to understand a particular topic. There are cultural variations about, for instance, the direction of the future: in front of the human body, behind the human body, uphill from the human body, and to the west of the human body. Yet, what each concept has in common is that each depends upon a relation to the human body. Cultural variation, then, sometimes makes it a daunting task to translate a particular liturgy into other human languages. Yet, this may be of benefit, in that cognitive variation provides us with new ways of thinking about religious ideas and practices. Just as learning a new language opens new ways of understanding objects and relationships, so learning new liturgies may avail us avenues to fresh understandings and practices. Thinking about translating human liturgies into the cognitive structures of other beings may enrich our understandings as well. Yet, this is challenging due to differing modes of embodied cognition. Nonetheless, liturgical humans and liturgical jellyfish each have bodies, so there will likely be some shared concepts—even if some liturgical concepts are lost in translation. When God relates to jellyfish or humans, God must use the conceptual structures available to each species. God interacts with humans in ways humans can understand. Our human concepts about God can be true from an anthropogenic perspective and thus our liturgies can appropriately help us worship.

NOTE

1. I am not claiming that jellyfish have language or that they have liturgies. Rather, I am using jellyfish to illustrate what embodied cognition entails.

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PART TWO

Liturgy and Social Existence

CHAPTER FIVE

Power and Protest: A Christian Liturgical Response to Religious Trauma

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Traditional Catholic and Anglican liturgies consist of two movements: the liturgy of the word and the liturgy of the sacrament. The liturgy of the word addresses our epistemic commitments with respect to God, ourselves, and others, and the liturgy of the sacrament acknowledges that we are enfleshed beings who experience the world and the Divine in an embodied mode, as we (symbolically or actually) take the body and blood of Christ into our own flesh. Yet the entire liturgy, in both its movements, is permeated with bodily expressions of spirituality. We kneel before an almighty and infinite God; we speak and sing praises, make confessions, commitments, and requests, blowing air across our tongue and lips; we make the sign of the cross over our breast; we listen to the vibrations of words spoken and sung, repeated, echoing through cathedrals and across the centuries. The entire experience, from the call to worship to the benediction, is an embodied one. But liturgy is more than a single individual's embodied practice. It is embodied within a larger community. As a result, liturgy can be a powerful religious experience for enfleshed communal beings like us.

In this paper, I approach the topic of Christian liturgy by asking what, if anything, liturgy can offer those whose encounter with God in the face of the church has left the debilitating wounds of religious trauma. I argue that incorporating lament and protest, even protest directed toward God, into liturgical practices can be a means of fulfilling the two great commandments to love God and to love one's neighbor. First, I introduce the phenomenon of religious trauma and its repercussions. Second, I consider some of the ways in which religious trauma is a socially mediated form of suffering and suggest that we view it through a "social-suffering hermeneutic." Third, I explore liturgy as a locus of therapeutic religious engagement in the wake of trauma and consider its dual potential for healing or retraumatization. Lastly,

I consider lament and protest against God as morally and religiously legitimate responses to religious trauma. I argue that, for the survivor of religious trauma, liturgical protest may facilitate a positively meaningful relationship with God that contains a mustard seed of faith, and that, for the broader community, it is a means of both standing in solidarity with survivors and resisting socially mediated forms of suffering. If this is right, then liturgical protest can be an act of Christian worship.

WHAT IS RELIGIOUS TRAUMA?

> The world is full to overflowing with pain. It is a relentless source of dismay for a person of faith to struggle with the omnipresence of radical, destructive suffering. But for the source of suffering to come from the church and be justified by its Scripture and traditions is a kind of toxic, crushing pain that is hard to endure. It is particularly wounding for abuse to come from one's own home.
>
> (Farley 2011, 5)

According to Wendy Farley (2011), the problem of evil manifests not only in a world overflowing with banal and horrendous suffering but also in the church where people come to God asking for bread and apparently receive stones and serpents in its place. In recent years, scholars have begun to call related experiences *spiritual violence* and *religious trauma* (Winell n.d.; Pasquale 2015; Tobin 2016, 2019; Panchuk 2018, 2020; Efird et al. 2020). Someone endures religious trauma when their encounter with a religion or form of spirituality harms them in ways that diminish their capacity for engaging in religious or spiritual practices in the future—when their search for the Divine leaves them so personally and spiritually fragmented that it undermines personal agency. Religious trauma has at least three common characteristics. First, the trauma is caused by something that the individual closely associates with the religion. Second, the survivor perceives the religion to have played a positive or negative causal role in the experience's coming about, either by motivating the perpetrator, justifying the behavior, or by failing to forbid or protect against it. And third, some of the posttraumatic effects have a religious trigger or object. The survivor may come to believe that God is untrustworthy or that religious communities are unsafe. They[1] might experience intrusive memories triggered by religious practices, feel extreme fear, distrust, or revulsion toward the Divine being, or internalize a deep sense of self-hatred as the result of religious doctrines.

Some of the most prominent and sensationalized examples of religious trauma involve clergy sexual abuse, especially in the Roman Catholic Church. In 2018, a Grand Jury reported that the Catholic Dioceses in Pennsylvania concealed at least 200 priests' sexual abuse of over 1,000 youth (Pennsylvania Attorney General: Grand Jury Report 2018). Protestants have similar problems. The *Houston Chronicle* reported that over 700 victims were found to have been abused within the Southern Baptist convention over a 20-year period, and at least 35 clergy and volunteers were able to resume ministry after exhibiting predatory

behavior (Downen et al. 2019). But other forms of religious trauma, ranging from religiously justified child abuse (Heimlich 2011; Panchuk 2018, 2020) to racism (Tobin and Moon 2020), medical neglect (Heimlich 2011; Anonymous 2019), and queerphobic abuse (Efird et. al 2020), are all too common as well. Furthermore, the trauma is not always limited to the abuse itself. The response of religious communities often compounds trauma when the survivor is not listened to, believed, or helped. Susan Brison (2020) argues that re-membering the self often involves, if not strictly requires, being able to construct a narrative to share with an empathetic listener. She cites Dori Laub, who writes of the film *The Eighty-First Blow*, which

> portrays the image of a man who narrates the story of his sufferings in the [concentration] camps only to hear his audience say: 'All this cannot be true, it could not have happened. You must have made it up.' This denial by the listener inflicts, according to the film, the ultimately fatal blow, beyond the eighty blows that man, in Jewish tradition, can sustain and survive.
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> (1992, 68, cited in Brison 2020, 59)

Being disbelieved and having one's suffering go unacknowledged by one's community is an additional trauma heaped upon the first. Carolyn says, in an interview on the Pennsylvania Attorney General's website, "It's very lonely, especially when it's your word against God's" (www.attorneygeneral.gov/report). Rachel Denhollander, a lawyer, activist, and survivor of sexual abuse, claimed in an interview with *Christianity Today* that,

> Church is one of the least safe places to acknowledge abuse … If my abuser had been Nathaniel Morales [church youth leader convicted of sexual abuse] instead of Larry Nassar [US gymnastics team doctor convicted of sexual abuse] … if the organization I was speaking out against was Sovereign Grace [Churches] … I would be actively vilified and lied about by every single evangelical leader out there … I would not only not have their support, I would be massively shunned. That's the reality.
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> (Lee 2018)

If she is right, then religious trauma victims are more likely than others to experience the debilitating eighty-first blow.

Both the initial trauma and any potential compounding of it from a negligent community can have a profound effect on a survivor's faith. Emma reports:

> It was a very lonely feeling—to go from feeling God and comfort in church on the Reservation to feeling so unsafe and unloved by how we were treated in White Church. For years after being emotionally hurt and threatened by members of the White church (and also our community when we lived off the Reservation), I was unable to walk into any church at all—it was just too painful, scary, and triggering of my religious wounds at the hands of those in our first non-Native (White) Church.
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> (Pasquale 2015, 54)

Carolyn says that, "Just thinking the word 'God' makes me think of him [the priest who abused her], and I just …" but is unable to finish her sentence for the tears (www.attorneygeneral.gov/report). Other survivors note nausea, vomiting, autoimmune flares, intrusive memories, and dissociation when attempting to engage in religious practices months, years, and even decades after experiencing religious trauma (Anonymous 2019).

RELIGIOUS TRAUMA AND A SOCIAL-SUFFERING HERMENEUTIC

Each of the testimonies cited above underlines the degree to which the suffering associated with religious trauma is deeply interpersonal. Even in cases where the trauma arises not as the result of any wrongdoing on the part of a community or where there are discrete victims and perpetrators who act without support from the community, it would be a mistake to ignore the broader social and epistemic context that is inevitably intertwined with such suffering. Social aspects of religion and religious practices can simultaneously contribute to trauma while also being a potential site for its healing. For feminist philosophers and philosophers of race, this will hardly seem surprising, since the socially mediated aspects of oppression and the suffering it causes are at the center of much of the theorizing in these fields. However, within philosophy of religion, the impact of socially imbedded causes of suffering may be less obvious. As such, Nancy Pineda-Madrid's social-suffering hermeneutic may be a helpful lens through which to view and make sense of both the causes and the meaning of the social aspects of religious trauma.

In *Suffering + Salvation in Cuidad Juárez*, Nancy Pineda-Madrid (2011, 9) interprets the suffering of feminicide within a "social-suffering hermeneutic" because suffering "demands that we recognize the ways in which our collective decisions can create an increased likelihood that the most vulnerable among us will suffer … mightily." By "hermeneutic," feminist theorists often mean not only the methods one employs in interpreting texts, but the principles and resources by which we interpret all aspects of our world. Texts are not the only things that must be interpreted. Verbal and nonverbal communication, social structures, and even experience itself all require interpretive acts before they can become comprehensible. To do this we draw on the conceptual resources and social imaginary that are available to us. As a result, those who have more access to the power and social locations that allow them to participate more in shaping the conceptual resources and social imaginary of a particular social group have disproportionate influence over how we understand the world and our experiences of it. Such access usually arises from *identity power*. Miranda Fricker (207, 14) claims that "whenever there is an operation of power that depends in some significant degree upon … shared imaginative conceptions of social identity, then *identity power* is at work." Within Western Christian contexts, the social identities that tend to exercise this kind of power are being a man, being white, being able-bodied, not having a mental illness, being straight and cis, and being an adult. People who fall into these categories,

and especially those who fall into several of them, tend to have disproportionate influence over the development of theology, traditions of biblical interpretation, liturgical practices, and Christian culture. Disproportionate power can then give rise to hermeneutical injustice: "the injustice of having some significant area of one's social experience obscured from collective understanding owing to a structural identity prejudice in the collective hermeneutical resource" (Fricker 2007, 155). As I have argued elsewhere (Panchuk 2020), religious trauma is often constituted or exacerbated by the lack of appropriate conceptual resources to properly understand or communicate the nature of the trauma to one's religious community. Thus, making sense of the suffering of religious trauma in a way that takes the social aspects of the suffering seriously—using a social-suffering hermeneutic—can be a starting point for communities who wish to fulfill their obligations to love the survivors in their midst.

Pineda-Madrid (2011, 21) suggests that there are four key features of a social-suffering hermeneutic, each of which will help us identify the value of protest within a liturgical context: (i) it foregrounds the role of the *social imaginary* in the experience of suffering; (ii) it recognizes the deep interests that social groups have in *naming* suffering; (iii) it acknowledges the connectedness of socially created evils and personal suffering; (iv) it identifies and puts to use the symbols and culture discourses that mediate suffering as a social experience. Each of these four features are essential for understanding and responding to religious trauma.

As I mentioned above, the social imaginary often plays a central role in whether or not a victim can even identify their experience *as* suffering or *as* abuse, and if they do, whether they can understand abuse as something they can legitimately protest (Panchuk 2020). Judith Herman (2015, 8) notes: "When the victim is already devalued (a woman, a child), she may find that the most traumatic events of her life take place outside of the realm of socially validated reality. Her experience becomes unspeakable." In religious contexts, interrelated theological concepts contribute to the social imaginary of religious groups—that is, to how the group is able to understand the world and imagine the relevant or "live" possibilities within it. For example, in a Christian context, where patiently enduring even unjust suffering is one of the highest marks of holiness, leaving an abusive spouse may not be part of the social imaginary as a morally appropriate option (Brock and Parker 2001, 20–1). Or, in a case of clergy sexual abuse, the victim and their community may perceive the clergy member as "the closest thing to God in [their] neighborhood" (van der Kolk 2014, 176). The community's social imaginary may lack the resources to see a clergy member as a potential predator or the word of women, children, or lay men as something that can weigh against the word of the clergy. These simply are not live possibilities for the community. "Who would have believed me? A priest, in 1948 or 47, would abuse you, or do that? No one ever heard of such a thing," says Robert Corby, an eighty-three-year-old survivor of clergy sexual abuse (www.attorneygeneral.gov/report). In both cases, the communities involved cannot adequately *name* the suffering for what it is, either because they cannot see it at all or because they cannot acknowledge it for what it is. The lack of an appropriate name then shapes the way the individual and the community interpret

the suffering: as not existing at all, as God's just discipline invited by the sinful nature or the actions of the victim, or as something to be embraced as a means of becoming Christ-like. Such interpretations place the responsibility for suffering on the victim and absolve the surrounding community of the responsibility to act. Hence our interest in naming. The community can name suffering either in a way that renders itself apparently blameless or in such a way that the suffering can become a site of resistance, both for the community and the victim. "To hold traumatic reality in consciousness requires a social context that affirms and protects the victim and that joins victim and witnesses in a common alliance" (Herman 2015, 9). To name suffering for its socially embedded causes is already to take hold of the power of knowing.

It is not enough simply to name the suffering for what it is. Christians all too often acknowledge the existence of religious trauma—especially instances caused by "other" Christians—but remain unable or unwilling to recognize the ways in which their collective theology, social norms, and identities of power contribute to the suffering of individual survivors. This is why Pineda-Madrid lists the acknowledgment of the connection between socially created evils and individual suffering. I do not have space here to develop a full theory of collective responsibility, but it seems plausible that, at a minimum, the connection between socially created evil and individual suffering gives rise to some degree of collective fault. Where there is collective fault, it is also plausible that there is some degree of collective responsibility, both to make amends as far as possible to survivors and to dismantle the systems that contribute to socially created evils.

Finally, Pineda-Madrid advocates for putting the symbols and social discourses that mediate suffering to use in resisting it. She tells the story of women who protest the inaction of the local police and the Catholic and Episcopal churches in the face of feminicide in Ciudad Juárez by leading marches through the city to its outskirts carrying pink or black crosses—appropriating the Christian symbol of the cross and the Jewish motif of the Exodus to "make space" to honor women and girls devalued, unprotected, and discarded by society (2011, 97–121).

In what follows, I want to suggest that Christians can make space in liturgy as a site of performative resistance that uses the symbols and discourses that have previously enabled the suffering of religious trauma victims in order to denounce and resist it. Such liturgies might "enable those who suffering [from the aftermath of religious trauma] to be 'present to' but not 'consumed by' their experience of suffering" (Pineda-Madrid 2011, 98) as they endure it together with a community that bears witness to it. Indeed, Herman (2015, 196–213) argues that the third stage of healing involves being able to face fear and risk but in a way that allows the survivor to exercise agency in the face of that fear and risk. Protest liturgy could provide space for survivors who are ready, and who desire to engage in religious practices, to exercise their agency in the face of the very symbols and discourses that contributed to their traumatization. But as we will see, for many, exercising this agency may involve challenging and protesting religious symbols, theological discourses, religious authorities, and even God Godself.

LITURGY AS AN EMBODIED PRACTICE

In this paper, I use "liturgy" to denote not only the so-called "high" liturgies of the Orthodox and Catholic churches, but any embodied communal practices of religious worship, from the formalized liturgy of Anglican churches, to the exuberant song and dance of Pentecostals, to the call and response of traditionally Black churches. As I described in the introduction, liturgy integrates the cognitive and the more visceral human responses to God and to each other in the context of community. As such, it coincides beautifully with the interlocking aspects of trauma therapy, which seek to address the mind, the body, and interpersonal relationships. Until recently, the dominant view in trauma therapy was that being able to own one's memories and tell one's own story, with all the physical and emotional stress this involves, was a powerful tool in regaining a sense of agency and healing (Brison 2002; van der Kolk, 2014). This isn't entirely wrong. Recovery does often involve piecing together fragmented memories into a coherent narrative and having one's narrative heard and acknowledged by a supportive community (Brison 2002, especially 98–9; van der Kolk 2014, 183–4). But leading researchers in complex trauma now believe that not only the mind and brain but the entire body play an essential role in storing and processing traumatic memory. This is why talk or exposure therapy alone are only marginally successful in aiding recovery, while the embodied therapies of eye movement desensitization and reprocessing, biofeedback, yoga, dance, and art therapy, in combination with more traditional therapies, tend to produce better long-term outcomes (van der Kolk 2014, 205–358; Stanley 2016). Liturgy, similarly, involves a number of different speech acts—from narrative description to condemnation to lament to exultation— together with bodily movement—from standing and kneeling to raising hands to dancing—within a witnessing community. Like the latest forms of therapy, it integrates practices of the mind and the body into a holistic and communal experience.

However, the sights, sounds, and smells associated with trauma can also trigger dissociation, intrusive memories, panic attacks, anxiety, and a number of other manifestations of posttraumatic stress disorder, especially when they are encountered in situations where the survivor does not feel safe or able to exercise agency. In an informal survey, self-identified survivors of religious trauma reported a number of these as symptoms they face when confronted with various aspects of Christian liturgy (Anonymous 2019). One mentioned vomiting for three days after having to attend a funeral in a Baptist church. Another spoke of experiencing an intense panic response at the thought of having to memorize passages from the Bible or being told that she should spend more time reading it, because her abusive mother would quote passages to her while beating her with a piece of wood engraved with more Bible verses. The beatings were the worst when she had failed in her weekly Bible memorization. A surprisingly large number mentioned hymns, especially those commonly sung during altar calls were also mentioined as triggers of physical pain, anxiety, or a fight-or-flight response.

The epistemic aspects of posttraumatic distress can also pose obstacles to engaging in liturgical practices. Experiencing trauma radically undermines the basic (but often false) assumptions that humans make about the world: that it is mostly safe; that bad things primarily happen to people who deserve them; that we have full control of the character and dispositions that we develop, and so on. In the same way, spiritual trauma can radically undermine what were formally the most basic religious assumptions. In the wake of spiritual trauma, it looks false that everyone who seeks finds. Doubts arise about whether God cares about one's wellbeing or whether God exists at all. Perceiving oneself as having been abandoned or actively abused by God or those who claim to speak for God can compromise the most basic foundations of trust. Furthermore, theological discourses that contributed to the trauma may come under increased scrutiny or doubt. Is complete submission the right attitude to have toward another person, or even toward God? Does penal-substitutionary atonement mean that God demands the suffering of wrongdoers? Are prayers that emphasize human unworthiness of God's love and care even true, much less how God would want God's children to relate to God? These epistemic changes and the reactive attitudes that follow from them do not necessarily make participation in liturgy impossible—one beautiful thing about liturgy is that it can give us words to say when we have none of our own—but they can make engagement difficult. The pain of standing week after week, repeating words that ring hollow, or worse, to the survivor can be difficult to bear; moreover, it is alienating to feel that the emotions elicited by one's own experience of God—fear, anger, hatred, resentment, revulsion—are too reprehensible and dangerous to be expressed within the context of the religious community. What would the fellowship of Christians think if they knew that the survivor prays "We confess that we have sinned against you, in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone," but then silently mutters to themself, "but nothing I have done or left undone holds a candle to what you have left undone, God! And you are supposed to be the almighty one"?

Given the healing potential of embodied worship, it would be valuable for religious communities to create opportunities for it that empower survivors and foster healing, rather than retraumatizing them. The considerations presented above suggest that the ability to express the survivor's true beliefs and feelings, naming their experiences of suffering for what they are, and exercising their agency to protest or lament might be ways of creating liturgical spaces that are healing, rather than dangerous. While it is impossible to guarantee an environment free from potential triggers—after all, most therapies involve a degree of discomfort—protest liturgy may constitute one way that survivors and communities can come together to foster agency, resistance, and, ultimately, love for God.

PROTEST AS LITURGY

The scriptural tradition provides numerous examples of conflict with, and protest against, God in the wake of confusion and suffering. When Abraham and Moses challenge God's intentions, God listens and relents. When Job protests his suffering and demands an audience, God responds. When Habakkuk laments perversion

of justice and pervasive violence, even venturing to accuse God of remaining complacent in the face of evil, God answers by revealing divine purposes. When Jacob wrestles with God and survives, he receives a blessing. When a pagan woman refuses to submit to Jesus' suggestion that she is an unworthy dog, he commends her faith. Even Jesus himself echoes David's cry of despair: "My God, My God! Why have you forsaken me?!" At a pivotal moment in Christian history, we hear an accusatory question rather than a triumphant shout.

Michael Rea points out that one of the surprising messages of these texts is that humans can contend with, question, blame, and protest against the almighty God of the universe and survive. They sometimes even receive a response (Rea 2018, 147ff.). While religious symbols have sometimes been appropriated for the purposes of resisting and protesting social evils, protest against God Godself is viewed with much greater suspicion, if not outright condemnation. Nonetheless, in the wake of the horrors of the past century, a small literature of protest theology emerged (Milazzo 1992; Blumenthal 1993; Adams 2013; Rea 2018). Christian and Jewish scholars have argued that in the face of suffering and death, one viable means of relating to God is by protesting the state of affairs that we find in the world and God's apparent indifference to it. Drawing primarily on the books of Job and Lamentations, Rea in particular argues that God expresses love toward those in the most conflicted relationships with God by authorizing and validating lament and protest. Rea (2018, 154) claims that:

> Often enough, lament and protest will remain accessible ways of continuing one's relationship with God and deliberately or not, promoting its improvement. They are behaviors that one can engage in just by trying to do so, assuming one has the concept of God, regardless of the state of one's confidence in God's existence, character, or dispositions toward oneself. They are, furthermore, ways of drawing near to God despite one's own pain and despite the conflict that mars one's relationship with God. They are alternatives to abject submission to suffering, silence, and an unintelligible divine value scheme.

In other words, protest is a means of remaining in relationship with God that does not require the survivor to completely sacrifice their agency or understanding of love and goodness in the face of religious suffering. Still, why think that this kind of relationship with God that Rea describes is one worth having? What spiritual or practical benefit does the protestor incur?

Following Walter Brueggemann, Rea (2018) points out that lament and protest can allow the sufferer to develop a more robust sense of themselves. Given the way trauma can shatter an individual's self-concept and sense of personal agency, these modes of emoting to God might be an important aspect of reconstructing that lost sense of agency. Marilyn McCord Adams (2013) expresses a similar view in an article on survivors of clergy sexual abuse:

> Praying angry helps to heal, because—by calling God to account—it asserts worth … Praying angry is an act of integrity: it foregoes politeness to tell stark truths about how the situation looked and felt to the survivor … Praying angry is

> good medicine because it differentiates the survivor from God, from the Church, and from predator priests by daring to contradict official points of view. Praying angry pits the interests of the survivor against the interests of the predator, the institutional church, and permissive Divine providence.

Still, one might wonder if praying angry offers any distinctly *spiritual* benefit. Survivors might develop integrity and promote differentiation through any sort of constructive expression of anger—through journaling, psychotherapy, or joining an activist community to speak truth to (earthly) power. One response is to say that relating to God just is inherently spiritually valuable. Another is to claim that protest as a form of interaction that necessarily constitutes a kind of faith, as suggested by Jean-Louis Chrétien's phenomenology of prayer (2000).[2]

Protesting God's actions or failures to act requires addressing oneself to God—perhaps both a necessary and sufficient condition for prayer. Chrétien (2000, 157) emphasizes that "there are no prolegomena or preliminaries to pray." This is why one can do it "just by trying" (Rea 2018, 154). Furthermore, according to Chrétien, the "act of presence [before an absolute other] puts man thoroughly at stake, in all dimensions of his being. It exposes him in every sense of the word exposed and with nothing held back" (Chrétien 2000, 150). One's speech makes one vulnerable before the other, because it creates the space in which one is conscious that one may be affected by that other. Certainly, if a being like God exists, then one may always be affected by that being, because one is always present to God. But protest as a form of prayer sharply underlines the extent of this vulnerability. According to Chrétien, the power of prayer is that in its acknowledgement of the possibility of the other's presence, one's words "turn back" on oneself with greater force. The one who "prays angry" is conscious of opening themself to the possibility that God has always already been listening and that they have always already been heard. "The man praying speaks for a hearing that has always already come before his speech." Chrétien, thus, describes prayer as inherently involving a mustard seed of faith.

Indeed, one might not only see the *act* of protest as an expression of nascent faith but also the very anger that urges one to do so. This is how G. Tom Milazzo interprets Qoheleth's persistent questioning of God in Ecclesiastes*:* "These questions plague Qoheleth not because he lacks faith but because he is a person of deep faith … The suffering and death of the righteous trouble him only because he expects the promise of enduring life in the presence of God to be a real human possibility" (Milazzo 1992, 125–6). Similarly, it is often the case that the one who protests spiritual trauma would not be outraged if they had not wholeheartedly expected that everyone who asks receives and that everyone who seeks finds. They protest *because* they expected God to give bread and are outraged apparently to find themselves or those they love holding stones instead. Furthermore, the urge to, and the act of, protest can indicate a belief that God *should* respond, as well as an openness to the possibility that God might *actually* respond. That is, protest can be a manifestation of hope. As Pineda-Madrid (2013, 4–5) affirms:

> [Hope] is less eloquent than either optimism or despair (both of which, knowing the outcome, confidently complete the story). Sometimes in silence, sometimes in

> more articulate agony or Job-like anger, the mode of the discourse of Christian hope is less that of assertion than request: its form is prayer.

Both the expectation of God's goodness together with openness to God's response suggest that protest can be an expression of faith and hope. Insofar as this is true, protest has spiritual value that goes beyond the merely therapeutic benefit that one might receive from any sort of angry self-expression in the wake of suffering.

There is something compelling about this view, and I believe that protest *can* be an expression of the seeds of faith and hope. And yet, it seems possible to protest against God with no expectation that God's hearing will involve care, love, or any response at all.[3] Insofar as a person with a conflicted relationship with God views God as a cosmic abuser, they might protest in the same way one would protest the actions of an apparently irredeemable abuser—not with hope, but simply as a means of asserting their own agency and condemnation. Would such protest constitute even a mustard seed of faith? A full answer to this question is beyond the scope of this paper, since it would require a detailed account of the nature and conditions for faith. But, as Rea (2018) points out, to angrily blame the God of the universe involves either a radical degree of trust in God's goodness to bear with the accuser rather than striking them dead, or a commitment to "the good" (as far as the protestor understands it) so radical that they are willing to risk the wrath of God in order to expressively defend it. This latter commitment to "the good" might, at least on some accounts of faith, amount either to a kind of faith in God in itself or, at the very least, a sort of preparatory step toward faith in God. On the traditional view, God is identical to goodness itself. On this view, even if such an unhopeful protestor does not believe in, trust, or love God *de dicto*—that is, under the description, "God" or "the almighty creator of the universe"—they might still be radically committed to God *de re*—under the description of "the Good" or "that which grounds love and justice and goodness"—insofar as they are committed to something that is identical to God. One might think that this is itself a kind of faith, or at the very least a step toward faith. Either interpretation would render the kind of protest I am describing spiritually valuable for the protestor.

Many of the Biblical stories of protest and wrestling with God bring to mind an individual who wrestles alone with God through their dark night of the soul. But, as we discussed above, spiritual trauma is never a purely individual affair, and historically social movements that resist socially mediated evils have required collective resistance. As such, I want to suggest that religious protest too can, and perhaps at times should, be a collective affair.

In *Ritualized Faith*, Terence Cuneo argues that we can see liturgy as instantiating concrete expressions of neighbor love through solidarity and repentance. For example, the Liturgy of St. Basil prays for "those who face trial, those in the mines, in exile, in bitter slavery, in all tribulations, necessity, and affliction; of all who need [God's] great compassion; those who love us, those who hate us, and those who commended us, though unworthy to pray for them" (Cuneo 2016, 20–36). Cuneo points out that in remembering those who suffer and even those who hate the prayer, the prayer stands in solidarity with them. Prayer is a way of saying that

whether one is the oppressor or the oppressed, we, the community, and the God we represent, will not abandon you. This is a troubling claim. Cuneo does not reflect on it at length, but in the context of our current discussion, it raises serious questions. At first glance, the oppressor seems like exactly the wrong person or group for the church to stand in solidarity with. A community that is in solidarity with the oppressor is not a community that is safe for the oppressed. If identification with the actions and goals of oppressors is what solidarity with them requires, then I think we should reject Cuneo's position. But this need not be the only way to understand his view. Rather than a commitment to the actions and goals of the oppressor, it seems like Cuneo is advocating for a solidarity that is an acknowledgement that we, the community, *are or in fact have been* the oppressors, so that we can then repent of our participation in that oppression. It is uncomfortable to identify ourselves as oppressors.

Nonetheless, as argued above, few in the church avoid benefiting from various manifestations of systemic oppression. Men in the church benefit from systems that oppress women. White Christians live with the luxury of white privilege. Those who prefer blissful ignorance benefit from silence in the face of clergy abuse. Anyone who has purchased inexpensive clothing produced by the cheap labor of desperate people to look nice in the pew has benefited from oppression. Perhaps when we express solidarity with the oppressor, we acknowledge that we too are complicit in systems of oppression and pray for God to change us. Perhaps this kind of solidarity can only be morally appropriate if it is an act of repentance. However, even this interpretation of solidarity is not unproblematic. When the most vulnerable members of society are constantly pressured to attend to the ways they hurt others, to the exclusion of attention to the ways in which they are good, beautiful, and worthy of love, the liturgical context can contribute to the very trauma and oppression it purports to repent of. For this reason, one aspect of a protest liturgy might involve some members of the community overtly resisting the call to repentance as a way of asserting worth, agency, innocence. Some examples of this will be explored in the last section.

The case of solidarity with the oppressed is more morally straightforward, yet it seems to me that our typical approach to prayer for others lacks sufficiently robust empathetic identification. Paul encourages the church in Rome to rejoice with those who rejoice and to mourn with those who mourn. To the church at Corinth, he says that, when one member of the community suffers, all of the other members suffer with it. Actually rejoicing, mourning, or suffering with another person requires something much deeper than merely mentioning them in prayer. One can pray for another without any attempt to feel what they feel. Following Paul's instructions requires a robust empathetic engagement with the experience of another person. By "empathy" I mean the act of cognitively modeling another's emotional state, such that one feels the relevant emotions and attitudes, while maintaining awareness that they are not primarily one's own. It is way of knowing the other in a mode parallel to the way we know ourselves. In this sense, it is distinct from mere emotional contagion, where one (often unconsciously) takes on the mood of those around them. This distinction is important because emotional contagion alone can become

self-centered. If we do not distinguish another's suffering from our own, we can forget that *they* are the ones in need of release and support and put them in the position of needing to comfort us (a phenomenon sometimes referred to as "white tears" in the context of racial oppression). Although I doubt it is healthy to completely eliminate emotional contagion from our response to those who suffer in our community—if we are actually to mourn with those who mourn—empathy helps us maintain focus on the state of the sufferer without becoming preoccupied with our own personal distress over it. But we cannot even attempt to cognitively model what religious trauma is like for the religious trauma survivor if we protect ourselves from the hard truths of it. True empathy with survivors requires some degree of bearing witness to their stories, informing ourselves about their experiences, without turning away from it.[4] If this is right, it begins to look as if empathy *is* an act of solidarity. It is an act in which we refuse to leave sufferers alone in their suffering. When we enter into their fear, anger, confusion, and doubts, we too acquire a reason to protest. We have reason to say "My God, my God why have you forsaken us? Why have we cried 'violence!' and you have not heard?! Do not even we dogs deserves crumbs from beneath your table?"

In this lies the risk of empathetic solidarity. To honestly and sincerely empathize with the angry, grief-stricken protest and questions of those in conflicted relationships with God, one has to grapple with the reality of this pain and suffering for oneself. There is always the risk of being overwhelmed by the darkness when one refuses to indulge the urge to maintain emotional distance from the force of such pain. But this risk also underlines a benefit of corporate solidarity. When mourning and protest are the task of the entire community, then no one person, neither the survivor nor any other individual, has to bear the weight of these realities alone. When one is in danger of being overwhelmed by the darkness, the community is present to affirm that the light is also real, and even to believe for the one who cannot currently hold onto faith or hope.

When we incorporate traditional or innovative manifestations of protest into embodied liturgy, we foster and express love of God and love of neighbor. For the survivors, we help to facilitate the mustard seed of faith that protest can involve. For the community, we begin reshaping the social imaginary as we name the evil of spiritual trauma. By appropriating the words of Jesus (the prophets, the nagging woman honored by Jesus) or other Christian symbols, we identity the survivors as people who have suffered unjustly, as worthy of our remembrance, and as occupying a place of honor in our community. In praying angry together as a community, we express our united hope that suffering will not have the final word. We, the church, will not idly allow it the final word in our world, and we trust that the God we represent will not give it the final word in eternity.

Before closing, I want to emphasize that liturgical protest is not a panacea to religious trauma; rather, it is one kind of limited but appropriate response. Liturgical protest has at least three primary limitations. The first limitation arises from the nature of religious trauma. Some individuals may be so deeply incapacitated by their trauma, or so tortured by their beliefs and feelings about God, that they either cannot or will not engage in any practices of worship. I have argued elsewhere that

such people may have an all-things-considered reason to deconvert (Panchuk 2018). I do not think anything I have argued here contradicts my earlier claims, and would not want this paper to be used to guilt or pressure such individuals.

Second, even those survivors who can and do wish to continue in corporate, liturgical worship may face other limitations that arise from the nature of that worship. Religious communities come together to foster and articulate the official theological positions of those institutions. While the Abrahamic traditions give a rich resource for divinely authorized protest, there will be some expressions of anger and resentment that might not be tolerated in an institutional setting but which might be appropriate in private protest prayer. A religious community might use the imagery of the cross and Jesus' expression of feeling abandoned by God there as a way to protest survivors' apparent abandonment, but they might not tolerate parishioners yelling expletive-laced accusations at God as a part of the official liturgy (although they might, and perhaps what I have written here gives them reason to consider that they should). Although they may allow expressions of the fact that it often *feels to us* as thought God does not care, they might not officially articulate the claim that God does not *in fact* care about the suffering of God's people. As I have claimed above, echoing Rea, I think that God authorizes the latter, angrier expression of despair, but still wish to acknowledge that institutionally endorsed protest will usually be circumscribed by the theological commitments of the particular community in question.

Third, protest as resistance within the institutional liturgy is unlikely to be an effective tool for protesting the actions of the very institution in which it is located. As long as an institution ignores the suffering it inflicts on vulnerable members or refuses to take responsibility for how it contributes to systemic violence, liturgical protest is likely to be interpreted as applying to others, rather than to the leaders and members of the institution itself. Thus, protest as resistance will often come from the outside, from those acting in opposition to the authority of the community. This does not mean that religious symbols and liturgical practices might not be used, but they will not be manifestations of the community itself, but of those who resist or prophesy to the community about the community's sin.[5]

CONCLUSION

Religious trauma is just one manifestation of the suffering that can be caused by systemic evils in the church and just one of the many reasons why someone might have a deeply conflicted relationship with God. There are certainly many others. But by demonstrating that protest is a means by which the survivor may develop a positively meaningful relationship with God and by which the community can express love of neighbor, I hope to have sketched a model for applying a social-suffering hermeneutic within a religious community. It is not usually the way of analytic philosophy (the tradition in which I find myself) to dabble in "practical application," but liturgy is a communal practice, and at least one necessary condition for a successful theory of an embodied practice is that it *could be* successfully embodied.

Furthermore, one of the goals of this volume is to model alternative ways of doing philosophy, even in the analytic mode. As such, I close by offering some

examples of how I can imagine liturgical protest manifesting. We can even begin by taking some cues from the biblical tradition. Indeed, one might think of the prophets as performative resistance artists.[6] Ezekiel uses a piece of clay to represent Jerusalem and besieges it. He lies on his side for 390 days. Jesus makes a whip to drive the money changers out of the temple. They don't just protest sin and suffering with words; they engage in full-bodied rituals. The psalmists wrote imprecatory psalms and psalms of lament, apparently for use in public worship. Creative Christians can surely find ways to follow these examples. The possibilities are as varied as the survivors and religious communities they inhabit, so the following are merely manifestations that I have personally encountered and found to be positively meaningful. There have been instances when I have remained seated through liturgies that invited standing or kneeling, in protest of theological claims that struck me as wrongheaded or positively harmful; at other times, I have changed words and phrases to express my perspective as a survivor of religious trauma.

In a feminist liturgical space, I once recited the work of Marie Thearose, a poet whose most recent chapbook *To Earth We Have Returned* (2019) focuses on recovery from her own religious trauma. It was deeply moving and empowering to stand in a circle of women and have my own anger and Thearose's sense of abandonment by religious communities acknowledged in a liturgical setting:

Holy Communion

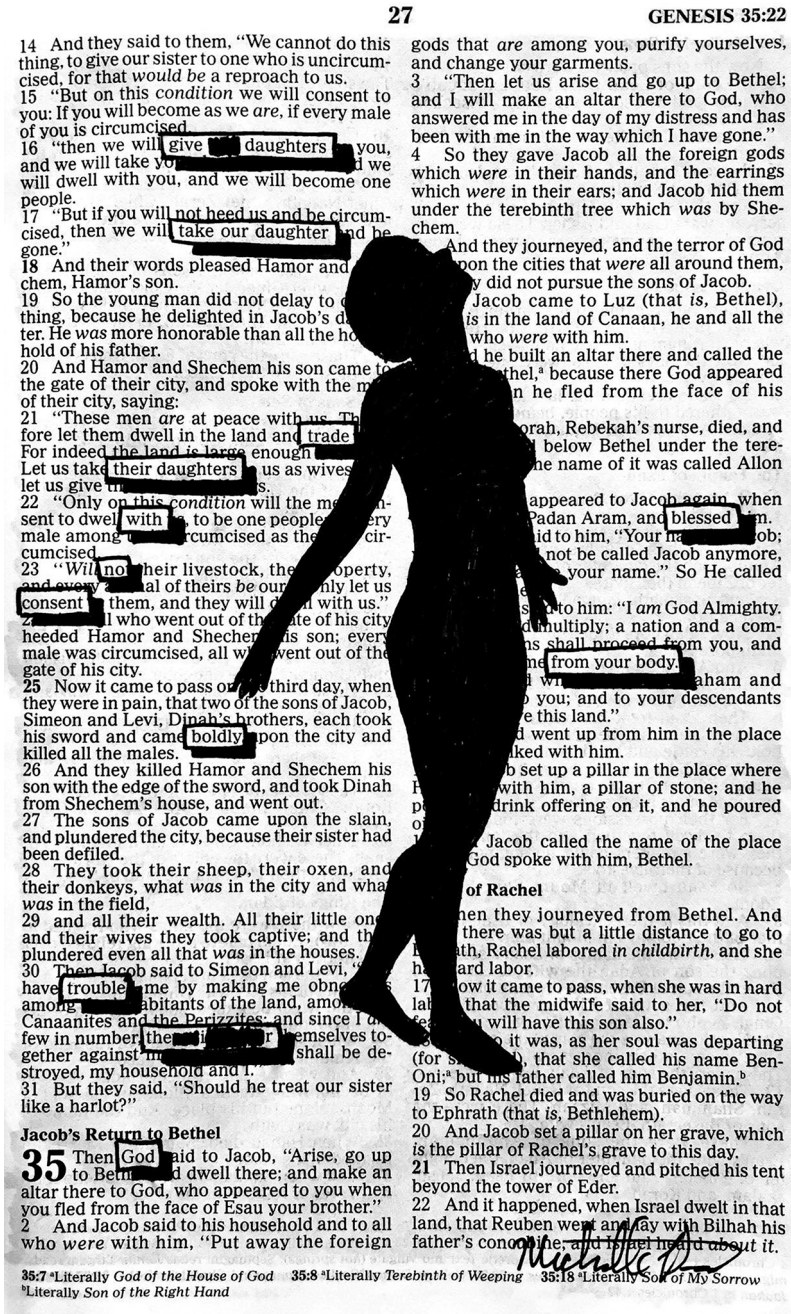
I loved Jesus so much
I once rescued
communion wafers
from the trash
and sprinkled them onto the earth.

The cardinals feasted on them
through winter.

Years later, holy men put me in the trash.

No one came to my rescue
so
I went back to the dirt.[7]
(Thearose 2019, 6)

Religious art from icons, to prayer labyrinths, to stain glassed windows, to artistic depictions of the passion has also traditionally had a place in religious liturgies. Some churches even display art (religious and otherwise) created by their members as part of their liturgical practice. As such, some survivors of religious trauma may find a voice and religious agency in making religious art that protests or subverts the theological discourses that have mediated their trauma. These could be incorporated into a community's liturgical life. For survivors for whom the Christian scriptures have been a site of oppression, "found" or "blackout" poetry created from the very texts used to justify abuse have been just such a form of protest (Sharpie Heretic; Blackout Bible Poetry).



27 GENESIS 35:22

14 And they said to them, "We cannot do this thing, to give our sister to one who is uncircumcised, for that *would be* a reproach to us.
15 "But on this *condition* we will consent to you: If you will become as we *are*, if every male of you is circumcised.
16 "then we will give [redacted] daughters [redacted] you, and we will take yo[redacted]d we will dwell with you, and we will become one people.
17 "But if you will not heed us and be circumcised, then we will take our daughter [redacted]nd be gone."
18 And their words pleased Hamor and [redacted] chem, Hamor's son.
19 So the young man did not delay to [redacted] thing, because he delighted in Jacob's d[redacted] ter. He *was* more honorable than all the ho[redacted] hold of his father.
20 And Hamor and Shechem his son came t[redacted] the gate of their city, and spoke with the m[redacted] of their city, saying:
21 "These men *are* at peace with us. Th[redacted] fore let them dwell in the land and trade [redacted] For indeed the land is large enough [redacted] Let us take their daughters [redacted] us as wives [redacted] let us give [redacted]s.
22 "Only on this *condition* will the me[redacted]n- sent to dwell with [redacted], to be one people[redacted]ery male among [redacted]rcumcised as the[redacted] cir- cumcised.
23 "*Will* not their livestock, the[redacted]operty, and every [redacted]al of theirs *be* our[redacted]nly let us consent [redacted] them, and they will d[redacted]l with us."
24 [redacted]l who went out of th[redacted]ate of his city heeded Hamor and Shechem [redacted]is son; every male was circumcised, all w[redacted] went out of the gate of his city.
25 Now it came to pass on [redacted] third day, when they were in pain, that two of the sons of Jacob, Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brothers, each took his sword and came boldly upon the city and killed all the males.
26 And they killed Hamor and Shechem his son with the edge of the sword, and took Dinah from Shechem's house, and went out.
27 The sons of Jacob came upon the slain, and plundered the city, because their sister had been defiled.
28 They took their sheep, their oxen, and their donkeys, what *was* in the city and wha[redacted] *was* in the field,
29 and all their wealth. All their little on[redacted] and their wives they took captive; and th[redacted] plundered even all that *was* in the houses.
30 Then Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, "[redacted] have trouble[redacted]me by making me obn[redacted] among [redacted]abitants of the land, amo[redacted] Canaanites and the Perizzites; and since I [redacted] few in number, the[redacted]r themselves together against [redacted] shall be destroyed, my household and I."
31 But they said, "Should he treat our sister like a harlot?"

Jacob's Return to Bethel

35 Then God said to Jacob, "Arise, go up to Beth[redacted]d dwell there; and make an altar there to God, who appeared to you when you fled from the face of Esau your brother."
2 And Jacob said to his household and to all who *were* with him, "Put away the foreign gods that *are* among you, purify yourselves, and change your garments.
3 "Then let us arise and go up to Bethel; and I will make an altar there to God, who answered me in the day of my distress and has been with me in the way which I have gone."
4 So they gave Jacob all the foreign gods which *were* in their hands, and the earrings which *were* in their ears; and Jacob hid them under the terebinth tree which *was* by Shechem.
[redacted]And they journeyed, and the terror of God [redacted]pon the cities that *were* all around them, [redacted]y did not pursue the sons of Jacob.
[redacted] Jacob came to Luz (that *is*, Bethel), *is* in the land of Canaan, he and all the [redacted] who *were* with him.
[redacted]d he built an altar there and called the [redacted]thel,[a] because there God appeared [redacted]n he fled from the face of his
[redacted]orah, Rebekah's nurse, died, and [redacted] below Bethel under the tere- [redacted]he name of it was called Allon
[redacted] appeared to Jacob again, when [redacted]Padan Aram, and blessed [redacted]m.
[redacted]id to him, "Your n[redacted]ob; [redacted] not be called Jacob anymore, [redacted] your name." So He called
[redacted]s[redacted] to him: "I *am* God Almighty. [redacted]dmultiply; a nation and a com- [redacted]ns shall proceed from you, and [redacted]me from your body.
[redacted]I wi[redacted]aham and [redacted]b you; and to your descendants [redacted]e this land."
[redacted]d went up from him in the place [redacted]ked with him.
[redacted]b set up a pillar in the place where [redacted]with him, a pillar of stone; and he [redacted]drink offering on it, and he poured [redacted]
[redacted] Jacob called the name of the place [redacted]God spoke with him, Bethel.

[redacted] of Rachel

[redacted]hen they journeyed from Bethel. And [redacted] there was but a little distance to go to [redacted]ath, Rachel labored *in childbirth*, and she [redacted]ard labor.
17 [redacted]ow it came to pass, when she was in hard [redacted] that the midwife said to her, "Do not [redacted]u will have this son also."
18 [redacted]o it was, as her soul was departing (for [redacted]h, that she called his name Ben-Oni;[a] but [redacted]s father called him Benjamin.[b]
19 So Rachel died and was buried on the way to Ephrath (that *is*, Bethlehem).
20 And Jacob set a pillar on her grave, which *is* the pillar of Rachel's grave to this day.
21 Then Israel journeyed and pitched his tent beyond the tower of Eder.
22 And it happened, when Israel dwelt in that land, that Reuben went and lay with Bilhah his father's concubine, and Israel heard about it.

Michelle Panchuk

35:7 [a]Literally *God of the House of God* 35:8 [a]Literally *Terebinth of Weeping* 35:18 [a]Literally *Son of My Sorrow*
[b]Literally *Son of the Right Hand*

FIGURE 5.1 Troubled Daughters. A found poem exploring the status of women and their relationship with God. © Michelle Panchuk. Scripture taken from the New King James Version. Copyright 1982 Thomas Nelson. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Finally, another common tradition is responsive reading or chanting of the Psalms. The following protest adopts that responsive structure, but with the congregation responding by "telling God how [things] look and feel on the ground" (Adams 2013).

The Lord is trustworthy in all he promises
and faithful in all he does.

[Yet, we have stones and not bread.]

The Lord upholds all who fall
and lifts up all who are bowed down.

[We choke on dust and ashes.]

The eyes of all look to you,
and you give them their food at the proper time.

[And your children starve.]

You open your hand
and satisfy the desires of every living thing.

[We desire the presence of God.
We meet only a closed fist.]

The Lord is righteous in all his ways
and faithful in all he does.

[Do your faithfulness and righteous only manifest in our suffering?]

The Lord is near to all who call on him,
to all who call on him in truth.

[Where is the falsehood in our cry?
Why do you remain far off?]

He fulfills the desires of those who fear him;
he hears their cry and saves them.

[Did you hear our cries, oh Lord?
Is our fear and trembling insufficient?
Where is our rescue?]

The Lord watches over all who love him,
but all the wicked he will destroy.

[Were you watching when your priests destroyed your little ones?
Why do they still prosper?]

My mouth will speak in praise of the Lord.
Let every creature praise his holy name
for ever and ever.

[Our mouths are silent with anguish.
Praise is but a farce.][8]

NOTES

1. Throughout this chapter, I use the singular "they" to refer to people whose gender hasn't been specified. I believe that the normalization of the singular "they" in academic writing is a matter of justice for some non-binary and trans people, and, as such, attempt to use it as often as possible.
2. I hesitate to appeal to this work in this context, because I think Chrétien's (and other's) extensive use of violent metaphors to describe our relationship ("wounded," "agonic," "shattered," "the prayer is prey," "inner violence") to God in prayer is both morally problematic and detrimental to the very folks I wish to serve in this inquiry. They have already been shattered by their encounter with God and, of all people, know that violence rarely transforms humans for the better. And yet, I find Chrétien's perspective instructive.
3. I thank Michael Rea for pressing me to consider this possibility in more depth.
4. Like so many things, there are dangers in the neighborhood. We can emotionally exploit survivors by demanding access to their stories in order to "educate us" or engage in a kind of emotional voyeurism.
5. Thanks to Jacob Given for raising this concern and for helpful conversation regarding it.
6. I believe that a fellow philosopher first suggested this terminology to me, but I cannot now remember the source. However, I thank that anonymous conversation partner for their suggestion.
7. Used with permission.
8. Psalm 145:13–21 The scripture quotations contained herein are from the New Revised Standard Version Bible, copyright © 1989, by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA, and are used by permission. All rights reserved.

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CHAPTER SIX

Religion as a Way of Life: On Being a Believer

BRUCE ELLIS BENSON

INTRODUCTION

A quick glance at the literature in the subdiscipline known as "philosophy of religion" makes one thing clear. A great deal of that work focuses on *belief*: what it is to have a belief, how beliefs should be defined, and the propositional nature of belief. Put more pointedly, philosophy of religion has been particularly concerned with *doctrinal belief*. Kevin Schilbrack (2014, 15) observes that "the doctrinal dimension of religions has received the lion's share of the attention from philosophers of religion" and then goes on to add: "The task of developing and defending religious doctrines tends to be the work of literate elites, typically from a leisured class and typically male." The result of both the narrow focus and the patriarchal hermeneutical perspective is that "they limit the subject matter of philosophy of religion to a small subset of religious phenomena."

In other words, religion ends up being defined—largely although not entirely—in terms of belief. Nicholas Wolterstorff attests to that emphasis in the opening paragraph of his book *Acting Liturgically: Philosophical Reflections on Religious Practice* (2018, 1):

> In recent decades there has been an extraordinary surge of interest in philosophy of religion within the analytic tradition of philosophy. Those who have participated in this movement—myself included[1]—have focused almost all of their attention on just four topics: the nature of God, the epistemology of religious belief, the nature of religious experience, and the problem of evil. If someone who knew nothing about religion drew conclusions about the religious mode of life from this literature she would come to the view that, apart from the mystical experiences of a few people, the religious life consists of believing things about God. She would have no inkling of the fact that liturgies and rituals are prominent within the lives of most adherents of almost all religions … Between the priorities of analytic philosophers of religion and the priorities of most religious adherents there is a striking discrepancy.

While the "surge of interest" in philosophy of religion is certainly a welcome development, Wolterstorff is likewise right that there is a significant discrepancy between work being done by philosophers of religion and "the priorities of most religious adherents." I assume Wolterstorff is speaking primarily about Christians, both when he speaks of the philosophers and the adherents. After all, *most* philosophy of religion is either explicitly or implicitly *Christian* in nature. There is comparatively little work in philosophy of religion on other religions and, even when the generic term "religion" is used, the author is more often than not talking about Christianity.

I think it is safe to say that, while Christians are by no means unconcerned with questions about the nature of the divine and the justification of their beliefs in God, the vast majority of them are far more concerned with living out their faith, which is largely about certain practices that reflect that belief. Consider what Charles Taliaferro (2004, 238) writes:

> It is regrettable that mainstream, contemporary philosophy of religion has largely ignored the role of ritual in Christian life and practice. Very few standard anthologies today in philosophy of religion contain any material on prayer, the sacraments, meditation, fasting, vigils, religious hymns, icons, pilgrimages, the sacredness of places or times, and so on, and yet these play different roles in much religious life. A neglect of this terrain results in an excessively intellectual or detached portrait of religion.

Turning to liturgy and ritual, then, is an important step in the direction suggested by Taliaferro, and this book marks a milestone in that movement.

However, one might push back on the claim that philosophy of religion is dominated by a concern for belief by saying that such tendencies are much more *analytic* than *continental* in nature. Indeed, Wolterstorff speaks specifically of "the priorities of analytic philosophers of religion," rather than simply speaking of "philosophers of religion" in general. Of course, the reality is that the subdiscipline of philosophy of religion has been so thoroughly dominated by analytic philosophy of religion for the past few decades that, when continental philosophers concern themselves with religion, they usually need to label their work as "continental philosophy of religion," since the simple label "philosophy of religion" is almost automatically associated with analytic philosophy. Should we assume that continental philosophy of religion has the same priorities as analytic philosophy of religion? Is it, likewise, primarily concerned with doctrinal beliefs?

A quick glance at work in continental philosophy of religion would seem to indicate that it is significantly different in its priorities and its point of departure. For instance, while Søren Kierkegaard has much to say about specific points of Christian doctrine, his real concern is how belief manifests itself in one's orientation toward life. Belief in God for Kierkegaard is not something purely—or even primarily—intellectual in nature; instead, it touches on the deepest concerns of human existence. In other words, whatever Kierkegaard's concern with doctrine may be, it is not with providing an analysis of doctrines in a theoretical sense. Not surprisingly, as someone greatly indebted to Kierkegaard, Martin Heidegger

provides a phenomenology of religious life. He asserts that "primordial Christian religiosity is in primordial Christian life experience and is itself such" (Heidegger 2004, 55).[2] Heidegger is concerned with showing how the beliefs of the early Christian communities of Galatia and Thessalonica are manifested in their lives. Doctrines come into play to the extent that they have a purchase on everyday life. Expanding on Heidegger, in *Experience and the Absolute* Jean-Yves Lacoste (2004, 2) takes us far beyond the "standard" view of liturgy (which he defines as "order and ceremonies of divine worship"), claiming that liturgy is "the logic that presides over the encounter between man and God writ large." In an important sense, he considers his position as against that of Heidegger, since, for Lacoste, entering into liturgy marks a break with our everyday being-in-the-world. Of course, he also believes that "liturgy proves the possibility of a suspension in a way that returns us to the world," so that break with the world is not complete in nature (Lacoste 2004, 51). For our purposes here, though, what connects Heidegger's and Lacoste's view is that belief is manifested in religious life.

Yet the divergence between analytic and continental philosophy of religion is not quite as clear-cut as it might seem. Let me lay my cards on the table. I was first trained solely in the analytic tradition and then, later, instructed primarily in the continental tradition, particularly that of phenomenology (particularly Husserl). From that training (and from teaching for over two decades in an analytic philosophy department), I've come to see that these two traditions often talk past one another. Quite a bit of that miscommunication is due to different terms. But it is also due to different points of entry or, to use continental language, what gets thematized. A good deal of the confusion has to do with the word "belief." Whereas analytic philosophers of religion often take as their starting point the doctrinal beliefs themselves and treat them in a kind of detached theoretical way, continental philosophers tend to begin with lived experience in order to see how it manifests belief. One might think that this is due to Heidegger's turn in *Being and Time* (1962) to giving an account of human existence (*Dasein*) on the basis of how we relate to the world or *Umwelt*. On such a view, it would be easy to think that Heidegger invented something "new." Yet, the reality is that Heidegger's phenomenology is deeply indebted to that of Husserl, despite their differences, both superficial and real. And here we get to the matter of belief that is much more fundamental than any kind of doctrinal belief.

Husserl (1973) speaks of a kind of *Urdoxa* (primordial belief) that structures our existence, namely "an actual world always precedes cognitive activity as its universal ground, and this means first of all a ground of universal passive belief in being which is presupposed by every particular cognitive operation." He goes on to speak of "this universal ground of belief in the world which all praxis presupposes, not only praxis of life but also the theoretical praxis of cognition" (Husserl 1973, 30). Like Husserl, I see these sorts of beliefs as so basic to human experience that life as we know it would be impossible without them. To drink a glass of water presumes beliefs about water, glasses, and human mouths. To be sure, most of the time we don't think about these beliefs. We simply act on them. In fact, we may never have consciously thought about such beliefs; instead, our action is proof of our beliefs.

Emmanuel Falque (2016, 83) describes Husserl's position as "an original faith in the world" or "an originary attitude of trust." I think Falque is quite right in that affirmation. Similarly, in defining the word "faith," Heidegger (2004, 248) notes that it "ranges over a multiplicity of modalities" that point toward a "primordial doxa." The *Urglaube* or *Urdoxa* that there is a world and that we exist in it is so basic to our being that it rarely crosses our minds.

Of course, given this *Urdoxa*, there is no such thing as "pure lived experience" that is somehow magically free from belief. Instead, all of experience is always already mediated by our beliefs. One could put this in Husserlian terms and label these beliefs as part of the "horizon" or *Lebenswelt* of our experience. All of us have beliefs of various sorts that are basic and without which we could not function. If this is the case, though, then everyone is a "believer." We differ, of course, in the content of our beliefs, the exact role they play in shaping our experience, and the degrees to which we hold them. Many of our beliefs are ones we share with almost everyone across the world. Some are quite peculiar to a particular culture or subculture. On my view, religious belief is a kind of belief, albeit a potentially very important belief because it can have life-changing consequences. However, just to be clear, I do not see religious belief as a special *species* of belief. Or, if someone wants to insist on the "unique" nature of religious belief, then I would simply say that there are many forms of religious belief that are not necessarily labeled by us as "religious" in nature. Not having a "religious belief" in the sense of not subscribing to one of the "recognized" religions is not the same as having "no belief at all." Instead, it is merely *another* belief, which is why the "believer vs. non-believer" distinction is both untrue and unhelpful. Not to believe in God is not "nothing"—it is the belief that "God does not exist" or that "there is not enough evidence (as Bertrand Russell famously put it) to believe in God."

One way in which I differ from Lacoste is that I see liturgy not as something that belongs to Christianity or any particular religion, nor even to religion per se. Further, while liturgy *could* be seen as something that mediates between us and God, it does not *necessarily* need to be defined in this way. Liturgy may simply mediate between human beings and whatever they take to be "sacred," which could be divine in nature but not necessarily. Due to etymological and historical reasons, I see liturgy as basic to living one's life. That is, one's being-in-the-world is always liturgical in nature.[3] There is no such thing as "non-liturgical life," at least in this point of human evolution. Thus, the liturgy of the Mass may take us out of the liturgy of the "ordinary" or "everyday," but it actually moves us from one liturgy to another, in the same way that specific religious belief removes us from one kind of belief to another.

In this chapter, I want to consider what it *means* to be a religious believer. All of this hinges on what we mean by "belief," which I define in three senses. I do not mean to imply that these are the only senses of belief, merely that these three senses can be distinguished at least in theory. In practice, of course, they are usually intertwined in such a way that untangling them would be difficult and probably impossible. The first is what I call "basic belief" (B1), in which we hold beliefs regarding ourselves and the world around us. This is what I pointed to in Husserl, the basic or grounding beliefs that are part of what it means to be human. We may differ as to what exactly these beliefs are or should be, but it would be folly to say

that they don't exist. We couldn't get along without them. The second is what I call "belief in someone" (B2), in the sense of trust. We speak of "having faith in someone" in the sense of believing that the person will "do the right thing" or "remember us." Such a definition is actually the first provided by the *OED* under the term "believe": "To have confidence or faith in, and consequently to rely on or trust to, a person or (*Theology*) a god or the name of a god."[4] In this sense, one can say that one "believes" in an elected official, a religious person or simply a friend. Such a belief can be extended to a group, such as a political party, a nongovernmental organization, a religious group, or even a corporation. The third sense is what I term "doctrinal belief" (B3), the belief in some particular doctrine or set of doctrines. For doctrine, we could easily substitute "principles" or "rules" or "practices," although admittedly each of these other terms have slightly different connotations.[5]

Given what I've said, it might be thought that B3 is necessarily "religious" in nature, but I don't see why that must be the case. B3 beliefs are, on my view, about "the way things really are." Religious beliefs usually provide an account of the way things are, but so do many philosophical views, (arguably) astrology, and forms of empirical science that attempt to provide a "final" picture of reality (or at least as "final" as one can provide for the time being). One could believe in doctrines (principles, rules, guidelines) about how to live, such as adopting various Stoic beliefs, principles, and rules.[6] Or one could be a Platonist or determinist or utilitarian. Believing in the forms, the absence of free will, or the principle of utility is a kind of belief, which in turn influences how one lives. Of course, depending on how we define "religion." these beliefs may well turn out to be *religious* beliefs, in the sense of serving the same purpose or function as religious beliefs do for religious believers.

The problem with the terminology of "belief" is that it can mean any of these things—or all of them at the same time. Further, one can easily slip back and forth between these meanings, perhaps without noticing the slippage. Moreover, one form of belief does not take the place of or negate other forms of belief. I will take it as a given that *all of us* have B1 beliefs that are basic to human existence. Equally, though, it is not difficult to make a case that we all have B2 beliefs of various kinds. We can be convinced that Joe Biden is the "right" person to be president of the US or that Jesus is a good person to follow. Either the belief in Biden or the belief in Jesus will likely come with some kind of doctrinal beliefs, such as believing in the goals of the Democratic Party or the moral teachings of Jesus (perhaps even the view that Jesus is divine). However, it should be clear that one could simply think that Biden was a better choice than Trump or that following Jesus will lead to a happier life than following Epictetus. Exactly what the B3 beliefs in either case might be could vary quite considerably from person to person. To assume, for instance, that everyone who attends a particular church deeply understands and subscribes to its doctrine is to make a very serious error of attribution. Which is to say that B2 beliefs do not *necessarily* lead to a given set of B3 beliefs. One could think that Jesus is a good person to follow, have questions (or doubts) about various aspects of Christian doctrine, and still decide to be part of a local parish (in the sense of attending services and taking part in the life of the community).

In order to explain how I see B2 and B3 beliefs relating to one another, I will first consider the origins of Christianity. My point is primarily this: at the very

beginning of Christianity, there is precious little to believe in the B3 sense—at least of a distinctively *Christian* sense. What would it have meant to be a "Christian" before such a name had even been coined or most of its key doctrines had been formed? Many basic doctrines of Christianity only took shape many decades or even centuries later—in some cases, many centuries later. Further, we have precious little information as to what followers of Jesus actually thought or even what the early church believed. To be sure, we have ample evidence of what Paul believed. But the very fact that he needed to articulate these beliefs multiple times would indicate that not everyone believed as he did. We tend to forget that he and Peter clashed over the inclusion of Gentiles in Christianity, and that their clash does not seem to have been resolved. Instead, we have a rather substantial body of evidence that beliefs varied quite considerably, which led to many beliefs being labeled "heresies." However, simply because a view was labeled a "heresy" hardly means that, from that point on, no one believed it.

Second, I turn to the notion of *Sittlichkeit* in Hegel, who believes that our moral notions are so basic to our beliefs that they have no "foundation" other than that our community holds them sacred. It is only later (in the stage of what Hegel terms *Moralität*, in reference to Kant) that we provide a theoretical underpinning for what we already believe. While Hegel is talking about moral beliefs rather than religious beliefs, I believe his view mirrors the development of religious beliefs that I articulate, although with one important caveat. What develops into Christianity may have had its seeds in Jesus' teaching, but the resulting doctrine goes far beyond anything Jesus could have imagined. But, as it turns out, *Sittlichkeit* is likewise malleable and it changes over time and from place to place.

Finally, I will consider Jonathan Haight's examination of the relationship between belonging, believing, and doing in religion. While I do not completely agree with Haidt, what he gets right is that belief is only a component of religion, even though he uses "belief" in a general rather than clearly specified sort of way. Haidt provides convincing evidence for his thesis that our moral judgments come first and then we find a rationale to support them. He takes the same position regarding religion and provides psychological evidence for the idea that we first have B2 beliefs that relate us to a particular person or group that, in turn, lead us to B3 beliefs. I agree with Haidt that *belonging* is the most fundamental aspect of being religious, although I contend that *living our beliefs out* is how we discover what we actually believe, in much the same way that current neuroscience confirms that it is only when we give voice to a view that we determine what we actually believe.

BEGINNING AT THE BEGINNING OF CHRISTIANITY

Among analytic philosophers of religion, a common view is that belief is a "disposition," a tendency to act in a certain way. Such a conception of belief goes at least as far back as Gilbert Ryle's *The Concept of Mind* (1949), in which he argues that beliefs are not spooky things in one's head but embodied tendencies or propensities to act in certain ways. Put another way, beliefs cannot be separated

from actions; they are always connected to how we live. Moreover, to a great extent, those beliefs come from those around us. They are socially constructed rather than simply something that a lone individual came up with "out of the blue" (like Kant's artistic "genius"). Most of our beliefs come to us from others, even if we modify them as we incorporate them into our own belief systems.

I agree with the dispositional conception of belief. But what does that look like in the beginnings of what later came to be called "Christianity"? What would it have meant to "believe"? Jesus teaches about something he calls "the kingdom of heaven," which can be interpreted in a very earthly and quite heavenly and removed sort of sense. Church history shows that followers of Jesus have taken it in both directions. I have noted elsewhere that, when Jesus calls people to follow him, he does not give anything like a clear-cut definition of what that means (see Benson 2012). At one point, he speaks of being "born again" (there is, strangely, only one biblical passage that mentions this, despite the fact that Evangelicals often take this to be the "key" to the Gospel). Yet he also says that the sins of the paralytic are forgiven because of the faith of his friends. The rich young ruler is told that he needs to sell *all* of his belongings, whereas Zaccheus says that he was only going to give half of his belongings to the poor, as well as repaying those he had defrauded fourfold.

What exactly is going on in these pericopes? From what we can tell, it is more B2 than B3. We can point to the Hebrew assumption that there was a Messiah to come who would "save" his people. But, of course, exactly what that "saving" was (at the time and even today) open for debate; there were and continue to be competing visions of what a Messiah would bring. While they may have projected very different images onto Jesus regarding his Messiah status, his followers clearly found his message attractive. He had something they wanted. When Jesus taught that "those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life," "many of his disciples heard it" and said "this teaching is too difficult; who can accept it?" (Jn. 6:54, 60) In response, Jesus asks the twelve: "Do you also wish to go away?" Simon Peter answers, "Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life" (Jn. 6:67–8). In effect, Jesus is saying: are you going to follow me? Peter replies, in effect, that they can't think of anyone better to follow.

There is much historical evidence to support the idea that his disciples expected him to set some kind of earthly "kingdom of heaven," although that didn't work out. Despite the fact that Jesus' death came as a shock to his followers, it turned out to be an important catalyst for the formation of the *ekklēsia*, which Paul describes using the phrase *kat oikov autōn ekklēsia* (Rom. 16:5), which translates as something like "the assembly at so and so's house." The term *ekklēsia* comes from the political assembling of free citizens to vote or discuss, so it is freely taken over from what we would be tempted to consider a "secular" context, until we remember that Greek life was, at its core, highly religious. Regarding the really early church (the first few decades), information is amazingly sparse. We know that Christianity was first seen as a Jewish sect and its numbers were insignificant. Wayne Meeks (1983, 1) points out in his landmark study of early Christianity that "its beginnings and earliest growth remain in many respects mysterious." Perhaps the best known account of the very early church comes from Acts 2, which begins with the story of Pentecost, the

result of which is that 3,000 converts were reportedly baptized. Perhaps the most memorable aspect of that story is that converts sold their possessions, owned things in common, and gave freely to all in need. It would appear that such practices as sharing with one another and caring for the less fortunate remained quite common in the church. That care and concern seems to have been an important reason for why people decided to join the band of Jesus' followers.

We are told that Jesus had said "by this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (Jn: 13:35). It's notable that Jesus speaks of a concrete action as the mark of his followers. Alvin Plantinga points out that, if belief in propositions were the only thing at issue in being a Christian, then the demons would be believers (Ja. 2:19). The difference, Plantinga (2000, 292) points out, is one of *affections*: the believer believes but also loves God. Plantinga is exactly right on this point. These affections and these beliefs are formed, nurtured, and put into action by Christian liturgy. But the affections (which can be defined in a B2 sense) are what lead to the B3 beliefs. Consider this statement: "Christianity is not an intellectual system, a collection of dogmas, or a moralism. Christianity is instead an encounter, a love story; it is an event" (Ratzinger 2004, 685). That quotation comes from someone one might not expect: Cardinal Ratzinger, who became Pope Benedict XVI. Given Benedict's nickname while cardinal—God's Rottweiler—it is safe to conclude that this statement could hardly mean that doctrine or dogma is unimportant. But it is interesting what he sees as the "core" of Christianity. In line with this emphasis on love, in the great "judgment" passage of Matthew 25, Jesus speaks of those who feed the hungry, give water to those who thirst, and visit the sick as those who will be judged "righteous." There is not a shred of evidence in that passage for anything like a "doctrinal belief" (B3) being a mark of righteousness.

Given that the early Christians didn't really have much in the way of Christian doctrine, what did they have? Judging from the preaching of Peter in Acts, the early Christians would have heard that Jesus was Lord and Messiah and that in order to follow him they needed to change their direction in life (*metanoia*), be baptized, and be filled with the Spirit. They would have been taught that Jesus forgives sins, that he is God's son, and that he had risen from the dead. These teachings would have been part of and informed Christian liturgy. It would not have been possible for liturgy to have no doctrinal content, no B3. But what is going on sounds much more like B2: Peter is exhorting his listeners to follow Jesus. While there are some B3 claims in his preaching, the primary emphasis is on B2 beliefs. Put more strongly: these early followers of Jesus needed to work out what they believed about Jesus, and this process continues with all of those who claim to follow Jesus. The Reformation was a striking example of how B3 sorts of beliefs change over time, both in terms of the new views expressed by Luther and the retrenchment and reformulation of views by the Roman Catholic Church in reaction. Of course, creeds can only formulate what a given group of people happen to believe about God/ultimate reality at a particular moment. They cannot determine what all people everywhere either will or even should believe in the future. What I mean by that statement is simply this: any particular group of Christians can say "this is what you have to believe." That, however, in no way guarantees that people will therefore believe it.

An example might be helpful. The Vatican estimates the number of Roman Catholics throughout the world to be approximately 1.2 billion. Roman Catholicism is a particularly good example, since (unlike many Christian "denominations") it has an official catechism to which it is assumed that the faithful subscribe. The reality, though, is somewhat different. In the US, there is the idea of "cafeteria Catholics," those who pick and choose the parts of Roman Catholic teaching they are willing to accept. Moreover, there are Roman Catholic bishops in various countries who do not follow official Roman Catholic doctrine regarding, for instance, contraception. As I write this, there are also many bishops displeased with the official teaching regarding the LGBTQ+ community. If those charged with upholding and promulgating the doctrine of the church do not necessarily hold to all of its doctrines, then it is at best de jure the case that they "subscribe" to it. However, of the 1.2 billion members of the church, it would be folly to assume that they all believe all of what is written in the catechism. While some "lack" of belief is simply due to disagreement, a good deal of it has to do with lack of understanding exactly what it is one is expected to believe.

In my own tradition (Anglicanism), we—like Roman Catholics—say the Nicene Creed as part of the Sunday service. Even though I have training in theology, I often wonder exactly what some of the lines even mean. "God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God" has an impressive rhetorical force. While it is obvious that the writers wish to convey the idea that Jesus is truly *God*, the meaning of these lines is not fully clear to me. But then we reach the next line—"begotten, not made"—and I find this very difficult to *understand*, let alone *believe*. What could it possibly mean to be "begotten"?[7] It is, at the end of the day, a bit tricky to strongly affirm that which one does not really understand. Yet, at least in my case, I have the benefit of a degree of theological sophistication. In contrast, the vast majority of the 1.2 billion Roman Catholics throughout the world do not have any theological background and thus it would be implausible to think that they understand and believe all of the B3 doctrine that the church teaches. Schilbrack (2014, 79) notes that people may "join a religious movement, participate in its practices, and identify with that community for reasons that have nothing to with its beliefs," and, instead, find "that a religious community is welcoming or fun or expected by one's family or a good way to make business contacts." However, Schilbrack (2014, 81 n14) insists that "one's actions are still interpretable in terms of what one takes as true." To be sure, such an interpretation is possible. The question, though, is the degree to which such an interpretation is warranted. The reality is that religious communities—like political parties—have "members" who may or may not believe exactly what the community or party claims to believe. To assume that membership necessarily entails full adherence to the community's B3 beliefs would be to make a serious mistake.

There is a further and rather fundamental problem in looking back at Jesus' teachings as "religious." The very concept of "religion," as we understand it today, simply did not exist in Jesus' time. While the ancient Greeks were what we would call "religious," ancient Greek had no term for religion. It had the term *thrêskeia*, which means something like "ritual practice" or "way of worshipping." The idea of "religion as subscribing to a set of doctrines" simply didn't exist.

Wilfred Cantwell Smith (1998, v) makes it clear that believing in Jesus was about putting one's trust in him or saying that one was willing to follow him. In contrast, the idea that "believing in Jesus" (B2) is somehow equivalent to or entails "believing in a set of doctrines about Jesus or Christianity" (B3) only very slowly came into existence over time and crystalized in the sixteenth century. While we can find instances of the term "religion" in the thirteenth century, their meaning refers to monastic vows. Yet, even when "religion" comes to mean something beyond religious orders, it still only refers to various forms of Christianity. Only much later does the idea of "other" religions develop, with the assumption that Christianity provided the "form" for all religions (which, in turn, provided their respective contents). The simplest way of explaining this change in the meaning of the term "religion" is by the Reformation, which meant that there were now alternative views regarding Christian doctrine and thus the need to define who was in and who was out. As it turns out, this was an equal opportunity sport: both the "Protestants" and the "Catholics" had ambitious programs of hunting down those whom they deemed to be "heretics." And, although their definitions of orthodoxy differed, they used similar methods to torture and kill those who didn't pass the test.

Yet, it is hard to see how Jesus would have been able even to comprehend the idea that his followers were—by way of following him—thereby committing themselves to a set of beliefs in the B3 sense. They were clearly committing themselves to him in the B2 sense, but most of the B3 kinds of Christian beliefs were yet to be invented. Further, since the very concept of "religion" and the accompanying idea of religion as equal to believing in a set of doctrines simply did not exist, we can only anachronistically attribute anything of the sort to Jesus and his followers. One might well ask: when did Christianity become a religion? The answer would be: somewhere around the sixteenth century. We are certainly free to think of Christianity as a form religion, but that is due to a much later development in thinking. At the very least, we need to admit that our projection of the concept "religion" onto Jesus' followers is how we think, not how Jesus or his followers thought.

To make this clear, consider what Hebrews 11:6 says: "without faith it is impossible to please God, for whoever would approach him must believe that he exists and rewards those who seek him." The term translated as "believe" is *pisteusai*, which is not about believing a proposition about God (B3) but believing in God (B2). In both the Hebrew and Christian scriptures, such a term never means intellectual assent to a proposition or holding a set of doctrines (B3). Instead, as Smith (1998, 41) points out, to have faith in Jesus would have meant "to hold dear" or "to be loyal to" or "to value highly"—or, simply, "to love" Jesus. For Jesus' disciples to believe in him, they would certainly have had to believe that he existed (B3); yet that would only have been a necessary but not a sufficient condition. However, their belief in Jesus was not a commitment to a proposition but a commitment to him. To follow Jesus meant choosing *a way of being* and the choice here was whether to pledge one's allegiance to Jesus or to follow someone else. Of course, it could not be said that these early followers had nothing like B3 beliefs. They were Jews, just as Jesus, and worshipped in the temple. Jesus'

teaching is set within that thoroughly Jewish context. But the vast majority of what Christians today assume as "standard" B3 Christian beliefs did not yet exist.

And this leads us to my next point. These early believers had a devotion to Jesus that was called "the Way" (Acts 9:2)—the way of Jesus. It was primarily a way of being. These very early converts—who were Jewish—would have continued to worship in the synagogues. Yet they would have also worshipped in the *ekklēsia*. In both cases, they would have engaged in liturgy. Being a Christian at this point was largely about liturgical practice. The original meaning of the Greek term *leitourgia* had to do with how people lived. Literally, it means "the work of the people," although the translations "public service" or "public work" are more accurate. *Leitourgia* described the service of affluent members of society who performed liturgy in ancient Greece by contributing money for religious and sporting events.[8] Such persons were called "liturgists" (*leitourgoi*). These definitions make clear why, in the Christian scriptures, variants of the term are used to describe such actions as "ministering" or "ministry," along with "service" and "serving." The closest the Christian Bible comes to using liturgy in the sense we use it today is in Acts 13:2, where Luke describes the church in Antioch as worshipping (*leitourgountôn*) the Lord. Liturgy was something individuals and groups did. Thus, from the beginning, the term "liturgy" denoted a way of life.

THE LITURGICAL BASIS OF MORALITY

My argument so far has been that early Christianity is largely formed by its liturgy, with doctrine gradually being formulated over time. Yet, it likewise stands to reason that, over time, his followers sought increasing clarification regarding who Jesus was and what it really meant to follow him. Thus, the gradual formulation of doctrine makes perfect sense. To some extent, this was a function of the many competing heresies and the desire to figure out what it was they really believed or should believe. But, in the same way that Augustine (1961, X.6)—after his conversion—famously asks "what do I love when I love my God?," so followers of the Way naturally would have asked similar kinds of questions. Who exactly is this Jesus and what does it mean to say that he is "the son of God?"

As I said at the beginning of this chapter, I do not think this pattern of beginning with some kind of liturgy and eventually moving to a more theoretical formulation of it is unique to Christianity, or for that matter to religion in general. I think it can be traced out in morality and life in general. Hegel makes this point quite well.

For Hegel, the essence of Spirit is moral substance, admittedly a vague and abstract claim. Yet he says that this abstract thing can only be seen in terms of actions (Hegel 1977, §439). What Hegel is claiming is that in actuality (that is, *acting*) the Spirit is fully true, rather than in some inert, essential sort of way. Thus, the ethical "order" Hegel has in mind is what he terms *Sittlichkeit*. Now, this is a strange word, one that is hard to translate. Its root is *Sitte*, which means custom or convention or even behavioral norm. For someone who goes against *eine Sitte*, one might respond: "that's not the done thing, old boy." Yet *Sitte* also has to do with morality. As should be clear, it is likewise connected to tradition, for *eine Sitte* has everything to

do with what a community takes to be its values. *Sittlichkeit* is for Hegel "ethical order," by which he means the moral practice of a community, rather than an abstract ethical system or set of principles. *Sittlichkeit* is composed of the values of a given community, not so much in the sense of what they hold dear abstractly but how they actually act in concrete situations. To put this in Hegelian terms, it is "self-supporting, absolute, real being" (§440), which means that it relies on nothing else for its validity. On Hegel's view, the values of a community are grounded on a collective sense of right and wrong. Thus, Hegel is deeply Aristotelian in how he conceives of morality.

It is interesting how often the Platonic/Aristotelian dichotomy gets replayed in Kant and Hegel. In contrast to Hegel, Kant believes that the key to moral acting is the categorical imperative, which is a seemingly simple formulation of morality that provides the basis for acting. Yet Hegel disagrees with Kant in at least two important respects. On the one hand, the sort of moral system that Kant provides is actually a further stage in the development of ethics, what Hegel terms *Moralität*. "Morality" for Hegel is a worked-out system of rules and principles that provide a theoretical formulation of what people already believe. As such, it is a step beyond *Sittlichkeit*. In that sense, it is like *theology*, something that gets worked out in theory on the basis of what people believe in practice. But such systems are based (or to be valid, must be based) precisely on this shared practice. What makes any ethical system convincing is precisely that it embodies in a rational, coherent way what people already believe and how they act—and it is this (their action) that gives it validity. To put this more bluntly, if we didn't already find certain actions to be right and virtuous, we would never by convinced by a theoretical justification of them. As Nietzsche (1997, III:6) observes, rational arguments are far too unconvincing for such a purpose: "Dialectic is chosen only as a last resort. It's well known that it creates mistrust, that it's not very convincing." The basis for morality, then, is tradition: there can be no further justification or foundation given for our moral beliefs than the basis of tradition.

However, this is not to say that tradition cannot be criticized or revised, nor is Hegel advocating some kind of blind obedience to tradition. There is always room for rethinking tradition, as the history of traditions amply demonstrates. Yet that rethinking stems from our actions. Accordingly, Hegel (1977, §437) says: "It is not, therefore, because I find something is not self-contradictory [a critique of Kant] that it is right; on the contrary, it is right because it is what is right." Thus, *Moralität* may be a rational expression or systematizing of that tradition, but it is certainly not a rational justification (as Kant thought). Of course, Hegel's move toward morality as shared moral practice (the emphasis on *ethos* over ethics) is one that involves a kind of historical reversal: given the historical development of philosophical ethics, the primacy of ethics *as a philosophical or moral system* over shared moral traditions is one that comes later in time and is itself based on practice.

On the other hand, Hegel argues that the problem with Kant's ethics is that it lacks solid moral content. Kant assumes that appealing to reason will tell us what to do. In contrast, Hegel claims that Kant presents us with merely an empty universal, one that can only be "filled in" by something else. Hegel's contention is that, in order

for the categorical imperative even to make any sense, it must be supplemented. As an example, the second formulation of the categorical imperative is that one ought to treat others as ends rather than means. Yet how would Kant even have come to this idea were it not for his Pietistic Christian upbringing and immersion in a culture that had been thoroughly influenced by Judeo-Christian ideals? What we are talking about here is not simply about explicating Hegel, for he can be seen as anticipating a turn in recent decades away from Kantian morality toward Aristotle's idea of situated ethics, that ethics cannot be formulated apart from practice. Alasdair MacIntyre is a good example of this shift, although we should remember that MacIntyre has been enormously influenced by his study of Hegel.

If we put all of this in MacIntyrian terms, we could say that at the heart of *Sittlichkeit* is the idea of what he calls a "practice."[9] Practices normally have rules they follow, although not necessarily. Even the "rules" may themselves be somewhat rough and ready, and not easily codified. Playing music, writing a philosophy paper, cheering on one's team, and rock climbing all have conditions for qualifying as good or poor. Such activities are usually learned and practiced by way of seeing examples of things done well and having teachers (formal or not) to help one along. If one knows anything about football, it's relatively easy to spot a good vs. a mediocre player of the sport. Both playing the game and being able to watch it critically requires *phronēsis*, Aristotle's term for practical knowledge. Practices are largely defined in terms of "internal" goods or rewards. The reward of being a moral person is, well, being a moral person. As soon as we start to veer from seeing morality as a reward in and of itself, we start to become immoral. For, if I am caring for someone merely because I hope that person will do me a favor (an extrinsic reward), then I am no longer really caring for that person. Practices are such that they are inherently communal, rather than individualistic, in nature. That is not to say that there is not a sense of individuality, but that it is only found in the context of community. As should be clear at this point, "practices" are remarkably similar to "liturgies." Both have to do with action and regulating action. Each has its own internal goods and each helps us to live in community with others.

There is an important point that needs to be added here. At one point I found myself explaining the difference between Kant and Hegel on morality to some colleagues. They started with the assumption that Hegel was a moral relativist because of his conception of *Sittlichkeit*. In contrast, they assumed that Kant was an ethical absolutist because he provided a theory of morality rather than relying on custom or tradition. Thus, my exposition of the two philosophers came as a shock to them. Hegel's position is in no way "relativistic." He believes that some actions are simply obviously right or wrong. In this respect, he is squarely in the tradition of Plato and Aristotle, not to mention Paul (Romans 1), all of whom believed that there are moral "facts" that we simply know to be true. They don't need some further justification. More important, we really can't come up with a justification for them, in the same way that Kant only gives us a theoretical codification. Yet, we can also add that, at least for Aristotle, knowing these facts requires having been brought up correctly. He writes: "Any one who is to listen intelligently to lectures about what is noble and just … must have been brought up in good habits" (Aristotle 1984,

1095b, 4–6). Hegel clearly believes this also. One must be in a good community to understand aright. *Sittlichkeit* is something shared that depends upon cooperation with others.

Put in other terms, the liturgical practice of the community is what enables one to understand and to act. Understanding only really takes place in the acting, which is why Gadamer (1989) insists that understanding does not merely involve interpretation and explication but also application. Gadamer points to an earlier hermeneutic tradition in which there was a distinction made between understanding, interpretation, and application, but then (rightly) contends that these distinctions are purely theoretical and that, in actual practice, application is key to any understanding at all.[10]

THE LITURGICAL STRUCTURE OF RELIGION

Hegel's contention that *Sittlichkeit* is the basis for *Moralität* is confirmed by current psychological research. In *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion*, Jonathan Haidt (2012, xx) advances this thesis: "*Intuitions come first, strategic reasoning second*. Moral intuitions arise automatically and almost instantaneously, long before moral reasoning has a chance to get started, and those first intuitions tend to drive our later reasoning." In practice, this means that we all have certain ideas—we might say gut-level intuitions—about what is right and wrong. While we as individuals have moral intuitions, those intuitions are strongly connected to our culture. Social psychologists have provided quite a bit of evidence to show that we start with ideas of right and wrong and then seek reasons to justify those ideas.

Haidt explicitly links this pattern to Hume, who believes that reason works in service of the passions. Belief for Hume springs from our passions or intuitions (what he labels "sentiments"). Haidt examines empirical evidence from neuroscience that shows Hume to be right. One of the turning points in neuroscience toward this view was Antonio Damasio's book *Descartes' Error: Emotion, Reason and the Human Brain* (2006). There, Damasio points out, on the basis of patients who had brain damage to the ventromedial prefrontal cortex and had no sense of emotion, that this loss of emotion left such patients either unable to make decisions or to make bad ones. Damasio concludes that we truly need the emotions to reason correctly. Without gut feelings, we cannot function. In other words, the view that begins at least with Plato—that the emotions are what cause us to do wrong and make mistakes—is deeply misguided. Instead, the interplay of emotions and reason results in what we call "rationality." That might seem a strange conclusion if one believes that the emotions are just "dumb." Yet, scientists and psychologists and many philosophers now realize that the emotions are actually a form of rationality or cognition. We know through our feelings. This leads Haidt—and in this he is hardly alone—to conclude that intuition and reasoning are really two kinds of cognition. In this recognition, we can say that Haidt and contemporary psychology are, in effect, rediscovering a pattern seen in Aristotle. While *phronēsis* is described by Aristotle as "practical reasoning," to a great extent it is really a kind of intuition that is, in turn, greatly shaped by our

community. We see certain actions and we immediately judge them to be wrong or right. Note that Aristotle does not feel any need to justify his claims about morality; he thinks they are simply obvious. It is really only when someone disagrees with us that we are forced to come up with justifications for our views.

Yet I believe that Haidt (2012, 56) gets something profoundly wrong. He claims that, while intuitions are cognitive, they are not "a kind of reasoning." Since he gives no account of what he means by "cognitive" or "cognition" nor of "reasoning," it is difficult to know exactly what causes him to make this claim. If reasoning means something like "working out a solution or explanation by way of dialectic or logic," then intuitions clearly do not count as reasoning. But I think this is too narrow a definition of reasoning. In contrast, Nietzsche (1967, §314) claims: "our most sacred convictions, the unchanging elements in our supreme values, are judgments of our muscles." The point of Nietzsche's assertion is that we think as embodied beings. Earlier, we noted that Nietzsche considers logical reasoning to be generally unconvincing. But this is because he believes that "there is more reason in your body than in your best wisdom" (Nietzsche 1969, I). To put all of this together, Nietzsche is claiming that we are most convinced by the kind of reasoning that takes place on a gut level. We are least convinced by an elaborate argument that requires multiple steps. If Nietzsche is correct about this, then this helps explain why phenomenology is so powerful. To show someone that such and such is the case by way of a careful phenomenology is an effective way of convincing that person. Logical arguments have value, but they are not nearly as effective.

And here we come back to my overall thesis. What we *experience* in life—in this case, liturgy—has a much greater effect on our way of being than does doctrine or dogma. To be sure, we cannot do without something like B3. Here, I do not mean to make a claim strictly confined to religion in general or Christianity in particular. Instead, I think we need something like "doctrine" in such realms as politics, science, psychology, to name just a few. Moreover, doctrine changes over time to reflect people's actual experience. My argument began with examining the early church in order to show that it had virtually no doctrine and so was driven primarily by its liturgy. To that I would add that, even with the advent of the creeds, the fundamental situation does not change. Most people who are "religious" are much more motivated by their B2 beliefs than their B3 beliefs. But this is no reason (pun not intended) to conclude that such motivation does not count as "reasoning." I think Nietzsche is right in saying that dialectic is the least convincing form of reasoning, at least if we are concerned with convincing other people who do not share our views. As an example, the classic proofs for God's existence may provide comfort to the faithful, but they are not particularly effective in convincing people who do not already believe. I once made a quip in class about evangelists not taking advantage of the ontological argument in their sermons. To which a visiting student responded: "well, I have a friend who become a Christian because of the ontological argument." To which I said: "then you have a very weird friend." While I am not ruling out the possibility of such arguments being efficacious at helping form B3 beliefs, I am simply saying that most people are not Christians because of such arguments.

Haidt (2012) contends that "a college football game is a superb analogy for religion." He takes this to be the case because it is a religious rite that does just what it is supposed to do: it pulls people up from Durkheim's lower level (the profane) to his higher level (the sacred). It flips the hive switch and makes people feel, for a few hours, that they are 'simply part of a whole'.

He goes on to cite Durkheim's definition of religion: "A religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden—beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them" (Haidt 2012, 287; quoted from Durkheim 1995, 44). One might understandably wonder how Haidt can move from the claim that a football game is analogous to religion to citing Durkheim. The answer lies in the phrase "a single moral community" and the fact that his argument is targeted at the New Atheists (Sam Harris, Richard Dawkins, Daniel Dennett, and Christopher Hitchens).

What unites the New Atheists is their definition of (and opposition to) religion in terms of belief (B3) in supernatural agents. Richard Dawkins (2006, 31) defines the "God Hypothesis" as the idea that "there exists a superhuman, supernatural intelligence who deliberately designed and created the universe and everything in it, including us." His entire book is an attempt at refuting such an idea—and arguing (generally rather poorly) that belief in the existence of God is simply a delusion. Not surprisingly, Haidt appears unaware that a good deal of analytic philosophy of religion is concerned with defending such an idea. Of course, Dawkins seems equally ignorant of the rather impressive work done by philosophers of religion that defends God's existence.

The virtue of Haidt's position is that it moves the discussion away from the primary focus on beliefs of the B3 sort. He contends that attempting any kind of understanding of religion by way of its B3 beliefs "is like trying to understand the persistence and passion of college football by studying the movements of the ball" (Haidt 2012, 290). What he suggests doing is precisely what I've been doing in this chapter—considering B3 beliefs within the context of Christian liturgy and its B2 beliefs. Whereas Dawkins claims that religion consists of "time-consuming, wealth-consuming, hostility-provoking rituals" that end up being "counterproductive," Haidt marshals considerable evidence from evolutionary biology to show that religion has actually been key to creating moral communities, that is, communities that foster trust and cooperation. It is important to note here that religions evolve, which is what I've been trying to show about Christianity. What we call "Christianity" today is simply not the same thing as the phenomenon we find in the early church. Moreover, in the same way that religions can change over time, so can conceptions of God. For example, not that long ago it was quite thinkable for Christians to believe that the Bible condoned slavery. Not everyone thought that, but many people did. However, today one would be hard-pressed to find someone who claims to be a Christian and likewise claims that the Bible clearly condones slavery. Both Christianity and its God have evolved.

What Christianity and other religions provide is a conception of the "sacred" that has made our evolution into moral beings possible. In *Darwin's Cathedral* (2002), David Sloan Wilson shows how Calvinism in Geneva sanctified the most mundane aspects of life and significantly improved the lives of people in Geneva. Wilson (2002, 118) concludes that

> Calvinism is an interlocking system with a purpose: to unify and coordinate a population of people to achieve a common set of goals by collective action. The goals may be difficult to define precisely, but they certainly include what Durkheim referred to a secular utility—the basic goods and services that all people need and want, inside and outside of religion. The interlocking system includes explicit behavioral prescriptions, specific theological beliefs, and a mighty fortress of social control and coordination mechanisms.

Calvin's brand of Christianity was certainly demanding and it is precisely this strictness that made Geneva flourish in terms of "secular utility." How did that work? Religious groups are bound together by what they take to be "sacred." Exactly what these sacred things might be can differ; the important thing is that all members of the group agree on their sacrality.

One might be tempted to think that what binds people in religious groups together is the liturgical practices that we tend to identify as specifically "religious," such as reading the Bible and praying. One might likewise be tempted to think that the cohesion achieved by such groups is due to their agreement regarding B3 beliefs, such as belief in heaven and hell, the divinity of Jesus, and other things mentioned by various Christian creeds. Yet Robert Putnam and David Campbell analyzed all the data they could find to determine how Americans who are religious differ from those who are not religious. What they conclude is that "by many different measures religiously observant Americans are better neighbors and better citizens than secular Americans—they are more generous with their time and money, especially in helping the needy, and they are more active in community life." However, what they found was that "it is religious belongingness that matters for neighborliness, not religious believing" (Putnam and Campbell 2010, 461, 473). They were unable to find *any* correlation between people's B3 beliefs and how well they acted in terms of generosity and concern for those in need.

CONCLUSION

Throughout this chapter, I have attempted to argue that B2 beliefs are more fundamental than B3 beliefs in driving religiosity. People can be identified as "religious" precisely by what they take to be important and how that belief drives their action. I have made a point of not defining the term "religion" in advance. But we are now at a place where such a definition is appropriate. While the English term "religion" arises from the Latin term *religio*, we use "religion" to designate something quite different from what *religio* designated originally, which was a sense of scrupulosity in morals. If we consider Cicero's *On the Nature of the Gods*, we find

that *religio* refers to following rules or prohibitions that have been instituted *either* by human beings or the gods (Cicero 1972, 3.2.5). Over time, the word comes to designate such things as "rite," "worship," and "reverence." Yet it does not denote B3. Indeed, the Vulgate version of James 1:27 translates the Greek term *thrêskeia* as *religio*: "religio munda et inmaculata apud Deum et Patrem haec est visitare pupillos et viduas in tribulatione eorum inmaculatum se custodire ab hoc saeculo." The point of this passage is that one's *religio* is about action, not belief.

Ultimately, *religio* is about what one takes to be sacred. While that could be God or gods, it could just as likely be something "mundane," like caring for widows and orphans. The idea that "religion" necessarily denotes a set of doctrines or B3 beliefs is a comparatively recent invention. Moreover, such a conception of what makes someone "religious" is problematic even with a religion like contemporary Judaism, since being Jewish is not about believing a set of doctrines (B3) but being part of a community. Belonging to a community is what "religion" is most fundamentally about. Whether one holds a given religious community's stated B3 beliefs is considerably less important than whether one sees oneself as belonging to that community. Of course, if this is the case, then "religion" probably needs to be defined much more broadly. There are many kinds of "religious" belonging—ways of holding communal views regarding sacrality—that go far beyond what we normally call "religion."

Perhaps it is time for us to rethink what "religion" could mean in the future.

NOTES

1. In his footnote, Wolterstorff lists his books *Inquiring about God* (2010a) and *Practices of Belief* (2010b).
2. Elsewhere, Heidegger (2004, 93) says that "Christian religiosity is in factical life experience, it actually is this itself."
3. I have elaborated on this point in *Liturgy as a Way of Life* (Benson 2013), so I will not be making that case here.
4. *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd edn, s.v. "believe."
5. I include practices because I think we can "believe" in them in the sense of efficacy. On might "believe" in exercise or meditation as ways to achieve a better life. Here, I am following the second definition of "believe" cited by the *OED*.
6. Like many moral philosophers, I see principles as higher and less specific than rules. For our purposes here, that distinction is not important.
7. While I have read various theological expositions of the meaning of "begotten," my lack of clarity remains.
8. Again, we should note that speaking of "religious" events and "sporting" events is misleading in talking about a culture that was thoroughly "religious" (even if not in our sense). Sporting events would have had liturgical significance in such a culture. We'll pick up on this theme in the next section.

9. Here, I am indebted not only to MacIntyre but also to Robert Solomon (1983, 535ff.) for making this connection and his explication.
10. Hans-Georg Gadamer (1989, 309) puts it as follows: "This implies that the text, whether law or gospel, if it is to be understood properly—i.e., according to the claim it makes—must be understood at every moment, in every concrete situation, in a new and different way. Understanding here is always application."

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CHAPTER SEVEN

Blessing Things

TERENCE CUNEO

> For we are God's co-workers
>
> (1 Corinthians 3:9)

Aside from an episode recorded in the Gospels in which Jesus is said to curse a fig tree (Mk 11, Lk 13), the activity of cursing objects, actions, or people plays no role in the Christian tradition. The opposite is true of blessing. It plays a visible role in the tradition, especially in the liturgical life of the church. Its role is no more prominent than in the Eastern Orthodox liturgies, where blessing is pervasive. From the beginnings to the ends of these liturgies, the people not only offer thanksgiving, praise, and petitions; they also bless. They bless God, each other, ordinary activities, and ordinary objects, such as oil, water, bread, and wine. The acts of blessing themselves are performed in diverse ways. In some cases, the celebrant will bless by performing gestural acts, such as making the sign of the cross or anointing with oil. In other cases, the assembled will bless by saying or singing words.

But what is it to bless? Why would it play such a pervasive role in the church's liturgical life? And what does the activity of blessing reveal about the character and role of liturgy? These are the questions I wish to address in this essay. Given that blessing is directed toward such a wide variety of things—everything from God to bowls of fruit—I think we should probably not assume that blessing is a single, unified type of activity. In fact, I suspect it is not. So, my discussion here will be selective. Rather than attempt to characterize blessing in all its manifestations, I want to focus on the activity of blessing ordinary material objects, such as oil, water, bread, wine, and the like. These are the "things" to which the title of my essay adverts. Toward the end of the discussion, I'll raise the question of whether the proposal developed here captures what it is to bless other human agents.

WHAT IS IT TO BLESS?

Let's begin by having before us some focal cases of blessing ordinary objects. Each example is taken from the Orthodox liturgies.[1]

The first is from the rite of healing in which olive oil is blessed and then used to anoint those in need of healing. In this rite, the celebrant addresses God, saying:

> direct your mercy upon this oil, and upon all who shall be anointed with it in your Name, that it may be for the healing of their souls and bodies, for purification,

> and for the removal of every passion, every disease and infirmity … make this oil to be for the healing of those who are anointed with it, for relief from every disease and all sickness, for deliverance from evil of those who in hope await salvation from you.[2]

The second case is from the baptismal rite in which the water is blessed before the baptism occurs. In this rite, the celebrant addresses God with the following words:

> Wherefore, O King, who loves humankind, come now and sanctify this water, by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit … That this water may be to him/her a laver of regeneration, unto the remission of sins, and a garment of incorruption.[3]

The third case is from the Eucharistic rite in which the celebrant blesses the bread and wine. In this case, the deacon directs the celebrant to bless these elements:

> *Deacon*: Bless, Master, the holy Bread … Bless, Master, the holy cup …
> *Celebrant*: That they may be to those who partake for the purification of soul, for the remission of sins, for the communion of Your Holy Spirit, for the fulfillment of the Kingdom of Heaven, for boldness toward You, and not for judgment or condemnation.[4]

These passages reveal that acts of blessing ordinary objects share a common structure.

First, each such blessing has an *object*. In the cases we're considering, these objects are physical things such as oil, water, bread, and wine—although, in actuality, the ordinary objects blessed in the church's liturgies are remarkably diverse. Second, each such blessing has a *recipient* who stands in a designated relation to an object of blessing.[5] In the examples before us, the recipients are individuals who belong to the church community. The relation they bear to the objects of blessing is broadly haptic. The celebrant intentionally acts so that the oil touches the skin of the recipient, or that the recipient is immersed in water, or that the recipient ingests the bread and wine. Third, each such blessing has *objectives*, which are made explicit in the passages I've quoted. In these passages, the celebrant addresses God by using linguistic expressions that are variants of the following form: "Do this so that it may be for so-and-so." The phrase "so-and-so" functions as a placeholder for blessing's objectives, which are desirable states such as "healing of soul and body … deliverance from evil … remission of sin" and "communion with the Holy Spirit." Finally, each such blessing involves *operative agents* who intentionally act so as to realize, or help to realize, blessing's objectives. One such agent is the agent who instigates the blessing, calling upon God to act. Another operative agent is the one called upon to act, namely, God.[6] These are not the only operative agents in blessing. As I'll emphasize later, the recipients of a blessing and the community in which that blessing is performed are operative agents as well.

In sum, the structure of blessing an ordinary object includes an agent calling upon God to employ that object in order to realize some state that contributes to the flourishing of that blessing's recipients. While gaining clarity regarding the structure of blessing is helpful, it does not specify what the act of blessing an ordinary object is. I have characterized it as one in which an agent "calls upon" God to act. The

question is what this comes to. In the passages quoted above, when the celebrant calls upon God to act, is God being petitioned to act in some way? Commanded or exhorted to act? Or is the celebrant simply expressing a wish that God act so as to realize blessing's objectives? Merely consulting the grammatical structure of the sentences of these liturgical texts won't answer these questions. We'll need to appeal to additional considerations—including broadly philosophical and theological ones—in order to make headway on this issue.

The purpose of the next two sections is to assemble these considerations. Before I engage in this work, let me present the main lines of the positive proposal I wish to advance. According to this proposal, to bless an ordinary object is not to express a wish (as we might when we say "Bless you" in response to someone's sneezing); nor is it to ask that God would favor something (as a child might ask for a parent's blessing upon their marriage); nor is it to exhort, demand, or command God to act, as the broadly imperatival language of the liturgical texts might suggest. Rather, to bless an ordinary object is to perform the distinctive speech act type of *invoking*. Somewhat more exactly: to bless an ordinary object is to invoke God's agency so that that object may play one or another role that positively contributes to the flourishing of its recipients.[7]

In his book on the baptismal rite, *Of Water and the Spirit*, Alexander Schmemann notes that the Orthodox baptismal, marriage, and Eucharistic liturgies all begin with the doxology "Blessed is the Kingdom of the Father, the Son, and Holy Spirit." Schmemann further observes that this doxology is highly significant; it indicates that these liturgies have the kingdom of God as their "theme."[8] In *The God We Worship*, Nicholas Wolterstorff makes a similar point, writing that all prayers in the liturgy are to be understood as variants or amplifications of the church's paradigmatic prayer, namely, the Lord's Prayer. That prayer "is framed by the petition that God's kingdom come."[9] These observations find their counterpart in N.T. Wright's work on the New Testament, in which he contends that, when endeavoring to understand its central claims, we could hardly overemphasize the centrality of the theme of God's kingdom. Central to the New Testament's understanding of the kingdom, according to Wright, is the claim that its realization consists in the defeat of evil.[10]

These observations about the kingdom of God help to contextualize the proposal I wish to advance. I said just above that blessing's objectives are states whose realization would contribute to the flourishing of its recipients. We could fruitfully restate and amplify this idea by employing the notion of the kingdom of God. To bless is to invoke God's agency so that ordinary material objects can, by contributing to the flourishing of a blessing's recipients, play the role of contributing to the realization of God's kingdom. Indeed, the text of the Eucharistic blessing quoted above suggests this very idea. That blessing specifies that partaking of the bread and the wine are to be for the "fulfillment of the kingdom of heaven."

It may be that the practice of blessing ordinary objects will continue in the eschatological state described in scripture in which lions lie down with lambs, swords are beat into plowshares, and people do not weep because they no longer suffer. Were God's kingdom to be realized to this degree, the purpose of blessing things would be to enhance the flourishing of people and communities that are already

flourishing. But we do not now occupy such a state. It is because we do not that the blessings of ordinary objects are best understood not simply as acts that contribute to the flourishing of their recipients, but also as acts of redemption: when an object plays a role that positively contributes to the flourishing of its recipients, its fulfilling that role brings about flourishing where it was absent or only partially realized. It's worth adding to this a point that Schmemann emphasizes: realizing the kingdom of God in this respect involves not only the redemption of blessing's recipients. It also involves the redemption of the material world itself. In blessing, the material world functions not as a distraction from or a barrier to God, but as "a means of God's presence … and communion with God."[11] I believe that Schmemann's observation helps to make sense of why ordinary material objects are so frequently employed in blessing, although this is a point whose discussion will have to await another occasion.

INVOCATION

The proposal I've voiced maintains that to bless an ordinary object is to invoke God's agency. To determine whether this proposal has legs, we'll need to gain a better understanding of what it is to invoke. That, in turn, will require us to venture into some unexplored conceptual territory, as no philosopher (to my knowledge) has discussed the phenomenon of invoking. I should note that my aim here is not to provide an analysis of invoking or even necessary and sufficient conditions for the application of the concept. Instead, I want to explore the "grammar" of invoking in enough detail so that we have a firmer grip on what it is. That will position us to understand better what it is to bless ordinary objects.

There are three features of invoking to which I'd like to call attention. The first is that invoking necessarily involves the employment of arrangements for acting of a certain type. Specifically, as indicated just above, invoking necessarily involves the employment of arrangements by which an agent can call upon another to act. All such actions are instances of the schema:

> An agent A's performing action Φ in circumstances C counts as A's invoking agent B to Ψ,

which is an *arrangement-schema for invoking*.[12]

The possible instantiations of such a schema are nearly limitless. The action performed by the invoker (which may be an individual or a group) could be anything from a verbal action, such as a sentence utterance, to a gestural action, such as the raising of a hand. Similarly, the action the invokee is called upon to perform (which could be an individual or a group) could be anything from the performance of another speech act, such as a declaration, to a feat of engineering, such as the launching of a satellite.

The implementation of an arrangement for invoking can have different explanations and rationales. (Taking note of this here will prove helpful in the next section.) Consider the arrangement whereby a poet calls upon the Muse when composing poetry. This arrangement may be in effect merely because certain patterns of behavior have been codified and encoded in linguistic conventions: this is what

poets do—they invoke the Muse. Or consider the arrangement whereby a delegate to the United Nations (UN) calls upon it to act. Such an arrangement might be in effect because there has been an agreement, contract, or promise made between agents or groups of agents who have been part of the UN. Note, in addition, that there are different rationales for why a given arrangement for invoking is in effect. An arrangement for invoking may be in effect because agents desire to achieve certain ends that they realize they can't achieve on her own; cooperation is needed. Alternatively, an arrangement for invoking may be in effect because an agent realizes that, while she could achieve some end by acting alone, it would be achieved more efficiently were she to act in concert with others. Or, somewhat differently, an arrangement for invoking may be in effect because the agents in question endeavor to realize some social good, such as the realization of a joint project, or increased trust, intimacy, or solidarity.

The second feature of invoking I'd like to highlight concerns its particular normative dimensions. To begin with, in order for an agent to invoke, she must enjoy a certain type of normative standing. That standing involves enjoying privileges or powers of certain kinds, which others often lack, that attend or constitute having a certain role or position. It is in virtue of occupying the role of being a composer of poetry by which the poet has the privilege of invoking the Muse. It is in virtue of occupying the position of being a UN delegate by which someone has the standing to invoke the UN's agency. I won't here attempt to puzzle through exactly what having the standing to invoke involves, as it may differ from context to context. I'll simply note that at various points I've spoken as if calling upon someone to act and invoking someone's agency are the same thing. They are not. While you or I can call upon the UN to act, we cannot invoke the UN's agency. That is because we lack the normative standing to do so.[13]

Add now that invoking typically provides both a requirement and a prima facie reason for the invokee to act. The requirement is that the invokee consider the call to act, at least provided that the invocation isn't badly malformed. The prima facie reason is for the invokee to perform the act that she has been called upon to perform. So, typically, the requirement pertains to an action of one sort—namely, taking into consideration the call to act—while the reason pertains to an action of another sort—namely, the action that the invokee has been called to perform. Let's add that in being provided with a prima facie reason to act, an invokee needn't exhibit any type of normative failure in not acting. After all, there may be dimensions of a situation that the invokee sees that the invoker doesn't. The invokee may understand that the objective for invoking wouldn't be realized if she were to act as called upon, or that acting in that way would have very bad long-term consequences. And so on. In short, the invokee may have a lot of discretion as to whether and when to act in response to being called upon to act. Something similar is true of the invoker as well; she may have a lot of discretion as to whether and when to employ an arrangement for invoking.

There is another normative dimension to invoking worth specifying. Invoking involves what I'll call a 'credit/responsibility link.' In invoking, the invoker not only takes responsibility for having the normative standing to invoke another's agency, she is also now partially responsible for the performance of the action that she has called

upon another to perform, were it to be performed by the invokee. Suppose that in calling upon the UN in order to address a humanitarian crisis, tens of thousands of lives are thereby saved. In such a case, the invoker is partially responsible for those actions being performed if they are performed. (Again, the degree to which she is responsible will vary from situation to situation.) The invoker herself may have performed none of the life-saving work. But she deserves partial credit for these actions being performed and the results achieved. (The degree of credit she deserves will no doubt vary from situation to situation.) Something similar is true of the case in which an invoker calls upon another to perform an action that is very bad: she will be responsible to a certain degree and rightly be open to censure, blame, or the like if those actions are performed. In these ways, invoking normatively binds together the invoker with the actions of the invokee.

The third feature of invoking worth highlighting is that it can be successful to different degrees. At a minimum, invoking can be successful insofar as it doesn't misfire. On the one hand, it avoids problems that might hamper the invoker, such as lacking the standing to invoke (as when an ordinary citizen calls upon the UN to take a vote) or implementing the incorrect arrangement (as when the invoker speaks the incorrect words). On the other, it avoids problems on the side of the invokee, such as lacking the ability to act (as when the invokee is incapacitated) or not existing (as in the case of the Muse). Furthermore, an invoking can be successful to a greater extent when the agent called upon to perform a given action performs that action. For example, a delegate to the UN might invoke the UN's agency, calling upon it to dedicate its resources in order to resolve a humanitarian crisis. If the UN thereby dedicates its resources to doing so, then that invoking is successful beyond merely not misfiring. Finally, an invoking can be more successful yet when an invokee is called upon to perform an action with an objective and that objective is realized (to some significant degree) by the performance of that action. To stay with our example, suppose the objective of the UN's acting is to resolve a humanitarian crisis. If the UN does such things as end violent conflict and provide food to people, then that invoking is successful to a considerable extent.

Invoking, I've suggested, involves employing arrangements for acting of a particular kind, has particular normative dimensions, and can be successful to different degrees. Having identified these three features of invoking, we are better positioned to appreciate its distinctiveness. Invoking is not identical with any of the speech act types listed above, such as expressing a wish, requesting, petitioning, exhorting, demanding, or commanding. (I hasten to add that it's possible for an agent to perform multiple speech acts simultaneously. I am focusing on what an agent is doing in invoking.) The explanation is simply that the performance of the speech acts listed above needn't involve employing an arrangement for invoking.

To appreciate the point, consider a case taken from a military context. In the invasion of Normandy, US reconnaissance teams on the ground were often tasked with identifying infrastructure in France, such as railroads and bridges, whose destruction would weaken the enemy. The arrangements in effect specified that, by communicating the coordinates at which these targets were located, these reconnaissance teams would thereby call upon the US air force to damage or destroy

these targets then and there. In so communicating this information, it would be assumed that both the target and timing for a strike were appropriate, given the objectives of the invasion and information on the ground. Imagine a case, then, in which a reconnaissance team informs the air force of such a target by way of sending along its coordinates. In competently employing this arrangement for acting, these reconnaissance teams were not thereby expressing a wish that the air force act. Nor were they demanding, commanding, or exhorting the air force to strike these targets. Nor were they requesting or petitioning that the air force act. Rather, in competently employing these arrangements for acting, they were invoking the might of the air force, exercising their standing to call upon it to strike these targets.

In fact, given the character of these arrangements for acting, it would be odd to characterize the speech performed as demanding, commanding, exhorting, petitioning, or requesting. When competently employing such an arrangement, the invokee could not legitimately command the air force to act; he would lack the normative standing to do so. Moreover, given the character of the arrangements in effect, it would be superfluous to exhort, demand, petition, or request that the air force act. For to competently employ such an arrangement, in which it is assumed by the invoker that the target and timing are apt, the invoker need only communicate to the air force the relevant information. Of course, as noted above, an invokee may not act when being called upon to act. For example, in the case at hand, it may determine that the target is inapt or the timing of the strike is poor.

If this is correct, then invoking is a speech act type distinct from those enumerated above and, indeed, needn't involve their performance. If invoking is not identical with, or constituted by, these other speech act types, would it be appropriate to characterize it as a type of directive? Probably. Under a liberal understanding of directives, according to which directives involve performing a locutionary act that counts as indicating to the invokee that something is to be done, invocations are directives of a certain kind. But it is worth underscoring that invoking needn't involve explicitly presenting to the invokee the claim that something is to be done. During breakfast, one's spouse might simply state that the children's lunches need to be prepared. That will often function as calling upon you to prepare their lunches. That this action is to be performed is, as it were, built into this employment of an arrangement for invoking. For arrangements of this sort, which are themselves grounded in complex and variable social contexts, specify that the performance of actions of a given type count as invoking another to act.

BLESSING AS INVOKING

Suppose that the argument to this point is on target: invoking is a type of directive in which the invoker exercises her normative standing to call upon an invokee to act. The question that remains is whether blessing ordinary objects is invoking.

Identifying three theological data points can help us answer this question. We saw earlier that there is a difference between arrangements for invoking and the explanation of why they are in effect. Suppose that the blessing of ordinary objects such as oil, water, wine, and bread are focal cases of blessing. The arrangements

for blessing these objects are in effect (in part) because the church has understood Jesus' followers to be subject to three of his commands: heal the sick (Lk 10:1), baptize in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matt 28:19–20), and eat in remembrance of him (Lk 22:19). The first datum, then, is that the healing, baptismal, and Eucharistic rites were implemented in order to fulfill Jesus' commands to his followers.[14]

As the liturgical texts reveal, these rites have various objectives such as the healing of soul and body, the remission of sin, and communion with the Holy Spirit. We know that we cannot realize these objectives entirely or even primarily by our own efforts. God is the one who heals, who remits sin,[15] and achieves communion with the Holy Spirit; our role is subsidiary. That is the second datum.

When addressing the issue of God's action in the Eucharistic rite, the Swiss Reformed theologian Jean-Jacques von Allmen writes that by

> its invocatory character, Christian worship is open to the free and sovereign action of its Lord: it does not seek to manipulate it. In this sense, it is the antithesis of magic. Because of its invocatory character, the cult gathers together the Church in an attitude of hope and expectation."[16]

What von Allmen points us to is the apt stance for the church to take when blessing: firm expectation that God will act in response to its actions.[17] This is the third datum.

With these data points in hand, let's focus on the character of Jesus' commandments. An analogy will help us to understand their character. Suppose you were to command your son to perform an action that you both realize is outside his power. For example, suppose you direct your child to perform a Schumann piano concerto. While a competent pianist, your son cannot perform this piece on his own. Only over time and with your hands-on assistance could he perform it. Providing such assistance will probably mean that you sit next to him on the piano bench, playing certain parts of the concerto with him. For your command to be non-defective, then, it must be that you commit yourself to ensuring that your son can with your (or someone else's) assistance perform the concerto. (It also follows that your command must be understood aright: it does not specify that your son is supposed to perform the concerto on his own.) Now consider Jesus' commands mentioned above. Conforming to them or achieving their objectives will require divine assistance. Given a high Christology, that assistance will come in the form of (inter alia) Jesus' own action. In order for Jesus' commands to be non-defective, Jesus must, in issuing these commandments, commit himself to helping his followers both to fulfill his commands and achieve their objectives. But, presumably, Jesus' commands are not defective. It follows that, in issuing these commands, Jesus thereby committed himself to helping his followers fulfill these commands and achieve their objectives. (It also follows that Jesus' commands must be understood aright: they are not commands to perform these actions or achieve their objectives on our own.)

This last point helps us to appreciate how the first two theological data bear upon the third. It is because (i) the church has implemented the healing, baptismal, and Eucharistic rites in response to Jesus' command (per the first datum), and (ii) the

church recognizes that fulfilling these commands and achieving their objectives are outside its power (per the second datum) that (iii) the church's appropriate stance is firm expectation that God will act in response to the actions performed in these rites. The firm expectation is appropriate, given the church's assumption that Jesus' commands are not defective, and that it can rely upon divine assistance in fulfilling these commands and achieving their objectives.

Let's now register a complication. The ordinary objects blessed in liturgical rites are the means by which the church endeavors to fulfill Jesus' commands. The olive oil used to anoint the sick, the water used to baptize, and the bread and wine used to eat in remembrance are what I'll call the 'designated means' by whose use the church endeavors to obey Jesus' commands. Now suppose it is true that, in commanding his followers to heal the sick, Jesus has thereby committed himself to aiding them in these endeavors and their objectives. It would not follow that Jesus has thereby committed himself to help his followers to fulfill his commands or achieve their objectives by the use of these designated means. After all, these means might be entirely inappropriate. (I am assuming that using these particular means are not strictly necessary in order to fulfill Jesus' commands or achieve their objectives. Something other than olive oil, for example, could be used in the rite of healing.) So, what we've said thus far falls short of establishing the claim that, in commanding his followers to do such things as heal the sick, baptize, and eat in remembrance, Jesus has thereby committed himself to aid them in fulfilling these commands or achieving their objectives by the use of the church's designated means.

The designated means that the church has selected in order to fulfill Jesus' commands and achieve their objectives are not, however, arbitrary or inapt. According to the biblical record, they are the very means that Jesus used, endorsed, or otherwise condoned for doing such things as healing, baptizing, or eating in remembrance. So, we can say this: in commanding his followers to do such things as heal the sick, baptize, and eat in remembrance, Jesus has thereby committed himself to engage in coordinated actions with them. If his followers use apt means to fulfill these commands or achieve these commands' objectives, then Jesus has accepted or consented to these means, thereby committing himself to aid his followers in fulfilling these commands or achieving these objectives, by the use of the church's designated means.

Keeping the foregoing in mind, let me now draw out some implications for our discussion of blessing. What we want is a characterization of blessing that not only fits the theological data but also makes sense of the claim that, in commanding his followers to do such things as heal the sick, baptize, and eat in remembrance, Jesus has thereby committed himself to providing divine assistance to their fulfilling these commands and achieving their objectives, by the use of the church's designated means.

Consider the alternatives. Start with the proposal that to bless an ordinary object is to demand or command God to use that object so as to realize God's kingdom. The proposal is theologically preposterous. We have no standing to demand or command anything of God. There is, in addition, the conceptual point that issuing such demands or commands would be inapt. We are supposing that, in commanding us to do such things as heal the sick, baptize, and eat in remembrance, Jesus has

thereby committed himself to aiding his followers to fulfill these commands or achieve their objectives, by the use of the church's designated means. Given some orthodox Trinitarian assumptions, the present proposal implies that blessing would involve us demanding of or commanding God that God perform actions that enable us to fulfill Jesus' commands and achieve their objectives. But we do not demand or command someone to do something that that person has already committed to doing, unless something is amiss. If you are ignorant that I have already committed myself to helping you achieve something, for example, you might demand that I help. But the demand would involve a mistake. Presumably nothing like this is amiss in the case of blessing ordinary objects, however.

So the first proposal won't do. Consider, next, the proposal that blessing ordinary objects consists in expressing a wish that God employ objects such as water and wine in order to realize God's kingdom. The proposal also looks theologically suspect. In non-defective cases, expressing a wish that someone will perform a given action presupposes that that agent has not already performed that action, or that it is unlikely that she will, or that you're not confident whether she's likely to. (The same is true of exhorting, although it is often done in order to motivate someone to do something.) But if what we said above is correct, something like firm expectation that God will act is the appropriate stance to take in paradigm cases of blessing. That fits poorly with the proposal that blessing consists in expressing a wish that God will act in such a way that the blessed object will play the role of being such as to contribute to the realization of the kingdom of God.

So the second proposal also doesn't appear promising. The suggestion that blessing is a species of request or petition for God to act is better and might be correct, but it also has untoward implications. We are supposing that, in commanding us to heal, baptize, and eat in remembrance, Jesus has thereby committed himself to providing divine assistance in the performance of these actions and the achievement of their objectives, by the use of the church's designated means. It would be odd if, given this commitment, arrangements for blessing were simply to involve requesting God to act in ways that enable us to fulfill these commandments or achieve their objectives. In the ordinary case, if you've committed yourself to helping me in some way, there would be no need to request that you help me. Of course, you might have forgotten about your commitment. In that case, I might need to remind you of it. And politeness might require that such a reminder take the form of a request. But failures of memory or attention are not live possibilities in the present case.[18]

The proposal that blessing is invoking suffers from none of these shortcomings. Unlike the first proposal, the blessing as invoking hypothesis (as I'll refer to it) is not too strong. It does not imply that we demand anything of God or command God to act. And yet the hypothesis makes sense of the broadly directive language used in the examples of blessing quoted at the outset of this discussion; in blessing, directives are performed vis-à-vis God, but they are not commands or demands. Moreover, unlike the second and third proposals above, the blessing as invoking hypothesis is not too weak. If it were correct, it would not imply that Jesus' followers are insensitive to the fact that, in commanding, Jesus had thereby committed divine aid

to them. To the contrary, the proposal implies that blessing involves being attuned to the character of Jesus' commitment to aid his followers. In so doing, I take the proposal to capture the distinctive character of blessing, which involves considerable boldness. (Interestingly, "boldness toward You" is one of the objectives named in the Eucharist blessing. In this way, the very act of blessing achieves one of its own objectives.) In blessing ordinary objects, agents do not request God to act but *call upon* God to act in cooperation with them. In blessing, then, there is a sense in which human beings are elevated to the status of co-workers who have the privilege of having the standing to invoke God's agency. Let's add that the proposal fits the three theological data canvassed above (in the sense of comporting with them) and may uniquely make sense of the datum that the appropriate stance to take toward God in the context of blessing is firm expectation that God will act. If Jesus has committed to providing divine aid, then the speech act that is most appropriate when securing it is something akin to invoking.

In fact, I think we can go a step further. We've seen that invoking involves the employment of what I've called an arrangement for invoking, wherein one agent calls upon another to act. That arrangements of this sort are in effect more or less falls out from the character of Jesus' commands and his commitment to provide divine aid to his followers. I say that their being in effect "more or less falls out" from Jesus' action. After all, it is possible that the arrangements in effect could have been different. For example, Jesus could have specified that his followers are always to ask God to act rather than call upon God to act. But that seems not to have been the case. At least the church has not understood this to have been the case.

DIVINE ACTION

Prior to when the celebrant declares the kingdom of God blessed, the deacon says: "It is time for the Lord to act." The declaration is both provocative and elusive. It is provocative because it suggests that the liturgy is the locus of divine action. It is elusive because the central actions performed in the liturgy, such as praising, proclaiming, thanking, and petitioning, are not paradigms of divine action.

In praising, proclaiming, and thanking, we respond to God's action. In petitioning, we respond to the needs around us, asking God to act. While I don't wish to suggest that the performance of these activities does not involve divine action, whatever relation their performance bears to divine action is not overt.[19] Blessing is different. For to invoke God in the context of the liturgy is to call upon God to act in that context. The actions that God is called upon to perform, we've seen, are ones in which God employs some ordinary object in order to fulfill blessing's objectives. Some of these objectives, such as the remission of sins and boldness in approaching God, appear to be ones that are realized (to some degree) in the context of the liturgy. But others, such as healing of soul, deliverance from evil, and the fulfillment of the kingdom, are states that are typically realized over time and only with continued effort. Given the assumption that blessings don't systematically misfire, then worship is a locus of divine action. In the context of the synaxis, blessing inaugurates a variety of action sequences in which God, by employing one or another object, acts both at

that time and through time in order to realize a variety of blessing's objectives. The mental picture that comes to mind is one according to which, while petitions, praise, and thanksgiving address God, blessings set into motion coordinated divine–human action sequences that radiate outward from the liturgy, reaching into the future.

When illustrating the character of invoking earlier, I used an example from a military context in which troops on the ground invoke the air force so that it would act. Given my purposes, the example is apt in certain respects, especially insofar as it involves coordinated activity between different agents. (In this regard, it is importantly different from an invocation such as calling upon the Muse in which there would be no coordinated activity even if the Muse were to exist.) But we can also see other respects in which the example is less helpful. For, in the military case, the air force is called upon to perform "one-off" actions in which (if all goes to plan) a military objective is satisfied upon the air force's acting. In addition, when reconnaissance troops call upon the air force to act, their work is done; the rest lies in the hands of the air force itself. Blessing differs in both respects. As just noted, its objectives are typically ones that are achieved over substantial stretches of time. Moreover, the realization of these objectives involves further cooperative action, in this case between human beings and God. Specifically, it involves cooperative action between the recipients of blessing, the community in which such blessings occur, and God. Healing of soul, being released from the grip of sin, realizing the kingdom—the achievement of any of these states involves God and human beings working together over time, gradually realizing these things to different degrees.

This reveals dimensions of worship that can easily escape our notice. Worship is adoration. As Wolterstorff notes in his treatment of the topic, worship of God is awed, reverential, and grateful adoration of the creator and sustainer of the universe.[20] Everything from the artwork to the tone of Orthodox worship lends itself to understanding and experiencing worship as such adoration. Although such adoration is entirely apt, it's worth recognizing that—in the Orthodox liturgies at least—it does not function to secure intimacy between God and human beings. To the contrary, it underscores the distance between creator and creatures. God is entirely unique: there is nothing else that could merit such adoration. Blessing, however, moves in a different direction, serving to close this distance, elevating and honoring human beings as God's co-workers. For, if we've seen things clearly, blessing is not primarily a matter of asking the creator and sustainer of the universe to bestow one or another favor on us; rather, it is a matter of calling upon God in order to do and accomplish something together.

The Anaphora of the Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom is a rather marvelous illustration of this dynamic. After the deacon enjoins the people to stand in awe, the celebrant addresses God:

> It is meet and right to hymn You, to bless You, to praise You, to give thanks to You, and to worship You in every place of Your dominion: for You are God ineffable, inconceivable, invisible, incomprehensible, ever-existing and eternally the same … And we thank You for this Liturgy which You have deigned to accept

> at our hands, though there stand by You thousands of archangels and hosts of angels.

All the components of awed, reverential, and grateful adoration are present, but the effect is not that of creating intimacy between God and human beings. To the contrary, the text could hardly be more emphatic about the vast ontological gulf lying between creator and creatures.

The liturgical text then assures us that the distance is traversable, moving to the theme of God's love for human beings and the world:

> With these blessed powers, O Master who loves humankind, we also cry aloud and say: Holy are You and all-holy, You and Your only-begotten Son and Your Holy Spirit! … Who has so loved Your world as to give Your only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

To love someone, or to act on behalf of someone out of love, needn't involve anything like engaging in coordinated action with that person. (Sometimes people lovingly act on behalf of others without those others knowing anything about the actions performed on their behalf.) Conversely, engaging in coordinated action with someone needn't involve anything like love for or friendship with that person. (Sometimes necessity requires that we engage in cooperative actions with rivals and enemies.) Not content to merely acknowledge God's love and action on behalf of human beings, the liturgical script directs the celebrant to bless the Eucharistic elements. The point of doing so is "that they may be to those who partake for the purification of soul, for the remission of sins, for the communion of Your Holy Spirit, for the fulfillment of the Kingdom of Heaven, for boldness towards You." Something remarkable has happened. If the account of blessing I've offered is correct, the blessing has joined the One who lies beyond description together in coordinated action with human beings in order to realize this blessing's objectives. More accurately, it has joined together God and human beings in a shared project to realize these objectives, which extends into the future indefinitely.

When characterizing invoking earlier, I mentioned that it has multiple normative dimensions, including what I called the 'credit/responsibility' link. According to the gloss offered there, in invoking, the invoker not only takes responsibility for having the standing to invoke, she is also now partially responsible for the performance of the action that she has called upon another to perform, were it to be performed by the invokee. The point is significant for understanding the unitive role of blessing in worship. The way in which blessing plays this role is not primarily by helping blessing's recipients feel as if they are close to God (although it may also do this); rather, blessing normatively binds human beings to God in relations of mutual responsibility and credit. Both human beings and God are responsible for and deserve credit for acting so as to realize blessing's objectives. Both human beings and God are mutually responsible for and deserve shared credit for realizing states that contribute to the realization of God's kingdom. The sense of unity that this achieves is like that which you might enjoy with co-workers when engaging in a

shared project in which everyone is "in it together." Unity of this sort, when all goes well, builds and reinforces reliance and trust.

Of course, when human beings fail to act so as to realize blessing's objectives, the result is often not union or intimacy; rather, such failure often creates distance and disruption. (It needn't do that, I might add. Sometimes failed projects can normatively bind agents together in more complicated ways, noted below.) The shadow side of blessing can help us see that the activity of blessing may be normatively freighted in ways that petitioning, praising, and thanking are not. The latter can be done insincerely, lazily, haphazardly, mechanically, and so forth. While blessing can be performed in these ways as well, it also commits its operative agents to cooperative work. And when this work fails to be done or goes badly, there are additional restorative actions, including repenting, that need to be performed, which also normatively bind agents together.

THREE QUESTIONS REVISITED

At the outset of this essay, I said that I would concern myself with three questions: What is it to bless ordinary objects? Why is the blessing of ordinary objects such a pervasive part of the church's liturgies? And what does it tell us about the character and role of liturgy?

While I have been primarily concerned to address the first question, we have the materials for addressing the second and third questions. In the last section, I suggested that awed, reverential, and grateful adoration is not aimed at, and does not easily secure, union or intimacy between human beings and God. Instead, worship largely functions to underscore the vast differences between creatures and creator. Blessing is different; it is not a mode of adoration. Instead, it is an activity wherein human agents and God engage in cooperative action, thereby normatively binding themselves together in relations of mutual credit and responsibility. My suggestion is that this makes sense of why blessing plays such a pervasive role in the church's liturgies. Given that part of the aim of liturgy is to secure union and intimacy between human beings and God, blessing plays a central role in securing that aim. (It is natural to wonder whether there is another liturgical activity that is suited to play the same role.) Moreover, blessing would not secure that aim if it were sporadic or uncommon. So, the fact that blessing is pervasive, woven deep into the fabric of the liturgy, is not a quirk of liturgical development; it seems to have a deep theological rationale. To state the general point I am making from a somewhat different angle, when blessing is a frequent and integral part of liturgy, it introduces a dynamic tension into the church's liturgies, which ensures that neither adoration nor cooperative action engulf one another.

The answer just offered to the second question paves the way for an answer to the third. Even a fairly cursory engagement with liturgy reveals that there is more to it than worship. Proclamation is a central component of liturgy; but it is not a mode of awed, reverential, and grateful adoration. Blessing, I've argued, is both a pervasive and central component of liturgy. Like proclamation, it is also not a mode of adoration. Reflecting on the character of blessing helps us to appreciate that liturgy

has a variety of aims. Some of these aims are not immediately apparent, but are important for understanding liturgy's character (and perhaps evaluating it as well).

Let me close by tying up one loose thread. Earlier, I voiced my suspicion that blessing is not a single, unified type of activity, but admits of various types. If that's so, an accurate account of what it is to bless ordinary objects may not provide an accurate account of what it is to bless human beings in which human beings are both the objects and recipients of blessing. Just a little reflection reveals, I think, that the proposal developed here does extend to the activity of blessing human beings, which also figures prominently in liturgy.[21] In blessing a human being, an agent invokes God's agency so that God would act so as to realize blessing's objectives in that person's life. If this is so, the most important divide is between blessing ordinary objects and human beings, on the one hand, and blessing God, on the other. For to bless God cannot be to invoke God's agency so that God realizes some mode of flourishing in God's life. Is blessing God merely to engage in the activity of praising God? I suspect that it may be more than this, but I do not know whether this suspicion can be substantiated.[22]

NOTES

1. In what follows, I'll sometimes use expressions such as "to bless" and "what it is to bless" without specifying that the blessing concerns ordinary objects. Unless the context indicates otherwise, this is the sort of blessing I have in mind when using such expressions.
2. I am quoting from Meyendorff (2009, 148, 150).
3. I am quoting from the translation of the baptismal rite produced by the Orthodox Church of America's Department of Religious Education, 1972. I have modernized the language.
4. Here and elsewhere, I quote from the translation used by the Orthodox Church of America, 1967. I have modernized the language.
5. For ease of presentation, I speak of "a" recipient here; I realize that recipients can also be groups.
6. To my knowledge, the liturgical scripts include no blessings in which an agent other than God (such as a saint) is called upon to act in order to realize blessing's objectives. At points, the liturgical script instructs the people to call upon the celebrant to bless ("Father, bless!"). But this action is not one in which the celebrant is called upon to realize blessing's objectives. Rather, it is one in which the people call upon the celebrant to call upon God to realize blessing's objectives.
7. It was correspondence with Nick Wolterstorff and Howie Wettstein that helped me to appreciate this proposal. Wolterstorff (2018, 213–17) floats a view in this neighborhood. Cf. von Allmen (1965, 29).
8. Schmemann (1974, 401).
9. Wolterstorff (2015, 109–10).

10. Wright (1996, 201); cf. Wright (2012).
11. Schmemann (1974, 42, 49). The protagonist in Marilynne Robinson's novel *Gilead*, a Presbyterian minister named John Ames, describes how as a boy he baptized a litter of kittens: "I still remember how those warm little brows felt under the palm of my hand. Everyone has petted a cat, but to touch one like that, with the pure intention of blessing it, is a very different thing. It stays in the mind … There is a reality in blessing which I take baptism to be, primarily. It doesn't enhance sacredness, but it acknowledges it, and there is a power in that. I have felt it pass through me, so to speak. The sensation is of really knowing a creature" (23). In this passage, Ames is describing something very interesting. But what he describes is rather different from blessing as it's characterized above and in what follows. I thank Howie Wettstein for reminding me of this passage.
12. For discussions of the "counts as" relation, see Wolterstorff (1995, ch. 5), Wolterstorff (2018, 23–6), and Cuneo (2014, 13–20).
13. Having marked this distinction, in what follows, I'll continue to use the phrase "call upon." But I will use it to mean *invocatory calling upon*.
14. What about blessings the church performs with regard to other objects, such as icons, vestments, or the like? My suggestion would be that while blessing these objects is not a response to any of Jesus' directives, they are helpfully thought of as being concerned to bring about the sorts of objectives that the focal cases of blessing discussed here are.
15. In Cuneo (2016, ch. 11), I contend that forgiveness of sin is distinct from remission of sin. The last is best understood as being released from the grip of sin.
16. Von Allmen (1965, 29); cf. Wolterstorff (2015, 63).
17. The rite of healing is in this respect different from the baptismal and Eucharistic rites. Meyendorff (2009, ch. 3) discusses the objectives of the rite of healing, summarizing them thus: "The goal of healing is the restoration of fallen, sickly, and mortal humanity into communion with Christ, and with the Church, which is already the manifestation of the kingdom on earth" (89).
18. Taylor-Grey Miller has told me that in the Mormon liturgies, blessings appear more overtly petitionary. If they are in fact petitionary, it may be that we should recognize different types of blessing, and that these different types have their homes in different religious traditions.
19. Wolterstorff discusses the idea that God speaks via the church's proclamations (2015, ch. 8, 2020).
20. Wolterstorff (2015, 26).
21. Nick Wolterstorff notes in correspondence that in the Reformed tradition the blessing of the people is more prominent than the blessing of things; the latter occurs within a larger context and goes past rather quickly. But in the opening "greeting" and the closing benediction, the blessing of the people is up front. In the Reformed tradition, the words spoken to bless the people are always either the so-called

Aaronic blessing (Numbers 6: 24–6), or the words of blessing from one of Paul's epistles.

22. Thanks to Faith Glavey Paul, Paul Meyendorff, Taylor-Grey Miller, and Nick Wolterstorff for their comments on a draft of this essay. I also thank audiences at the Princeton-Rutgers Philosophy of Religion Colloquium and Augustana University.

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CHAPTER EIGHT

Liturgical Groups, Religions, and Social Ontology

KEVIN SCHILBRACK

INTRODUCTION

In a discussion of the corporate aspect of liturgical action, Nicholas Wolterstorff (2018, 60–1) raised the question whether, ontologically speaking, the furniture of the universe includes not just individuals but also groups.[1] When, say, twelve individuals enact a liturgy together, does a new entity—in some sense, a thirteenth entity—emerge from the very performance of the collective religious practice, or does this way of speaking about people artificially reify an abstraction? When one speaks of "a liturgical group," do those words refer to something that exists, so to speak, "out there" in the world, or is the phrase simply a heuristic device that gathers individual people together in one's mind? In this chapter, I recommend the realist answer that "a liturgical group" is not simply a mental category or a rhetorical device but also refers to a real entity in the world. In my judgment, this realist position brings two benefits. First, it is true; that is, the behavior of human beings is both enabled and constrained by structures that operate even when those structures have not been recognized or named. Some of these enabling and constraining structures are hormonal, neurological, and genetic, but some of them are historical, social, and religious. Second, the realist answer helps scholars reracinate the religious actions, experiences, and beliefs they study in the communal and institutional soil from which they grew. There is often a gap between the normative questions about religion that are pursued in philosophy and theology and the explanatory questions pursued in the social sciences. But recognizing that religious groups are real social entities shaping their members has the benefit that it provides a bridge that all these disciplines can use.[2]

The realist view defended in this chapter is that worshipping together creates relations between the participants that sew them together as a unit, and it is therefore right to speak of their group as a new entity in the world.[3] Social practices like liturgical performances are ontologically generative. In this paper, I present this

thesis at three levels. The first and most intimate level addresses the question of what it means to say that the people who enact a liturgy coalesce to become a group, and how such a group differs from a mere aggregate. The first section concerns the social ontology of a liturgical group. However, the individuals who enact a liturgy often understand themselves to be part of a larger community—for example, a "congregation" or a "church," the "sangha" or the "ummah"—that includes others who are not engaging in a common activity, others who may not be present. In fact, it is common that the liturgical participants do not know all these others or have ever even met them. Is it also right to speak of such a diffused and anonymous set of people as a group? The second section addresses this question, which we might call the social ontology of a religion. Third, it is common today to speak not only of *a* religion but simply of religion as such. The term "religion" is now used to categorize communities engaged in a wide range of liturgical and non-liturgical practices, and many ask whether the term's reference has become so sprawling that it no longer has analytic value. Does the central concept of religious studies also name a group of people, a thing in the world? This section concerns the social ontology of religion. This chapter argues that "a liturgical group" refers not merely to a set of individuals but also to an emergent social entity and that "a religion" does, too, but that "religion" does not.

Before I turn to those three social ontological questions,[4] let me say two words about liturgies as an object of study. Following Nicholas Wolterstorff (2018), we can see liturgies as an example of the larger category of scripted activities. Doing so places liturgical enactments in a class with performances of dramatic pieces, football plays, musical scores, and other social practices in which the participants follow previously specified directions. The use of a script is absent in spontaneous activities and the script makes an activity norm-laden, so that there is a right way and a wrong way to do it. It is valuable to distinguish, however, between explicit, written directions and implicit, unwritten conventions. Wolterstorff notes that the written script for a liturgical activity (prescribing, for example, what the participants should say) will not specify everything that the participants should do (for example, how quickly or loudly they should say it). In this light, he argues that to count as a liturgical activity, an enactment need not follow a written liturgy and he stretches the term "script" to refer to both written and unwritten prescriptions (2018, 17). In either the strict sense or the loose sense, a script serves to coordinate the participants' actions as they suspend the exercise of their own autonomy and submit to its guidance.[5]

To define liturgical activities as *religious practices scripted in at least the loose sense* has the benefit of making the term equivalent to *religious rituals* and thereby placing the philosophical study of liturgies within the interdisciplinary field of ritual studies.[6] By definition, all rituals are scripted in at least the loose sense, but not all rituals are religious. One therefore has to specify which rituals one puts in this category. By my lights, a religious ritual is one enacted to connect the participants with a superempirical reality, that is, with an unusual reality whose existence is said to depend on no empirical thing.[7] The neologism "superempirical" gathers under one label realities that are person-like (such as God) or not-person-like (such as the Dao), while excluding the products of human beings such as nations, money,

and ideologies. Such a definition gives us a reasonably bounded object of study: a liturgical group is a number of people engaged in a scripted activity to connect participants with a superempirical reality.

THE SOCIAL ONTOLOGY OF A LITURGICAL GROUP

To spell out what it means to say that a liturgical group is real entity in the world, one should consider two issues: what it means to say that a group is "an entity in the world" and how such an entity could get created.

The central claim made by realists about social groups is that there is an ontological difference between people who are merely doing the same activity in the same place and same time and people who are doing that activity *together*. The realist claim is that people acting together constitute a new entity, a "social group," because the members develop relations with each other that are lacking in a mere aggregate. These relations are invisible. For example, two people attending a concert *with* each other might be visibly indistinguishable from two people simply squeezed together by the crowd. A cluster of people in the park running to a gazebo to avoid the rain might be indistinguishable from a cluster of people in the park running to the gazebo together as part of a choreographed theater. One might think that if one entered a religious building and saw people worshipping there, one could assume that the individuals so acting constituted a liturgical group. Because the existence of a group requires relations between the participants, however, one cannot assume this. In fact, it is not uncommon in Hindu and Jain puja services that a priest will perform one ritual and other celebrants who are present perform their own individual puja. Although they are all worshipping near each other, they are not jointly enacting a liturgy. They would not constitute a liturgical group.[8] I suspect that this distinction between an aggregate and a group is one that most people find intuitive. But if a group consists of no entities other than its interrelated members, what does it mean to say that a group is a new entity? What ontological difference is captured when one endorses social realism?

My proposal is that we define a group in the ontological sense in terms of the presence of emergent properties. The concept of "emergent properties" was first introduced by George Henry Lewes (1875), who contrasted them with "resultant properties." Both are properties of the composite whole, but resultant properties do not depend on the particular way that the whole is structured. For example, the combined weight of a set of people does not depend on their relations to each other. The group's weight is simply the sum of the weight of the group's members, and so their combined weight is a resultant property. The average IQ of a set of people would also be a resultant property. By contrast, emergent properties depend on the particular relations between the members, which is to say, how they are organized, the structure or form of the group.[9] Given this distinction, we can say that a group is a new entity in the world because it is only the existence of the structured relationships between the members that explains the properties that the members possess, properties those same individuals cannot have unless that

structure exists. A group exists in the sense that new constraints on and powers of its members emerge when they join others in that particular structure. For example, Lydia can hire a new employee, but only in her capacity as a manager for a company. LeBron can win a game, but only when playing on a team. Michelle should not walk as fast as she prefers, because she is going for a walk with Jean. Now that he has become a citizen of this country, David not only pays taxes but can also vote. As an emergent entity, a social group can be either long-standing and complex or relatively ephemeral and simple. Groups thus include not only Manchester United as a team, Mitsubishi as a corporation, the US Congress as a legislature, or the Vienna Philharmonic as an orchestra, but also two people exchanging words for a moment. Even if an ephemeral and simple group has no name, no distinctive clothing, and no flag—and even if the members of the group have not realized that they have created a group—acting within the structures of the group endows the members with emergent constraints and powers.

Because "group" names an entity with emergent properties, this term differs from other ways that people might be sorted. For the purposes of this chapter, I want to contrast groups with sets and categories. Let's use "set" to name a number of people simply gathered together in one's mind. One can describe individuals as a set even if they have no distinctive traits in common, for instance, the set of Mao Zedong, my mother, and the most recent reader of this sentence. In contrast, let's use "category" to name a set of people when they are gathered together conceptually because they are like each other in some way, for instance, all left-handed people or those born under the sign of Capricorn. A set can be arbitrary, but a category requires that its members share at least a family resemblance to each other, if not a common trait. It follows that even though individuals gain no emergent properties simply by being in a category, category membership is not independent of the way things are in the world: unlike an individual placed in a set, an individual could be placed in a category incorrectly. Sets and categories of people are often called "groups" colloquially, but they are not groups in the ontological sense specified here, because these populations lack the internal structure that creates emergent properties.

To describe individuals participating in a liturgy as a group, then, is not simply to say that there is more than one person acting. It is also to recognize that the individuals acting together are constrained and enabled by an invisible structure, a set of relations among social positions and social constructs, that gives form to their practice.[10] A liturgical group is an ontological entity in that its structure constrains and enables its members to act in a particular way. The constraints are often required words, gestures, vestments, or implements. In some cases, a liturgy requires a fixed number of people working together, as when a minyan needs ten members, or an Agnicayana fire ritual needs seventeen priests. Some liturgical actions can only be done in a designated place. Participating in a liturgical group also endows the members with new abilities. The responsibilities of an imam, priest, or cantor to lead others in prayer or bless a meal or make an offering, for example, are not the property of the individuals who happen to be in those roles, save when the individual participates in that social structure. Not only worshipping individuals but

also liturgical groups are part of the ontological furniture of the universe, because it is the existence of the group that explains these constraints and powers.

What is it that brings liturgical groups into existence? Paradigmatically, the relations that constitute a group as a social entity are created when people *agree* to do something together. For instance, one person asks another on a date, the other agrees, and now the concert-attending actions of these two individuals are joined in a way that the visually identical actions of other members of the audience are not. An explicit agreement through which individuals create a new group (or through which an individual joins an existing group) is also found when an individual is sworn onto a jury, signs a contract, is drafted by a sports team, or joins a band. Agreements can also be wordless and implicit, communicated by a raised eyebrow from one person and a smile from the other, or a flick of the head from one person that leads the two to share an intention. Explicit and implicit agreements like these are prominent in Margaret Gilbert's (2014, 32) analysis of social groups that are created by what she calls "joint commitment." A joint commitment, in contrast with an individual's personal commitment, requires (i) that each participant express their readiness to be committed with the other(s) to espouse a goal as a unit or as a body and (ii) that each knows of the other's expression. Similarly, Wolterstorff (2018, 63) analyzes collective liturgical actions in terms of agreement: "Joint action requires that the participants agree with each other over what to do."

It cannot be right, however, that a social group is always constituted by an agreement, because people often act together in ways to which they have never explicitly or even implicitly agreed. For instance, as those who speak a particular language talk to a preverbal infant, naming things and asking questions, they induct the child into that linguistic group. One might describe their actions as inviting the child to speak, but they are not inviting the child to agree to speak, because no alternatives are considered. Similarly, when two people start quarreling, this is an activity that they do with and not merely near each other, but people typically do not explicitly agree to quarrel, or even implicitly communicate a personal readiness to quarrel. And one person may simply fall in with others repeatedly over time (for a cigarette break, for instance) and a joint activity may arise as a habit. In short, then, not all group membership is voluntary or chosen, and so some groups are created without agreements. Both Gilbert and Wolterstorff recognize this. Gilbert (2014) grants that collective activity requires agreement or "something like an agreement." Gilbert wants commitments that are *like* agreements in that they are on purpose, and they encumber the participants with obligations to each other, even if the participants have not explicitly or implicitly agreed to do them. Wolterstorff (2018, 63) also backs off the claim that agreement is required for groups when he grants that "when the participants in some liturgical enactment act together they don't do any such thing as *come to agreement with each other* over their actions." As Wolterstorff emphasizes, there is a degree of heteronomy when people submit to the script of a liturgy. Recognizing that people often act together without consciously deciding on what they are doing, both Gilbert and Wolterstorff are seeking a way to articulate how individuals create groups—without ever agreeing to do so.

The solution, I suggest, is to recognize that groups are created not by one mechanism, agreement, but rather by a spectrum of mechanisms that range from agreements that are conscious, deliberate, and reflective to modes of imitation that are unconscious, habitual, and prereflective. Agreement is an especially clear and a distinctively human way for people to coordinate their actions, but human beings, like other social animals, will also wordlessly copy and fall in with each other. In fact, it is precisely because human beings have the unusual capacity for shared attention—to follow another's gaze and look at what another person is looking at—that they have the ability to learn from and be socialized by another, even when the observed person is not deliberately instructing. This learning-without-teaching is what Kim Sterelny (2012, esp. ch. 2; cf. Zawidzki 2013) calls "the apprentice learning model" through which for millennia human beings passed on their practices and thereby their skills without explicit instruction or formalized institutions. This model of transmitting skills would produce a population whose members recognized as proper a particular way of, for example, speaking, cooking, or tool-making. Even for early human beings, in other words, learning-without-teaching would produce a culture. It would produce corporate practices in which there were recognized right and wrong ways to act, that is, an unwritten script.[11] To act in the way that one's community recognizes as proper does not require that the members know of alternatives: it could simply be "what we do." This lack of alternatives and therefore the lack of an explicit or even implicit choice of what to do is typical of socialization in general. Even when the members of a human culture do not join their norm-laden practices through agreement, however, they nevertheless form a group in the ontological sense that membership brings with it certain powers and constraints.

How might a liturgical group be created through the apprentice learning model? Some social practices in history cannot exist until human beings have the required language, and liturgical activities would be of this type. It is relatively easy to imagine how a liturgical group might be created through explicit agreement: one person invites another to worship, the liturgical leader hands them a written script, and they follow it. How a liturgical group might be created without agreement needs more elaboration. According to the apprentice learning model, early human beings created groups by imitating each other, developing a proper way and an improper way, for example, to cook food or to make tools. Practices like these pursue empirical goals that do not require the use of language. However, to create a social practice based on an alleged superempirical reality—such as the God of one's people, or the Dao, or the spirit of one's ancestor—requires the use of language, and, for this reason, there would be no liturgical practices before the invention of language. When a population has a vocabulary for superempirical entities, however, its members can create liturgical groups as they copy each other in how they revere those entities, ask them for help, or thank them. Such groups can be formed through prereflective imitation developing proper ways and improper ways to pray, worship, and celebrate, that is, scripts in Wolterstorff's loose sense. The mechanism of forming these liturgical groups would not be an agreement. One person could perform a religious act, and another could see it and copy it, and the practice could become "what we do." With Gilbert, one can say that the mechanism of prereflective

imitation is "like an agreement" insofar as the collective activity is done on purpose. With Wolterstorff, one can say that the members of the liturgical group act together according to a shared script without coming to an agreement or negotiating what to do. As the group repeats its practice, it may develop distinct roles and, over time, a hierarchy. This more elaborate structure would count as the institutionalization of that group. Even before roles and hierarchy, however, as long as there is a group, there would be relations that make the members of the group ontologically different from those who are not in it. In this ontology, then, a liturgical group is an entity in the world that depends for its existence on human minds and also on human language, but it can exist whether or not people name or conceptualize it.

THE SOCIAL ONTOLOGY OF *A* RELIGION

When we identify a set of people enacting a liturgy together and we refer to them as "a religious group," the referent of the term is often clear. In many cases, one can simply point at the relevant people. Typically, those performing a liturgy together can see each other and they may know each other personally. They may have enacted the liturgy with each other many times in the past. What it means to call people worshipping together in a group like these is relatively unproblematic. But the phrase "a religious group" is usually not used to refer to a discrete and visible set of people worshipping together. More commonly, the phrase is used to refer to a larger and more amorphous set of people, for example the whole assembly or congregation. This alleged group includes those who have not literally assembled or congregated and who are not present for or involved in the liturgy on a given day, as when one speaks of "the parishioners of Saint George Catholic Church" or "those who worship at Temple Beth El." Even more amorphously and more inclusively, "a religious group" is also often used to refer to all the members of a sect or a movement, as when one uses it to refer to all Shiites or Methodists or Pure Land Buddhists. And even more amorphously and more inclusively, the phrase is often used to gather conceptually all of the members of a religion: say, all Hindus or all Christians, with all the diversity one would expect in a population of over 1 billion people. In these increasingly diffuse and anonymous uses, it becomes first difficult and then impossible for the individuals being referred to as a "religious group" to know each other, let alone see each other. Unlike the people involved in liturgical activities with designated roles or an expected number of participants, these sprawling sets of people are not simultaneously engaged in the same activity. No observer can indicate the members ostensively. One might make the case that liturgical practices are the *central* activity of a religion, but given the variety of activities that religious people do, even that claim would be dubious. Is it proper, then, to claim that "a religion" refers to a single ontological entity?

I argue that the correct answer is yes. Like the phrase "a liturgical group," the more amorphous and inclusive phrase "a religion" can also refer to a real social entity in the world. By the same logic, the name for a religion (such as "Islam," "Buddhism," or "Shinto") or even a descriptive label for a religion that has no name (such as "the religion of Java" or "Greek religion") can also refer to a real entity. The criterion

of whether a set of individuals constitute a group is not whether the members know each other personally; it is common that they do not. And the criterion is certainly not whether the group is monolithic; none are. Instead, the criterion proposed here is that the practices in question create emergent properties for their participants. When one realizes that the activities of some population generate emergent powers and constraints for the participants, to call that population a social group is to recognize that ontological fact. For example, when those activities generate norms that give obligations to some of the members or endow some of them with authority over others, then it would be accurate, ontologically speaking, to call them a group. And when these activities concern superempirical realities, then it would be accurate, descriptively speaking, to call them a religious group.[12] Whether the group is gathered, as with a typical liturgical group, or diffused, as with a congregation, sect, or tradition, the members can be connected to each other in a social structure. This is a realist social ontology regarding "a religion."

An alternative to realism regarding "a religion" would be to say that this phrase (and the names and labels mentioned above) are merely heuristic or rhetorical devices. According to this non-realist approach, "a religion" treats a set of unconnected people *as if* they were a unit. And it is true that many labels for sets of unrelated people are heuristic devices like this. Imagine two people passing out flyers to a crowd who decide that one will distribute to the individuals on the left and the other to those on the right. In this case, *the left side of the crowd* comes to exist simply out of the practical aims and the physical location of the leafleters. (A zodiac constellation would be ontologically analogous.) The leafleters can label that set of people something like "the lefties" and, given their purposes, this usage is coherent. The referent of a heuristic category like this is something that exists only "in the eyes of the beholder": this set of individuals has no structure and no norms tying them together. The members of this set do not even have the property of being on the left, save in relation to those passing out the flyers. Crucially, they have no emergent powers or constraints. The lefties gain no abilities or disabilities *qua* members. If the individuals so described were to come to know this label, they would not recognize themselves in it. If the label were continued to be used on them, they would likely be confused or object; however, if they came to see some advantage in this rhetoric, they might adopt it. Interpellated by that description, they might come to identify themselves as that kind of person. I take it that a story like this is the origin of racial and many other social categories: the label of a social kind is originally *conferred on* a set of people, not because they possess some particular property, but rather for the purposes of those doing the describing.[13] This is a non-realist account of human kinds.

The non-realist view that terms for "a religion" do not correspond to a social entity—that the people so labeled are not woven together into a unit by relations and norms that the members have created—is today a live position in the academic study of religion. Realists about groups should recognize that when the term was introduced, for example, to the Americas, Africa, South Asia, and East Asia, the Europeans who used it took Christianity as the paradigm of what would count as "a religion." They assumed that the best religion would be monotheistic and,

increasingly over time, they assumed that it would be apolitical. These normative views built in to the concept of "a religion" had a powerful shaping effect on the beliefs, practices, and institutions of what came to be called, for example, Pueblo religion, Shinto, and Hinduism. But the non-realists go beyond this claim about "shaping," offering in its place a nominalist or idealist view of the term that, as with "the lefties" above, those described as in a religion have no properties *qua* group members. For example, Russell McCutcheon (2018) argues against the assumption that the European concept *religion* merely shaped social entities that already existed in colonized nations. He proposes instead that the use of this concept (like the use of concepts generally) "fabricates" a world, in the dual sense of manufacturing the referent and then misrepresenting it as one's discovery and not one's invention (2018, esp. 2–4, 42). As Craig Martin says (2012, 158), terms like "Christianity," "Hinduism," and "Buddhism" are rhetorically useful for mobilizing people for and against certain actions, but there is nothing in the world "to even hang [these] words on." In a book championing the non-realist position, Daniel Dubuisson (2019, 27) argues that the idea that people outside Europe practiced religions before the introduction of the European concept is "a naïve and ethnocentric illusion."

My view is that the non-realists' treatment of "a religion" is one-sided. It recognizes the human capacity to create a social world through concepts, but it ignores the contribution of structures that operate whether or not they are conceptualized. The realist view in biology is that there are structures operating in human bodies, created through evolution, discovered and not invented through human conceptualizing. The realist view in sociology is that there are structures operating in human communities analogously "waiting" to be discovered. When a population of people make their lives, there will be patterns to their activities of which they are not aware. Those patterns can become norms as people are socialized and come to learn from each other what behavior, emotions, and opinions are considered proper. As people engage in these practices together, they can generate structures among each other, either through explicit or implicit agreement or simply through prereflective imitation, structures that constitute the participants as a social entity. These social structures will give some members of the group properties and powers denied to other members, and these social properties and powers are then objective aspects of the social world, despite the fact that they are the products of human behavior. A realist social ontology of a religion will treat the relation between word and world, between "a religion" and a form of life predicated on belief in a superempirical reality, not as a unidirectional relation of fabrication, invention, or manufacturing, but rather as dialectical. That is, human beings are born into objective social structures, and the use of concepts then can help to maintain or alter those material conditions into which later generations are born. The non-realists are right to underline the role of concepts is social worlds, but social structures can exist and operate even before they are recognized.

The view proposed here is that a religion is sometimes formed reflectively by explicit agreements and sometimes formed prereflectively by unspoken imitation. In either case, the members of the group may have never heard of the concepts of *liturgy* or *religion*. Even when a religious group is formed through explicit agreement, the

participants may not have given their group a name nor see it as an instance of a larger genus or "-ism," and for this reason the non-realist objection that the participants never understood themselves to be practicing a religion is a red herring. When responding to the non-realists about "a religion," however, it is especially important to recognize that religious groups can be formed through prereflective imitation. The realist view recommended here is that, through apprenticeship or learning-without-teaching, people over time can create a form of life that could accurately be called a religion. The key element for a form of life to be religious, by my lights, recall, is that the practices involve beliefs regarding superempirical realities, that is, realities not created by empirical things. This definition includes practices based on beliefs in superempirical beings like ancestors or gods, or superempirical orders like yin/yang or karmic laws. To conceptualize realities that are superempirical, however, takes a relatively developed cognitive capacity for imagination, and to share concepts of superempirical realities requires language. No nonhuman animals have these capacities, and it follows that for much of their evolutionary history, human beings lacked religious practices as well.

How might what we now call "a religion," that is, a group engaged in practices predicated on superempirical realities, have developed through prereflective imitation? Given the historically late arrival of beliefs about superempirical realities, scholars of religion should be careful not to retroject those beliefs back onto ancient practices from which we have little material remains.[14] It is likely that early hominins, like other primates and animals generally, did not bury their dead, and this first period presumably lasted millions of years. In time, these early humans developed the practices of disposing of their dead or covering them with dirt, perhaps to avoid attracting predators, to stifle odors, or other practical reasons. This second period, too, might have lasted a million years. At some point, however, Paleolithic hominins (some say *Homo naledi* or *Homo neanderthalensis*) began not only to bury their dead but to do so in distinctive ways, for example with special objects or always facing east. It is easy to imagine that the enactment of either of these two kinds of mortuary practices, "scripted" in Wolterstorff's loose sense, could spread wordlessly through learning-without-teaching. Those participating together in mortuary practices like these would constitute a group. I expect that such practices were first performed simply because the participants felt that a certain arrangement of the body was proper or fitting or respectful.[15] Presumably, the earliest forms of these practices did not originally involve beliefs about a soul, an after-life journey, or any other superempirical realities. On my account, therefore, the practices in these first, second, and third periods would not constitute a religion.

Millennia later, people added speculation or stories so that some mortuary practices came to be understood in terms of realities whose existence did not depend on anything one could see or touch. On my account, the addition of such elements makes the social practice religious. Such practices, now integrating language about these unusual realities, would constitute a religion, and the community that engaged in those practices would be a religious group—distinguishing themselves from earlier groups that lacked beliefs in superempirical realities and from their contemporaries who operated with beliefs in alternative superempirical realities. Mortuary rites

are just one illustration of a human social practice that moved from non-religious to religious. Similarly, there were presumably millennia when those who killed an animal commemorated that event; when those who found food on plants expressed gratefulness; when those caught in a storm responded to it with activities typically used to drive away an enemy. Like the mortuary practices, such actions could be spread by prereflective imitation among those in a family or a village or a region. And like the mortuary practices, such practices would not be religious unless or until beliefs in superempirical realities were added.[16] When social practices like these began to be justified in terms of superempirical realities, however, the result would be forms of life that were religious and the people engaging in these practices would be religious groups, even if they did not themselves have the concept.

THE SOCIAL ONTOLOGY OF RELIGION

I have argued that when individuals act together, they make themselves into a social group, a new emergent entity in the world. In this way, to enact a liturgy with others is an ontologically generative activity. In addition, I have argued that social entities like these can grow to the point that members of the group do not know all the other members or even know *of* all the other members. In this way, a name like "Daoism" or even a descriptive or redescriptive phrase such as "everyone who follows this teacher," "those who revere the ancestors," or "this religion" can refer not only to a set of people but also to a social entity with emergent powers and constraints. Clearly, "a religion" can refer to a more amorphous and more inclusive social structure than would "a liturgical group." The term "religion" is even more amorphous and even more inclusive than "a religion." When "religion" is used to refer to the collection of people around the world whose practices include some superempirical element, does the term name an even larger unit, namely religious people, as a social group? Does "religion" also refer to an emergent ontological entity?

The answer is clearly no. The practices that constitute different religious forms of life aim in different directions, and there is no sense in which Buddhists and Yoruba practitioners, for instance, act *together*. There are no social structures binding Shinto practitioners with Muslims. There are no emergent powers and constraints generated by the joint activities of Jews and Navajo *qua* religious people.[17] The referent of "religion" is therefore not like that of the other terms considered in this paper. Because Buddhists, Jews, Shinto practitioners, and so on lack a shared social structure, "religion" does not name a group, even in a diffused sense; instead, it is a second-order word for sorting groups whose practices are alleged to resemble reach other. "Religion" is a category term meant to refer not to a single social group but rather to a genus of social groups, and a genus does not have emergent properties. Unlike a number of people *qua* social entity, a number of people *qua* genus does not have effects on the world. Unlike a religion, then, religion is not "a thing" (Nye 2020).

The fact that "religion" allegedly names a genus raises an interesting ontological question. What is the status of theoretical terms like this whose referent is an abstraction? Given that "religion" is a concept for sorting entities, perhaps it is here

that the previous analysis of heuristic devices is fitting. Does "religion" exist only in the eyes of the beholder?[18] As several scholars have pointed out, the term "religion" often lumps together people who did not know the term, who had not ever thought that they were in or had a religion, and who did not even have such a category in their own language. It is not uncommon that there is a lack of fit between the label "religion" and the self-understanding of those so labeled. As with "the lefties" before, is "religion" imposed on entities in the world simply out of the interests of those using the term?

This heuristic analysis of "religion" as something that only exists in the mind goes hand in hand with the non-realist position toward "a religion" described in the previous section. Brent Nongbri (2013, 20), for example, draws on arguments from Russell McCutcheon to reject the idea that "religion" refers to "a genus that contains a variety of species."[19] Nongbri argues that when a population lacks a word that corresponds to "religion," one might redescribe their culture as "religion" to be "thought-provoking," but those who use this term "must always be explicit" that religion is not really "out there" (158). Until the modern concept was developed, "there was never any 'it' there" (159). For this reason, the forms of life that are presently treated as if they are members of a common category should be "disaggregated" so they are no longer considered as similar, and scholars should not seek a replacement concept (159).[20] The heuristic analysis is also defended by Wouter Hanegraaff (2016, 581), who argues that "'religion' exists only in the human imagination." He rejects the claim that religion *qua* genus is something that exists "in the world," a claim he labels the "reification fallacy." "There is no such thing as 'religion' out there … only a wide variety of human practices, beliefs, and experiences that may or may not be categorized as such, depending on one's definition" (582). According to the heuristic analysis, "religion," although a useful tool for some people, does not track a real pattern in the world and so the term has no analytic value. Those who argue that "religion" is a heuristic device need not deny that there is an ontological difference between a group and an aggregate, nor need they deny the emergence of new powers and constraints when people act together. But they seek to reorient the study of religion to the study of "religion," that is, from the study of the referent of the term to the study of the uses of the term.[21]

The heuristic or "mind-only" analysis of religion is not persuasive. It is true that religion does not correspond to an emergent social group and, in this sense, unlike "a religion," it does not refer to an entity. But given the lack of this kind of reality, it does not follow that religion as a genus exists only in the imagination. From a realist perspective, the label for a genus refers to a pattern in the world that exists independent of that label. To see how, one can contrast (i) the claim that leopards can be sorted together with tigers and lions because, despite the evident differences, these distinct species are all capable of roaring, and (ii) the claim that pangolins can be sorted together with sloths and pelicans because, despite the evident differences, these distinct species are my favorite animals. The former claim regarding cats in the so-called "genus *Panthera*" seeks to identify a trait that exists in the members of the category, independent of the observer. The ability to roar by these particular cats (and the incompletely ossified hyoid that makes this sound possible) would

exist even if it had never been noticed or named by human beings, or even if no human beings existed at all. This is not true of the animals sorted as favorites, which is observer-dependent. To use the terms I introduced before, a world-tracking "category" is different from an arbitrary "set."

The categories that particular human beings invent and use depend on their interests. Even when a category accurately tracks a real genus or pattern in the world, there is no necessity that every human group will have cared to notice or conceptualize the features that constitute that genus. Moreover, every entity can be categorized accurately in multiple ways, just as one might also sort leopards into the categories of "spotted things" or "sub-Saharan animals." And how a genus is conceptualized is likely to evolve over time as people seek to improve it; in fact, in the nineteenth century, a criterion for membership in the *Panthera* genus was being spotted, but in the twentieth century that criterion was dropped and the shape of cranial bones was added. But none of these observations—that not all people are likely to care about a particular category, that an entity can be in several categories simultaneously, or that the definition of a category will change over time—undermine a realist analysis. The fact that concepts are human creations does not imply that the pattern in the world named by a concept is also a human creation. For this reason, the realist will not collapse (i) the discursive question about how and why human beings came to categorize animals together and (ii) the explanatory question about the anatomical and genetic traits that put an animal in that category. And this is because the category is an attempt to map a genus, and a genus does not exist only in the imagination.

The same realist analysis fits the category "religion." "Religion" allegedly names a genus, in the sense that the forms of life in this category are said to share traits that would exist and have their effects on the world whether or not people recognize the pattern. It is true that not all cultures have developed a concept for this genus.[22] It is also true that a form of life categorized as religion might also be accurately sorted into other categories such as "art," "culture," or "politics." And it is also true that the definition of "religion" has shifted from scholar to scholar. But none of these observations about the human concept (in the epistemic register) undermine the legitimacy of claims about a pattern in the world (in the ontic register). The realist position defended here is that "religion" is a socially constructed concept that sorts together forms of life that are, in fact, similar to each other.

Perhaps the strongest argument for the heuristic view is that the forms of life that have been counted as religion have shifted over time, and the boundaries of the term can therefore seem arbitrary. For instance, Edward Tylor (ET) has a substantive approach that defines "religion" in terms of beliefs in spiritual beings. William James (WJ) defines "religion" more broadly and includes not just Tylor's invisible beings but any unseen order. Émile Durkheim (ED) drops the substantive requirement and defines "religion" functionally in terms of a social need to set apart certain places, objects, or people as sacred. Paul Tillich (PT) also adopts a functional definition, treating religion as an expression of an individual's ultimate concern, whether or not that concern involves spiritual beings. And so on. What is counted as religion on one definition gets excluded by another. It therefore may seem that one cannot plausibly claim that religion corresponds to a real pattern in the world, although it

could be a rhetorical tool or heuristic device for scholars. Given the unstable history of the term, not to mention the ideological uses to which it has been put, how can the realist argue that "religion" names a genus?

My realist answer is not that one of these definitions of "religion" is closer to reality than another. One cannot show that one of them gets religion right. Nevertheless, consider each definition individually. Using superscripts to track the theorist's names, one can think of religion^{ET} as *the belief in spiritual beings*, religion^{WJ} as *the adjustment to an unseen order*, religion^{ED} as *the setting apart of sacred and profane*, and religion^{PT} as *the expression of one's ultimate concern*.[23] Despite partial overlaps, these four do not share a common object. The truth of the claims one makes about religion as a category will vary according to which definition one uses. This is the fact that encourages the heuristic interpretation. For the sake of argument, however, let's say that none of these definitions is incoherent.[24] It follows that each of them tracks a different slice of reality. From the realist perspective, each definition is successful: not one of them fails to refer to a real pattern in the world. When people disagree in how they use a term, it does not follow that the term lacks reference, but rather that one must be clear which reference it is that one wants to investigate. Here is an analogy. Some define "racism" as actions or institutions that are based on people's negative judgments toward certain races, and others define "racism" as actions or institutions that promote inequality even if the people involved lack those negative judgments (e.g., Bonilla-Silva 2018). The difference between these two approaches is significant, but it does not follow from this disagreement that ascriptions of "racism" are arbitrary, that the term "racism" has no analytic value, or that one should only study those who speak of racism and not racism itself.

At issue in this disagreement between a heuristic and a realist account of "religion" is whether all human concepts cut the world up as if, like cookie dough, the world has no structure, or whether, by contrast, some human concepts are tools that track patterns in the world that exist independent of those concepts. My view is that terms like "a liturgical group" or "a religion" correspond to real social entities having effects on the world. A term like "religion," by contrast, corresponds not to a social entity but rather to a genus of social entities. Although each of the groups sorted together in this pattern has emergent properties, the genus as a whole does not. Nevertheless, because the forms of life in this category resemble each other, the genus exists in the world whether or not it is noted or named. In short, then, religion is not simply a product of how social life is described, but turns upon the character of how people live together.

NOTES

1. Wolterstorff (2018: 61) notes in passing that he is a realist about groups, although he has no argument for this view that the reductionist would find persuasive. I am also a realist about groups without an argument, but I judge that the case for social realism will turn not on one decisive argument against reductionism but rather on the ability of realists to articulate the advantages of the realist perspective without begging the question. That is the larger aim of this chapter.

2. For a valuable discussion of the gap between theological and critical studies of religion and the benefits of putting these two academic camps into conversation with each other, see William Wood (2021, especially ch. 13).
3. It is worth keeping in mind that even when it is accurate to say that a group of people believes something, it does not follow that every member of the group believes it. Andrew Chignell (2021) has an illuminating discussion of how a "liturgical turn" in philosophy of religion can change the study of religious beliefs.
4. The classic philosophical texts in social ontology largely assume realism about groups and then seek to identify the relations that constitute grouphood. In religious studies and the social sciences, however, genealogical critiques of "religion" as a social kind and debates about explanatory reductionism challenge the assumption that "a religion" names something real in the world. In previous works, I argued negatively that the non-realist position on "religion" is flawed; in this chapter, I seek to contribute to a positive account of what it means to speak of a religion as a real entity.
5. Those who study liturgies or rituals should not elide this distinction between activities scripted in the strict sense that they follow written directions and activities merely "scripted" in the loose sense of following unwritten conventions, because the use of a written script makes possible cognitive and social effects otherwise lacking. Just as reading a story to an audience differs from telling a story to an audience, even when it is the same story, the use of a text provides a public reference that can be used to check correct performance and it provides a greater ability to coordinate the participation of multiple group members.
6. There is a broader sense of "liturgy," etymologically based but now archaic, as *contributions to the polis* or *service to the public*. A contemporary contribution to the polis or service to the public would include actions that would no longer be called "liturgical," such as paying taxes, although some scholars nevertheless want to use "liturgy" in this broader sense to refer to leading a ritually informed life even outside formal rituals. There is also a narrower sense of "liturgy" that restricts it to religious rituals that are theistic, or even to theistic rituals of worship. These broader and narrower senses appeal to some religious philosophers, although they would make interdisciplinary conversations with others in ritual studies harder.
7. In Schilbrack 2013, I introduced the concept of *superempirical* to distinguish religious from non-religious practices. The requirement of connecting participants to such a reality is not sufficient to consider a social practice religious, however, because mathematical or logical truths, for instance, would also be superempirical. In Schilbrack 2018b, I therefore made this concept the substantive "anchor" of a polythetic or family resemblance definition. That is, I propose that the best definition of "religion" sees it as *always* involving a belief in superempirical realities, and *typically* involving benefits for participants, ethical norms, worship or other kinds of rituals, and a "church" or some other bounded community. If the neologism "superempirical" seems awkward and one prefers to use "supernatural" or "superhuman" in one's definition, that would not change the argument of this paper, nor undermine the proposed nesting of the philosophical study of liturgies within ritual studies.

8. As I argue in the next section, they would likely be members of a larger group, their religion.
9. I am discussing Lewes's distinction in terms of people, but if emergent properties are real, then they will be found throughout the natural world. The British emergentists' favorite example was to contrast the mass of hydrogen and oxygen atoms with the emergent solvent power of those same atoms when they are combined into molecules of water. The only book-length treatment of religion as an emergent entity I know is Cassell (2015).
10. I borrow the definition of *social structure* as "a set of relations among social positions and social constructs" from Porpora (2015, ch. 4).
11. Wolterstorff's (2018: 21) treatment of what constitutes *a social practice* is similar. He distinguishes between "the happenstance of a number of [individual] people being in the habit of doing things of the same sort in the same of way" and the requirement that the participants are woven together as they "observe how others perform the actions in question, exchange advice, discuss better and worse ways of engaging in the practice, imitate others, and so forth."
12. The variety of social behavior requires us to distinguish between (i) group activities that are *directly* concerned with superempirical realities (such as praying to God, performing a sacrifice in a temple, meditating while visualizing a deity that inspires compassion) and (ii) group activities that support those first activities and are therefore only *indirectly* concerned with superempirical realities (such as knocking on doors to invite others to join a religious activity, a softball game played to increase the sense of fellowship within the group, or a political party founded on the moral principles said to be taught in the religious practices). The group of people involved in the first set of activities is paradigmatically a religious group. This is true even of the members who are participating for reasons not related to the superempirical reality (for example, the recalcitrant child brought to the activity by parents or the individual who participates only to make business connections). That is, a person who joins a collective religious activity is part of that religious group notwithstanding their personal motivations. If a group that engages in the first activities also engages in the second, then identifying the softball team or the political party as a religious group may be apt, but the difference between these two activities makes the nature of the second group ambiguous. The members might connect the supporting activities to those directly related to the superempirical reality, for example, by praying before the softball game or the political convention, and one might understand all one's activities as religious. But this ambiguity becomes more difficult when those doing the supporting activity are not members of the first group, as when atheists join the softball team or the political party. In these cases, the supporting activities and the groups that do them might be religious for some but not for others.
13. For a non-realist "conferralist" account of gender and racial categories, see Ásta (2018).
14. King (2007) is especially good on this point, insisting that we typically lack enough context to know whether, for example, cave art was symbolic, let alone whether it was symbolic of religious themes.

15. Ronald Grimes (2010: 16–17) describes an experiment in which his students provided a guitar, a gold ring, a ceramic pitcher, a plastic bear, and other objects, and he asked them to arrange the cache of things as they saw fit. Lacking any plan but illustrating the agency of inert objects, the students arranged and rearranged the objects until their placement felt right. People can care about and act with regard to what they consider the propriety of things without articulating a theory, story, or justification; as Grimes puts it, acting "below the threshold of reflection."
16. The notion that some empirical effects like diseases, harvests, or storms require superempirical causes seems to be a "cognitive default" for human beings, that is, easy to think and hard not to think (Wildman 2017). It may be worth emphasizing that, unlike the proposals of some phenomenologists of religion, the practice-centered approach I use here does not assume that a religion must involve some distinctive emotion or experience (for example, awe).
17. Of course, groups that are interreligious can be created when members of distinct religions act together, for example in a joint ritual. In Schilbrack 2019, I propose a distinction between the syncretism that would not generate an interreligious group and the "mutual interrituality" that would.
18. For example, Daniel Boyarin (2017, 25) defends what he calls a "nominalist view," according to which religion "only exists for this those humans for which it has been named." On this view, when one holds that religion exists where the term itself is not known, then it exists for the one who uses the term but not for those so described.
19. One sometimes sees the objection that to consider "religion" a genus is to hold that the term is "universally applicable … in every culture across time and throughout history" (Nongbri 2013, 158), or that it implies that human beings are naturally, necessarily, or inherently religious (McCutcheon 2018, 115). But to say that a category applies to more than one culture need not suggest that it applies to all of them, and, given my definition, there have been human cultures that are not religious.
20. Citing Nongbri, Carlin Barton and Daniel Boyarin (2016) agree: we should "imagine no religion" in antiquity.
21. Russell McCutcheon has long called for this shift (most recently, 2018: 18, 23); Nongbri seconds this idea (2013: 155). In Schilbrack 2018a, I argue against it.
22. It is easy to see why a people would not develop a term for "religion" as a genus until they had some experience with what (in hindsight) would be called multiple religious forms of life. Although most of the critics of "religion" treat the term as an invention of modernity, Barton and Boyarin (2016) show that the Latin *religio* was used to refer to a genus since at least the second century.
23. I am emphasizing how different these definitions are, but in reality the practices on which they focus are not wholly unrelated. For example, since a pantheon of spiritual beings would be unseen order, the extension of James's definition includes that of Tylor's. In Schilbrack 2013, I propose a way to combine multiple definitions into a composite one.

24. I add this caveat because part of the process of developing a hypothesis will be investigating whether the concepts within it are coherent, and it is possible that a term is defined in such a way that it has no reference ("phlogiston," "witch") or even in such a way that they could have no reference ("round square," "married bachelor").

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PART THREE

Materiality and Religiosity

CHAPTER NINE

Material Spirituality and the Expressive Nature of Liturgy

NEAL DEROO

In philosophy of religion circles, it is common to think of "liturgy" or the sacramental as that which uniquely combines the religious and the material: *qua* embodied performance, liturgy ensures that religion is not merely cognitive or epistemic but is necessarily a material practice. But this characterization seems to work only if we assume a sharp initial distinction between "religious" and "material." For it is only if materiality and religion are assumed to be two different things that a given phenomenon's being both religious and material can be unique and worth remarking on.

In this chapter, I will draw on the phenomenological tradition to challenge this assumption by arguing for an expressive understanding of the relationship between liturgy and religion. Once "religion" is further broken down to some of its constitutive phenomenological elements (spirituality, religiosity, religious traditions/institutions [*Stiftungen*] and religious phenomena), we can see several different ways we could understand the relationship between religion and liturgy, and none of them equate liturgy simply with the material embodiment of religion or religious practice. As such, we will see the need for an expressive account of the relationship between liturgy and religion that will cause us to rethink at least one, and perhaps both, of those terms.

To do this, I will begin by briefly explaining phenomenology's accounts of both expression and spirit to make clear the claim that all phenomena are expressive of material spirituality. Having distinguished between "spirit" and religion, I will then clarify the relation between them to argue for several different ways in which liturgy could be religiously expressive, and therefore distinguish between seven different potential understandings of "liturgy" or "liturgical practice," each of which offers a slightly different account of the connection between liturgy and religion. Then, we will use the possibility of "everyday" liturgies (found in James K.A. Smith, Richard Kearney, and others) to show that these differing accounts of the liturgy–religion

relationship entail a redefinition either of liturgy or of religion. Either way, thinking liturgy simply as the embodiment or materialization of the religious is insufficient once the expressive nature of liturgy is accounted for.

THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL ACCOUNT OF EXPRESSION

I will begin, then, with a (hopefully brief) clarification of my key terms. The first of these is "expression." Expression is understood, phenomenologically, as the phenomenal unity between asymmetrical elements, such that I "live through" A so as to "live in" B (Husserl 2000, 193). I do not initially experience a distinction between A and B, but I am able to acknowledge the difference in later reflection. The most common example of expression to help clarify this definition is in language use: I use a certain phoneme ("dog") to convey a particular sense or meaning. But, in the hearing of the word "dog," most people do not pay attention, dwell on, or "live in" the perception of the sound "dog," but rather "live through" that sound so as to "live in" the meaning. This does not negate the distinction between them (the phoneme "dog" can refer to other meanings, such as a promiscuous young man, and the meaning can be communicated by other phonemes, such as "canine," "chien," and so on), but simply shows that when the phoneme is functioning expressively, we pay little attention to the perceptual qualities of the phoneme itself, and rather seem to perceive the meaning directly.

The "phenomenal unity" of expression, then, is a particular kind of unity. We can define it as one that relates A and B to each other in a way that is constitutive of both A and B without conflating them. This is to say, in relation to our earlier example, that the phoneme cannot be understood, *qua* phoneme, without acknowledging that it is referring to some meaning or other. The sound "dog" is altered in an essential way by its expressive connection to a meaning. Similarly, the meaning is in some important way altered by the various phonemes used to express it, insofar as those phonemes have various connotations that come to attach to the meaning itself, such that "dog" does not mean simply a scientific designation of a genus, but also a domesticated animal for whom people have certain affections, such as "man's best friend."

The movement between constitution ("constitutive of A and B") and alteration (A is altered by its relation to B) in the last paragraph is not accidental. The constitution of A and B happens through the relationship between them, and that relationship is nothing other than a series of uses or enactments of that relation. This is like the "differential relation" found in calculus, whereby the differential equation marks or indicates the relation that determines the functions and their derivatives, a relation that is premised on an (infinitesimal) alteration or change (Deleuze 1994; D. Smith 2006). Similarly, linguistics tells us that the rules of language use are governed by the actual uses of language,[1] even as those uses of language are themselves obviously governed by the "rules" of language. Hence, the relation between them is *mutually* constitutive, although still asymmetrical: insofar as a rule is governing a particular instance of language use, the rule is "lived through" so that people can "live in"

the linguistic utterance; that this can be reversed—that actual uses of language can be "lived through" so as to establish the changing "rules" of language[2]—does not negate the asymmetrical nature of the relation. The mutually altering character of the relation we are deeming here a "phenomenal unity" ensures that the asymmetry of the elements involved in the relation is a mutual asymmetry. Hence, when we say that expression is the phenomenal unity between (mutually) asymmetrical elements, we necessarily invoke a differential relation of constitution-by-alteration similar to that at work in the infinitesimal calculus.[3]

THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL ACCOUNT OF SPIRIT

The next key term in need of definition is "spirit." This is a translation of the German *Geist*, which can also be translated by words such as "mind," "intellect," or "psyche." These other resonances are included in the "sense" of *Geist* in ways that are essential to its meaning and function. In phenomenology,[4] this broader resonance of "spirit" is summarized most succinctly in Husserl's definition of spirit as a "vital presentiment" (Husserl 1970, 275). Its "vitality" means that spirit is a dynamic force, shaping us in our orientation to and in the world, while also being affected by us (as we will return to in a moment). The "presentiment" element of the definition places spirit at the very core of Husserl's epistemology of intuition and fulfillment. Husserl distinguishes between two distinct types of intuition that must work together for fulfillment: *clarifying* intuitions narrow the range of possibilities via the horizon of expectations out of which we operate so that the intended object can coincide with the *confirming-fulfilling* intuition. Both types are necessary for "the merely expected object [to be] identified with the actually arriving object, as fulfilling the expectation" (Husserl 2001, 79). Presentiment is the work of clarifying intuitions, and invoking it here gives spirit a key role in shaping our intuitive engagement with the world.

In calling spirit a "vital presentiment," then, Husserl is saying that spirit is an active, dynamic force that shapes how we bring the world to intuition. One could say that it shapes our imagination (Smith 2009a), our social imaginary (Taylor 2003), or our plausibility structures (Taylor 2007) in such a way as to make experience possible, although we may not be consciously aware of it even as we are being guided by it. Spirit, then, is not simply a subjective attitude or action, but is a force that drives us in and through the ways it is "embodied" in the environment of the lifeworld (Husserl 2008, 427).[5] "Houses, bridges, tools, works of art, and so on" (Husserl 1959, 151) are "spiritual products" (Husserl 1970, 270), insofar as they have a "spiritual" meaningfulness (Husserl 1997, 111, 8, 384ff., 408ff.; see also Husserl 1952, 236ff.), that is, "not externally associated, but internally fused within as a meaning belonging to [the material object] and as expressed in it" (Husserl 1997, 112; Pulkkinnen 2013, 125). But we must remember that this expressive relation is not unidirectional: "the attitude [in which spiritual meaning is seen] does not itself constitute the spiritual entity" for "the material-spiritual is already preconstituted, prethematic, pregiven" (Husserl 1989, 238 n.1; see also Pulkkinnen 2013, 127). Qua expressive (and therefore mutually constitutive), spirit

is always the material-spiritual, not simply as the incarnation of the immaterial in the material, but as the differential relation that constitutes its relata in and through their relation.

MATERIAL-SPIRITUAL EXPRESSION

Spirit, then, is the "meaningfulness" of the material world itself, a meaningfulness that is necessarily expressed through the material. But this "expression" does not leave either the meaning or its expressions unaltered—rather, both spirit and material are constituted in and out of this expressive relation between them. And, as such, the notion of spirit as "meaning" must be understood, as we have seen, in the sense of orientation or directedness within the world,[6] a directedness that shapes both subjects and the world in particular ways (Ferrari 2018). This directedness, while intrasubjectively motivating (Husserl 1970, 273),[7] is communally constituted: sense acts as a kind of "pre-culture" (Merleau-Ponty 2003b, 176) or background field (Merleau-Ponty 2003a) that provides the foundation for distinct acts or phenomena. This "pre-culture" exists as *Stiftungen*[8] (Barbaras 2004, 58), that is, as cultural institutions (that are themselves traditions, with a history and heritage) such as painting (Merleau-Ponty 1964a), language (Merleau-Ponty 1964b), the justice system (Derrida 1992), "food, shelter, work, erotic relations or relations to the dead" (Henry 2013, xv), the "higher forms of culture such as art, ethics or religion" (Henry 2013, 47), and so on. We cannot help but draw on these "institutions" when we are doing things: our acts of labor draw, inevitably, on contemporary mores for both labor relations and the industry in which we work (in my case, the university); eating lunch draws on the institutions of "cuisine" and social interaction; talking with a friend draws on the institutions of language (more specifically, the language or sublanguage [slang, regional dialect, etc.] we are speaking), social interaction, ethics, and so on.

Because every distinct phenomenon necessarily draws on these institutions for its sense, and these institutions themselves are the "mode of being" (Barbaras 2004, 58) of the "pre-cultural" field of sense-as-directedness that is a primary expression of the material-spiritual, we can see that every phenomenon is the expression of the material-spiritual background in which it takes place. Every phenomenon is therefore thoroughly material-spiritual, through and through. There is no phenomenon that is not always, inherently, the material-spiritual expression of sense.

SPIRITUALITY AND RELIGION

If this is true, however, then there is nothing particularly unique about being a phenomenon that materially incarnates spirituality. As such, the notion that liturgy is unique because it is an embodied spiritual practice is, at best, ambiguous and, at worst, wholly banal (if not tautologous). But so far we have been talking of liturgy as embodied *religious* practice, not embodied spiritual practice. And given the definition of "spirit" we are using here, the traditional conflation between spiritual and religious clearly does not apply here, and therefore the claim that all

phenomena are spiritually expressive says nothing to our initial claim of liturgy as embodied religious practice. While the first part of this objection is almost certainly true, the distinction opened up between spirituality and religion does open up a new set of problems or issues that remain germane to our understanding of liturgy as embodied religious practice. For once we concede that spirituality and religion are not interchangeable, we must be careful to establish the relationship between them, especially given the foundational importance we have been ascribing to spirituality so far.

Thankfully, we have the resources to begin to clarify this relationship in what we have already discussed. For we have already distinguished four distinct "moments" in any phenomenological analysis of religion:[9] there is the concrete religious phenomenon from which our analysis might be said to begin (a particular doctrine, object, or ritual); there is the religious *Stiftung* which that phenomenon is drawing on, and which helps constitute its "sense" (for example, the "sense" of the wine and bread is different—not just conceptually, but in terms of the role it plays in the life of the church, the significance of its ritual performance, the materials used—in the Catholic Eucharist than in the Calvinist Lord's Supper); there is religiosity, as the expression of spirit in a religious (rather than an aesthetic, ethical) way, and which helps constitute the "sense" of the religious institution/tradition (*qua religious*); and there is spirituality, which helps constitute the sense of "the religious."

For our purposes, the first thing to glean from this initial clarification of the relationship between religion and spirituality is the expressive nature of that relationship. Once this is noted, we must clarify more precisely what we mean by "religion": do we mean religiosity, the impulse to express spirit religiously (rather than in some other way), which therefore marks the sense of the religious? Do we mean religious institutions, which is how the religious impulse is expressed in the world? Do we mean concrete religious phenomena, which is how those religious institutions are expressed? Obviously, the question of how we define religion is a much bigger question than can be dealt with here. Here, I simply want to point out that one's starting point will inevitably shape the sense one attributes to religion: if I begin by focusing on phenomena, I might be inclined to consider "religious" anything that plays a significant role within a "religious tradition"; if I begin by focusing on religious traditions, I might be inclined to consider "religious" that which is both present in, and perhaps determinative of, the various religious traditions; and so on.[10]

Note that, in these cases, I seek to understand the sense of religion on the basis of how that sense arises out of its expressions: I seek to know what its expressions can tell us about religion. Viewed through the lens of material-spiritual expression, we can see that this type of maneuver is correct, but perhaps incomplete. It seems to treat expression as a one-way street, perhaps more akin to manifestation: the sense of religion shows itself in its various (phenomenal and traditional) manifestations. This is consistent with our "lived experience" of expression, in which we "live through" A in order to "live in" B. In this case, that would mean that we live through the phenomena and traditions so as to live in the religious sense contained therein. But, as we have seen, this is only part of the puzzle of expression, which we have

shown to be *mutually* asymmetrical (it is equally the case that B can be a way to "live in" the "sense" of A) because the relation of expression is mutually constitutive. While it is certainly correct to look for the meaning of religion in how it shows itself in religious phenomena and traditions, we must also look for how the religious phenomena and traditions themselves *alter* the meaning of religion.

It seems to me that the latter is, at least in part, what motivates the turn to "material religion."[11] The "material turn in religion" (Schilbrack 2019) is not simply a case of looking at the material *manifestations* of religion (rather than simply at its ideas or epistemic contents),[12] but rather helps us recognize that what religion is—its very sense or meaning—depends on its various *expressions*. Religion does not just "show up" in material conditions, it is constituted by and within those material conditions (even as it also helps to constitute those conditions). This enables us to ask the question: do we live through material practices so as to live in the sense of religion, or do we live through the sense of religion so as to live in the material practices? Historically, Protestantism would generally be understood as affirming the first suggestion, while Catholicism, perhaps, might be taken to lean more toward the second.[13] In terms of liturgy, this opens the question of whether liturgy is the means by which we engage with or uncover the sense of religion, or is the performance of the liturgy the "point," and religion merely a means to get us there? If one thinks religion is primarily about teaching ethical behavior, for example, one might argue that the doctrines, belief systems, and so on are there simply to facilitate certain actions and behaviors, the performance of which is both the liturgical structure of the religion and its telos.

DIFFERENT SENSES OF LITURGY

Understood expressively, liturgy therefore serves a dual purpose: it manifests the sense of religion in and to the world, even as it also alters and constitutes the sense of religion through its performance. But this dual purpose, of course, presumes that liturgy is expressive of religion, in some way. And we can distinguish several distinct accounts of liturgy that could emerge from this assumption. On the one hand, liturgy can be construed more narrowly as the phenomena of a particular religious tradition that express that tradition in and through particular formalized[14] rites of worship (liturgy 1); on the other hand, liturgy can be taken to refer to any religiously expressive phenomenon (liturgy 2).

The first understanding of liturgy can, in turn, be understood in at least three ways: *every* phenomenon that is part of formalized religious worship rituals can be taken as liturgical, including, for example, the sermon in Reformed Christian worship services, which is construed by some as bearing the word of God (e.g., Barth 1991), and therefore part of God's response to us in the dialogical structure of the worship service (liturgy 1a); second, liturgy can refer to those phenomena within a religious worship service that have a uniquely artistic or aesthetic element to them—music is liturgical, and creative or poetic language is liturgical, but sermons would not be, on this account (liturgy 1b); third, liturgy can refer to those phenomena within a religious worship service that have a participatory element to them,[15] that

is, those in which the audience is taken up as part of the "action" of the service—responsive readings, communal prayers, and singing are liturgical, on this account, but sermons, solos, and the music played during the offering are not (liturgy 1c).[16]

The second understanding of liturgy can also be understood in multiple senses, depending on one's understanding of religion. Hence, liturgy can refer to any phenomenon that expresses a religious tradition (liturgy 2a); any practice that expresses religiosity (liturgy 2b); or, if one conflates spirituality and religion, liturgy can refer to any practice that expresses *spirituality* (liturgy 2c).

These different understandings of liturgy need not be mutually exclusive, at least in terms of what is included under each one: if I find *all* phenomena within a formalized religious ritual or worship to be liturgical (1a), I will obviously also find its more aesthetic (1b) and participatory phenomena (1c) to be liturgical as well. Similarly, if I find all religiously expressive phenomena to be liturgical (liturgy 2), I will certainly find the phenomena within a religious worship ritual (liturgy 1) to also be liturgical. In a sense, the differences between these understandings of liturgy concern a narrower or wider scope, more than mutually exclusive understandings.

But in another sense, and in part because of their expressive nature, these different understandings of scope inform, imply, and constitute different "senses" of liturgy. Liturgy 1 (in all its variants) presumes that liturgy is confined to formalized rites of worship: where liturgy is, there is worship. Liturgy 1a would also say "and where formalized worship is, there is liturgy," and it therefore constitutes liturgy and formalized worship as wholly overlapping regions: formalized worship is liturgical, and liturgy is formalized worship. Liturgy 1b and liturgy 1c, on the other hand, constitute liturgy as requiring some other essential element, in addition to being part of formalized worship: either some type of purposeful artistry (liturgy 1b) or some communal participation (liturgy 1c). As such, the latter two types suggest liturgy is essentially artistic or communally participatory, as well as essentially part of formalized ritual worship. In each of these two cases, the sense of liturgy is not exclusively religious, but requires something else, in addition to religious worship rituals, to be liturgical. As such, liturgy is not *simply* embodied religious practice, but something else in addition to that, and liturgy cannot therefore be understood simply as the concrete manifestation of religious practice. Of course, this is the case also in liturgy 1a. For while all formalized ritual religious worship is liturgical on this understanding of liturgy, this does not yet entail that all religion, or all religious practice, is contained in the set of formalized religious worship rituals. As such, on the liturgy 1 understanding, liturgy is not simply the manifestation of religion in concrete, material practices, and therefore liturgy is not noteworthy simply for being the site where religion and materiality meet (although, perhaps, it could be said to be the site where religion and materiality meet in a unique way, or where religion and certain types of materiality meet in unique ways).

Opening this minimal gap between liturgy and embodied religious practice does not obviate the centrality of religion for liturgy, however. For liturgy 1, liturgy must, by necessity, be religious, even if religious practice need not be liturgical. This also holds for liturgy 2: if liturgy refers to any religiously expressive phenomenon, liturgy remains essentially religious, and non-religious liturgies are ruled out, by definition.

Yet there are some people who want to speak of non-religious liturgies. In many low liturgy 1 Protestant churches, in fact, the notion of liturgy has become of interest recently precisely because of the importance of non-religious liturgies in forming our (religious and spiritual) identity. James K.A. Smith's work, especially in his Cultural Liturgies trilogy (Smith 2009a, 2013, 2017), has been immensely influential in this regard. Carefully describing the spiritual[17] power of such "cultural liturgies" as going to the mall (Smith 2009a, 19–23), using one's iPhone (Smith 2013, 142–3), and going to a football match (Smith 2009a, 105–9), Smith argues that liturgies are not just found in churches and "religious institutions," but are fairly ubiquitous throughout our lives. As such, the idea of liturgies that are, at the least, not ritually religious (in the liturgy 1 sense), and perhaps not even religious at all (in the liturgy 2 sense), is gaining credibility in (certain) Protestant circles.

But in what sense can we speak of non-religious liturgies, if all our definitions of liturgy make religion a necessary, although not sufficient, condition of something being liturgical? This is not, I would argue, a wholly ambiguous use of the term liturgy, but concerns precisely the relationship between religion and spirituality that is at stake in our expressive understanding of liturgy. This does not simply affect our understanding of liturgy as liturgy 2c, but affects the whole of our understanding of liturgy as both liturgy 1 and liturgy 2, which we can see if we look at the changing sense of liturgy in 2a and 2b. For liturgy 2a, every religious phenomenon is considered liturgical—but is so insofar as it expresses the religious *tradition* and not insofar as it directly expresses divinity, the sacred, or some connection to them. Of course, the tradition itself is an expression of religiosity, which is an expression of spirituality, so it is possible (and perhaps to be expected, at least if one is an adherent of said tradition) that the tradition itself is the connection to and expression of divinity or the sacred. That is, we need not posit that the tradition, *qua Stiftung*, is inherently at odds with an expression of divinity, the sacred, the "Spirit of God," and so on, as if its being materially located has to mean that it cannot be an expression of God.[18] But nor should we conflate those two entirely, either: no *Stiftung* is the Spirit of God, the divine, the sacred, and so on, although a *Stiftung* may be expressive of such a thing in its own way. The nature of the relationship between *Stiftungen* and divinity, the sacred, and so on must be clearly established (and my hope is that expression can help clarify this),[19] precisely because there must also be a distinction between them. This is significant insofar as it entails that, for liturgy 2a, something is liturgical insofar as it expresses the tradition and not insofar as it expresses the divine: on this account of what liturgy is, the Eucharist, for example, would be liturgical because it expresses *Catholicism*, and not because it expresses *God*. It is the Catholicism that makes it liturgical and the connection to God is, presumably, a necessary, although not yet sufficient, element of its being Catholic. Hence, a gap is opened up between liturgy, *qua* liturgy, and an expression of divinity, the sacred, and so on: the latter may be a necessary condition (at one step removed) of something being liturgical, but it is not sufficient for the definition.

Such an understanding may seem counterintuitive to religious practitioners: most Catholics would, I think, claim the Eucharist is significant as an expression of God (the body and blood of Christ), and not as an expression of Catholicism. Yet

this minimal gap between liturgy and an expression of the divine/sacred remains in liturgy 2b as well. When liturgy is defined as being expressive of religiosity (that is, of the religious mode of expressing spirit, rather than some other mode such as the aesthetic or the ethical) rather than of a religious tradition, liturgy is understood as anything that expresses the desire to make the spiritual driving force of our lives our focus (cognitively or otherwise).[20] Because this expression cannot but be done via some religious *Stiftung* or other, liturgy 2b remains rooted in tradition, but it posits the task of liturgy, not to be in its expression of some particular tradition, but in its expression of the desire to bring the spiritual to our attention (although, again, not only cognitively: we can "attend" to the religious as much through embodied practice as through cognitive assent—the latter of which, to be fair, is itself a type of embodied practice). As such, it closes the gap somewhat between liturgy and an expression of divinity or the sacred, but the gap remains. For it is still only a particular type of expression (religious) that counts as liturgical, and not all expressions of the divine. As such, here too expressing the divine may be a necessary condition of something being liturgical, but it is not sufficient. In liturgy 2a and 2b, therefore, liturgy seems to cover the range of embodied religious practice (if everything that expresses religiosity is liturgical, then it seems all "religious phenomena" are liturgical), but only insofar as embodied religious practice remains distinguished from expressions of the divine.

Addressing an objection here will help us understand the slippage at work in our discussion of liturgy as expressive, and so shed light on why some people would want to talk of "non-religious" liturgies, "cultural liturgies," or "everyday liturgies." Some readers may have noticed a certain slippage or ambiguity between "an expression of the divine" and "an expression of the spiritual" in the preceding analysis. The two should not be conflated: we have clearly defined spirituality in essential relation to materiality, both as constitutive of materiality and as constituted by it, and at least some religious traditions (including my own Reformed Christian background) would no doubt shy away from thinking of the divine as constituted by its relations with materiality. For religious/theological reasons, at least, we must maintain the distinction between the divine and the spiritual.

But this theological distinction need not be a functional distinction in terms of our *experience* of the divine, the spiritual, and so on. For in light of our analyses to this point, we might wonder how we would experience the divine, how our experience would be affected by the divine: Is the divine a phenomenon we encounter? A tradition we live in? My contention—one rooted in the Reformed background I share with James K.A. Smith—is that our primary encounter with the divine is a spiritual encounter: the divine is that which drives (or ought to drive) the whole of our lives, the fundamental impulse (or ultimate "love"; cf. Smith 2016) shaping everything we do.[21] Not every spiritual impulse is necessarily divine, but the divine is encountered (primarily) as a spiritual impulse that is expressed in every part of our lives, not simply the religious ones.

Hence, the "divine" and the "spiritual" are not interchangeable any more than "religion" and the "spiritual" are interchangeable. But if we want to speak of the breadth of our experience of the divine, we must speak on the level of spiritual

(and not merely religious) analysis. In this regard, thinking of liturgy as spiritually expressive (liturgy 2c) is not as atypical or strange as we might think: insofar as liturgy is taken to put us in contact with some primordial force that drives our lives,[22] it seems to presume something closer to the "spiritual" understanding of liturgy. Through a *certain kind of* conflation of religion (taken here in the sense of "divine action") and spirituality, then, it is possible to conceive of liturgy as every spiritually expressive practice. But this closing of the gap between liturgy and an experience of the divine comes at the expense of sundering entirely the necessary connection between religion (conceived as a human expression of spirituality) and liturgy: if every spiritually expressive phenomenon is a liturgical phenomenon, and if religion is only one of many possible ways that humans express spirituality, then it is necessarily the case that there will be non-religious liturgies.

ON THE SIGNIFICANCE OF "EVERYDAY LITURGIES"

Do we then move past liturgy 2c (in which the spiritual is conflated with religion) toward a new account of liturgy, liturgy 3, in which liturgy is understood as referring to all spiritually expressive phenomena, and not only to religiously expressive ones? Perhaps, although not necessarily. The account of religion at work in liturgy 2c requires something like the notion of spirituality as the deepest motivating impulse of human living. At the same time, it keeps open the possibility that such spirituality can be expressed in ways—going to the mall, watching football—that most people would not consider religious. As such, it either gives us a new sense of liturgy (leading to a "new" definition of liturgy as liturgy 3) or it gives us a new sense of religion. Or, perhaps, it does both.

To investigate which of these options is at play here, we must begin by noting that this account of liturgy as spiritually expressive makes liturgy ubiquitous. This ubiquity of everyday liturgies, in turn, threatens to make the term "liturgy" almost entirely meaningless: if liturgy refers to every spiritually expressive phenomenon, and if every phenomenon is spiritually expressive, then every phenomenon is liturgical. And if *everything* is liturgical, then perhaps *nothing* is liturgical—at least if we understand "liturgical" to refer to a subset of some phenomena vis-à-vis others. When we understand liturgy in the sense of spiritually expressive phenomena (either as liturgy 2c or as liturgy 3), then we seem to be unable to "delineate its boundaries" in any substantive sense.[23] But that this understanding of liturgy cannot help us separate liturgical things from non-liturgical things does not need to imply that it cannot help us do anything. At the least, it distinguishes phenomena from "bare facts," revealing the latter to be simply higher-order phenomena requiring certain types of abstraction (or reflection, methodology, etc.) to generate a material-spiritual concept that proves to have some analytic usefulness in certain contexts, but certainly does not indicate a "more basic truth" of the way "things are." That is, this understanding of liturgy helps us recognize, precisely, that *everything* is liturgical (which is to say, in the context of liturgy 2c/3, that everything is spiritually expressive). And if every phenomenon is liturgical, the question of liturgical analysis becomes not "is this liturgical?," but rather "what liturgy is this expressing?" Such

a question includes the question "what spirit is this expressing?," but also extends beyond that to include "what mode of spiritual expression (religion, art, ethics, cuisine, etc.) is (most) operative in this liturgy?," "what *Stiftung* is expressed through this liturgy?," and so on. While deeming phenomena "liturgical" might not distinguish them as one type of phenomena distinct from other types of phenomena, therefore, it does remind us at least that "phenomena are ontological entanglement" and do not simply "mark the epistemological inseparability of 'observer' and 'observed'" (Barad 2007, 333). This is, perhaps, just to say that it reminds us that phenomena are inherently *expressive*, and that this, in its turn, entails a certain relationship (but also distinction—a differential relation) between spirit, modes of its expression, *Stiftungen*, and concrete phenomena. Considering phenomena to be liturgical, then, is to acknowledge that they are deeply embedded in webs of relationship that not only give them meaning, but inscribe them *as* meaning, in their very materiality.[24]

But if this account of liturgy as spiritually expressive phenomena offers us a distinct account of liturgy (either as liturgy 2c or as liturgy 3), how is it to be distinguished from other accounts of liturgy that are simply operating with a different account of religion? For example, I think it is fair to question whether Smith's account of everyday liturgies is, in fact, an account of liturgy 2c at all, let alone of liturgy 3. It is clear that Smith thinks things are liturgical that we would not normally consider "religious," but it is not clear whether this is because he is using liturgy in the sense of liturgy 2c (or 3), or rather if he is using liturgy in the sense of liturgy 2a and pushing us to consider consumerism, individualism, and the "military-entertainment complex" (Smith 2009a, 103–10) as *religious* traditions expressed in the (religious) phenomena of going to the mall, using one's iPhone, and watching a football match, respectively. That is, does Smith's work ask us to reconsider what we mean by "liturgy" or what we mean by "religion"? Indeed, the more positively formative elements of his work (the last chapters of J. Smith 2006 and Smith 2009a) may, in fact, cause us to wonder whether he isn't working with an account of liturgy that is actually closer to liturgy 1, and that he wants us to think of the mall, the iPhone, and the football match, not simply as "religious phenomena" but as formalized worship rituals.[25] If this latter is the case, then it is not our understanding of liturgy that is being challenged in Smith's work, it is our understandings of religion and worship. As such, his account of liturgy would not give us a distinct sense of liturgy (as liturgy 2c or as liturgy 3), but a recognizable account of liturgy (as liturgy 2a, perhaps, or liturgy 1a or 1c) with a distinct sense of "religion" and/or "worship."

CONCLUSION

Conceiving of liturgy as referring to any spiritually expressive phenomenon *could*, therefore, give us a new sense of liturgy (liturgy 2c or liturgy 3), or it could simply be giving us a new sense of religion and worship. Our cursory treatment of Smith's work did not afford us the opportunity to determine which of those was operative in his case. But the purpose of this paper was not to properly evaluate Smith's use of liturgy, nor even to articulate and clarify it. For Smith is not the only contemporary thinker who seems to be pushing for a more expansive understanding of the liturgical

or the sacramental to make them more "everyday" phenomena (cf. Lacoste 2004; Kearney 2006, 2009). Rather, my purpose was to draw on the phenomenological notions of expression and the material-spiritual to argue for an essentially expressive character to liturgy that moves us beyond thinking of liturgy simply as the embodiment or manifestation of the spiritual (or the religious) in the material. We then distinguished at least seven different possible uses of the term "liturgy," each of which give a slightly different account of liturgy and its relationship to religion. It is, then, too simple—perhaps even downright misleading—to conceive of liturgy simply as "embodied religious practice," or to define its essential character simply as being the materialization of religion and/or spirituality. My hope is that the clarifications and distinctions I have provided here will prove helpful to refining our understanding of liturgy and its relationship to religion and spirituality, once we view that relationship in expressive terms.

NOTES

1. This is true of the Sausseurian distinction between *langue* and *parole* but is also true in pragmatic philosophies of language (cf., e.g., Rorty 1979; Brandom 1994, 2008).
2. For example, while there is a history of "their" being used as gender-neutral, third-person singular pronoun, the various empirical moments in that history are simply "lived through" so as to "live in" the current rule that this is an acceptable use of the pronoun "their."
3. I examine this all in much more detail in DeRoo (2022).
4. We must be clear here that the use of spirit in phenomenology has none of the resonances of Absolute Spirit found in Hegel. Spirit, as we will see, because of its expressive relationship with materiality, is always being constituted in and by its relation to materiality, even as it also constitutes and alters materiality. Hence, the notion of expression outlined above is key to distinguishing Hegelian spirit from phenomenological spirit.
5. This theme is examined at much greater length in Pulkkinnen (2013) than I can do here. I think the notion of expression would be a helpful addition to Pulkkinnen's analysis.
6. A move made easier in French, where the word *sens* has connotations of sense, meaning, direction, and way.
7. Through the spirit, "character is given to the persons" (Husserl 1970, 273). This "character" is not merely a set of personal character traits, moods, or dispositions, but is the acting out of an inherent entelechy (in the Leibnizian sense) that actively guides development "toward an ideal shape of life" (Husserl 1970, 275).
8. An institution or tradition that pursues a purpose determined in its founding; for more on the notion of *Stiftung* in Merleau-Ponty's work, cf. Merleau-Ponty (2003a); Vallier (2005).
9. For more on this notion, cf. DeRoo (2020).

10. Hence, it might be permissible for religious studies scholars and phenomenologists of religions, for example, to have differing definitions of religion, insofar as they have different starting points for their respective analyses; cf. DeRoo (2018).
11. On the term "material religion," cf. Engelke (2011) and the journal *Material Religion*.
12. It is possible to read the material turn as simply a bet that the true nature of religion "shows up" better in material practices than in epistemic contents. This would be problematic for two reasons: first, it seems to beg the question of what counts as a manifestation of religion (how can I distill the "essence" of religion from its manifestations unless I already know what religion is sufficiently to determine what counts as manifestations of it?); second, it suggests that epistemic contents are not themselves material practices, which seems to downplay their situatedness in particular social and historical contexts.
13. There is also the question of the way religion is taken up within these various traditions: theistic and anatheistic understandings of religion, for example, will yield different experiences of any of the religious traditions. This is, perhaps, a question of the meaning of "religiosity."
14. By formalized, I do not necessarily mean codified or written down, but simply those that are recognized as rituals of worship, are repeatable, and bear some identity relation to other performances of that ritual.
15. Cf. section 14 of the Catholic Church's *Sacrosanctum Concilium* of December 1963: "active participation … is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy."
16. Yes, I am Protestant, and from a relatively "low liturgy" tradition of Protestantism, as these examples no doubt make clear.
17. A quick note on my use of "spiritual" in relation to Smith's account of liturgy. Smith (2009a, 93) defines liturgies as "rituals of ultimate concern that are formative of our identity." While he (and those most interested in his work) tends to focus more on the formative *power* of liturgies, this power is rooted in their being rituals of "ultimate concern," and insofar as spirituality (on the model we are outlining here) is that which is most formative of our identity insofar as it pertains to the "most ultimate" or deepest level of constitutional concern, I think it is fair to consider Smith's use of liturgy to be "spiritual" in the sense I am working with here, although, to be clear, I am not suggesting that Smith is using the language of "spirituality" in the same sense as I am. I simply think his concern with things of "ultimate concern" would, on my account, be served by a concern with spirituality.
18. This is a point of contention between many religious philosophers and John D. Caputo regarding the latter's "event-al" theology: that he defines the "event" of God as necessarily distinct in kind from any manifestation of that event, such that any institution can never itself harbor the event, but must always, by dint of its very determinacy, lose the event; cf. Simmons and Minister (2012). I do not think this is a necessary implication of Caputo's position, and I think a stronger elaboration of the notion of expression could be helpful in clarifying the relationship between the event and its manifestations/expressions in concrete historical instances.

19. I've begun to try to clarify this via an account of what it means to think of humanity as an "image-bearer" of God/the divine in DeRoo (forthcoming).
20. More work needs to be done to establish the "essence" of religiosity; I suggest the above definition as a possible, perhaps even a likely, definition of religiosity in DeRoo (2018).
21. Dooyeweerd might refer to this as a "ground motive" or "basic motivation" (*grondmotif*); cf. Dooyeweerd (1953, vol. 1, 1979).
22. Cf. Smith's definition of liturgy as "rituals *of ultimate concern* that are formative of our identity" (Smith 2009a, 93, emphasis added).
23. Spiro (1966, 90) makes this claim in regards to religion, and it is picked up by Schilbrack (2013, 291) in his important essay "What isn't Religion?," where he claims that some definitions of religion "are so capacious that the term 'religion' loses its analytical usefulness."
24. For more on the embodied nature of meaning, cf. Kearney (2015); Kearney and Treanor (2015).
25. For further evidence to this effect, cf. his account of worship in Smith (2009b), in which he suggests that where you spend your time and money is what you worship, or his account in Smith (2016) that "you are what you love." Both of these must be read ultimately in light of his account of *Imagining the Kingdom: How Worship Works* (Smith 2013).

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CHAPTER TEN

Dark Times and Liturgies of Truth: The Uses and Abuses of Reason

WENDY FARLEY

Let me begin by offering two passages that can serve as something of an orientation for what follows:

> The Church is only at worship, that is, we only have liturgy, when divine service is held by a legitimately assembled group of the faithful … under the leadership of someone holding office in the Church. (Jungman 1968, 321)
>
> If my sister or brother is not at the table, we are not the flesh of Christ. (Copeland 2009, 82)

The root of the word *liturgy* means something like public work or the work of the people, although it more commonly refers to public worship under clerical leadership. Liturgy combines preaching, music, and ritual acts, with the intention of orienting the faithful toward what is ultimately real. As Pseudo-Dionysius (1980, 712) rather poetically puts it:

> We must dare to say this beyond truth: the cause itself of all beings—by the beautiful and good eros of all and through the throwing forth of erotic goodness—comes to be outside of itself and into all beings through its providences and is, as it were, charmed by goodness, eros, and agape.

The basic "work" of liturgy it to reorient the church toward ultimate reality and thus enable it to participate in the divine eros and agape. This eros for the good embodies a form of rationality that is ethical in nature. But because official liturgy is indebted to patriarchal and exclusive models of power and authority, it can perform its work only ambiguously.

The underlying thesis developed here is that an emphasis on the legitimacy of liturgical authority obscures the fundamental nature of the church's work. An *eros* for truth, both in the sense of ultimate reality and in the sense of the beauty and suffering of beings, is essential to liturgy. In this chapter, I will explore ways in which

rationality can be compromised and liberated by exploring two models of ethical reason: phenomenological and contemplative. In imagining this eros for truth as fundamental to liturgy, I will look in and beyond the "legitimate" boundaries of the church.

A desire for reality is an essential nourishment to the spirit. Accordingly, in this chapter, I will explore reason itself as a liturgy of truth that resists the anti-liturgies of exclusion and deception. In what follows, I will move through four phases of analysis. The first recalls the insights of mid-twentieth-century European philosophers as they faced the triumph of disaster. Recovering reason from its degeneration into objectifying technologies, they struggled for truth against great odds. The second phase turns to the fate of a medieval contemplative, Marguerite Porete, executed June 10, 1310. Her insistence on the central role of apophatic awareness accompanied a strenuous critique of technical (scholastic) reason. Porete's use of negative theology further expands our investigation into the uses and abuses of reason. The third phase draws these analyses together to reflect on the nature of reason and its role in a contemporary liturgy of truth. A final section will point toward polyphonous liturgies that provoke a joyful and courageous encounter with the tragic and beautiful beings inhabiting our torn-up world. May the joy and sorrow of this liturgy sustain an intoxicating worship of the "Good Beyond Being," the "Truth" shimmering through every darkness.

Before getting started in earnest, let me offer two qualifications about how the liturgical conception I will be presenting functions as opposed to exclusion and in response to the reality of dark times.

ANTI-LITURGIES OF EXCLUSION

Most Christian churches (Roman Catholic, Orthodox, as well as the majority of evangelical and fundamentalist churches) limit legitimate leadership to educated, ostensibly heterosexual men. This limitation is too often accompanied by deeply racist assumptions about the full humanity of millions of people (Jennings 2010). The degradation of well over half of humanity within churches is so naturalized that it is difficult to experience how shocking it is or to recognize the soul-destroying effect of casual and ubiquitous dehumanization. As we will see, this is the power of deformed reason to readjust reality in light of ideological structures and ideals.

All human institutions suffer from distortion. However destructive, the church's exclusionary tactics do not invalidate its liturgical practices. But we have to look harder to see what resources are available to re-center us in reality, ultimate and otherwise.

I want to imagine a liturgy that is not limited to formal worship communities but expands to all who are inspired by the spirit of goodness. This liturgy aims to reignite an *eros* for truth that radiates an urgent need to protect and celebrate the beauty of beings. Churches will contribute to this liturgy, and fight it with all it has. But the work is incumbent on all of us who find ourselves in these dangerous, deceptive, and dehumanizing times.

ANTI-LITURGIES: DARK TIMES AND SYSTEMIC DECEPTION

In one sense, all of human history takes place during dark times, periods during which humanity is harassed by slavery, poverty, misogyny and patriarchy, oppression of the social outsider, harsh treatment of people with non-normative mental or physical abilities—the list goes on. Acknowledging this persistent reality locates our own moment on a larger canvas in which oppression and its necessary lies are endemic to human societies. But it is also important to notice the particular sense in which one is living in a dark time. The disparagement of whole groups of people dominate our headlines and social structures. Economic and political systems drift ever more dramatically toward oligarchy. The unmaking of the natural world by climate change haunts our dreams as both too horrible to imagine and increasingly inevitable. The long atrocity of white supremacy remains intact. But, as Hannah Arendt (1955, viii) insists, "dark times" are constituted not only by historical cruelties and disasters, but by the repression of truth. She describes:

> "the disorder and the hunger, the massacres and the slaughterers … All this was real enough as it took place in public; there was nothing secret or mysterious about it. And still, it was by no means visible to all … for, until the very moment when catastrophe overtook everything and everybody, it was covered up by efficient talk and double-talk of nearly all official representatives … When we think of dark times … we have to take this camouflage … also into account … darkness has come when the light is extinguished by 'credibility gaps' … by speech that does not disclose but sweeps [truth] under the carpet … that under the pretext of upholding old truths, degrades all truth to meaningless triviality.

There are at least three dimensions of truth that circulate in my account in this chapter: basic facts and information, ethical truth in the sense of perceiving human beings and the natural world as of sacred or at least ethical importance, and the value or desirability of truth. "Darkness" evokes the displacement of basic facts and information by ideology, consoling fictions, and outrageous lies. Related to the mendacity regarding facts is the underlying lie that whole categories of human beings simply do not matter. The natural world is likewise stripped of wonder and reduced to resource and profit. These great lies are trafficked even more easily than young girls: climate change denial, the irrelevance of natural and created beauty, a logic of domination. Even the desire for truth succumbs to a dispirited acquiescence to unreality and despair, a sacrifice that permits deception to outrage the human spirit daily, hourly, minute by minute.

Our situation is truly terrifying and it is not surprising that many people find reality too much to bear. We face deadly serious problems at a time when our basic institutions—political, religious, social, educational, artistic—become less sustaining. This ennui and discouragement point to an underlying spiritual malaise that has come to tolerate outright lies and ethical outrages.

THE DEATH OF REASON

Let's begin this section by listening to Edmund Husserl (1970, 6):

> In our vital need … science has nothing to say to us. It excludes in principle precisely the question which man, given over in our unhappy times to the most portentous upheavals, finds the most burning: questions about the meaning or meaninglessness of this whole human existence. Do not these questions, universal and necessary for all men, demand universal reflections and answers based on rational insight?

In 1933, Husserl, a Jewish convert to Christianity, was forbidden to publish or speak publicly in Germany. A man passionately devoted to reason, it appalled him to see the rigors of science so easily appropriated by the forces of irrationality, while reasoned discourse was denuded of its ethical dimension. The wildest fantasies and misinformation could be passed off as truthful stories about the Jews, and others, while the machinery of technical reason created the means to materialize these fantasies in history.

In 1934, Husserl began a new work, somewhat different in character from his foregoing thought: *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*. Near the beginning of this work, he describes the Enlightenment's enthusiastic embrace of reason—its "ardent desire" for learning, its "zeal" for political and social reform. "We possess an undying testimony to this spirit in the glorious 'Hymn to Joy' of Schiller and Beethoven. It is only with painful feelings that we can understand this hymn today. A greater contrast with our present situation is unthinkable" (Husserl 1970, 10). For Husserl, the contrast between the passion for truth represented by the Age of Reason and the disintegration of rationality under the National Socialist (Nazism) regime was an epistemological, historical, and even spiritual catastrophe of unprecedented significance. Husserl's response to this crisis was to turn his intellect toward an investigation of the thought patterns, the hidden assumptions, the lacuna or forgetfulness in Enlightenment scientific and philosophical endeavors that prepared the ground for the descent into disaster. What seeds of anti-reason were planted by the great lovers of reason, Galileo, Descartes, and Kant? Husserl argued that the methodological abstractions of mathematics and philosophy displaced the concrete lifeworld. A subtle turn away from concrete reality toward theories that explained reality began. Living beings became secondary to methods of interpretation. Scientific method implicitly took on the task of metaphysics. What is not susceptible to this method is not real. With this sleight of hand, all the questions concerning meaning, ethics, justice, and experience are reduced to the merely subjective. Reality questions outside the mathematical equation or the laboratory become matters of taste. "Hitler had his truth and I have mine," as a college student once informed me. Husserl argued that this identification of reason with method contributed to a crisis in which thought patterns erased real persons, displacing them with formulas and abstractions.

Hannah Arendt more directly tracked the dynamics by which reality was re-created in the image of National Socialist or Stalinist ideology. Arendt turned her

philosophical training toward historical and social analysis. What dynamics of power made possible the transition from philosophical erasure of persons to their actual liquidation? In *Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951) and other works, she relentlessly tracked the rationalized displacement of reason by propaganda and terror.

Many continental philosophers became preoccupied with understanding how the dedication to reform and rationality culminated in reason's death. Perhaps they were wrong to attribute so much importance to the way educated Europeans thought about reality. The great phenomenologists used the tools at their disposal to diagnose and respond to their historical context. Hannah Arendt spent her life wrestling with the causes and implications of totalitarianism. Gabriel Marcel analyzed the fanaticized thinking that contributed to techniques of degradation. Emmanuel Levinas tirelessly evoked the opposition between a totalizing logic of domination and the infinity manifest in the faces of the vulnerable. Karl Jaspers quietly defended rationality and truth while waiting for the knock on his door, a knock that—miraculously—never came. We can remember Edith Stein's philosophical defense of empathy as well as her humanity as the train carried her to Auschwitz. We can remember Tillich whose opposition to Hitler earned him exile in the US. We remember Rudolf Bultmann who, like Jaspers, somehow rode out the war and Dietrich Bonhoeffer who did not. Together these philosophers and theologians give an account of the ethical power of reason and the degradation that accompanies its demise.

One of the things that has long concerned continental philosophers and theologians is the way a spirit of abstraction can displace reason's power to attend to the particularity of real beings. That is, they were concerned by thought patterns in which a general or abstract account of phenomena became more real and significant than actual persons. For example, a statistic concerning the percentage of people who reject religion on ethical grounds becomes more compelling than the narratives of particular persons who experience religion in a variety of ways. The argument could be offered that a person's story is merely anecdotal. Whatever particular suffering, insight, and irreducible complexity available through such a narrative is only singular: it does not tell us anything about larger social patterns; it does not tell us anything (scientifically) important. And yet, listening to a single narrative of a Black woman's courage in the face of the brutalizing racism or the sweetness of a trans man as he seeks ordination teaches something that statistics cannot.

This is not to say that abstracting from particularity is itself an attack on reality. To think, to use language at all, is already to abstract from the infinitely complex ways phenomena manifest, relate, and change. Methodological abstraction makes possible medical and other advances. It is a *spirit* of abstraction, the translation of method into ontology, the translation of persons into ideological constructs that troubled these thinkers. Husserl identifies the disappearance of the lifeworld into the abstraction of mathematics as a disease that infected science from its beginning. His point is not that mathematics is evil, but rather that something extra is embedded in the Enlightenment's mathematicization of nature. The particular is gradually so effaced that it eventually fails to have the same reality as a formula or theory. When this happens, persons are overridden by the theories that attempted to explain them.

Levinas (1987, 50) argues that the assimilation of beings into concepts destroys the ethical foundation of reason. For totalizing thinking, the individual no longer counts. Levinas sees in this epistemology the primal violence that allows suffering others to be erased, dominated, and violated. For him, all genuine rationality must begin with the "face" of others. The truth of the commandment against murder is not deontological. It is the blasphemy of destroying this particular person, sacred and irreplaceable. When this ethical foundation of reality is remembered, reason and its children (philosophy, religion, politics, science) will build on firmer ground.[1]

Gabriel Marcel (2008) was also interested in the transposition of epistemological abstraction into fanatical thinking. This is a style of thinking that so efficiently obscures persons and their real situation that consciousness becomes numb and unresponsive to anything external to the governing ideological construct. Such a person is

> utterly unable to represent to himself the real nature of the facts under discussion; insensibility is here allied to an almost total deficiency of imagination. This phenomenon can properly be called pathological because it is of the same order as that observed by a doctor whose patient fails to react to certain stimuli.
>
> (Marcel 2008, 108)

Ideologues have lost the capacity to represent to themselves the humanity of others because the spirit of abstraction has not only reduced the world to mathematics or individuals to concepts, but persons to ideological positions. Marcel (2008, 121) first calls this a disease of the intelligence, because it is impervious to facts. But he corrects himself, identifying it as having its root in the passions. Reason, in a sense, clicks on imperturbably—making calculations, matching ends with means. But in another sense, reason, as the mind's access to reality, has died.

These thinkers were preoccupied with how Europe suffered its descent first into a tyrannical assault on facts and then into an orgy of cruelty and mass death. For them, part of the problem was the death of the capacity to perceive that other people are real. They associated this death in part with a spirit of abstraction that allowed persons to be perceived as no more than nubs within an ideological system. In the absence of the capacity to perceive human beings as real, degradation and destruction become entirely natural. An extension of this theme for our own times is that when natural beings and ecosystems are reduced to abstractions and economic ciphers, the destruction of the environment (including humanity) likewise becomes natural and perhaps inevitable.

DEATH BY REASON

We see a kind of objectifying rationality displayed in the bureaucratic and technical accomplishments of the Nazis. In turning to Marguerite Porete, a beguine executed for heresy in 1310, we witness the beauty of scholasticism reduced to an instrument of terror in the hands of some medieval inquisitors.[2] Marguerite's is the period we witness the brilliance of Thomas Aquinas and Bonaventure. But it is also the

time when scholastic techniques produced manuals designed to tease out sexual sins or heretical phrases. Scholasticism facilitated the creation of precise abstractions that replace persons with labels of condemnation: heretic, Jew, beguine, sodomite.[3] Marcel (2008, 54) describes a similar use of reason centuries later: "to dispose of your opponent … it is enough … to stick an obnoxious label on him and then to fling in his face, as one might a bottle of acid, some gross accusation to which it is impossible for him to reply." Although, in fairness, scholastic inquisitors were much more meticulous in making the "gross accusation" stick.

Marguerite's trial was a show trial intended to repress a movement of women who were becoming too independent, theologically and otherwise. During her lifetime, her book *The Mirror of Simple Souls* had already been translated into Latin. After her death, it continued to circulate anonymously in several translations. Speculation attributed it variously to John van Ruysbroek, an unknown Cistercian monk, or a Parisian theologian. Once separated from an independent beguine, it was no longer deemed heretical. But as a particularly brilliant theologian, Marguerite was targeted for overstepping the boundaries of appropriate female piety.

A few sentences were read from Marguerite's long and complex manuscript to members of the theology faculty of Paris. One fragment for which she was condemned describes the death of the ego as an ultimate freedom in which one "neither desires nor despises poverty or tribulation, neither mass nor sermon, neither fasting nor prayer and gives to nature all that is necessary without remorse of conscience." In her manuscript, although not in the fragment read at the trial, the sentence continues: "but such a soul is so well ordered by transformation in unity with love to which the will of this Soul is conjoined, that nature demands nothing which would be forbidden" (Porete 1993, 87). At least one of the theologians who condemned her expressed an almost identical view in his own theological writings: "and from the effect of this love, the soul devoted in all its desires is transformed into this same uncreated image, such a soul seeks nothing, desires nothing, aims at nothing among transitory things nor does it delight in anything apart from the divine good alone" (Field 2012, 140). The twenty-three theologians who participated in this process spent their lives engaged in subtle analyses and arguments. They presumably understood that extracting a sentence from Aquinas's "Objections" (for example) would not provide an adequate understanding of his theology. They were familiar with descriptions of advanced contemplative states. And yet they accepted the reading of a few sentence fragments from a much longer theological text as grounds for condemnation and the stake.

In defense of their authority, scholastic theologians and the institutions that supported them found it reasonable to tie tender flesh to a pole stuck in the public square and watch the unimaginable agony as that flesh was slowly emancipated from life. Like the totalitarians of later centuries, they allied themselves to a process that was highly rational and yet deployed spectacles of violence that left little to the imagination. The spectacle of fire did more than eliminate a presumed enemy of the faith. As Ellen Armour (2016, 28) points out with regard to public executions, if elimination was the goal, any kind of killing would do:

> But simply eliminating the threat isn't the point; it is the (re)assertion of the king's power over the corporate body he forms with his subjects. Execution as (tortuous) spectacle reminds the king's subjects of their proper place … subject to his (absolute) rule … Subjects matter only in the collective, not individually, the specific body … could just as easily be another.

William of Paris, confessor and chief inquisitor for King Philip IV, employed precise reasoning to obtain a desired result. Describing Porete as "rebellious and contumacious" and a "false woman," "stained with heretical depravity," he highlighted the outrage of a female theologian (Barton 2018). His repression of her and her work was intended to display the king's fervent defense of orthodoxy, which had been somewhat tarnished by his removal of the papacy to Avignon, among other things. By these standards, it was wildly successful. The beguines never produced another serious theological writer, Marguerite is still regarded as a "heretic," and Philip the Fair retains the soubriquet "defender of the faith."[4]

Marguerite warns away readers who would try to understand her text with this *kind* of reason. Interpretation must be guided by humility, faith and love:

> You who would read this book, if you wish to grasp it … for it is very difficult to comprehend … humility, who is the keeper of the treasury of knowledge and the mother of other virtues, must overtake you. Theologians and other clerks, you will not have the intellect for it, no matter how brilliant your abilities, if you do not proceed humbly. And may Love and Faith, together, cause you to rise above Reason, for they are the ladies of the house.
>
> (Porete 1993, 79)

Her appeal to humility, love, and faith is not a rejection of truth and reality in favor of subjective affections. Intellect is her term for intelligence, for something that is oriented toward reality and in that sense is rational in the broad sense, but which is not confined to dualistic thinking or literal use of language. It is dependent upon the training of rationality and agape. As far apart as she is from continental philosophy, she seems to share the view that reality-oriented rationality depends upon ethics, else it becomes a "disease of the passions," as Marcel put it.

She is aware of how threatening this mode of truth is and her danger from those who rely exclusively on scholastic or discursive reasons: "I must hide from them and not speak my language to those who prefer death to the being of life where I am in peace" (Porete 1993, 143). She is aware of the tension between contemplative and scholastic rationality. But Marguerite does not reject reason altogether. Human reason and divine reasoning intertwine throughout the book.

I am framing my discussion of Marguerite primarily in terms of her understanding of reason. Although her methods and insights are quite different from his, she, like Husserl and other continental thinkers, laments a style of reasoning whose analytical precision becomes a weapon against truth. She, like them, described a kind of rationality infused with ethics. To begin the contemplative path, one must first master the twin love commandments. She interprets the love of neighbor with great strictness: "that we do not act, nor think, nor speak toward our neighbors anything

we would not wish they do toward us. These commandments are of necessity for salvation for all: nobody can have grace in a lesser way" (Porete, 1993, 81). Like Levinas's "royal road to truth" or Plato's apprehension of the "Good," Marguerite's "intellect" presupposes an ethical foundation. One must train in such a way that it becomes impossible to even ideate harming another person. The highest form of truth can be grasped only through ethical conditioning.

Marguerite's book is a dialogue between the three female interlocutors: Soul, Reason, and Lady Love (a personification of divine reality). This dialogue follows the questioning of Reason but can only be fully comprehended by the "intellect of love." Reason personifies discursive thought and, although intrigued by Lady Love, she remains "a model of how not to interpret" because she is "unable to contend with figurative language [or] complex comparisons" (Kocher 2008, 6). Nonetheless, dialogue is essential to launch Marguerite's analysis. Lady Love is discursive but not rationalistic. She moves among dimensions of reality, from the abyss of divine non-duality to image and argument deployed to assist Reason's understanding. Reason's questions to Lady Love move the argument along while responding to confusions readers of the book might also experience. Like Pseudo-Dionysius or, later, John of the Cross, Marguerite uses discursive reasoning to dismantle the structures of dualistic rationality. Divine reality is not a being or structured by the conditions of being; it cannot be thought through the mental patterns appropriate to beings or the language that structures our access to them. "The divine school is held with mouth closed, which the human mind cannot express in words" (Porete 1993, 142). Marguerite frequently bemoans the paradox of feeling compelled to write for the sake of fellow contemplatives—writing distorts the very thing it would express. Love demands that she set in writing a journey toward that which cannot be written, a narrative of the Soul that "remain[s] in pure nothingness without thought" (Porete 1993, 142).

Part way through this peregrination, Reason dies. As Lady Love leads the Soul toward "annihilation," Reason cannot continue. She cries out "Ah God, How dare one say this? I dare not listen to it. I am fainting truly, Lady Soul, in hearing you; my heart is failing. I have no more life" (Porete 1993, 163). Soul is delighted to pronounce Reason dead, but Lady Love continues with her teaching, putting the questions Reason would have asked if she were able to survive on the borderland of non-dual awareness. The intellect of Love remains to teach and guide. But discursive reason is unable to grasp what is happening. If the inquisitor uses reason to obscure the truth, Lady Love uses reason to enlighten the Soul.

But we begin to perceive that Reason's resistance is not simply a cognitive limitation. Reason not only cannot understand the conversation between Lady Love and the Soul, she can't bear to hear about it, it is too shocking. Reason mocks the poetics of divine emptiness as "a very noble rock on the wide plain of truth" (Porete 1993, 130–1). She allies herself with the church's doctrinal teachings that capture God in catechisms, the terror of hell, and the penitential practices by which contemplatives were taught to torture their bodies into submission (see Porete 1993, 86). Amy Hollywood (1997, 108) argues that Marguerite's theology "is a direct response to the forms of sanctity prescribed by women … and is an attempt

to counter a situation of anxiety, struggle, moral rigorism, and bodily suffering." Reason's difficulty certainly pertains to her limited capacity to comprehend multivalent discourse. But the deeper obstacle is her allegiance to a mode of thinking that was both reductive and sadomasochistic.

We have something like Marcel's concern that the disease of the reason is not only cognitive but concerns the passions. Contemplative rationality perceives cognition, desire, and ethics as intimately connected: access to reality requires the integration of the components of personhood. Contemplative rationality subjects the soul to training, just as an athlete trains. If we think of reason simply as a technical function, it is not difficult to imagine that a computer could do it. But for both phenomenologists and contemplatives, rationality—"the mind's openness to the true" (Levinas)—is a capacity for reality that requires not only technique but ethical and spiritual training.

This association of rationality with the disciplining of the whole person is deeply rooted in Western epistemologies, certainly going back as far as Plato and Philo, and woven into Christian theology for many centuries. Apprehension of ultimate reality proceeds not simply by way of discursive reasoning but by way of purifying the passions, liberating unconditional love, and obtaining *theologia*—wisdom concerning divine matters. The knowledge that allows us to discern what is happening around us and to wonder at the beauty and suffering of beings is rooted in an apprehension of ultimate reality, an apprehension that disciplines the heart by love. From this awareness is born a compulsion, or freedom, to act on behalf of creation.

Marguerite's heroism and tragedy was the necessity she felt to teach what she had discovered. She cries out in frustration describing how she would have willingly heard about God but no one would teach her until Lady Love finally revealed the truth to her: that God is utterly incomprehensible and that there is no limit to this love. Salvation is nothing but coming to awareness of the radical goodness of divinity that cannot be grasped by language. But this salvation was accompanied by a command: "Obey no created thing but Love" (Porete 1993, 82). She was free from desire and fear, but not from obligation to teach others: "I cannot be silent in order to save the whole world … I would wish to speak about him because no one would tell me about Him" (Porete 1993, 112).

But the tides of history were moving in a different direction. During the Early Middle Ages, the highest form of awareness was contemplation, an immediate "tasting" of divine reality. This mode of rationality loses its privilege with the rise of scholasticism, which, for all its brilliance in the hands of someone like Thomas Aquinas, is less beautiful in inquisitorial handbooks. As contemplative rationality recedes from public view, scholasticism evolved in the direction of Enlightenment reason, which oversees both a glorious spirit of reform and a logic of domination that justifies colonialism, slavery, and a thousand cruelties.

The attack on contemplative wisdom represented by Marguerite Porete's execution witnesses the early beginnings of the modern world, in its genius and its tragedy. Tracking patterns of thinking in theology and philosophy is hardly sufficient to understand the good and bad that always weave together as history trundles along. But as different as they are, the linking of ethics to truth found in

Marguerite and continental philosophy stand as both a critique and a resuscitation of rationality. Objectifying rationality can have its uses, but its very structure permits the objectification of others and thus the rationalization of logics of domination.

Marguerite Porete witnesses to a steadfast obedience to "the intellect of love." We are told by a witness to her burning, presumed to be one of the theologians that condemned her, that the crowd wept at her "noble and devout" demeanor (Barton 2018).

TRUTH, DESIRE, AND ETHICAL RATIONALITY

Anselm (1962, 80) offers a helpful way to approach the various "deaths" of reason: "Let my soul hunger for it; let my flesh thirst for it; let my whole being desire it." With Anselm's words standing as a guide, we can attend to the fact that I have portrayed two, almost opposite senses in which reason dies. One death is when an abstracting rationality reduces phenomena to mere objects, rendering their particularity and innate worth largely invisible. This kind of reason can be instrumental in destroying the mind's access to truth. As instrumentized reasoning numbs awareness to ethical reality, the destruction of persons and the earth itself follows only too easy. The second kind of death is apophatic—the dismantling of discursive reason in order to apprehend non-dual, non-conceptual reality. The fruit of this death is a capacity for equanimity and radical love that arises when egocentrism is pacified. Discursive reasoning must die for awareness of ultimate reality to be born. But it returns when it is needed to communicate its findings to others. Thus, there is a third sense of reason, one that has been reborn in the service of truth.

Continental philosophy was born in a time when abstractions were taking epistemological priority over actually existing beings and when communist, capitalist, and fascist ideologies were granted priority over persons and nature. The disappearance of persons into ideological categories—Jew, "homophile," capitalist—soon manifested as the disappearance of Jewish, gay, counterrevolutionaries, and other persons into internment camps and death. A kind of reason remained very potent: rational calculations made both great and terrifying advances. But reason as the luminosity of the human mind, open to multidimensional reality, received a mortal wound. Continental philosophers turned their talents to understanding such phenomena and teasing out a radical commitment to truth and reasoned discourse from technical reasoning that defrauded persons of their humanity.

We are experiencing something similar today in public language and policies. The characterization of immigrants and refugees as rapists and drug lords is quickly followed by the imprisoning of immigrant and refugee families and children in cage-like environments. Traumatic suffering, sexual abuse, and even death of separated children is veiled behind rhetoric that renders them inhuman. Racist and white supremacist language materializes in extrajudicial killing of Black men and women. Obscene language used by the highest political officials to describe women and their bodies quickly turns into legal assaults on their privacy and autonomy, as well as the reversing of laws meant to protect victims of rape and assault.

Marguerite Porete was both committed to reasoned discourse and suspicious of a form of reasoning that obscured theological and ethical truths. Her term, "intellect of love," evoked the mind's accessibility to reality while displaying the limitations of discursive reasoning. The death of technical reasoning allowed the intellect of love to do its work. These medieval and modern thinkers understood that the distortion of reason represented not only a cognitive but a spiritual crisis that was not only a concern of private individuals. Corrupt reason, insensible to the sacredness of beings, yields a strange fruit: not only the erasure of information but the erasure of beings.

Reason dies when it is separated from actual beings. Contemplation and phenomenology are two different approaches for retraining the mind so it can pay attention to others, see them, cherish them, and desire justice and wellbeing for all. Phenomenology and contemplation invite us to remember that true rationality is also a matter of the heart. The luminosity of reason and intellect awaken a capacity to perceive the beauty of beings. "Ethics is an optics" to borrow Levinas's phrase. The study of phenomenology is itself a rigorous mind training. I mean here not only the study of texts but the training of the mind so that the "natural attitude" is bracketed and phenomena are allowed to manifest according to the manner of their self-presentation. The mind is trained to detach from the primacy of theory and pay attention to "the things themselves." Being a phenomenologist involves the effort to allow others to appear in their appropriate modes of self-givenness. I suspect that this is why Levinas is a natural successor to Husserl, notwithstanding their differences.

Of course, we remain shaped by society, by patterns of racism, sexism, and privilege, by modernity's habits of mind, and by the specificity of our own background. We cannot jump over these mental habits. But, phenomenology, like contemplation, invites us to the discipline of mindful attention, watching the mind and observing ways it preforms our access to the world and to others. It requires the discipline of rigorous attention and the courage to acknowledge that total truth will never be available to us. In another context, Simone Weil (1977, 51) describes this kind of attitude as the soul emptying "itself of all its own contents in order to receive into itself the being it is looking at, just as he is, in all his truth. Only [one] who is capable of attention can do this." The lucidity of the mind burns away the attachments and assumptions that dominate us. It is this combination of radical commitment and enduring openness that characterizes the discipline of reason. Mental discipline is an enduring task: who among us completely escapes habits of mind, which see types rather than persons, enemies rather than difficult companions, or prefer what is familiar and consoling over what challenges our ways of thinking and feeling? Karl Jaspers, like other continental thinkers, perceives this commitment to reason to be fundamentally ethical and spiritual. He identifies love as the guardian of truth but he also notes that

> it is impossible for us to live solely by love, this force of the highest level, for we fall constantly into errors and misunderstandings. Hence we must not rely blindly

> on our love but must elucidate it. And for the same reason we finite beings need the discipline by which we conquer our passions and because of the impurity of our motives we require distrust of ourselves … Only the unconditional character of the good fills mere duties with content, purifies our ethical motives, dissolves the destructive will of hatred.
>
> (Jaspers, 2015, 62)

These figures remind us that the divorce of reason from ethics is a kind of spiritual death. But Marguerite Porete in the fourteenth century and philosophers and theologians in the twentieth are witness to a lucidity whose eros for truth purifies the passions. These lovers of truth, phenomenological and contemplative, invite us in our own time to participate in the adventure and discipline of ethical rationality.

LITURGIES OF TRUTH

The civil rights activist Fannie Lou Hamer calls us to think about the stakes of liturgies in our relational lives: "We are not fighting against these people because we hate them but we are fighting against these people because we love them and because we are the only thing can save them now … Every night of my life I pray for these people" (cited in Parker Brooks and Houck 2011, 54).

We have observed reason's capacity for violence and mendacity. We have seen the crucial role of reason in unmasking this mendacity and fostering a passion for reality. We have seen that neither ecclesial authority nor discursive reason are sufficient to a liturgy dedicated to the good and the good of all beings. Neither objectifying reason nor uncritical faith provide means by which we are able to recognize the beings of the earth as creatures of sacred worth, demanding protection and appreciation. Going beyond objectifying rationalities, we perform a liturgy of unknowing: immersed in the apophatic abyss of divine goodness we are better able to recognize the beauty of all beings, a beauty that forever eludes reduction to categories. This is not anti-reason but the intellect of love, which drops into the abyss of divine reality and from that nourishment is provided courage for the work in dark times to love light and love one another.

In dark times, we are called to a liturgy of *erotic* truth-seeking. This liturgy of truth calls upon those who identify with the public body of Christ and also on those who are exiled or excluded from this body. It is the perennial work of all people for whom the delight in the beauty of creation inspires lament, compassion, and courage. It will be performed by gay men who minister in San Francisco's Castro District. It will be performed by non-ordained lesbian liturgists creating healing rituals. It will be performed by poets and dancers whose visions cannot be captured by institutional religion. It will be performed by Black Lives Matter activists, with and without the Black church. It will be performed by ecologists and scientists, contemplatives, and philosophers. It will be performed at the interstitial spaces between religious traditions. Whoever we are and wherever we are, we can find ways to participate in this great liturgical dance of healing.

Rosemarie Freeney Harding (2015, 235) describes something like this liturgy as the heart of her own vision of radical compassion in the midst of the struggle for civil rights:

> Teaching about how to be family. How to live like family. How to live with some strength and care in your hands. How to live with some joy in your mouth. How to put your hands gentle on where the wound is and draw out the grief. How to urge some kind of mercy into the shock-stained earth so that that good will grow.

This work must be sustained by practices that open the heart to the beauty and suffering of the world, practices that bring courage in the midst of defeat and affliction, practices that resuscitate joy even in hard times. This is perhaps the most crucial insight of contemplative traditions: we do not simply open our eyes and perceive the truth—factual, ethical, or metaphysical. Access to reality, like any great undertaking, is possible only through discipline. It is only through practice that the beauty and suffering of others becomes a visceral reality. These practices will look different in a Catholic church in Milwaukee, a Black church in Alabama, a book club for trans men, a philosophy class, a doctoral seminar, a poetry reading, a protest march, or a meditation retreat. But perhaps we can recognize these liturgies, as different as they are, as a conspiracy of the Holy Spirit to draw us toward a more hopeful future.

There are many ways people of good faith will respond to difficult situations, each using their own gifts and insights. This paper has presented an argument that part of a liturgy for dark times is a devotion to truth. The defense of rationality against lies and prevarication becomes a crucial work of the spirit. Recovery of attention to the "intellect of the heart" is equally important. This non-discursive intellect perceives theological and ethical truths that discursive reasoning may overlook. The "way of unknowing" is a path toward knowing what is most urgent: that the divine eros for creation must be embodied in our tender devotion to the wellbeing of all beings. The activation of this eros in reason and intellect is part of a liturgy of justice. But it is perhaps more profoundly a liturgy of joy in the beauty of beings. Rooted in this joy, the tragedies, major and minor, of human life become more bearable. Joy endows us with what Husserl (1970, 299) described as a "courage that does not fear even an infinite struggle." It is my hope that the polyphony of liturgies within and beyond church worship will contribute to the formation of people who can "live the meaning of truth in all the ways of being truthful … This is the vision of a great and noble life: to endure ambiguity in the movement of truth and to make light shine through it; to stand fast in uncertainty; to prove capable of unlimited love and hope" (Jaspers 1952, 105).

NOTES

1. Husserl does not put it that way but that reason is intimately connected to ethical existence seems integral to his thought—and to the thought of those who were influenced by him—as Levinas (1969, 29) himself suggests: "Husserlian phenomenology has made possible this passage from ethics to metaphysical exteriority."

2. Marguerite Porete is usually characterized as an unenclosed beguine who lived at the border between France and Belgium. Some scholars raise questions about whether she was herself a beguine. In any case, she was a lay contemplative in contact with beguine communities and other contemplatives. She lived in an area of great religious vitality, populated by numerous large and small beguinages, in which thousands of women engaged in religious practice, the study of scripture, social work, debate, education, as well as in rich communication with enclosed and mendicant religious. The beguines defied the roles available to women in their day. They rejected both marriage and enclosure in a convent. Walter Simons (2001, 143) describes them this way: "As the only movement in medieval monastic history that was created by women and for women – and not affiliated with or supervised by, a male order – beguines bear many of the characteristics associated with religious communities dominated by women: a lack of overarching governmental structures, a low level of internal hierarchy … creating … a unique and supportive environment for single women of all ages, ranks, and intellectual ambitions." Many people admired their devotion as well as their service to their communities. Some clergy admired their learning and spiritual wisdom, and consulted with them regarding spiritual practice. Meister Eckhart was among those influenced by Marguerite and other beguines. Within this community, Marguerite was a master of contemplative practice and theological reflection.
3. Mark Jordan's *The Invention of Sodomy in Christian Theology* describes this kind of meticulous reasoning to criminalize various sexual practices. A number of texts describe the use of technical reasoning in the work of the inquisition, for example Burgtore et al. (2010) *The Debate on the Trial of the Templars (1307–1304*) and Field (2012) *The Beguine, the Angel, and the Inquisitor: The Trials of Marguerite Porete and Guiard of Cressonessart*. Both give some sense of how inquisitors structured interrogations in a severely rationalistic style to achieve the desired outcome.
4. The French king was a skillful and ruthless politician who initiated the inquisition in France, the massacre and expulsion of Jews, the torture and murder of the Knights Templar, the removal of the papacy to Avignon, and tithing the population for a crusade he never embarked on, all of which significantly expanded his access to money and property. The Introductions to the two main English translations of Marguerite's book tend to accept the point of view that this king was, in fact, a genuinely pious defender of Christianity and Marguerite was a heretic because she was then declared so. This is a curiously uncritical look at the actual function and actions of these two exemplars of Christian faith. The efficiency of authority to determine reality remains striking.

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CHAPTER ELEVEN

Compassionate Action: Taking Eckhart, Farley, and the Beguines to Bethany

SHARON L. BAKER PUTT

In this chapter, I consider how embodiment is itself a kind of liturgical practice that encompasses both words and actions, both spiritual and practical. While I will not specifically use the term "liturgy," my focus on the compatibility of a life of contemplation and a life of practice articulate a holistic embodied liturgy of compassion that I find exemplified in the sisters of Bethany, Mary and Martha.

I have always felt sorry for Martha. All she wanted was a little help in the kitchen in order to show good Middle Eastern hospitality to an important guest. Furthermore, to make matters worse, she can't even hide her shame by fading into the obscurity of lost memories buried under the weight of historical detritus; that is to say, Dr. Luke felt it necessary to write the episode down for everyone in the future to read! Consequently, as luck would have it, her infamous attitude toward Mary, and Mary's choice to reach for transcendence rather than to grasp the immanence of the work at hand, forever graces the pages of the bestselling book of all time. She asked Jesus one legitimate question and forevermore gets slammed with a bum rap. And if that weren't enough, the church has used Martha's story to propagate and legitimize the dichotomy between transcendence—reaching for God—and immanence—grasping for the world. But does this dichotomy truly stand up under scrutiny? Does transcendence draw us closer to God than immanence? Is a Martha existence doomed to wallow in shallow pursuits, while the Mary's of the world rise to the heights of God in the depths of heavenly bliss, detached from the vicissitudes of everyday life?

In the interest of redeeming Martha, and with a little help from Meister Eckhart, two of the Beguine mystics, and Wendy Farley, I answer "no" to the above questions and insist that the dichotomy is a false one. The transcendent God is never closer

than in the realm of immanence: indeed, Eckhart claims that Martha lived and moved in the place where transcendence and immanence harmonize. I suggest that we put ourselves in Martha's place by following the directions of Meister Eckhart (*c.* 1260–*c.* 1328) and, by imitating his movements, discover if we can master a method of transcending detachment and descending into immanence with the world.

THE MEISTER'S MOVEMENTS OF LOVE: THE GOD(HEAD)

For Eckhart (2009), living life by the power of God's Spirit—which he identifies as the Spirit of love—requires three main movements that find fulfillment in the soul's unity with the Godhead. In order to acquire that unity, however, the soul must first let go of "God," separate itself from "God" in order to break through into the empty nothingness that he calls the "ground of the Godhead" (Caputo 1978, 210–11). In fact, Eckhart (Sermon 87, 422, 424) takes the necessity of the soul's separation from "God" so seriously that he prays that God rid him of "God."[1] This statement doesn't make much sense to contemporary readers, unless they understand Eckhart's distinction between God and the Godhead.

By the word "God," Eckhart refers to the God that is named and known by the human mind, the "God" who interacts with the world, who works relationally with creation and its creatures. In other words, "God" is the name we use to signify God's relationship to the world, as Trinity, as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Sermon 87; Caputo 1978, 211–12). By conceiving of "God" as the creator, as the Father, or as the provider, or by assigning to "God" any other name, attribute, or characteristic, we make a distinction between "God" and the soul—a distinction that precludes the soul's unity with the ground of God—that is, with the Godhead itself. Alternatively, Eckhart prescribes that the soul desiring union with God must rid itself of "God," the God of perception and imagination, the God of creation and creatures, in order for it to become one with the Godhead, God as God is in Godself, the God that cannot be named or known, the God who is absolute, timeless, pure, one, and simple. The God of the trackless void, the desert wasteland of nothingness where there is no ontological distinction between creator and creature, where there is nothing but the ground of God, a stripped down God, not yet cause or creator, but beyond being, beyond time, what the Taoist might call the uncarved block, the nothingness of non-existence, the primal seat of all origins (Caputo 1978, 213–14, 1986, 105–6).[2]

In fact, Eckhart's mystical thought centers around the notion of the ground (*Grunt*/*Grund*) of God, a significant term in understanding the distinction between the God of our conceptions and the Godhead. We might consider the ground of God a "master metaphor" or an "explosive metaphor" in the Meister's thought. Since the ground of the Godhead and the ground of the human soul are one and the same, the metaphor of the ground breaks through all forms of speech and generates explosive new ways for the soul to encounter the Godhead (McGinn 2011, 37–8).

Likewise, the beguine mystic Marguerite of Porete points out that in order to grasp true divinity, we must give up all human understanding, move beyond discursive

reason, beyond language and image that remain inadequate to God. Even passionate words that describe God in beautiful language serve as a distraction that leads us away from Eckhart's Godhead. She writes that "this Soul … no longer knows how to speak about God" and that "the more this Soul has understanding of the divine goodness, the more perfectly she understands that she understands nothing about it" (Porete 1993, 83–5). She, along with Wendy Farley (2011, 74), suggests that, since human reason cannot reach beyond what the mind can understand, human knowledge applied to God amounts more to thinking lies than it does to thinking the truth. Even though reason desires to satisfy the soul by articulating the character and nature of God, in reality, we can say nothing about God that truly expresses the incomprehensible God. Marguerite expresses this in terms of the way of negation, writing that "all one can say about [God], is at best nothing (to speak properly) compared to what He is of Himself, which never was said, is not now said, nor will be" (Porete 1993, 110). The human mind simply cannot comprehend or express the divine (Porete 1993, 142). Consequently, Marguerite rids herself of God by letting go of all her conceptions, ambitions, and affections so that her soul can fly on the wings of divine goodness, at rest in the being of God. So, once we realize the need to "move beyond" words, reason, and understanding, the soul begins the cycle of motion that unites us with the Godhead.

The soul, which Eckhart often refers to as the "spark,"[3] yearns for unity with God, not with the "God" of our imagination, but the ground, the simple, pure, nakedness of God. In addition, only God can come fully into the soul, and the union between human and divine can only take place in the ground of God. Because the ground of God constitutes the most hidden depths of the divine essence and the ground of the soul constitutes the innermost depths of the human being, God's ground fuses with the soul's ground and they become one and the same ground (Sermon 65; Caputo 1986, 100; McGinn 2011, 41). Eckhart (2009) beautifully describes this place where the human soul unites with the divine, saying in Sermon 60:

> I declare in all truth, by the eternal and everlasting truth, that this light [the soul] is not content with the simple changeless divine being which neither gives nor takes ["God"]: rather it seeks to know whence *this* being comes, it wants to get into its simple ground, into the silent desert into which no distinction ever peeped, of Father, Son, or Holy Ghost. In the inmost part, where none is at home, *there* that light finds satisfaction, and there it is more one in itself: for this ground is an impartible stillness, motionless in itself, and by this immobility all things are moved, and all those receive life that live of themselves, being endowed with reason.

As we can see from this sermon, Eckhart also believes that all creation receives its life from the ground of God. It serves as the creative force out of which all things not only come into being but also from where all things receive their being (Sermon 40; Caputo 1986, 104). Only the human soul, however, possesses the spark or the light that is identical to the ground of God and, therefore, able to unite with the ground as one.

Flowing Out

According to Eckhart (2009), God works in a set of three moves in circular motion to create the world of creatures and to unite them with the divine in a relationship of love. He calls these motions "the three kinds of love" (Sermon 88; see also Radler 2010, 190–2). In the first love of Eckhart's metaphysics of flow, the Godhead, who is pure, essential truth, abides in eternal pregnancy. Then, through divine Trinitarian love, the pregnant God gives birth to the world by spilling over into creation, overflowing into all creatures equally with divine being and with the light of God's grace (Sermons 88 and 72; see also Caputo 1986, 114–15; Radler 2010, 190–1). God's being fills and loves all creatures equally. In the words of theologian Charlotte Radler (2010, 179, 190–1): "God boils and billows and sends the divine love 'flowing forth from the One through the Trinity into creation.'"

The flowing out from the Godhead is consummated first in the Trinity—God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—and second in the creation, separating what was once one in the ground of God into distinct realities. Once the Godhead flows outward in Trinitarian form, God flows outward even more and creates the world of creatures, plants, rocks, mountains, and so on—all objects distinct from God. At that point, creatures can look from a distance to the source of their creation and think: this is "God"—the "God" we imagine, the "God" we think we know and understand, the "God" we call Trinity, and the "God" we experience as love (Sermons 23, 32, 72; see also Caputo 1978, 215).[4] This love of God, which is another name for the Holy Spirit, is the unifying force that generates, transforms, and sustains the union between God and humanity (Sermon 88; see also Radler 2010, 171).[5]

Flowing out, therefore, is the first of three motions that Eckhart attributes to God. The divine love that overflows into creation is the same love that gives birth to the incarnate Son in the world, who, together with the Father, sends forth the Holy Spirit—the true manifestation of divine love. Marguerite of Porete expresses a similar concept of the outpouring of God, saying that "God the Father possesses the divine power of Himself without receiving it from any other. He possesses the outpouring of His divine power and gives it to His Son," who is then joined to creation (Porete 1993, 143). For her, as for Eckhart, God flows outward into the world through the Son and who, with the Father, sends the Spirit. This flowing out of the divine power into creation, into something other than God, engenders a separation between God and God's creation.

Sin and the cares of this life make yet another distinct separation between God and God's creatures. Human conceptions of God, however accurate, cloud our vision and distract our souls from the true essence of the Godhead. We seek God with our hearts and minds and think that we serve God and remain faithful to the divine will through our good deeds, but all our thoughts, prayers, and actions amount to nothing. They do not bring us closer to union with God. In fact, according to Eckhart, all our actions serve only to draw us further away from that much desired union. But Eckhart merely mirrors the thought of Marguerite, who asserts that no human can accomplish works of true divine goodness without first dying to self, stripping the self completely of one's will, and flying to heights of union with the Trinity (Porete 1993, 145–6).

Breaking Through

Our dependence upon our own immanence keeps us from transcending back into God—the topic of Eckhart's second love in the process of union with the ground of God. In the motion of the second love, Eckhart believes that the soul has two births: one birth into the world and one birth out of the world. The birth out (or break through) is spiritual—out of the world and into God (Sermon 7). The soul's attraction, distraction, and attachment to the world keep it from enjoying the fullness of God's love through perfect unity with the Godhead. Consequently, the soul must detach from its engagement with the world, let go of its love of life, friends, family, job, and even its love of God. It thinks nothing, knows nothing, wills nothing, and is nothing.[6] Consequently, to be one with God, the soul must let go of everything imagined so that absolutely nothing remains. As John Caputo (1978, 207) puts it, "the only way back to this inner ground is the way of detachment and letting be, the way which lets knowledge go for a silent unknowing, which lets willing go for a motionless rest."[7] Eckhart insists that "letting go" of everything enables a "letting be" of God in us (Sermon 7; see also Caputo 1978, 201). We've heard the saying, "let go and let God." Meister Eckhart would say, "let go and let God be God in you" (Sermons 7, 65; see also Caputo 1978, 201).

The soul must become nothing so as to break through into the nothingness of the ground of God in which nothing exists but God. In this movement of the break through into the Godhead, no distinction exists between God and the soul; the soul becomes God by becoming one with God (Sermons 6, 7; see also Caputo 1978, 213). Eckhart (2009) articulates the break through and union in terms of numbers. Before unity with God, a distinction exists between God and the person—that adds up to two. Union with the Godhead in nothingness, however, adds up to nothing. According to Eckhart (Sermon 16):

> This (human) spirit knows neither number nor numberlessness: there is no numberless number in the malady of time. No one has any other root in eternity, where there is 'nobody' without number. This spirit must transcend number and break through multiplicity, and God will break through him: and just as He breaks through into me, so I break through in turn into Him. God leads this spirit into the desert and into the unity of Himself, where He is simply One and welling up in Himself. This spirit is in unity and freedom.

By breaking through to the Godhead, the soul actually returns to the nothingness, to the primal seat of its origin before there was a cause or a creator, where the soul first lived in the being of God (Sermon 32; see also Caputo 1978, 214–15). Eckhart (Sermon 7, 40) says that

> when I am able to establish myself in Nothing and Nothing in myself, uprooting and casting out what is in me, *then* I can pass into the naked being of God, be ousted that I may be transplanted into God and become one with Him: one substance, one being, one nature, and the Son of God.

Eckhart equates this personal letting go of everything with being poor in spirit. The soul's poverty of spirit reduces us to nothing.[8] When we become nothing, the very

essence of God fills us. God's knowing, God's substance, God's nature, and God's essence become ours and then we truly are the sons of God, that is, so much like God's Son that we *are* God's Son (Sermon 24a).

Farley and Marguerite also claim that only when the mind empties itself of reason, ego, and desire does it become nothing. The soul dissolves into God like water dissolves into the sea. Channeling Marguerite of Porete, Wendy Farley (2015, 111) notes that "this is the purity of non-duality, where the 'sweet abyssed one' falls into the divine emptiness." The soul profoundly realizes the illusion of "self" or what Farley (2015, 112) labels "egocentric preoccupations" that include all of the qualities that characterize the human ego. The soul detaches from these preoccupations into the spacious nothingness that is then filled with divine goodness in which the soul's will actually *is* the divine will. In fact, the non-duality between the soul and the divine is so complete that Marguerite can say: "this Soul … sees neither God nor herself. But God sees himself … in her" (Porete 1993, 193). Mechthild of Magdeburg, a beguine contemporary with Marguerite, expresses the soul's breakthrough into the Godhead and this non-duality in terms of the unity of the human and divine will into one as pure love. In beautiful poetic praise, she extolls the pleasures of intimacy with God, asserting that "pure love finds rest in God alone because the two of them have a single will, and no creature is important enough to disturb them" (Mechthild 1998, Book 3.24). Eckhart expresses the same concept surrounding the break through into the divine, stating that "My eye and God's eye is one eye, and one sight, and one knowledge, and one love" (Farley 2015, 112; see also Sermon 4).

The Birth of Son in the Soul

Breaking through into God results in the third kind of love: God giving birth to the Son in the soul, filling us with the being of the Son in perfect union. The birth takes place in the soul only as the soul rests in the ground of God with perfect stillness, in the silence of nothingness, where no images, no thoughts, no activity or understanding interrupts the perfect, quiet union with the Godhead. In this silent union, the soul has no power of itself; it lies passive and receptive to nothing other than the divine essence. Eckhart (Sermon 1) states that:

> here nothing but rest and celebration for this birth, this act, that God the Father may speak His word there, for *this* part is by nature receptive to nothing save only the divine essence … Here God enters the soul with His all … God enters here the ground of the soul.

In other words, the soul's return to God so unites it with the Godhead that the soul and God share one ground, one essence, one nature.

Consequently, at this point, the soul and God are one in perfect unity in the ground of God. No distinction exists between God and soul. Because the Son has already flowed out from God and takes part in this unity of the soul, "God the Father gives birth to the Son in the ground and essence of the soul, and thus unites Himself with her" (Sermon 1). In other words, the soul assimilates into the unity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Eckhart expresses this union by saying that

"we, by the love of the Holy Ghost, being unified into His Son, shall know the Father with the Son and love ourselves in Him and Him in ourselves with mutual love" (Sermon 88). The Son that God birthed eternally is the same Son that God births in our soul. The soul draws its being as a son from the very being of the Son. Consequently, there is no division between the Son and the soul—they are truly one (Caputo 1978, 222).[9] We are sons of God through the same being that makes Jesus the Son of God. We shall be like him for we shall see him as he is (1 Jn. 3:2).

In the ground of God, the Son's very nature is born in us. Eckhart expresses the puzzling notion of our possession of the Son's nature by saying: "God could not make me the son of God if I had not the nature of God's Son, any more than God could make me wise if I had no wisdom" (Sermon 7, 1). Thus, we share one nature with God's Son. The shared nature is a natural outcome of unity because, for Eckhart, "in the heavenly realm all is in all, and all is one" (Sermon 7, 47; see also Caputo 1978, 216). Because the Godhead brought forth the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the soul's sharing of God's ground and essence also means it shares the nature of the Son. In fact, the Son himself prays for this very event, asking: "as you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us … The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one" (Jn. 17:11, 21–3).

For Eckhart, however, we do not become one in the sense that we are one of the persons in the Trinity. Although there is only one Son, one nature of the Person of the Word, we must share oneness with the One; but we share that oneness through adoption into God. Eckhart explains that there are not many Sons but just one, and we are the same Son as the one begotten of God. He says: "it [the Son] is the same and is he himself, who is Christ, born as Son in a natural way, and we, who are sons of God analogically—by being joined to him as heir, we are coheirs" (Sermon 40).[10] Eckhartian scholar Bernard McGinn (2011, 118) states this conundrum in simple terms:

> *Insofar as* there is only one real Son of God, if we are sons (as scripture expressly says), we are indeed identically the same Son *insofar as* we are sons, univocally speaking. From the perspective of our existence as created beings, however, we are sons by adoption and participation, analogically speaking.

Eckhart also distinguishes between the Son by nature and the Son by grace. Christ is the Son by nature, the Eternal Word who flows forth from the Godhead and is birthed anew in the soul. We are the Son by grace as the birth of the Son in our soul transforms us into Christlikness.[11] How this happens exactly, Eckhart does not know—none of us know because it has not yet been revealed to us. What Eckhart does know is that the union of the soul with the Son unites us with the Father so that the love of the union wells up in the Holy Spirit (Sermon 2, 18, 53; see also Caputo 1978, 223–4).

In similar manner, Farley (2015, 70) explains Marguerite's notions of the Trinitarian movements of God in human life by referring us to Eckhart's metaphor of the birth of the Son in the world saying: "through the love that the flowing godhead awakens in us, God is born in the world." Interestingly, rather than merely

the birth of the Son in our souls, the mystics speak of a restored intimacy with the Trinity. Through the love of the Spirit and the union of human and divine through the Son, a love for humanity awakens in the Father. As we detach from all earthly concerns and thoughts, the Son draws us into the Trinitarian love and we participate with the Godhead in the perichoretic flow of life (Farley 2015, 77). With romantic ardor, Mechthild (1998, Book 6.16) expresses her joy in Trinitarian union in which God sees God's self in her and she sees herself in the triune God. Lifted up into the Trinitarian heights, she sees the soul of Jesus, who says to her: "Welcome, my likeness." In other words, Jesus the Son unites the human nature with the divine nature, knitting us permanently to the Trinity, and enabling us to participate in the Trinitarian love of God (Farley 2015, 123, 143).

With Eckhart, Farley, and the beguine mystics, we see that the soul has now completed the full cycle in the circle of love. First, it has come into the world through the flowing out of God in creation, where it exists distinctly separate from God. Second, the soul experiences a break through back into the Godhead through detachment, letting go, and letting be.[12] Third, the soul undergoes the perfect union with the love of God through the birth of the Son in the soul and through which the Holy Spirit brings forth the fruitfulness of love. Eckhart seems to close the imagery of the circle of love at the fruitfulness wrought in the soul by the love of God. But with the help of Wendy Farley and the women mystics, I suggest that we can take Eckhart and the soul's journey one step further and keep the circle open by imagining a fourth love that expounds upon Eckhart's notion of fruitfulness, one that sees the Spirit-filled soul pouring forth into the world, living a life of action, and revealing the Son of God by loving God and neighbor. Through union with God, the soul actively bears the Son back into the world, making what was once a wasteland into a fruitful oasis of action.

THE POURING FORTH WITH MARTHA AND MARY

When I first began reading Meister Eckhart for this essay, I intended to critique him for ending the creature's journey into God at the birth of the Son in the soul rather than continuing on to a fourth motion of love that sends the soul back into the world to live and love in the power of the Spirit. After a more careful reading of Eckhart, however, I realized that, interestingly enough, with his interpretation of the Mary and Martha story, he actually points us in that direction, albeit implicitly. I argue that a latent movement of what I call "the pouring forth" lies buried within the work of Eckhart. Furthermore, I believe that in pouring forth back into the world, the creature must let go of detachment in order to affirm a reattachment to the *via activa* by loving others in the power of the Holy Spirit. The active life manifests itself as the love of God and neighbor, a life that only the Holy Spirit, as the expression of divine love, makes possible.

Eckhart (Sermon 12) echoes the beguines by asserting that the Holy Spirit *is* the love God. He preaches that "the greatest masters say that [the] love with which we love is the Holy Ghost … That is eternally true: in all the motion with which we are moved to love, we are moved by nothing but the Holy Ghost." The Holy

Spirit, therefore, plays a major role in the cooperation between the creature and the Trinitarian relationships as enacted in the active life of a soul united with God (Caputo 1978, 223). Eckhart spins the active and affective force of love into the unifying ingredient that engenders, nurtures, and sustains the transformative relationship between the creature and God (Radler 2010, 171). Love draws us in, love gives us birth in the Son, and love fills us so we can actively love God and others in the world. In fact, Eckhart believes that the love poured into us, the love that fills us up to overflowing and burns within us, is the love of God in the Holy Spirit (Sermon 43). He says that the Holy Spirit becomes burnt into us, and we become totally melted into the Spirit; therefore, we become wholly love. The Spirit sets our soul on fire so that we melt into God's Spirit and the Spirit into us. Thus there is no longer a distinction between the two (Sermon 59, 23; see also Radler 2010, 183). Consequently, when we act in love toward others, it is the Holy Spirit acting, not us.

Acting in love constitutes what I call the "pouring forth" into the world— the fourth love I find hidden in Eckhart's thought (Sermon 7). Eckhart expresses this thought as an extension of God's first love with which God loves all creatures. He says: "God loves all creatures equally and fills them with His being. And thus too, we should pour forth ourselves in love over all creatures" (Sermon 88). Developed into a more explicit fourth love, however, we act as bearers of the Son in the world through the Holy Spirit and pour forth into the everyday world to love God and all people equally (Sermon 88). Eckhart clearly describes the love we pour forth into the world through God's Spirit. If we love a person or ourselves more than we love another, we are not loving with the love of the Spirit. Eckhart concludes that all authentic love is the love of God, and since there is only one God and one love, all love must be loving everything and everyone equally, with the same love. We might object to this on the grounds that by loving the other, we are truly only loving God, thus making no room for alterity or the true love of someone totally other. But Eckhart would not reduce the love of neighbor to the love of God. In fact, because we are to love others equally, that love includes the totally other, even the outcast, the marginalized, the ones who are difficult to love. With the one love of God in the power of the Holy Spirit, we can love the other freely and authentically in the same way we love those who are more like us. Our loving others equally through the Spirit, then, embraces difference in the bond of love (Sermons 18, 40, 56, 57; see also McGinn 2011, 126–7).

Prior to Eckhart, Mechthild and Marguerite make very clear that the Trinity as a whole plays the active role of pouring out God's love in the world. Mechthild (1998, Book 3.9) believes that the Holy Spirit serves as the fertile power of love between the Father and Son. She claims that the Spirit, as "Lady Love," directs the power of God and the wisdom of the Son into the world by creating a "bride," a people of God to manifest God's love. Rather than articulating a distinction between divine persons, Marguerite stresses the work of the whole Trinity as the active agent in pouring out love and doing God's work in the world. She writes that her soul, "totally dissolved, melted and drawn, joined and united to the most high Trinity … has no thought nor word nor work except the practice of the divine Trinity" (Porete 1993, 81, 99, 143).

Like the beguines, Eckhart asserts that the love of neighbor is Trinitarian and has its foundation in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit manifested in the world through us. Not only does the love of neighbor flow out of us from the Holy Spirit, but this love also reveals to others our love for God and God's love for creation. Appropriately, Jesus provides the model for the equality of love so that we can truly say, "it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives within me" (Gal. 2:20) (Sermon 6, 88). In this way, we *are* the Son and the Son *is* we. Eckhart calls this the *incarnation continua*, or a continuing incarnation. God continually incarnates the Son in believers through the birth of the Son in the soul. Those souls then go out into the world as the manifestation of God's love (McGill 2011, 115).

Living out the love of God in this way requires the soul to remain in God while remaining active in the world. Here is where Eckhart makes a latent connection between speculative mysticism, a life detached from the world, and an affective and active mysticism that remains attached to the world in an appropriate way, while still maintaining the soul's unity with the ground of God. The first three of Eckhart's movements of love seem to exhort us to leave this world behind and live a life totally detached from emotion, desire, and ego. We leave immanence behind in favor of rising to the transcendent realm of the ground of God so that the Son of God is birthed in our souls. The fourth movement of love to which Eckhart tantalizingly alludes, what I call the "pouring forth" into the world, finds us with our feet back on solid ground. It's as if God draws souls into the Godhead, fills and fulfills them with God's essence, and, then, through the Spirit, breathes them back out into the world to a life of love in action (see Petry 1952, 13).

Although Eckhart clearly believes that we remain in a state of detachment, it is not an unimpassioned or passive detachment from the world, but one that denies the self. As we live in God and God in us, we live for others—attached to God for the service of others in the love of the Spirit—yet completely detached from selfish desires (Sermons 6, 47). Eckhart unequivocally states that we work only as creatures detached from ourselves and attached to God—God works in us and not we ourselves. He says that "a man should be so free of all things and works [detachment], both inward and outward, that he may be a proper abode for God where God can work." And if a person "is free of all creatures, of God and of self," then God finds a place *in him* to work (Sermon 87). Consequently, I interpret Eckhart to say that we live a life of detached attachment, of transcendent immanence, a life in which Eckhart exhorts us to love others with God's love, a love that drives us to suffer with those who suffer, to rejoice with those who rejoice, and to labor with those who labor (Sermons 40, 57). The soul that bears the Son of God, that loves as God loves through the Holy Spirit, transcends self-will, desire, and ego and lives a life of immanence and solidarity with others. We transcend detachment and descend back into the world as active participants in the lives of others, all the while remaining firmly attached in the life of God. In other words, we live in the eternal reality by loving others in the temporal reality (Sermons 40, 59).[13]

We don't love because there is a reason or a motivation to love; we love because we overflow with the love of God, and the love of God is without why (Sermon 17). As God is without why, so, too, love is without why, because God is love. But for

Eckhart, God's love loves actively, not passively. It loves in and with the other, not from a distance, from the heights of transcendence untouched by earthly events, human emotion, and unsightly suffering. Rather than advocating for a monastic life of passive prayer, uncontaminated by the cares of the world, too heavenly minded to be of any earthly good, Eckhart motivates his hearers to a life of activity, of earthly immanence that draws its strength from the transcendent ground of God.

For Eckhart, true contemplation, that is, authentic groundedness in God, is manifested in outward works, through the *appropriate* engagement with the world. Although he says that the soul united with God possesses "a waxing love for the eternal and a waning interest in temporal things," Eckhart, at the same time, exhorts his readers to an active life of service to God and others in the Spirit of love (Sermon 55; see also McGinn 2011, 157). But how do we harmonize such seemingly contradictory ways of life? Meister Eckhart tells us that we must be both active and empty at the same time—the emptiness that results from unity with the ground of God and the action that accompanies life in Christ through the Holy Spirit. In fact, the active life of good works done from what Eckhart calls a person's "essence" (from unity with the Godhead where we most authentically act as the Son) reveals true perfection in God (Sermon 9). Eckhart explains that all our service to others flows from the "well-exercised ground," where God and the soul unite as one. We work above time into eternity while simultaneously living in time. In other words, we serve others in the temporal realm while our essence remains in union with the eternal Godhead (Sermon 9; see also McGill 2011, 161). He refers to the active life as "living truth joyously present in good works … with an eternal will consonant with the loving commands of the Holy Spirit" (Sermon 9).

According to Eckhart, acts of love and mercy reveal our closest likeness to God. He says that it's better to leave the state of rapture with God and go help someone in need.[14] He insists that "temporal work is as noble as any communing with God, for it joins us to Him as closely as the highest that can happen to us except the vision of God in His naked nature" (Sermon 9). He contends that many people hope to reach a point where they are free from the hindrance of works, but the soul grounded in God and sent forth by the Holy Spirit is never free from works. Eckhart points us to the example of the disciples, saying that "*after* [they] received the Holy Ghost, they began to do good works" (Sermon 9). Sacrificing the self for others in service, therefore, is the greatest kind of love—greater by far than the inner life of silence and prayer. At the same time, Eckhart stresses both the importance of the inner life of contemplation grounded in the Godhead (transcendence) and of love made manifest in good works (immanence). One follows upon the other; the former makes the latter possible. A message much needed in a time when the contemplative life seemed to take precedence over the active life in religious orders.

We find Eckhart's most direct reference to the fourth love in his treatment of the Mary and Martha story, where he privileges immanence over transcendence, the *via activa* over the *via contemplativa*. He chooses the story of Mary and Martha in order to advocate for an active rather than a passive life, a life lived through the power of the Holy Spirit overflowing and pouring forth in loving service to others. He reverses the usual interpretation of Mary as the one who has reached a

deeper level of piety by sitting at the feet of Jesus, while Martha chooses to slave away at worldly pursuits in the kitchen. Instead, for Eckhart, Mary symbolizes the merely contemplative life, the life of visions, rapturous experiences with God, of silence without action, while Martha represents the perfection of a life of action born from contemplation. Martha, not Mary, transcends to the ground of God. Her soul reaches that union with God that then pours forth through the Spirit into the world as love in action.[15]

The fact that Jesus speaks Martha's name twice indicates that she possesses union with God and that she is able to be active and inwardly united with God at the same time. Eckhart says that "the first mention of Martha showed her perfection in temporal works. When he [Jesus] said 'Martha' again, that showed that she lacked nothing pertaining to eternal bliss" (Sermon 9). Martha, unlike Mary, has mastered detachment, letting go of self-will, desires, and ego, and transcended to God only to return to a life of immanence, activity, and life in the Holy Spirit, both loving God and others (Sermon 9; see also Caputo 1978, 204–5). Martha is so well grounded in God's essence, so united with the Spirit in her love of God and others, that activity comes naturally, as an overflow of love spreading out to others. Her groundedness in God enables Martha "to do outward works perfectly as love ordains" (Sermon 9). In other words, Martha's unity with the Godhead via total detachment makes it possible for her to live an active life appropriately attached to the love of God and others.

Eckhart explains that Martha engages the active life properly because she relates to the needs of others "with care" rather than "in care." The cares of the world do not distract her because she is steeped in the delightful presence of God. She is *with* the world in action while resting *in* God (Sermon 9; see also McGinn 2011, 160). Eckhart explains that Martha is careful, meaning, "'you are among things, but they are not in you,' for those who are careful are unhindered in their activity. They are unhindered who organize all their works guided by the eternal light" (Sermon 9). All of Martha's works serve to manifest her total union with God in eternity. Eckhart (Sermon 9) preaches that:

> Martha stood maturely and well grounded in virtue, with untroubled mind, not hindered by things, and so she wished her sister to be equally established, for she saw that she [Mary] was not grounded in her being. *Her* [Martha] desire came from a mature ground, wishing her [Mary] all that pertains to eternal bliss.

Life in God and works of love in the world are one just as God is one with the soul. Martha wants this same experience of oneness with transcendence and immanence, of contemplation and action, with God through the Holy Spirit of love for her sister Mary and we might say that she wants it for us (Woods 2011).

Although I like Eckhart's take on the application of the story, I believe he misses the point and maintains the dichotomy when he privileges Martha and basically sets Mary aside as ineffective in the real world. The guidance of Marguerite, Mechthild, and Wendy Farley leads to the idea of privileging *both* sisters and merging these two forms of life, the "Martha life" *and* the "Mary life" into one complete person. Farley (2015, 13) delves into the lives of women immersed in the beguine movement, who

"combined contemplative practices with compassionate action and who discovered among themselves a theology of divine love," the stage of love articulated by these women that the patriarchal church often neglected to communicate. Although these feminine mystics often suffered for their piety and compassionate action, they nonetheless serve as penetrating examples of how the experience of God in the fourth stage of human/divine love includes both contemplation *and* compassionate action.

After a person has reached union with God through the joining of the Son to the soul in complete unity, Marguerite explains how the contemplative life works in harmony with the active life, writing that these souls "sustain and teach and feed the whole Holy Church. And not merely they … but the whole Trinity within them" (Porete 1993, 122). In fact, she reveals God's goodness and love toward the world by serving others, a divine goodness and love she can understand only through a life spent in contemplation of the triune God (Porete 1993, 82, 122).

Following the beguines, Farley (2015, 117) asserts that "like Christ, though in created form, one part of human nature is eternally united with the Trinity, and another part is embodied on earth in individual persons." The experience of God in compassionate action to the world, therefore, involves both the transcendent (divine) and immanent (human) or, expressed in other words, both the *via activa* and the *via contemplativa*. Mary as the model of the *via contemplativa* and Martha as the model of the *via activa* illustrate *together* a compelling metaphor that incorporates the necessity for both the contemplative and the active life for the experience of God and for effectively ministering to the oppressed, the marginalized, and the abused of the world. Together they form the image of how each person can live *in* God, *for* God, and *with* God—a nice Trinitarian cooperative, a living liturgy so to speak.

A Mary/Martha life begins with contemplative practices that, according to Eckhart, give birth to the Son in the soul and, according to our mystics, awaken the Trinitarian love in our souls. But contemplation leads to wisdom, which then, in the words of Farley (2015, 146, 148), leads to the flowing together of "desire and compassion, love of God, and juicy, joyous love for humanity." Because divinity *is* active energy, divine wisdom gained through the *via contemplativa* must lead to concrete action or the *via activa* (Farley 2011, 103, 118). Farley (1998a, 21) expresses this double way of life, saying that "when one's heart turns to the living God it is flooded with love and cannot help but love others and be moved by suffering. As the life of faith deepens, this compassion becomes more and more universal." Active faith, therefore, "finds its meeting place with God to be in action itself" (Farley 1998a, 21). For Farley (1998b, 49–50, 2015, 5) then, the Mary life of sitting at the feet of Jesus in contemplation feeds and leads to the Martha life of action that radiates the love of God to the world as flames of justice and truth.

So, with Martha and Eckhart we ascend to the heights of the transcendent "God" only to return to a life of serving others. With *both* Mary and Martha, along with Farley and the medieval female mystics, we continue the cycle of ascending and descending, of the *via contemplativa* and the *via activa,* in the power of divine love, moved by the Spirit to the experience of God in compassionate action.

Since the desire and ability to experience God throughout Eckhart's four stages of love come only from God, I like to articulate this rebirth to new life in the

improvisational words of Bruce Ellis Benson in his book, *Liturgy as a Way of Life*. In agreement with Benson, I too maintain that, in the process, God acts as the "great improviser" and we act as God's embodied improvisational imitators. Benson (2013, 16) suggests that improvisation lies at the heart of the call of the divine on our lives as well as our response to that call—that "we are all improvisers in all that we do." He asserts that as partners with God in a dynamic relationship, God and we take what we have at hand and build upon what others have done as we participate in compassionate action in the world. With God, we rework, revise, rethink, and renew in a to-and-fro play ending in the transformation of the work at hand.[16] As persons who embody the Son in our souls, we live out the fourth love by constantly improvising, remaking, riding the flux and flow of life's diverse permutations and surprising twists in order to serve others with compassion. Beginning with the act of re-creation, God takes our existing personal chaos and, through improvisation, forms, molds, and creates something new and beautiful. We embody that new creation by going out into the world playing divine music, improvising as we go, re-creating order out of the chaos of a suffering world. As re-created beings, we always breakthrough to God in personal contemplation and return to the world in compassionate action—always in staccato and always in improvisation. Moreover, to satisfy Bruce Benson's concerns, we do not have to worry about copyright permissions—God owns the rights and gives us a carte blanche license to imitate and embody these divine tunes by living a life of *both* personal contemplation and compassionate action. This constant, creative flow of divine/human improvisation, effectively embodies God and re-creates restored order in a world conflicted by chaos.

NOTES

1. All sermon numbers will be cited from the Walshe translation (Eckhart 2009) unless otherwise indicated.
2. See Sermon 8 in which Eckhart (2009, 81) writes: "But only insofar as He is one and indivisible, without mode or properties, (can He do this): in that sense He is neither Father, Son, nor Holy Ghost, and yet is a Something which is neither this nor that." See also Sermon 53, 57, and 68.
3. For more on Eckhart's treatment of the spark, see Sermons 53 and 66. The spark is the part of God in us. Eckhart says, "this spark is so akin to God that it is a single and impartible one, and it contains in itself the images of all creatures, imageless images and images above images."
4. "God" only exists because we exist. If we didn't exist, "God" would not exist.
5. Eckhart explicitly says that love is the Holy Spirit in Sermon 7.
6. Meister Eckhart (2009), *Talks of Instruction*, section 6; Sermon 21; *The Nobleman*, 561–2; see Caputo (1978, 209).
7. See also Eckhart (2009), Sermons 6 and 87; *The Book of Divine Comfort*, 349–4.
8. Eckhart (2009), *The Book of Divine Comfort*, 339–44; Sermon 87.

9. Caputo (1978, 222) claims that Eckhart is not saying that the soul *is* the Son, but that he is stressing "the radical dependence of the soul upon the Son and its radical unity with the Son if it is to be called a Son."
10. Also quoted from McGinn (2011, 117). Eckhart culled this quote from one of his German sermons in order to make a defense of his beliefs.
11. Meister Eckhart (2009) *The Book of Divine Comfort*, 439–544; Sermon 87. See also Caputo 1986, 115–16.
12. For a nice treatment of the concept of letting go and letting be, see Caputo (1986, 118–27).
13. Eckhart very clearly states that, as detached souls, our work in the world comes directly from God, not from ourselves. So not only do we receive our being from God—God's actual being or essence—the power that makes us active in the world is God's power, God's being, God's acting, not ours.
14. See Eckhart (2009) *Talks of Instruction*, 10; see also Woods (2011, Kindle version loc. 1339); Sermon 39.
15. For more on Eckhart's treatment of the differences between Mary and Martha, see Caputo (1978, 203–5); Heffner (1991, 178–80).
16. Bruce Ellis Benson (2013, 47).

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CHAPTER TWELVE

After Metaphysics?: The "Weight of Life" According to Saint Augustine

EMMANUEL FALQUE

TRANSLATED BY CHRISTOPHER C. RIOS

"I am a burden to myself (*oneri mihi sum*)" (August. *Conf.* 10.28.39), and "I had become a great enigma to myself" (*factus eram ipse mihi magna quaestio*)" (August. 1997, *Conf.* 4.4.9).[1] Few phrases or formulas of patristic or medieval philosophy have known such a fortune as these in the history of philosophy, particularly under the influence of the interpretation that Martin Heidegger (1889–1976) gives it in his Freiburg Lectures of the 1921 summer semester. Coming from quite different texts and hermeneutical places—in the context of memory for the "burden" (*onus*) and that of grief for the "question" (*quaestio*)—these theological concepts, more or less acquired and transformed by philosophy, have produced in the twentieth century a so-called "hermeneutic of facticity" (Heidegger). The genesis of such a hermeneutic, drawn from Aristotle, Saint Paul, Saint Augustine, and even Luther, is well established today (see Sommer 2005). Measuring its repercussions remains, or then remained, unaccomplished. If Heidegger draws from Augustine in the sense of deriving everything from him by transforming him, does Augustine himself escape from Heidegger, this time in the sense of departing from him and quite naturally doing without him as well as his interpretation? In other words, this time in a synchronic and not a diachronic reading of the history of thought, can and should one read Saint Augustine (AD 354–430) not in opposition to, but rather against the grain of Heidegger, so that what makes Augustine a failure (Augustine as "too Greek" according to Heidegger) in fact serves as his great achievement (Augustine as "non-Greek" according to Jean-Luc Marion) (see Falque 2009)?

"After metaphysics: Augustine?" The very title of our subject supposes or presupposes the possibility and even the reality of, if not a metaphysical, then at least

a post-metaphysical Augustine. The intention of this is clear, and at the very least justified. After centuries of purely historical and sometimes historicizing exegeses of Augustinian thought, it was necessary to come and think *with* it rather than to think *on* it, to embrace it more than to objectify it—it was necessary, finally, to bring to light what of it remains unthought, and not only to repeat or reformulate what it has always already said. In short, and one must say it from the outset: Saint Augustine is non-metaphysical or post-metaphysical, at least insofar as the mystical mode of his thought can neither be translated nor reduced to the epistemological and ontological categories of classical metaphysics.

Nevertheless, the question arises and does not cease reappearing. What is the price we must pay for the detour from the thought of Saint Augustine outside metaphysics, this change of course? Every retreat has a cost that should also be evaluated, at the risk of undertaking ventures that are precarious, to say the least. For what is essential, at least in our eyes, is not only what comes "after" metaphysics, but rather what comes "after its end (*après de son après*)." Indeed, thought is held back, or at the very least falters, wondering if such and such an author does or does not belong to the so-called "metaphysical sphere." We know this because it was irrevocably demonstrated, such that no one could deny it now:

> for a medievalist, this characterization of the essence of 'Aristotelian' metaphysics [as theology or ontotheology], in fact, is for the most part valid for *one of the Latin interpretations of Avicenna* which emerged in the School and which, through the neo-scholastic bias of the nineteenth century, decisively permeated the Heideggerian vision of metaphysics: Scotism
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> (de Libera 1992, 72–3)[2]

which in actual fact refers to Thomas of Erfurt. In other words, at least when it is defined as the ontotheology that must be overcome, metaphysics withers away for lack of actually being found in the history of philosophy. Is this to say, then, that metaphysics and its overcoming no longer have an object? Far from it. For what the renunciation of the overcoming of metaphysics awaits is not the return to the past alone, but the anesthetization of thought in a "dogmatic slumber" which no longer knows how to ask questions. Thus, the question of what comes "after" metaphysics, if it remains necessary, is no longer essential in our eyes. One day it will also be necessary to ask about what comes "after the end." It will be necessary, in other words, to ask what precisely one does "after," that is, "after" determining if some author does or does not belong within the sphere of the metaphysical.

A step further must be taken, not "after" or "against" metaphysics, but "in" metaphysics itself or "in" the history of thought generally. We have shown this elsewhere, and there is no need to return there, so many are the texts speaking in favor of this interpretation and so dazzling their evidence (see Falque 2015, 25–46). Saint Augustine is not "non-metaphysical" or "trans-philosophical," nor "outside of the language of metaphysics" (see Marion 2012, 8–10). To the contrary, he feeds on the metaphysical and transforms it from within, rather than negating it and pretending to do without it. The category of "substance," taken from Aristotle's list of categories, in Book V of *De Trinitate* (Augustine 2016) is not rejected when it is

subsumed by "relation" in order to speak of the divine persons; to the contrary, it is transformed as much in its place as in its role so that the relational takes precedence over the substantial without yet blaming or rejecting it. The unity of persons by way of *ousia* is no more an accident of the Council of Nicaea than is the determination of their diversity by way of *hypostasis*. We run the risk of "dehellenizing" (H. Küng), even of "demythologizing" (R. Bultmann), if we overcome (metaphysics) or want to separate (the orders) too much. The myth of pure faith might well betray the illusions of a pure discourse, although we might forget its fundamental rule: "the Hellenization of faith is the counterpart of the dehellenization of its content" (A. Grillmeier's response to Hans Küng). In short, and we will have understood it for having at least demonstrated it elsewhere within the Augustinian schema: "all categories 'change meaning (*mutantur*)' when they are applied to God" (Boethius 2004, *De Trinitate* IV), rather than being radically extracted and separated from their categorial role in the history of thought.

"After metaphysics: Augustine?" The question arises, to be sure, and the question mark sustains the interrogation, which does not make a proposition of the question, but rather makes of it the place of a *disputatio*. Better, what comes "after the end" announces itself, for we will always hide by not looking at it, and by not opening a space to speak of it or attempting to think it. One could have confidence in the margins of philosophy, in the irruption of a total novelty, in the creation of totally refashioned concepts, but it is precisely the merit of Heidegger and a number of French phenomenologists to have escaped this. Even if we speak "after metaphysics," we do not cease doing philosophy in the context of or from within the already established framework available to us to think it. What has opened, though, particularly since Heidegger, is not a mere question of borderlands—as if one must always repeat the process through which such and such an author or such and such a concept do or do not belong to the metaphysical way of doing philosophy. In reality, the existential must take precedence over the categorial, the experiential over the categorical, and the descriptive over the analytic. What is no longer essential today is knowing or asking who or what belongs to the metaphysical according to a field on the whole always already predelineated. Rather, what is essential is to return to the experience or to the existentials that philosophy itself and the mystics in particular have perfectly expressed.

Saint Augustine was a trailblazer on this path. The "weight of life" weighs heavy there, precisely in that what is to be borne cannot be limited to the sphere of sin alone, as we sometimes mistakenly believe. A sort of "restlessness of the created" innervates the whole of Augustinian thought, which is not only the "excess of sin," but takes into consideration the meaning of the incarnate as well: "you provided me with some books by the Platonists, translated from the Greek into Latin," Saint Augustine confides in Book VII of the *Confessions,* nearly explicitly recognizing the prologue of John:

> not that the same words were used, but precisely the same doctrine was taught … that in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God; he was God. He was with God in the beginning. Everything was made through him; nothing came to be without him. What was made is alive with his life, and that life was the

> light of humankind … that God, the Word, was born not of flesh and blood … but of God; but that the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, I did not read there (*sed quia verbum caro factum est et habitavi in nobis, non ibi legi*).
>
> (August. 1997, *Conf.* 7.9.13–14)[3]

The flesh or Christian incarnation therefore escapes from the Plotinian soul or metempsychosis, not by going against or beyond them, however, but in passing through them in order to push them to the limit, to transform them, even emphasize their differences and there reveal the insufficiencies.

AND AFTER?

The issue at hand appears sufficiently clear today to demand attention. The Husserlian or Heideggerian readings of Augustine mark a sort of tailored reading, or rather one done with a "snip of the scissors." First, *tailored* because plying patristic and medieval philosophy to phenomenology has usually tilted the scale to the side of phenomenology rather than to mysticism. By looking for patristic and medieval roots in phenomenology (Thomistic *intentio* for Husserlian intentionality, Augustinian *cura* for Heideggerian care, and so on), we have forgotten the phenomenological roots of patristic and medieval philosophy themselves. Second, with a *snip of the scissors* because a sort of interpretive or predetermined reading somehow guides the phenomenologists in their relation to the authors of the tradition, sometimes in "cutting," and more than ever today here in the texts and *corpora* of Saint Augustine.

This is the case, by way of a first example, with Edmund Husserl's Augustinian reading, the predetermination of which Marion's *In the Self's Place* has brought to light (Marion 2012, 100). We know the final sentence of Husserl's *Cartesian Meditations* (2013)—precisely the one with which we pride ourselves for rooting phenomenological egoity in mystical interiority: "Do not go outside, come back into yourself. It is in the inner self that Truth dwells (*noli foras ire, in te ipsum redi, in interiore homine habitat veritas*)" (August. 2005, *De vera religione* 39.72). The Doctor of Hippo's formula is not used in the same way, or rather only for a while does it take on what the father of phenomenology acquires and claims as definitive. The following passage from the text of *De vera religione*, cut out precisely by Husserl, suffices to show this: "so that the inner self might find in accord *with its lodger* (*ipse interior homo cum suo inhabitore conveniat*)" (August. 2005, *De vera religione*, 39.72).[4] That the truth can be outside or exterior to the self is only one stage of ascent that patristic theology will call symbolic (*extra nos*). That it lodges or lives within the self is the moment of speculative theology (*intra nos*), and what Husserl alone retains. But that it resides also "above the self" (*supra nos*) is the stage of mystical theology, which is precisely what Husserl excludes. It is not enough that truth lives "in us," in which case phenomenology here rejoins the Augustinian moment of interiority. It is also necessary that it be recognized as "above us" inasmuch as *we are in it*, and not the inverse, which distinguishes patristic incorporation from phenomenological ipseity: "you were *more intimately present to me* (*interior*) than my most innermost being," Book III of the *Confessions*

specifies, "and *higher* (*superior*) than the highest peak of my spirit" (August. 1997, *Conf.* 3.6.11). What constitutes the weight of life is not first the weight of *my* life, even if it lives in or inhabits its life in good medieval mystical fashion, but the weight of *its* life as it takes up and incorporates my life. The "weight" in its positive sense, to which we will return (*pondus*), weighs all the more heavy as we are of two lives and grasp one in the other, thus defying all the laws of gravity and a false lightness gained by the self and always by the sweat of one's brow.

In the quest for a weight of life, which, in short, always first gives gravity to my life, Heidegger repeats the "tailored" Augustinian reading of his master, Husserl, the father of phenomenology, in the double sense of privileging the phenomenological and operating a hermeneutical break. The 1921 course on Augustine and Neoplatonism gets right to the point: "'Oneri mihi sum' [I am a burden to myself] … It is necessary to grasp more sharply this fundamental character in which Augustine experiences *factical life*" (Heidegger 2004, 151–2).[5] In other words, being a "burden to myself" (*onus*) in Heidegger is not in the first instant the coefficient of the heaviness of sin, and "trouble" or *molestia* speaks more to the restlessness of the living being than to the culpable impossibility of self-realization. No longer can the "fallenness of Dasein" in *Sein und Zeit* be called a sinful condition or be expressed in terms of a "fall" (see §38: "Falling and Thrownness," Heidegger 1962), no longer can Augustinian burden (*onus*), trouble (*molestia*), or care (*cura*) in the 1921 course signify the entrance into the condition of sin on the part of the believer distracted from God. And yet, the text of the *Confessions* on that point could not be clearer: "You were with me, but I was not with you … But now it is very different. Anyone whom you fill you also uplift, but I am not full of you (*tui plenus non sum*), and so *I am a burden to myself* (*oneri mihi sum*)" (August. 1997, *Conf.* 10.27.38, 28.39).[6] Paradoxically, to be full of the self is not to be full of God, not the inverse. In other words, and according to a law of inverse proportionality to which we must return, the less we are with God the more we are with the self, and the more we are with the self the more we weigh upon ourselves, upon our self, and our self alone, not God—thus we are heavier with the self and with the "burden of self (*fardeau du soi*)" alone (Matthew 11:30). It is not all a matter of weight alone, as we will show (*onus* or *pondus*), but of the manner with which we bear it and of who bears it: ourselves alone carrying the self, or God picking me myself up so as to bear my self with me. The dimension of sin—practically excluded or at the very least cut out by Heidegger in order to keep the weight or finitude alone and according to a system of stitching things together, at least at first and in the first reading—therefore loses what was the Doctor of Hippo's true intention for it: the relation between sin and grace. I am "laboring over myself (*laboro in me ipse*), and I have become for myself a land hard to till and of heavy sweat (*terra difficultatis et sudoris mihi*)" (August. 1997, *Conf.* 10.16.25). Such is the true and sin-filled sense of the "burden" (*onus*) that Saint Augustine actually had in view (with the implicit reference to the sweat of toil after the transgression in Genesis), that Marion (2012, 79, 152–9) has set out so well, and that Heidegger seems to have deliberately concealed (Heidegger 2004, 151–5).

So it must be concluded, at least in the first instant. Neither Husserl in the return to interiority without elevation ("It is in the inner self that Truth dwells"), nor

Heidegger in the determination of a weight of sin, or the burden taken only in the dimension of ontological care but in nothing religious or ethical ("I am a burden to myself")—neither Husserl nor Heidegger are faithful to the original intent of the Bishop of Hippo on a first reading: the return towards the self by elevation in God and through God, and the burden for the self in the sole absence of the true weight of love or the weight of God alone capable of relieving me. The twofold primacy of interiority over transcendence (Husserl) and neutrality over sin (Heidegger) grounds the one and the other upon a distorted reading of the Augustinian *corpus* that had to be rectified; hence the fair, legitimate, and indeed quite successful undertaking of Marion's *In the Self's Place: The Approach of Saint Augustine* (2012).

One question, or rather *the* question remains. For all that, is Heidegger mistaken? Can one so easily oppose the "self in its intonations" (Heidegger) and the "self in its temptations" (Augustine), or *Dasein* and Christ? As Marion (2012, 154) notes, "the stakes for someone who belongs to Christ (*pertinens ad Christum*) are essentially different from the stakes for someone who is identified with *Dasein*." At the very least, the question here appears essential. It is not a matter of a straightforward, more or less nuanced scriptural exegesis of the Augustinian *corpus*, but of the thing itself. For if belonging to Christ in some way extracts the human from the dimension of *Dasein* or from finitude as such, or better, if the relation of sin to grace determines created being so much so that it is nothing other than the thickness of the human apart from the sin-filled manner to which it is inclined, it is then to be feared that every burden (*fardeau*) is but the result of the original transgression from which in the end it is drawn, and that lightness is earned only in losing it or in forgetting what constitutes the density of our humanity. The true question in our eyes, therefore, is not or no longer knowing if Augustine is "too Greek" (Heidegger) or "non-Greek" (Marion), a metaphysician (Heidegger) or outside the metaphysical (Marion). Rather, it goes back to asking what can still be conserved from a reading of the Augustinian *corpus* that is still Greek—or, better yet, occidental—so that it may speak to our humanity today? "After metaphysics: Augustine," certainly. And after that? we dare to ask. If Augustine were still a metaphysician, would he have nothing more to teach us? This is of little importance, at least in our eyes. The true transgression or the true burden of sin is not that of metaphysics in its own field as well as in its historicity, but rather in the revision of an ethos of man so inappropriate to Christ and to us ourselves that it excludes all that constitutes the weight of our *Dasein* as well as of our humanity *tout court*. In so strongly opposing *Dasein* to the figure of Christ, does one not condemn *Dasein* as such if it is only the being-there separated from God and not phenomenological incarnation taken up by theological incarnation as well? It is all a matter of the "weight of life *tout court*," of the one that we bear, to be sure, but also of the way or manner with which we bear it and of the One with whom we bear it.

EXISTENTIAL RELIEF

After the end of metaphysics—whether at the hands of Augustine or another—therefore leads to the crucial question of the determination of the "after." We have said this since the introduction. One today must substitute for the problem of

questions pertaining to "borderlands" (belonging to metaphysics or ontology, the distinction of disciplines between philosophy and theology, and so on) an existential analytic of our "ways": the way or manner of being, of bearing, of undergoing (*épreuve*) the self in affectivity, as many ways or manners of being as the descriptions which the phenomenology to come will know precisely how to take up. In this "existential relief" then comes the main question of the weight of our humanity, of man *tout court*, to speak in terms that we have already employed, or of the determination of modern man as the "figure of finitude," to take up once again Foucault's locution, difficult to contest today (see Foucault 1973, 312 ff.). Is it possible that on this point Heidegger himself is not mistaken, including as it pertains to Saint Augustine? In other words—and just as the Christian commentators of the Heideggerian corpus since the publication of both the 60-volume *Gesamtausgabe* and the course on Saint Augustine (Heidegger 2004) keep repeating endlessly—is the break of the philosopher of Freiburg with the Doctor of Hippo such that the determination of the "burden for myself" in its finitude (*oneri mihi sum*) had absolutely nothing to do with what Augustine himself could have intended, including in our humanity as such? Both the "loss" of the friend and the "place" of Monica in relation to her son Augustine, also teach us what the "weight of life" is, for her as well as for us, and therefore what our "humanity *tout court*" is, although it be in sin.

Factus eram ipse mihi magna quaestio—"I had become a great enigma to myself" (August. 1997, *Conf.* 4.4.9). As Heidegger comments in taking up Kierkegaard, although this time without referring to the "anxiety of sin": "To comprehend is the range of man's relation to the human" (Heidegger 2004, 130, citing Kierkegaard 1980, 95). From the opening of *Sein und Zeit* we know that *Dasein* defines man in "its essential possibility of inquiring," and this possibility itself could indeed derive from a reading of Augustine upon which it is fitting to now linger (see Heidegger 1962, § 2). Indeed, the weight of life, in Augustine as well as in Heidegger, does not first or only derive from the burden (*fardeau*) of sin. It is a finitude of existing that the believer, like all men, must also bear, precisely within the limit of its created being: "There would not be sin if there was no finitude," an exegete highlights, commenting upon the *posse non peccare* of man in Saint Augustine, "But finitude *is not* sin" (Agaësse 1980, 68).[7] The "question" or *quaestio*, not that man asks about himself but that he *is* himself and for himself, appears precisely within a context in the Doctor of Hippo without reference to the issue of sin. It is in the grief of mourning, both the lost friend as well as the departed friend, that in Book IV of *Confessions* this definition of man as "made and woven in the form of a question" arises: "He was the same age as myself and, like me, now in the flower of young manhood. As a boy he had grown up with me; we had gone to school together and played together," remembers the one who will become a doctor. Much later, the text continues, the friend falls sick, "he lay for a long time unconscious," and after a short respite, "a few days later the fever seized him anew and he died. And I was not there" (August. 1997, *Conf.* 4.4.7–8). Grief (*dolor*) then overtakes the heart of the young Augustine: "I hated all things because they held him not, and could no more say to me, 'Look, here he comes!' as they had been wont to do in his lifetime when he had been away" (August. 1997, *Conf.* 4.4.9). Death or the experience of mourning, to say it otherwise and to translate it phenomenologically, is not the

"absence of a presence," as is the case with the beloved friend who has departed on a voyage and who will be well met again; but it is the "presence of an absence" all the more painful as it is known to be forever impossible to fill, and yet in waiting always wants to be fulfilled. Saint Augustine then concludes and admits defeat: "I had become *a great enigma to myself* (*mihi magna quaestio*), and I questioned my soul, demanding why it was sorrowful and why it so disquieted me, but it had no answer … Weeping alone brought me solace, and took my friend's place as the only comfort of my soul" (August. 1997, *Conf.* 4.4.9).[8]

We therefore will have understood it, despite the leaps that we sometimes make wrongfully with respect to the Doctor of Hippo, as well as with respect to the whole of his doctrine. The "weight of life" for him is also and primarily the "burden of death." Even in the *Confessions*, the question that we ourselves are for our self is born here and principally from anxiety, from the fear of passing away to be sure, but especially of dying or surviving the one who has already died. Finitude shapes the question itself, rather than the question arising from finitude. There is here no calling man *tout court* into question, nor even any hasty consolation of grief. "I had become a great enigma to myself (*factus eram ipse mihi magna quaestio*)" in that my determination as an enigmatic being constitutes my life as well as my death, or rather my life on the edge of my death and the death of the other. According to us, it is also a "positive restlessness of the created" over and from my state of created being in Augustine himself, one which the negative restlessness of sin would not totally conceal. To the inauthentic restlessness of sin is opposed the authentic restlessness of the simple fact of existing, as Heidegger emphasizes in his 1921 course on Augustine: "the *most uncanny power* of *tentatio* opens [itself] precisely in the most radical, genuine self-concern, so that only here has the most radical situation of self-experience been won, in a direction of consideration in which the self knows neither in nor out—*quaestio mihi factus sum*" (Heidegger 2004, 189).[9]

The confession, or rather the revelation of the mother Monica to her son Augustine some pages earlier, then confirms this vision of a "simple weight of life" included in the master of Hippo's thought. Informed in a dream, or rather living in a dream, Monica saw herself joined by her son in the very place where she herself did not stop being and wished for herself, that is, in God himself: "see that *where she stood* (*ubi esse illa*), *there also stood I* (*ibi esse et me*) … She took heed, and saw me standing close beside her" (August. *Conf.* 3.11.19).[10] Monica's being-self (*l'être soi*) therefore takes place with and alongside Augustine's being-self. Together, if they do not occupy the same place, at least they form a community by which they stand together. Yet the story does not end there. The "dream" takes another, new turn as soon as it is transformed into a "vision," as soon as it takes the form of an "account": "she had related the vision to me," the Doctor of Hippo confesses, "and I had launched into an attempt to persuade her that she must not give up hope of some day becoming *what I was*" (August. 1997, *Conf.* 3.11.20).[11] Here, things get interesting. The I and the you (*tu*) are instead reversed. It is no longer the undecided Augustine who must stand in place of or alongside the believing Monica, but Monica the confessor espousing the convictions of the as yet unbelieving Augustine. In this change of place or reciprocity of places,

the interchangeability of places in reality comes to a halt. It matters little that the believer embraces the unbeliever or the unbeliever the believer, even today, if the one and other do not recognize a Third (an other or God?) capable of holding them together in a common humanity. As Augustine writes with a rare confidence in the matter: "she promptly replied, without the slightest hesitation, 'No: I was not told, "*Where he is, you will be too* (*ubi ille, ibi et tu*)," but, "*Where you are, he will be* (*sed: ubi tu, ibi et ille*)"' (August. 1997, *Conf.* 3.11.20). The formula, at the very least celebrated, here will be understood in two ways, and perhaps could even be newly interpreted.

We admittedly will insist upon the "Third" (God), who gives to one *ego* (Monica) access to an alter *ego* (here, Augustine), and rightly so. As Marion (2012, 50) does well to highlight: "Saint Augustine thus anticipates the phenomenological doctrine, now widely admitted, of the third but immediately inverts it … And, in fact, God does become closer to me than the other to whom he alone nevertheless gives me access." However, there is more, or better, more even than the sole confession of the Third in Monica's response to Augustine. Someone else ("No, I was not told")—probably God himself, all the more universalized as he is not identified (*dictum est*)—imposed, or rather now put into law, the requirement for the Third or God to stand there where I myself am standing, and not the reverse: "Where *you are*, he will be (*sed: ubi tu, ibi et ille*)," and not "*Where he is*, you will be too (*ubi ille, ibi et tu*)." The "he" (*ille*) and the "you" (*tu*) admittedly designate Augustine taking the place of Monica or Monica that of Augustine. But more than them, or besides them, they each refer back to the One who comes to fully inhabit the place of man's being-there, more than they refer to the human caught or thrown upon the background of God. In other words, and according to a perspective that, in part, probably departs from the Latin intention of the Greek orientation of the Fathers of the Church, God comes "where I myself am" (*ubi tu*) rather than I myself going "where he is" (*ubi ille*). The path of humanization takes precedence over that of divinization, the encounter with God in the thickness of man introduces more than the fusion of man in the union with God. Thus, it is not only a matter of sin in Saint Augustine but also of pure and simple humanity.

So, we will insist here that we will be able to innervate the "existential relief" in order to make it visible, with or without consideration of the metaphysical sphere itself. Indeed, nothing indicates that Heidegger was mistaken on this point, including the reading of the Augustinian *corpus* itself, both in the determination of the burden of life (*oneri mihi sum*) as in that of its facticity (*mihi quaestio factus sum*). In both cases, as in every case, what first weighs heavy and puts things into relief is the fact of being or existing—even in being separated from God (*onus*), or in recognizing the heaviness of the enigma that I have become for myself (*quaestio*). The weight, indeed his entire weight, lies heavy—in Augustine, though, this is what constitutes the burden (*le fardeau*) itself that we must bear. No respite or way out is so easily given or delivered, at the risk, conversely, of forgetting that there is no lightness and resurrection except in the act of metamorphosis. Only a weight, or rather a "counterweight," then, will match the insurmountable grief or pain of the simple fact of existing, provided that a tragedy (such as the death of the friend) can with

difficulty be overcome: the weight or counterweight of love, rather than the mere burden of the self (*le fardeau du soi*), even that of death—*amor pondus* (the weight of love) more than that stemming from the *onus* (the burden of sin or death).

TWO WEIGHTS, TWO MEASURES

To measure the weight, or rather "to lose weight," is not to be disburdened of or freed from the self, since, when all is said and done, here being-self only with the self lies heavy upon the self. There is no facile flight of the ego in phenomenology nor in mysticism. The difficulty of living and of life itself in Saint Augustine, surprisingly, is first of all *temptatio* in the fundamental, ontological sense of the term (a trial, experience, ordeal (*épreuve*)—*tempto*: to touch, examine, to test or try out), and only then "temptation" as an ethical derivative of sin obviously rooted in the first meaning of the term. "Is not human life on earth a time of testing without respite?," the Doctor of Hippo wonders in Book X of *Confessions*. "Who would choose troubles (*molestias*) and hardships (*difficultates*)? … What middle ground is there between the two, where human life might be free from trial (*non sit humana vita temptatio*)?" (August. 1997, *Conf.* 10.28.39). Let this be said, therefore, in order to avoid any drift in meaning here. It goes without saying that it is not a question of denying the sin-filled dimension of the "weight of life," nor the responsibility of the man who is bound to it. It remains the case that life itself, independent of its burden for me (*onus*) or its weight for God (*pondus*), remains a test and a trial to be lived as well as borne (*temptatio*)—a passage through and risk in experience (Heideggerian *Erfahrung*) more than mere affection in a lived experience (Husserlian *Erlebnis*). In "constant temptation," Heidegger (2004, 152) comments, Augustine "experiences factical life," and "understand[s] accordingly to what extent the one who lives in such saintliness, and on such a level of enactment, is necessarily a burden to himself." As the professor of Freiburg insists, according to an at least portentous formula, to reread the *Confessions* is to understand "how far the *tentatio* is a genuine *existential*" (Heidegger 2004, 191).

To be sure, we could again protest at the distortion of Augustinian thought, we could wish to focus everything upon sin and rest satisfied with the expectation of a life *in patria* in a quasi-impassible and quasi-disincarnate world. But what about the thickness of my life *in via*? What will happen to it if it acquires its particular rest-lessness from sin? Must rest and repose be so regulated that we no longer want anything from it, or even desire it? With "utility" (*utendum*) we will certainly limit the need to help each other, but with "enjoyment" (*fruendum*) this time we will have the place and the motivation for a life forever to be lived without losing oneself in the calm of an *ennui*, the repose of which could indeed frighten us. As *De doctrina Christiana* emphasizes, "Among all the things there are, therefore, those alone are to be enjoyed (*fruendum*) which we have noted … while the rest are to be used (*utendum*), *in order that we may come at last to a full knowledge of the former sort*" (August. 1996, *De doctrina Christiana* 1.22.20).[12] Even in love, he who keeps to the human approaches the divine, he who keeps to the utility of the *utendum* tends toward the enjoyment of the *fruendum*. From the

burden of the self in the ego (*onus*), both then and now, one should proceed to the weight of the self in the alter ego (*pondus*).

There are indeed in Saint Augustine "two weights and two measures," or rather what constitutes the weight is first its measure. To be sure, as we have said, "I am a burden to myself (*oneri mihi sum*)" from the moment that "I am not full of you (*tui plenus non sum*)." The *onus* of Book X of *Confessions* makes me my self, and the weight lies heavy precisely in that all of me is there, so much so that no longer could anything that is not me be included there, and still less taken up (see August. 1997, *Conf.* 10.28.39). It remains the case that in Book XIII, and therefore practically at the end of the text, another weight, or better a "counterweight," bursts in and sees to reversing the sense: "my weight is my love (*pondus meum amor meus*)," the Doctor of Hippo exclaims, "and wherever I am carried (*eo feror*), it is this weight that carries me (*quocumque feror*)" (August. *Conf.* 13.9.10). There are indeed two weights here: not only in that the weight of burden (*onus*) is distinct from the weight of love (*pondus*) but also and through that, this time in a Christian vein, the weight of the "downward attraction (*ad ima*)" characteristic of bodies is not identified with the weight of the place proper to love (*ad locum*) giving glory (*kabôd*, weight). As Augustine calls to mind, taking up Book IV of Aristotle's *Physics*: "A body gravitates to its proper place by its own weight. This weight does not necessarily drag it downward, but pulls it to the place proper to it" (August. *Conf.* 13.9.10). To be "weighed" in love is inversely proportional to the laws of physics. The more we weigh of "love," the more my weight is borne "in the self's place by God" (to take up Marion), and therefore becomes *light* for me. Conversely, the more we weigh of "hatred," the more my weight is borne "in the self's place by my self," and therefore becomes *heavy* for me. Paradoxically, and against all the human laws of weight, we become heavier in being *alone* than in being *together*, or better, more bowed down or grave in isolation than glorious in communion: "Filled with God, I undergo the impact of a weight oriented upward, while filled (in fact, stuffed) by myself alone, I undergo a weight oriented downward" (Marion 2012, 269).

And yet the question returns, or rather remains. Will the *amor pondus* or the "weight of love" take so much precedence over the "weight of finitude" or the "weight of the living being" for whom to love is in some way always to leave? Will the *amor pondus* take so much precedence over his or her being here below, as well as over this flesh, which constitutes our being-there? Nothing is less certain, at the very least in our eyes and in those of Augustine.

Beatitude is not merely "rest or repose," in the static sense of the word, which would have entirely annihilated what there is of the dynamic in man. Book X of the *Confessions* insists that the happy life consists rather in "joy in the truth (*beata quippe vita est gaudium de veritate*)," (August. *Conf.* 10.23.33), and *De musica* echoes in response: "pleasure … is something like the weight of the soul (*delectatio quippe quasi pondus est animae*)" (August. *De musica* 6.11, cited and commented upon in Marion 2012, 266). Upon earth as in heaven, we therefore do not cease "to enjoy" (*frui*) this time otherwise and without "using" or "spoiling" (*uti*). As Heidegger (2004, 144) remarks, in a note that he will largely forget in *Being and Time* in service of the existential of anxiety, "the being-delighted itself" is a "radical

reference to the self, authentic facticity … Thus, the desire to take delight (or the desire to avoid pain) is the real motive: having delight."

This joy, which now comes from God and not from men, therefore, is not in the Doctor of Hippo the "cessation of movement," neither the "loss of weight" nor the "loss of burden," such that Christian existence would then only be a weight-loss regime for a world which could no longer have flavor (*sapor*) or wisdom (*sapientia*). To be sure, Augustine admits at the opening of Book I of *Confessions* that "you have made us and drawn us to yourself, and our heart is restless (*inquietum*) until it rests in you" (August. *Conf*. 1.1.1).[13] And "in the Sabbath of eternal life," he awaits at the close of *Confessions* Book XIII, we hope to "rest in you (*requiescamus in te*)" (August. 1997, *Conf*. 13.36.51). Independent of the, at the very least, promised if not obtained rest, a sort of positive rest-lessness in enjoyment abides in man (or at the very least in God), a positive rest-lessness by which "you yourself, Lord, *are ever working, ever resting* (*semper operaris et semper requiescis*)," and "then you will rest in us, as now you work in us, and *your rest will be rest through us* (*et ita erit illa requies tua per nos*) as now *those works of yours are wrought through us* (*quemadmodum sunt ista opera tua per nos*)" (August. 1997, *Conf*. 13.37.52).[14]

When the category of "heavy burdens" (*onus*) therefore passes into that of "light weights" (*pondus*), it is not that the one or the other—carnal wrestlers or spiritual protagonists—no longer weigh down with all their mass or force; in fact, quite the contrary. Actually, lightness or heaviness in the "weight of life" matter little as soon as it is existentially examined and not only depicted from afar, always in advance and (metaphysically or not) predetermined. For the "easy yoke and light burden" (see Matthew 11:30) do not depend upon the weight in itself, but rather on the *way* or *manner* of taking it on and of letting oneself be accompanied. All weight is in fact heavy, because life quite simply "weighs heavy," if not from the burden of sin, at least from the gravity of existing. To conclude, one must affirm with Kierkegaard, heir to Saint Augustine, that "meekness" consists in "carry[ing] the heavy burden lightly," and "impatience" or "sullenness" in "*carry*[*ing*] *the light burden heavily*" (Kierkegaard 1993, 239).[15] The Christian does not differ from others "by being exempted from the burden," but reveals himself as Christian "in carrying it lightly": "The one who carries the beneficial yoke, and the one who, *heavily burdened*, carries the light burden [*fardeau*]—that one is a Christian" (Kierkegaard 1993, 245–6; see de Gramont 2001, 216–29).[16]

NOTES

1. Throughout the text, the author employs the literal and figurative senses of the French *poids* as "weight" and "burden," both of which may be read in the French translation of Augustine's "I am a burden to myself (*oneri mihi sum*)" as "*je suis un poids pour moi*." Since the author maintains the distinction in Latin between *onus* or "burden" and *pondus* or "weight," *poids* is translated as "burden" or "weight" according to the context. The occasional and unequivocal use of *le fardeau* for "burden" is indicated in the text.

2. Emphasis added.
3. Translation modified to reflect the French.
4. Emphasis added.
5. Emphasis added.
6. Emphasis added.
7. On this possible distinction of "finitude" and "sin" included in Saint Augustine (even if the second is "grafted" upon the first), so that man is created *mortal* (*mortel*) (capable of dying) but not *dead* (*mort*) (actually dying), just as he is created *peccable* (capable of sinning) but not *sinful* (actually sinning), see Falque 2016, 615–89, esp. pp. 649–66. See also Augustine 2000, *De Genesi ad litteram* VI.25, cited and commented upon on Falque 2016, 652: "The body of Adam is *mortal* through the condition of its animal body (*mortalis era conditione corporis animalis*), *immortal* through the goodwill of the Creator (*immortalis autem beneficio conditoris*)." This passage has been translated from the French to respect the author's cross-reference. For a circulating English translation, see the References.
8. Emphasis added.
9. Emphasis and brackets original.
10. Emphasis added.
11. Emphasis added.
12. Emphasis added. Translation modified to reflect the French.
13. Translation modified.
14. Emphases added.
15. Emphasis added.
16. Emphasis added.

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PART FOUR

Knowledge, Sound, and Hope

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Knowing God by Liturgically Addressing God

NICHOLAS WOLTERSTORFF

In Marilynne Robinson's novel *Gilead*, the character Pastor Ames claims that "The right worship of God is essential because it forms the mind to a right understanding of God" (Robinson 2004, 138). In line with this sentiment, the thesis I will develop in this essay is that participating in liturgical enactments is a way of gaining, deepening, and sustaining knowledge of God. More specifically, the thesis I will develop is that participating in the liturgical practice of *addressing God* is a way of gaining, deepening, and sustaining knowledge of God. By engaging God in the mode of address, we can come to know, and to know better, the one whom we address. We can become *attuned* to God, and remain attuned.[1]

There is, of course, more to liturgical participation than addressing God. In addition, there is listening when one is *being* addressed; for example, listening to the reading of scripture and listening to the sermon. And these, too, contribute to one's knowledge of God. Indeed, most people will think of these when reflecting on liturgical participation as a way of gaining, deepening, and sustaining knowledge of God. They think of addressing God liturgically not as a way of gaining, deepening, and sustaining knowledge of God but as a way of expressing knowledge of God acquired in some other way.

Imagine a liturgical enactment that consists exclusively of the people addressing God; at no point are the people addressed. Enactments of the Orthodox liturgy sometimes come close to that. I hold that participating in such a liturgical enactment is a way of gaining, deepening, and sustaining knowledge of God. We'll see how that works.

The sort of liturgical participation I have in mind is *fully compliant* participation. A person's participation is fully compliant if she performs all the verbal, gestural, and auditory acts prescribed for her and thereby also performs all the acts of worship prescribed to be performed thereby. What I have to say applies to many forms of participation that are not fully compliant. It applies, for example, to someone whose

only abstention from doing what is prescribed is that she doesn't kneel or stand when those are prescribed. But our discussion will be much less cumbersome if, throughout, we have fully compliant participation in mind.

TYPES OF KNOWLEDGE

Knowledge comes in a number of fundamentally different types. The type that has received far and away the most attention from philosophers in recent decades is knowledge that consists, at its core, of believing something—call it *doxastic knowledge*, from the Greek *doxa*, belief. I say, "consists at its core." Not every belief is a case of knowledge; obviously a false belief is not. And many true beliefs are also not cases of knowledge; a correct guess, for example. Philosophers have spilled much ink trying to identify what else is necessary for a true belief to count as knowledge.

There are two types of doxastic knowledge. One type is knowledge of the form, *knowing that so-and-so*; for example, knowing that Lansing is the capital of the state of Michigan. Since what's known in knowledge of this form is commonly called a *proposition* by philosophers, knowledge of this sort is commonly called *propositional knowledge*, sometimes, *de dicto knowledge*.

The other type of doxastic knowledge is knowledge of the form, *knowing*, *about something*, *that it is such and such*, commonly called *de re knowledge*. For example, knowing, about Lansing, that it is the capital of the state of Michigan.

A question that will come to the mind of some readers is whether *de dicto* and *de re* knowledge really are two different forms of knowledge, as opposed to two different ways of expressing the same item of knowledge. Isn't what one knows, when one knows that Lansing is the capital of the state of Michigan, the same as what one knows when one knows, about Lansing, that it is the capital of the state of Michigan?

It is not the same. Suppose that one is in the city of Lansing and is reliably told that the city in which one finds oneself is the capital of the state of Michigan, but one doesn't know that the city is Lansing, nor does one know the name of the city that is the capital of Michigan. Then one knows *about* the city in which one finds oneself, namely Lansing, that it is the capital of the state of Michigan, but one doesn't know *that* Lansing is the capital of the state of Michigan.

It's likely that some readers will find the distinction between *de dicto* and *de re* knowledge arcane and not easy to wrap one's mind around. I introduce it not out of a love for distinctions but because we will need the concept of *de re* knowledge in our subsequent discussion.

A form of knowledge that has also received considerable attention from philosophers in recent decades, although much less than doxastic knowledge, is *knowledge-how*; knowing how to do something, how to play the violin, for example, or how to lay bricks. Such knowledge is commonly called *practical knowledge*. A question that has received considerable attention by philosophers is the relation between practical and doxastic knowledge. No doubt practical knowledge often incorporates some doxastic knowledge. But might it be the case that practical knowledge is nothing but a species of doxastic knowledge?[2]

In recent years, a third form of knowledge has caught the attention of some philosophers, namely *knowing some entity*: some person, some animal, some stuff, some object, some way of acting, and so on. Such knowledge is now commonly called *objectual knowledge*.[3] Knowing a person—let me call it *person-knowledge*—is a species of objectual knowledge. In some languages, Dutch to name just one of many, objectual knowledge is marked off from doxastic and practical knowledge by distinct terms, in Dutch, *kennen* for objectual knowledge and *weten* for doxastic and practical knowledge.[4]

When I say that participating in the liturgical practice of addressing God is a way of gaining, deepening, and sustaining knowledge of God, the type of knowledge I have in mind is person-knowledge. I realize that, in classical Christian doctrine, God is *three* persons—a trinity of persons, rather than *a* person. The concept of *person* employed in this theological formula is obviously different from our ordinary concept of *person*. God is a personal being in three persons. I think no confusion will result from my saying that the sort of knowledge I have in mind, as gained, deepened, and sustained by liturgical participation, is *person-knowledge* of God.

Whereas in recent years there has been an extraordinarily rich discussion of doxastic knowledge of God by philosophers of religion, I know of only four contemporary philosophers and one theologian who have discussed person-knowledge of God at any length: the philosophers William Alston in *Perceiving God* (1991), Matthew Benton in his essay, "God and Interpersonal Knowledge" (2018), Terence Cuneo in his essay "Ritual Knowledge" (2016, 145–66), and Eleonore Stump in *Wandering in Darkness* (2010), and the theologian Sarah Coakley in her essay "Beyond 'Belief': Liturgy and the Cognitive Apprehension of God" (2013, 130–45). None of these five writers has taken note of gaining, deepening, and sustaining person-knowledge of God by participating in the liturgical practice of addressing God.

Practical Knowledge as Yielding Objectual Knowledge

Before I address my topic—gaining person-knowledge of God by participating in the liturgical practice of addressing God—I think it will help to have in hand a clear example of practical knowledge yielding objectual knowledge. Let me choose James Elkins' (1999) fascinating description, in *What Painting Is*, of coming to know paint by painting. There is, need I say, little similarity between paint and God! Nonetheless, in Elkins's description of coming to know paint by engaging in the practice of painting, we have an illuminating adumbration of several important points in our subsequent description of the person-knowledge of God that can be gained, deepened, and sustained by participating in the social practice of liturgically addressing God.

Elkins is an art historian; but before taking up art history he was a painter. He writes that he knows "from experience how utterly hypnotic the act of painting can be, and how completely it can overwhelm the mind with its smells and colors, and by the rhythmic motions of the brush" (Elkins 1999, 6). I will focus first on what he says about the practical knowledge that the painter acquires, and then on what he

says about the objectual knowledge of paint that this practical knowledge yields. In Elkins' discussion, these topics are interwoven; to some extent they will unavoidably be interwoven as well in my presentation of his thought.[5]

The practice of painting, says Elkins (1999, 193, 9),

> takes place outside science and any sure and exact knowledge. It is a kind of immersion in substances, a wonder and a delight in their unexpected shapes and feels … Its materials are worked without [scientific] knowledge of their properties, by blind experiment, by the feel of the paint. A painter knows what to do by the tug of the brush as it pulls through a mixture of oils, and by the look of colored slurries on the palette … Artists become expert in distinguishing between degrees of gloss and wetness—and they do so without knowing how they do it, or how chemicals create their effects.

Elkins shows no interest in the chemistry of paint.

On Elkins' description, only a small part of the know-how of the painter consists of *de re* beliefs about paint or painting. Most of it is subdoxastic, located primarily in his eye and the muscles of his fingers, wrist, and arm. It is located in his acquired ability to make fine intuitive discriminations in the look and feel of paint and in his ability to interpret the significance of those differences. Such knowledge "can just barely be taught, and it can never be written down" (1999, 18). Elkins notes that it was traditionally thought that there were rules for painting and that those rules could be taught; it was the project of art academies to teach the rules to novices. Painting, on Elkins' account, is beyond the reach of any "routine education." It's not that there is nothing about the know-how of painting that can be taught by routine education; rather, much, if not most, of the know-how of the painter does not consist of following rules that were formulated and taught him by some teacher.

Let us move on from Elkins' description of the practical know-how of the painter to his description of the artist's objectual knowledge of paint that his know-how gives him. "Painters learn substances," says Elkins:

> Long years spent in the studio can make a person into a treasury of nearly incommunicable knowledge about the powderiness of pastels, or the woody feel of different marbles, or the infinitesimally different iridescences of ceramic glazes. That kind of knowledge is very hard to pass on, and it is certainly not expressed well in books on artist's techniques … But it is a form of knowledge.
>
> (1999, 22–3)

"Painters know paint by their bodies," Elkins says (1999, 104).

> 'Body' is a standard painter's term for the heft of the paint, its resilience and sturdiness. Paint that has no body is 'thin' or 'lean,' and apt to disappear into the crevices of the weave … Other paint is called 'fat,' and it adheres to the canvas in lumps and pats, reminding even the most absentminded viewer that the object is a painting, and not a landscape.
>
> (1999, 104)

"There is so much to learn about even the simplest substances" (1999, 34), says Elkins. "Each paint [has] its particular feel, its quirks and idiosyncrasies, or it cannot take its place in the mixtures and blendings" of the painter (1999, 67).

Elkins offers a flurry of detailed descriptions of what it is about paint that painters learn. The common thread in these descriptions is that the knowledge of paint that painters acquire is knowledge of the distinctive character of different paints: what different paints are like, how different paints act and react, their causal powers and dispositions. But words cannot capture what it is that a painter knows when he knows what is distinctive of a certain paint. Poetic though many of Elkins' descriptions are, one does not, by reading them, come to know paint as Elkins knows paint. His objectual knowledge of paint, like his practical knowledge of how to paint, is largely subdoxastic. Many of those who take painting lessons in the hope of becoming painters never acquire the requisite know-how and consequently never get to know paint, except in the most elementary way. Knowing paint eludes them. So they beat their head against the wall, or give up and do something else.

Before moving on, let me give a simple personal example of subdoxastic practical knowledge yielding subdoxastic objectual knowledge. I know how to type using all ten fingers and without looking at the keyboard. This knowledge-how does not consist of applying beliefs that I possess about how to type; the knowledge is embedded in the muscles of my fingers. The fact that I know how to type implies that I also possess objectual knowledge of the layout of the keyboard. But I am unable to describe or sketch the layout; I do not possess the *de re* beliefs concerning the relative location of the keys that would enable me to do that. When learning to type, I must have formed beliefs about the layout; I would then have had *de re* doxastic knowledge of the relative location of the keys. But if so, that memory disappeared long ago. My objectual knowledge of the layout of the keyboard is now entirely subdoxastic, lodged in the muscles of my fingers.

Gleaning from Elkins

I remarked that in Elkins' description of coming to know paint by painting, we have an adumbration of several important points in our subsequent description of coming to know God by liturgically addressing God.

First, and most important: in Elkins' description of coming to know paint by painting we have a clear example of practical knowledge yielding objectual knowledge. Elkins came to know paint by engaging in the practice of painting. So too, I claim, one can come to know God by participating in the practice of liturgically addressing God.

Second, learning how to paint, as Elkins describes it, does not consist of learning how to apply beliefs about the properties of paint acquired by reading books or listening to lectures on the chemistry of paint. Elkins did, of course, have beliefs about the properties of paint. But many of those beliefs were acquired by engaging in the practice of painting; the practice preceded the beliefs rather than the beliefs preceding the practice. And much of his knowledge of paint was ocular and muscular knowledge, knowledge embedded in his eyes and in the muscles of his fingers, wrist,

and arm, subdoxastic knowledge, not knowledge in the form of *de re* beliefs about the properties of paint. Probably some of it did not even reach the level of awareness.

So, too, I will argue, learning to participate in the practice of addressing God liturgically does not consist of learning how to apply beliefs about God that one acquired in some other way. One acquires beliefs about God by engaging in the practice; and a good deal of the knowledge of God acquired by engaging in the practice is not in the form of *de re* beliefs but is subdoxastic.

Third, the knowledge of paint that Elkins acquired by painting was acquired by bodily interaction with paint: seeing it, smelling it, mixing it, feeling it on one's brush. It was, in that way, very different from the knowledge of paint that a chemist has. So, too, the knowledge of God acquired by liturgically addressing God is different from the knowledge of God articulated by theologians.

Fourth, the knowledge of paint that Elkins acquired by painting was not just a smattering of items of knowledge; that would not count as *knowing paint*. What he gained was a sense of the *character* of paint, or rather, of different kinds of paint—a sense of what is distinctive of paint of different kinds. So, too, the knowledge of God acquired by liturgical participation is knowledge of what is distinctive of God. A point implicit in Elkins's discussion is that the sense a painter acquires of the distinctives of different kinds of paint comes in degrees; one can know a certain paint very well, or not very well. So, too, with liturgically acquired knowledge of God.

KNOWING A PERSON

To make my case, that knowledge of God can be gained, deepened, and sustained by participating in the liturgical knowledge of God—that we can thereby become attuned to God—it will be necessary to spend some time discussing person-knowledge in general; the understanding that the typical reader brings to the discussion will not be sufficient.

Only recently have philosophers devoted sustained attention to objectual knowledge in general, and to person-knowledge in particular. I regard the two articles by Matthew A. Benton already mentioned—"God and Interpersonal Knowledge," and "Epistemology Personalized"—in which he develops an analysis of person-knowledge in the context of a thorough acquaintance with the recent literature on the topic, as a state-of-the-art discussion of the issues. So rather than striking out on my own, let me present, respond to, and appropriate elements of Benton's analysis. Benton's discussion is rich and detailed. Here, I must neglect that richness and confine myself to presenting its highlights.

Strictly speaking, what Benton offers is not an analysis of what it is for one person to know another but of what it is for two persons to know each other; *interpersonal* knowledge he calls it. Benton's focus on interpersonal knowledge is not incidental on his part. He affirms a principle that he calls "symmetry":

> SYMMETRY: S knows R, only if R knows S.
>
> (Benton 2018, 425)

It's not clear to me why Benton holds this principle of symmetry. Although most of the cases he cites are examples of interpersonal knowledge, it seems clear to me that, in general, S can have person-knowledge of R without R having person-knowledge of S. Accordingly, with an eye on my subsequent analysis of our liturgical knowledge of God, I will delete, from my presentation of Benton's thought, the interpersonal component. Participating in the liturgical practice of addressing God is a way for the participants to gain knowledge of God; it is not a way for God to gain knowledge of the participants.

Benton's discussion is shaped by the distinction between knowing *a person* and having *de re* doxastic knowledge *about* that person; for example, knowing, about a person, *who* she is, so that one can identify her.[6] He observes that our ordinary English term "knows so-and-so" is ambiguous on this point. He writes, "the 'S knows NP' construction can take a propositional use and an interpersonal use" (Benton 2017, 818). He holds—rightly, in my judgment—that the locution "S knows so-and-so personally" is not ambiguous in this way; it consistently refers to what I have been calling "person-knowledge." It makes sense to say: "I know Rebecca, although I don't know her personally."

What, then, is Benton's analysis of *knowing someone personally*? He writes (2018, 423):

> "Two people might have excellent knowledge of each other by working in the same institution and learning about each other from web research, or internal literature, or from the say-so of colleagues. They recognize each other's faces, they might go to the same committee meetings and hear each other offer suggestions, and so on."

Nonetheless, they might not know each other personally. What's missing? Referring to the epistemologist Ernest Sosa's discussion of person-knowledge, Benton (2017, 822) writes: "Sosa notes that knowing a person requires an acquaintance-like perceptual contact." The requirement of "acquaintance-like perceptual contact" is satisfied in the case Benton imagines. So what, then, is still missing?

What's missing, says Benton, is an "encounter" of a certain sort. He highlights three features of this encounter. First, knowing someone personally "requires treating another subject *as a subject*, that is, as an 'I' treats an individual 'you' … for example in the language of address or in joint attention to objects or topics of conversation" (2017, 821). If two people have "never addressed each other in conversation or properly met, it would seem they don't yet know each other personally" (2018, 423).

Second, the encounter must yield a meeting of minds. In knowing someone personally, "the mind of the known subject itself [is brought] right into the subjective life of the knower's mind" (2017, 823). Knowing each other personally—interpersonal knowledge—is "a state of minds meeting" (2017, 823). Whereas knowledge that "is a state of mind consisting in a subject's attitude to a (true) proposition … interpersonal knowledge [is] a state of minds [plural], involving a subject's attitude to another (existing) mind" (2017, 813).

Third, the "acquaintance-like perceptual contact" must function essentially in bringing about this meeting of minds. Knowing someone personally requires perceptual contact with the other person in which one "[learns] facts from them first-hand," that is, "not mediated by transmission through someone else's mind" (2017, 822). This contact need not be "in the flesh perceptual contact" (2017, fn. 21). It might be "technologically mediated" and still be a "meeting of the minds." "Thus, two people could interpersonally know each other entirely as pen pals or phone pals or chat room pals" (2017, 824). Such technologically mediated knowledge would be deficient in that the two persons would have little or no "qualitative knowledge of mannerisms, facial expressions, mood patterns, and so on" (2017, 824), and little or no knowledge of who the other person is, that is, little or no knowledge that enables one to identify the other person by, for example, visual recognition. "For mature subjects, interpersonal knowledge typically brings with it some knowledge-who by which the known person can be individuated" (2017, 824–5). But that's not essential to knowing someone personally. What's essential is that one gains some of one's knowledge of the other person directly from the other person without the mediation of another person's mind. "Some of what one learns about [the other] is learned from, because it is given to one by, the [other person]" (2017, 822).

Such knowledge comes in degrees. "Through personal encounters, people can progress from being mere acquaintances to being friends, to close friends, to intimates or lovers. Increase in personal encounters, once there are enough of them, makes for interpersonal knowing" (2018, 425). There is probably

> a context-sensitive threshold for how well S knows R, or how often S and R have had personal interactions in order for S to count, in a given context, as knowing R personally. In some contexts knowing someone interpersonally requires more than just having met once … In other contexts, even when one hasn't met someone multiple times, one can in principle still count as knowing someone: 'Do you know R?' 'Yes, I just met her for the first time yesterday.'
>
> (Benton 2017, 825)

Appraising Benton's Analysis

Although Benton places a great deal of emphasis on his claim that knowing someone personally requires having treated them as a subject by, for example, addressing them as "you," that claim seems to me mistaken. I must, of course, *regard* them as a person. But I might know someone personally without ever having had occasion to address them, or in some other way to *treat* them as a person. It's not true, so far as I can see, that if two people have "never addressed each other in conversation or properly met, it would seem they don't yet know each other personally" (2018, 423).

That leaves us with two core intuitions on Benton's part as to what constitutes knowing someone personally, both of which seem to me essentially correct. To know someone personally, I must have some "acquaintance-like perceptual contact" with them, and/or with their speech or actions. That contact need not be face-to-face, in-the-flesh, contact; it may be technologically mediated. Her appearance may be mediated to me by television or Skype, what she says may be mediated to me

by phone or by texting. But in one way or another, she must be presented to me, given to me, revealed to me; and at least some of my knowledge of her must be "anchored" in that.

Second, I must acquire, in this way, a sense of her mind, says Benton. "Mind" seems to me too restrictive, at least when interpreted as it ordinarily would be interpreted. In knowing someone personally, one acquires a sense not only of how they think but of how they feel, of what they love, of what they invest themselves in. One acquires a sense of their character, of what is distinctive of them, of what makes them "tick."

It turns out that knowing someone personally has the same fundamental structure as knowing paint in the way that Elkins came to know paint: to have an Elkins-like knowledge of a certain paint, one must have a sense of its character, its distinctives, acquired by perceptual contact with the paint.

Beyond Benton

Suppose that I have never met Reuben. Nor have I ever seen him, either in person or on any electronic medium such as television, Skype, and the like. Neither have I heard him speak, neither when in his presence nor by way of telephone and the like. Nor have I read anything he has written. But Jennifer, a good friend of both of us, has been with him often and talked with him at length. Her personal knowledge of him is deep. And she has transmitted to me so much of what he is like that I feel I know him well, better than I know a good many of my friends. I know what drives him, how he thinks, what makes him tick.

I would hesitate to say that I know Reuben *personally*, perhaps because, to use Benton's terminology, my knowledge has been "mediated" through "another person's mind." But if asked whether I know Reuben or just know some things about him, I would unhesitatingly say that I know *him*. I have a good sense of his character, and I have acquired my sense of his character by way of someone who knows him well personally transmitting her sense of his character to me. Although I myself don't have perceptual acquaintance with Reuben, nonetheless, by way of Jennifer's transmission, I have a sense of his character that is *anchored in* perceptual acquaintance with him—anchored in *her* perceptual acquaintance. That's why I know *him*, and don't just have *de re* knowledge of things *about* him. Although I don't know him personally, I have person-knowledge of him

AN UNUSUAL EXAMPLE OF GETTING TO KNOW A PERSON

I now invite the reader to imagine an example of a quite unusual way of getting to know a person. Imagine someone—let's call her Hannah—who has emigrated from the old country with her parents and her siblings except for one brother, Jurian, who declines to emigrate because he has just landed a high position in the secret service of the government. He tells Hannah, before she leaves, that he is eager to receive frequent letters from her, but that his position makes it impossible for him to reply

on any regular basis. On occasion, she may receive a message from him by way of a courier. And every now and then he will send a gift.

Hannah writes Jurian faithfully, interweaving news about her doings in the new country with expressions of her ardent love for him, reminiscences about their good times together in the past, her pride in him for the high position he has secured, praise for what he is doing, according to reports that occasionally come her way, requests of various sorts, concerns of hers that she hopes he can do something about, and so on.

Hannah marries and has children. When the eldest of her children, Ben, is in his early teens, Hannah notices him watching intentely as she writes to Jurian. One day he asks whether he can also write to Jurian—for him, it is *Uncle* Jurian. Hannah says, "Of course." But she has never told him anything about Jurian, other than that Jurian is an uncle of his in the old country and that Jurian loves to receive letters but cannot answer them on any regular basis. She has not shared with him the few communications she has received from Jurian, nor the reports that have come her way about his doings. Although she gladly allows Ben to look over her shoulder when she is writing to Jurian, for reasons she doesn't explain, she never talks to Ben *about* his uncle. So what is Ben to write?

"Why not copy what I write," says Hannah; your uncle will love getting a letter in his nephew's handwriting. So that's what Ben does: he copies his mother's letters to Uncle Jurian. On occasion, Hannah varies the practice. Sometimes she says aloud the next sentence, and they write it down together. Now and then she dictates a letter for Ben to write to his uncle. Where "I" in his mother's letters refers to her, the "I" in Ben's letters refers to him, of course.

Ben finds much in his mother's letters to Uncle Jurian that is striking, especially the reverential tone that she adopts toward Jurian, the ardent love for her brother that she expresses, and the range of concerns that she seems to think he can do something about. When his mother writes "I love you," he faithfully copies the sentence even though he isn't entirely sure that he does love his uncle. After some time, he is quite sure he does. Writing to his uncle that he loves him has ignited in him love for his uncle.

Gradually, Ben gets the hang of how to address his uncle in a way that befits his uncle's high position, and the hang of which sorts of things it is appropriate to tell him and ask him. Ben begins to interpolate a few sentences of his own into the letters of his mother that he copies. Then, one day, he asks whether he can write his own letter. His mother says "Go ahead." Before he sends it off, he shows her what he has written. "That's fine," she says.

My question now is this: has Ben, in this curious way, gotten to know his Uncle Jurian? Has he gained a sufficient sense of his uncle's distinctiveness, and has he gained that knowledge in the right way, for his knowledge to count as person-knowledge of his uncle? I would say that he has, or may well have. Hannah knows Jurian from having grown up with him. In the curious way described, she has transmitted much of what she has long known of her brother to Ben. What she transmits is anchored in her perceptual acquaintance with Jurian. Not all of what she knows in this way can be transmitted, of course. Some of it cannot be captured in

words: the way he walks, for example, the way he gestures, the timbre of his voice. But as we saw above, one can gain a sense of someone's distinctiveness sufficient for knowing the person without oneself having perceptual acquaintance with the person. Over time, Hannah has transmitted to Ben much of what can be put into words that she knows, by acquaintance, of Jurian's distinctiveness. And that may be enough to count as Ben having person-knowledge of his uncle. Should he someday meet his uncle and engage him in conversation, he might well respond: "Uncle Jurian is just as I expected him to be!"

KNOWING GOD BY PARTICIPATING IN LITURGICALLY ADDRESSING GOD

It's time to employ what we have learned about person-knowledge in general to the topic of this essay, namely gaining, deepening, and sustaining knowledge of God—becoming attuned to God—by participating in the liturgical practice of addressing God. Just as Ben learned how to address his uncle by engaging in the scripted action of following the example of his mother, so one learns how to address God by engaging in the scripted action of participating in the liturgy.[7] And just as Ben came to know his uncle by learning, in the way described, how to address him, so one comes to know God by learning how to address God liturgically.

There may be some people who have never participated in any liturgical enactment but have come to know God by reading scripture. Such a person might, at a certain point, decide to address God in a way that accords with his biblically acquired knowledge of God. Or he might look around for an assembly of believers who address God in a way that accords with his biblically acquired knowledge of God and, if he finds such an assembly, join them in their worship. This person knows God before he addresses God. For him, addressing God is a way of putting into practice, or expressing, his knowledge of God. Among the things he has come to know of God is that God is worthy of praise. Now he puts that knowledge into practice by praising God for what God has done and is doing.

That is not how things go for most worshippers. They don't first come to know God and then participate in liturgical enactments in order to express the knowledge of God they have already acquired. In good measure, they come to know God by participating in liturgical enactments. Some of the knowledge of God gained by liturgical participation is acquired by listening to what is said when they are addressed by the reader of scripture and by the preacher; but much of it is acquired by participating in the scripted action of addressing God.

A central component of Christian conviction is that God has spoken by way of the prophets, by way of Christ and the apostles, and by way of Christian scripture, and that, by listening to what God has said in these ways, we learn what is distinctive of God. God is creator of heaven and earth, God is love, and so forth. The sort of liturgy I have in mind, when I say that knowledge of God can be gained, deepened, and sustained by participating in liturgically addressing God, is liturgy that is anchored in, and shaped by, God's revelation. Assuming that God has in fact revealed Godself in the way Christians claim God has, such liturgies are, one might

say, *reliable* with respect to the understanding of God explicit and implicit within them.[8] And they are *communitarian* with respect to that understanding. A liturgy devised by an individual to express his own haphazardly acquired personal "take" on God is neither reliable nor communitarian.

KNOWING GOD BY TAKING FOR GRANTED, IN ADDRESSING GOD, GOD'S DISTINCTIVENESS

Let's identify some of the aspects of liturgy that account for the fact that one can gain, deepen, and sustain knowledge of God by participating in the liturgical practice of addressing God. Over and over in Christian liturgical enactments the people address God as *You*: "We bless You, O God," "We worship You," "We praise You," "We thank You," "We confess to You," "We petition You." The participants engage God in second-person address. In doing so, they take for granted that God is the sort of being whom it is appropriate to engage in that way. They take for granted that God is a subject. The thought that God is a subject never crosses the mind of most of them; nowhere in the liturgy does anyone declare God to be a subject. They just address God as "You" and, in so doing, take God to be a subject—the sort of being whom it is appropriate to engage in second-person address. Some of them, at some point in their lives, may form the explicit belief that God is a subject. Most of them do not; *being a subject* is not a component in their conceptual repertoire.

Add, now, that God is, in fact, a subject. Then, by participating in the scripted liturgical practice of addressing God as "You," they acquire some sense of what is distinctive of God. They gain some person-knowledge of God. Practical knowledge yielding person-knowledge.

In liturgically addressing God, the participants also take for granted that God is capable of listening, that is, capable of cognitively apprehending what they say to God. Otherwise, addressing God as "You" in the way they do makes no sense.[9] The thought that God is a listener also never crosses the mind of most participants; nowhere in the liturgy does anyone declare God to be a listener. In addressing God as they do, the participants just take for granted that God is a listener. Add, now, that God is, in fact, capable of listening. Then, by participating in the scripted liturgical practice of addressing God, they acquire some sense of what is distinctive of God. They gain some person-knowledge of God.

"We worship You, O God," say the participants, "We praise You," "We thank You." In addressing God in this way, the participants take for granted not just that God is a subject capable of listening but that God is a listening subject of a distinct sort, namely one who is worthy of worship, praise, and thanks. In some liturgies, there is an explicit declaration that God is worthy of worship, praise, and thanks; in many, there is not. When there is not, the thought that God is this sort of being probably doesn't cross the mind of most participants, certainly not of those who are young. In how they address God, they just take for granted that God is that sort of being.

Add, now, that God is, in fact, worthy of worship, praise, and thanks. Then by engaging in the liturgical practice of addressing God in these ways, they gain some sense of what is distinctive of God. They acquire some person-knowledge of God.

In the enactment of all Christian liturgies, the participants also address to God their confession of individual and communal sins and ask God for forgiveness. The point of doing so is that our sins are sins *against* God; they are wrongings of God. In addressing one's confession of sin to God and asking God's forgiveness, one is taking God to have been wronged, and thus to be the sort of being who can be wronged. Only the person that one wronged can forgive one for the wrong one did them. In no Christian liturgy that I know of is it explicitly declared that God is the sort of being who can be wronged; the participants just take it for granted in addressing to God their confession of sin.

Add, now, that God is, in fact, the sort of being who can be wronged. Then, by engaging in the liturgical practice of confessing one's sins to God and asking forgiveness, one gains some sense of God's nature, God's distinctiveness. One acquires some person-knowledge of God. At some point in one's life, one may form the explicit belief that God is the sort of being who can be wronged. Then again, the thought may never cross one's mind. This aspect of one's knowledge of God may remain subdoxastic.

My general point will now be obvious; it would be tedious to analyze additional examples. To participate in the liturgical practice of addressing God in accord with the script of some reliable Christian liturgy is to take God to be a subject who is capable of listening, who is worthy of worship, praise, and thanks, who can be and has been wronged, and so on. If God is as one takes God to be in one's address to God, then, by engaging in the liturgical practice of addressing God in these various ways, one comes to know God in those respects—or to deepen and sustain one's knowledge. For most participants, the knowledge of God acquired in this way is almost entirely subdoxastic.

We have been touching here on a phenomenon that pervades our lives, the phenomenon of gaining knowledge of certain aspects of reality by engaging in activities in which one takes for granted that aspect of reality. Every human being who lives past infancy has been socialized, this socialization consisting, in good measure, of being taught when and how to perform certain actions and when and how to participate in certain social practices. Anyone who performs those actions and participates in those practices takes for granted a great number of things about the world, herself, and her fellow human beings. If those things are as we take them to be, then, in taking those things for granted in what we learn to do, we gain objectual knowledge of the world, ourselves, and others.

An example: our objectual knowledge of the physical world includes knowing that the world existed before we were born. But nobody in the course of our socialization bothered to tell us that the world existed before we were born. We just learned to perform a wide variety of actions in which one takes for granted that the world existed before one was born. Another example: objectual knowledge of the physical world includes knowing that, in fundamental ways, the future will be like

the past as we have experienced it. But nobody in the course of our socialization told us this. We just took it for granted in a wide range of actions that we learned to perform.[10]

Much of what we take for granted in what we do is never explicitly believed by the ordinary person. It is *subdoxastic* knowledge. It never crosses the mind of most people that the world existed before they were born. If the question were put to them whether or not they believe this, they would say they do, with the possible exception of a few highly sophisticated philosophers.[11] But most people are never asked. I am not aware that any philosopher has ever articulated an analysis of what it is to take something for granted in what one does. But clearly any such analysis would have to be compatible with the fact that one can take something for granted in what one does without then, or ever, explicitly believing it.

Before we move on, let it be noted that it is by no means only when addressing God that liturgical participants take God to be a certain way. In closing their eyes and kneeling for the prayers, they take God to be a certain way. In receiving the Eucharistic elements, they take God to be a certain way. And so forth. Whatever they take God to be in performing the actions of some reliable liturgy, if God is in fact that way, then, by performing those actions they gain, deepen, or sustain knowledge of God as being that way. One of the tasks of liturgical theology is to bring to the level of explicit belief such knowledge of God.

AN INTERRUPTION

Let me interrupt my train of thought for a moment. I said that there are probably many worshippers who confess their sins to God and ask God for forgiveness, thereby taking for granted that God can be wronged, without ever having the thought, then or later, that God can be wronged. However, there might also be some who do have the thought but reject it. A good many philosophers and theologians have explicitly rejected the proposition that God can be wronged. What we take for granted about God, in confessing our sins to God and asking God for forgiveness, is contradicted in a good many philosophy and theology classrooms.

Now suppose that the philosopher or theologian who claims that God cannot be wronged participates in the liturgical actions of confessing his sins to God and asking God for forgiveness. He does not just say the words without performing any illocutionary act thereby, nor is he a revisionist who does something else when he utters those words than confess and ask for forgiveness. He is a fully compliant participant; he follows the script. He says the words that the script prescribes and thereby performs the actions of worship that the script prescribes to be performed thereby. He confesses and asks for forgiveness by saying the words. Does he or does he not possess the liturgically acquired knowledge of God as one who can be wronged? Can his explicit belief to the contrary inhibit his knowledge of God in that respect?

I think not. Recall an example I gave earlier. I know the standard layout of a typewriter (or computer) keyboard; the knowledge is in the muscles of my fingers. At present I cannot, however, diagram the layout. Suppose I do my best to visualize

the layout and diagram what I think it is, but get it partly wrong. Do I, or do I not, know the keyboard layout? I would say that I do, notwithstanding my false beliefs on the matter. The proof of the fact that I do know the layout is that I don't make mistakes in my typing—except for mistakes caused by the fact that my fingers are not as nimble as they once were.

And so, I think, it is in general. If, in performing some action, we really do take for granted that reality is a certain way and reality is that way, then we know reality as being that way even if we explicitly believe that it is not. The philosophical skeptic who has brought himself around to believing that the world did not exist before he was born nonetheless knows that it did. His knowledge that it did does not have the form of a contrary belief; it has the form of subdoxastic objectual knowledge embedded in his actions.

I am reminded, here, of the mocking treatment of the philosophical skeptic by the eighteenth-century Scots philosopher Thomas Reid (1858, 183–4). Imagine that I am a skeptic about the existence of an external world:

> I resolve not to believe my senses. I break my nose against a post that comes in my way; I step into a kennel; and, after twenty such wise and rational actions, I am taken up and slapped into a mad-house … If a man pretends to be a skeptic with regard to the informations of sense and yet prudently keeps out of harm's way as other men do, he must excuse my suspicion, that he either acts the hypocrite, or imposes upon himself.[12]

Participating in some liturgical enactment is, of course, very different from employing one's senses to get around in the world, and denying that God can be wronged is very different from denying the existence of an external world. But it's true in general, so it appears to me, that the objectual knowledge one has of some aspect of reality, on account of taking that aspect of reality for granted in what one does, is not inhibited by holding a belief to the contrary.

GAINING KNOWLEDGE OF GOD FROM THE BASIS-SPECIFICATIONS OF LITURGICAL ADDRESS TO GOD

Participants in liturgical enactments do not just declare, "We worship You, O God"; they specify *for what it is* that they worship God: for God's wisdom, God's power, God's love, whatever. They specify the basis of their worship. And they do not just declare, "We praise You, O God"; they specify the basis of their praise of God. So too for their declarations of gratitude; they specify the basis of their gratitude. Let me call these specifications, *basis-specifications*. The basis-specifications of liturgical address to God are a second aspect of liturgy accounting for the fact that one can gain, deepen, and sustain knowledge of God by participating in the liturgical practice of addressing God.

Eucharistic prayers provide a rich body of examples of basis-specifications. One example will suffice. Here are some lines from one of the Eucharistic prayers of the people in the *Book of Common Prayer*. The prayer is spoken by the celebrant:

> God of all power, Ruler of the Universe, You are worthy of glory and praise.
> At your command all things came to be: the vast expanse of interstellar space …
> and this fragile earth, our island home.
> From the primal elements you brought forth the human race and blessed us …
> You made us rulers of creation. But we turned against You …
> Again and again, You called us to return … And in the fullness of time You sent
> your only Son … to open for us the way of freedom and peace.
> Therefore we praise You, joining with the heavenly chorus, with prophets,
> apostles, and martyrs.
>
> (Book of Common Prayer, p. 370)

If the basis-specifications in this prayer apply to God, then by participating in this prayer, one learns many of the specifics of what God has done that make God worthy of praise. One gains person-knowledge of God.

The hymns that the people sing are another rich body of examples of the point. One example will again suffice:

> For the beauty of the earth, for the glory of the skies,
> for the love which from our birth over and around us lies …
>
> For the joy of human love, brother, sister, parent, child,
> friends on earth, and friends above, for all gentle thoughts and mild,
>
> For Yourself, best gift divine, to the world so freely given,
> agent of God's grand design, peace on earth and joy divine,
>
> Christ, our Lord, to You we raise, this our hymn of grateful praise.
>
> (Borger et al. 2013, #19)

The hymn consists entirely of basis-specifications. A newcomer to Christianity who participates in singing this hymn may not understand everything she is singing. But if she continues to participate in singing this hymn and others like it, and gradually comes to understand what the words refer to, then, assuming the basis-specifications apply to God, she increases in her person-knowledge of God.

The psalms the people sing, chant, or recite are another rich body of examples. Here are the opening lines of Psalm 147:

> Praise the Lord!
> How good it is to sing praises to our God;
> for the Lord is gracious, and a song of praise is fitting.
> The Lord builds up Jerusalem,
> and gathers the outcasts of Israel.
> The Lord heals the brokenhearted,
> and binds up their wounds.
> The Lord determines the number of stars,
> and gives to all of them their names.
> Great is our Lord, and abundant in power,
> with understanding beyond measure.

The Lord lifts up the downtrodden,
and casts the wicked to the ground.
Sing to the Lord with thanksgiving.[13]

Assuming that the basis-specifications in this psalm apply to God, by participating in voicing this psalm, one's knowledge of what God has done that makes God worthy of praise is deepened and enhanced.[14]

A point that's important to add here is that, in learning the basis-specifications of liturgical address to God, one not only comes to know God but also learns to see history and reality, including oneself, in a distinctive way. One learns to see the beauty of the earth and the glory of the skies as God's handiwork. One learns to see the joy of human love as God's gift. One learns to see human beings as turning against God and as called to return to God. One learns to see history as the arena in which God opens up for us the way to freedom and peace. One learns to see the righting of injustice as a manifestation of God's love and a sign of the coming of God's kingdom.

It's in the assembly, by participating in the liturgy, that one learns to see reality and history in these ways. But one's seeing things in these ways does not cease when one leaves the assembly. It carries over into one's life in the everyday. That's because that for which one gives God thanks and praise is mainly not for what God does in the assembly but for what God does in history and reality in general.

When the way of seeing history and reality that one has acquired liturgically carries over into one's life in the everyday, it often comes into conflict with alternative ways of seeing history and reality that are prominent in our culture and that powerfully impinge themselves upon us. The result, for many, is that their way of seeing things is bifurcated and unstable. They regard all human beings as possessing the ineradicable dignity of bearing the image of God. But they also regard some human beings as just scum. These two ways of regarding their fellow human beings compete for dominance in their minds without either one ever winning out.

In this section I have said nothing, thus far, about that form of address to God that consists of petitioning God to do something. Just as the worshippers do not content themselves with declaring "We praise You, O God," but go on to give specificity to their praise, so also they do not content themselves with declaring "We petition You, O God," but go on to give specificity to their petition.

The specificity is different in this case, however. When praising God, the worshippers give specificity to their praise by specifying the *basis* of their praise—by specifying what it is about God and God's doings that God is to be praised for. When petitioning God, they may also specify what it is about God and God's doings that is the basis for their petition. But, mainly, the specificity of their petitionary prayers consists of specifying what it is that they are petitioning God to do. By participating in these prayers, they learn the sorts of things for which it is appropriate to petition God; and from this, in turn, they learn something of what is distinctive of God. They advance in their knowledge of God. Most

liturgies include the people praying the Lord's Prayer. By participating in praying this prayer, they gain, deepen, and sustain knowledge of God. They become more attuned to God.

GAINING KNOWLEDGE OF GOD FROM THE ADDRESSEE-SPECIFICATIONS OF LITURGICAL ADDRESS TO GOD

There is a third aspect of liturgy that accounts for the fact that one can gain, deepen, and sustain knowledge of God by participating in the liturgical activity of addressing God. Just as the participants in liturgical enactments go beyond declaring that they worship, praise, and thank God to specify the basis for their worship, praise, and thanks, so also they go beyond identifying as *God* the one whom they are addressing to specify more fully what is distinctive of their addressee: "almighty," "creator of heaven and earth," merciful," and so on. These terms can be used to make declarations about God. But that's not how they are used when they are incorporated into address to God; they are used to specify the nature and identity of the one addressed. Let me call them *addressee-specifications*. By employing these addressee-specifications in their address to God, liturgical participants gain, deepen, and sustain knowledge of God.

Let's have a few examples. In the present-day Catholic Mass liturgy, the confession opens with the priest and the people saying, "I confess to almighty God …." When saying these words, the priest and the people are not *declaring that* God is almighty; they are using the addressee-specification term "almighty God" to *specify* the one to whom they are addressing their confession.

In "The Holy Eucharist: Rite One" of the Episcopal Church, one of the options for the prayer of confession, spoken by the priest and the people together, opens with the words, "Almighty God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, maker of all things, judge of all men …." When saying these words, the priest and the people are not *declaring that* God is almighty, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, maker of all things, and judge of all men. They are using these addressee-identification terms to *specify* the one to whom they are addressing their confession. Thereby they become more attuned to the one whom they are addressing.

In the Orthodox Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, the prayer the priest offers just before the public liturgy begins incorporates a flurry of addressee-specification terms: "O heavenly King and Comforter, Spirit of truth, Who art in all places and fillest all things; Treasure of goodness and Giver of life: come and abide in us, and cleanse us from all that defileth."[15] When saying these words, the priest does not *declare that* God is in all places and fills all things; he *specifies* the addressee of the prayer as one who is in all places and fills all things.

Parenthetically, what these examples show is that the addressee-specification terms incorporated into liturgical address to God come in a number of different grammatical forms. Some are adjectives: "almighty," "merciful." Some are nouns: "Father," "King." Some are verbal nouns: "creator of heaven and earth," "giver of life." Some are who- or that-clauses: "who art in heaven," "that takest away the sins of the world."

The prayer of the Trisagion in the Orthodox liturgy is an unusually flamboyant example of the last of these grammatical forms:

> O Holy God, Who restest in the holies, unto Whom the seraphim sing the thrice-holy song; Whom the cherubim glorify … Who didst bring into being all that exists; Who didst create man in Thine own likeness … Who givest wisdom and understanding to him that asked … Who hast deemed us, Thine humble and unmeritable servants, worthy at this hour to stand before the glory of Thy holy altar

Suppose, now, that the addressee-specification terms employed in some liturgical address to God do, in fact, fit God, then, in participating in addressing God in that way, one becomes more attuned to God. One gains, deepens, and sustains one's person-knowledge of God. If one of the addressee-specification terms employed is "creator of heaven and earth" and that term fits God, then, by participating in the liturgical practice of addressing God in that way, one's knowing God as creator of heaven and earth burrows more deeply into one's soul.

I am assuming, of course, that the person who shares in using the terms "almighty," "creator of heaven and earth," and so on in addressing God has some grasp of what those terms mean. If she shares in voicing the words but has no grasp of what they mean—because she's a small child, or because she doesn't know English—her knowledge of God is not deepened.

Grasping the meaning of the terms "almighty" and "creator of heaven and earth" comes in degrees, as does grasping the meaning of most terms. One has a better grasp as an adult than as a child; one adult has a better grasp than another. A liturgical neophyte learns to employ the term "creator of heaven and earth" in addressing God. At first, the knowledge of God that she acquires thereby is shallow. As she understands better what he is saying, her knowledge of God as creator of heaven and earth deepens. The better one understands the meaning of the addressee-specification terms used when addressing God liturgically, the deeper one's knowledge of God—assuming that the terms fit God.

IN CONCLUSION

Let me make three brief remarks in conclusion. First, there is a certain artificiality about my discussion. As I noted earlier, liturgical participants do not gain, deepen, and sustain knowledge of God only by participating in addressing God; they also do so by attentively listening to the reading of scripture, to the sermon, to the declaration of God's forgiveness and blessing. In practice, these two ways of becoming attuned to God—by addressing God and by attentive listening—are intertwined. I have abstracted the former from its intertwinement with the latter in order to get clearly in view this way of becoming more attuned to God.

If one holds, as I do, that by the reading of scripture and the preaching of the sermon God speaks to the people assembled,[16] and if one grants that, by attentive listening to what God says, one becomes more attuned to God, then liturgical knowledge of God is gained, deepened, and sustained both by God addressing the people and the people listening, and by the people addressing God.

Second, the clue to how it is that one becomes more attuned to God by participating in addressing God liturgically in a reliable liturgy is that liturgical activity is scripted activity. If, following no script, one just addresses God as one pleases, one is not, in so doing, advancing in one's knowledge of God—not even if one's way of addressing God happens to be right and proper.[17] One may be *expressing* one's knowledge of God, assuming that one's understanding of God is, in fact, knowledge, but one is not *gaining* or *deepening* in knowledge. In following a reliable liturgical script, one is *being taught* how to worship God. One is *submitting* to being taught. It's a distinctive form of being taught, consisting not in being taught by someone—although one may receive some coaching along the way—but in being taught by the script.

Third, because throughout my discussion I have had reliable liturgies and fully compliant worshippers in mind, I have said nothing about situations in which one should resist the formative influence of liturgy. But, of course, there are such situations. When should one allow liturgical practice to form one's understanding of God and when should one, instead, allow one's understanding of God to govern one's liturgical practice? When addressing this question, it might prove interesting to explore the similarities and differences between gaining knowledge of God by participating in the liturgy and gaining knowledge of God by accepting testimony. These are similar in that, in both of them, there is a "handing on." In recent years, philosophers have begun identifying and analyzing the situations in which one is entitled to accept (or warranted in accepting) what is handed on to one in testimony and those in which one is not. Are the latter situations similar to the situations in which one should not participate in what is handed on to one for one's liturgical participation?

To Those Who Yearn

There are a number of different ways of gaining knowledge of God, whether it be doxastic *de re* knowledge or person-knowledge: by reading Holy Scripture, by revelatory experiences of various sorts, by testimony, by following the arguments of natural theology. Over the centuries, philosophers and theologians have discussed, at great length, these ways of gaining knowledge of God. They have not, to the best of my knowledge, discussed gaining knowledge of God by participating in liturgically addressing God. I'm not sure why that is. Perhaps it's because they have assumed that, in addressing God, one expresses one's knowledge of God acquired in some other way.

There are many in our society who are confident that they know God very well. There are others who are confident that there is no God to be known. And then there are those who are inclined to believe that God does exist and who yearn to know God, and to know God better. The advice to be gleaned from our discussion is this: consider participating in addressing God, with whatever degree of compliance one can muster, within some rich liturgical practice that seems reliably grounded in divine revelation. Over the centuries this has proved to be, for many, one way of becoming attuned to the divine reality one yearns to know.[18]

NOTES

1. I addressed this same topic in my essay "Knowing God Liturgically" (Wolterstorff 2016). My treatment of the topic in this present essay is very different from and, in my judgment, a vast improvement over what I wrote there.
2. For an example of the attempt to analyze practical knowledge as a species of doxastic knowledge, see Stanley and Williamson (2001).
3. Some philosophers have argued that practical knowledge is a species of objectual knowledge. See Bengson and Moffett (2011).
4. For additional linguistic markers, see Benton (2017).
5. One of the most fascinating features of Elkins' discussion is his use, throughout the book, of alchemy to illuminate painting. Alchemy, he says, "despite all its bad press, and its association with quackery and nonsense … is the best and most eloquent way to understand how paint can *mean*: how it can be so entrancing, so utterly addictive, so replete with expressive force, that it can keep hold of an artist's attention for an entire lifetime. Alchemists had immediate, intuitive knowledge of waters and stones, and their obscure books can help give voice to the ongoing fascination of painting" (1999, 7). I will have to neglect Elkins' description of alchemy.
6. Benton (2017, 814–19) offers a number of considerations in favor of the conclusion that person-knowledge is not a species of doxastic knowledge. I find his arguments compelling. Rather than rehearsing them here, I refer the interested reader to his discussion.
7. I discuss scripted action in general in ch. 1 of *Acting Liturgically* (Wolterstorff 2018), and scripted *liturgical* action in particular in ch. 2.
8. In employing the concept of reliability at this point, I am, of course, gesturing toward reliability theories of propositional knowledge.
9. In *The God We Worship* (Wolterstorff 2015), I distinguish what I call "strong address" from what I call "weak address." In strong address, one takes one's addressee to be capable of apprehending what one is saying; in weak address, one does not. An example of weak address would be a child saying to his goldfish, "You sweet little things." When one considers the full range of liturgical address to God, it's obvious that such address is strong address.
10. I have adapted these two examples from Ludwig Wittgenstein's scattered remarks, on taking things about reality for granted in what we do, in his little book *On Certainty*. He argues that to say that we know that the world existed before we were born and that we know that the future will be more or less like the past is a strained use of the word "know," if not incorrect. I do not find his argument on that point persuasive.
11. Those highly sophisticated philosophers who say they do not believe this might nonetheless take it for granted in their everyday lives. Not only do we all take things for granted that we do not hold as beliefs; one can believe the negation of something that one takes for granted.

12. I discuss Reid's treatment of the skeptic in *Thomas Reid and the Story of Epistemology* (Wolterstorff 2001, ch. 8).
13. NRSV, adapted to remove gendered pronouns for God.
14. An unusually exuberant example of the point we are making here is the prayer in the Orthodox liturgy that occurs at the opening of the Anaphora: "It is meet and right to sing praises unto thee, to bless thee, to magnify thee, to give thanks unto thee, to worship thee in all places of thy dominion. For thou art God ineffable, unknowable, incomprehensible, the same from everlasting to everlasting … Thou didst bring us up from non-being into being; and didst raise us up that were fallen away; and left naught undone till thou hadst lifted us to heaven, and hadst bestowed upon us thy kingdom to come. For all these things we give thanks unto thee."
15. This flurry pales, however, before the flurry of addressee-identification terms in the anaphora of the so-called *Testamentum Domini* (probably fifth century): "Holy God, strengthener of our souls, giver of our life, treasure of incorruptibility, Father of your only-begotten, our Savior." The prayer then addresses Christ: "Grace of the nations, knowledge, true wisdom, the exaltation of the meek, the medicine of souls, the confidence of us who believe … the strength of the righteous, the hope of the persecuted, the haven of the buffeted, the illuminator of the perfect, the Son of the living God." The prayer then returns to addressing God the Father with an additional flurry of addressee-identification terms: "founder of the heights, king of the treasuries of light, visitor of the heavenly Zion, king of the orders of archangels, of dominions, praises, thrones, vestures, lights, joys, and delights, father of kings." Quoted from Jasper and Cuming 1987, 139.
16. See my essay "Preaching the Word of God" (Wolterstorff 2020).
17. There is the possibility, however, that the *Holy Spirit* uses this activity on one's part to enhance one's knowledge of God.
18. I thank Matthew Benton, Kelly Clark, Terence Cuneo, Stephen Wykstra, and Jennifer Zamzow for helpful comments on successive drafts of this essay.

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CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Beyond "Belief": Liturgy and the Cognitive Apprehension of God

SARAH COAKLEY

INTRODUCTION: HOW CAN LITURGY BE "TRUE?"

The Dominican Fergus Kerr records at one point the story of a precocious four-year-old boy, who commented thus after attending a solemn Christian liturgy that had greatly impressed him: "I know why churches are true" he said to his father. "It is because the people in them like singing and walking about in patterns" (Kerr 1986, 198, citing Martin 1973, 179).

Now admittedly this particular child was the son of British sociologist of religion David Martin, and had doubtless absorbed more than just musical sensitivity from the ambience of his family and from their Anglo-Catholic Eucharistic worship. But the child's intuition is striking, suggestive, and yet prima facie more than a little puzzling. The analytic philosopher might well balk immediately at his comment; for does it not seem peculiar that a liturgy, per se ("church," in the child's parlance) might—precisely through its music, its poetic hymnody, and its intentional bodily comportments (and not, at least according to this child's account, very obviously through any propositional content)—deliver, and even guarantee, "truth"? Is not this a category mistake? Is it not—literally—"beyond belief?"

Such an apparently weird suggestion, one might think, should come up more naturally in the world of the anthropologist (where, after all, "weird" things are precisely what are studied!) than in that of the philosopher. It reminds us, for instance, of Catherine Bell's insistence—building creatively on Bourdieu's understanding of "practice"—that ritual is *not* an optional frill that accompanies a rational commitment founded somewhere else (and previously), but is rather the irreducible purveying of such a commitment (Bell 1992, esp. 1–12, 182–96; see Bourdieu 1977). Or again, it recalls Talal Asad's memorable comment that contemporary secularized Northern Europeans lack faith not as a result of a failure in religious education, but on account of "untaught bodies" (1997, 48). But what

can *philosophy of religion* do with the idea that liturgy does not merely rehearse, or inculcate, the beliefs of Christian faith that have already been acknowledged rationally sometime previously, but that liturgy *in and of itself* purveys a particular kind of "truth?" It is the purpose of this paper to muse speculatively on this puzzle and on its accompanying epistemological implications.

To undertake this task, I am going to draw on three strands of thought that may not seem obviously to fit together. It will be my task to show that they can do so, and indeed that their braided force will together be stronger than their individual impact. The first strand relates to the sophisticated discussion of the category of "religious experience," and its putative veridical force, that has developed within analytic philosophy of religion in the last part of the twentieth century. Here, I shall utilize William P. Alston's *Perceiving God* (1991), already established as a classic within this discussion, and both criticize and stretch its arguments for my own purposes. By setting Alston up as my straw man, I shall at the same time attempt to rescue and extend one aspect of his thinking—that of "doxastic practice"—for my own purposes. Second, I shall turn to some rich insights from recent feminist epistemology to bolster the force of those considerations I have taken forward from Alston. (This second move may also strike the listener as odd: surely secular feminist philosophy and analytic philosophy of religion are hardly compatible bedfellows? Yet I hope to be able to demonstrate that the interests of the former can well assist the extension of arguments of the latter toward a positive consideration of the veridical force of *embodied* religious practice.) Third, and finally, I shall refer the discussion as developed so far to a rich, but neglected, strand of thought in patristic writing about the so-called "spiritual senses." If I am right, this tradition may help us to develop a way of thinking about the relation of liturgical sense experience to the question of theological "truth" in a way that fits none of the mainstream philosophical accounts of cognition with exactitude. It nonetheless holds promise for an alternative that could explain how liturgy purveys theological truth in a distinctive, and irreducible, way. If I am right, then well-conducted liturgy gives us access to a certain kind of "truth" that only liturgy can supply; and, moreover, it gives us that access because a particular epistemic *apparatus* and form of cognition is being trained precisely in the performance of liturgy itself.

But before I go any further I need to rehearse a few important distinctions. I have so far been wielding the language of "liturgy" and "truth" (not to speak of their relation) with a certain carelessness. But it could be that liturgy and truth are related to one another in a number of different possible ways, and that "truth" is then differently construed according to the relevant scenario. One possibility, for instance, is that ordinary propositional truth *is* at stake after all (as, for example, in the recitation of the propositions of the Nicene Creed at the Mass), but that the bodily movements of the liturgy enable those truths to be personally assimilated or internalized in ways that mere noetic assent could not achieve. Or, second, it could be that liturgy actually *delivers* some theological truths in a particular and distinctive way, through illocutionary or performative utterances that are unique to its undertakings, and thus irreducible (for example, "This is my body;" or, "I pronounce you man and wife"). Or, third, it could in principle also be that liturgy,

in virtue of certain repetitive belief-forming practices, could actually mount a "justification" thereby for true beliefs. Or, finally, and more subtly (as I was hinting just now), it could in addition be that the deeper "truth" at stake in the liturgy is not propositional at all, but "truth" in the particular sense intended by Christ when he said, according to John, that *he* was himself "the way, the truth, and the life." The intersection of liturgy and "truth" would then consist in the liturgy's capacity to train one's sensibility to the presence of Christ in the same liturgy, and to knit one more deeply into his "true body" through sacramental ingestion, attention to his Word, and the sharing of his communal love in the Spirit. Note that these four possibilities are not, as far as I can see, mutually exclusive; and that the last, if defensible, could supply a certain undergirding incubus for the others.

But let us now see how far into this nexus of possibilities Alston's existing epistemological project can take us. His is a project certainly not without sophistication.

PERCEIVING GOD: "DOXASTIC PRACTICES" AND THE SENSES

Alston's *Perceiving God*, which has already, and justly, achieved the status of a classic, seems to me to have two basic prongs to its epistemological argument that are somewhat problematically related. The first is the prong that sets out to do a complete end—run around Kant (and indeed the entire hermeneutical tradition that later succeeded him), and insist on the possibility of *direct* and "unmediated" perceptions of God, unbesmirched by any cultural *addita*. The success of this first prong's strategy has always seemed to me dubious, and this for several reasons. First, it has to rely on assertion, rather than empirical demonstration, to insist that *certain* epistemic moments abscind from all linguistic and hermeneutical shaping (Alston 1991, 37). Second, it implicitly valorizes thereby a Jamesian reading of "religious experience," which is sporadic, elevated, and supposedly self-authenticating. Yet this sort of reading (let us call it the "zapping" factor) actually fits very ill with the patient, repetitive—even humdrum—practices of liturgy, prayer, and service with which most Christian lives are taken up. Further, the interpretation Alston gives here of the great Christian mystics (such as Teresa of Ávila and John of the Cross) to support his "zapping" interest has to distort their intentions by excerpting supposedly "unitive" moments from their wider ascetical narrative of progression. Third, Alston himself has to admit that in any case high-point experiences such as he understands to constitute "mystical perception" are not the lot of all. Finally, and more gravely, there is a danger in Alston's appeal to a "Theory of Appearing" that God will be treated as another—albeit unusual—item in the universe to be "perceived," rather than appropriately conceived as the sui generis creator and means *of* all perceptions. Let us then for the meantime leave this prong of the argument to one side: it may be that Alston's Theory of Appearing is an unnecessary distraction from the epistemic project enshrined in *liturgical* practice.

The second prong of Alston's book, however, is much more interesting for our current purposes. It is one influenced—by Alston's own admission—by Wittgenstein's

understanding of a "form of life," and by Reid's account of "credulity"; and it is undergirded by a trenchant appeal to "reliabilism." Here, the notion of a "doxastic practice" is introduced to emphasize the epistemic importance of *repeated* acts of sensory cognition. It is argued that sensory experience involves both "input" and "output," with a consistency of success in accurate perception that pragmatically "justifies" our reliance on the deliverances of sense experience, all "defeaters" notwithstanding. (Of course, if I have a high temperature, a brain tumor, or have just consumed half a bottle of Scotch at speed, I should be wary of such reliance.) The circularity here is undeniable, but not *vicious*; I have flouted no epistemic duties in my "justified" belief that, under normal circumstances, my senses give me accurate information about the world.

For Alston, of course, the argument then leads to a conjoining of the two prongs so described. If a non-vicious circularity is found fruitful, indeed fully reliable, in the case of our normal sense perceptions, what is to prevent an analogous argument being mounted for "justified belief" in what is delivered to us by "mystical perception"? Here (putatively) there is also a form of input and output; here, there is an outside source of information (in this case, God) to be perceived; and here, too, there are "doxastic practices" by means of which such reliable information is processed.

What, however, if we lay aside the particular difficulties of Alston's Theory of Appearing as applied to putatively *unmediated* perceptions of God (and enshrined in the first prong of his argument), and instead do more creative work than he himself does with the notion of a "doxastic practice?" For it is surely a disappointment that Alston in *Perceiving God* does nothing much to extend his use of this idea beyond the regular input and output of the five senses (and especially of sight); whereas the Wittgensteinian (and Reidian) background to what he proposes by way of "socially-mediated" practices surely promises much more than Alston himself develops. One might be forgiven for coming away from his text with a picture of *individuals* (or rather, individual philosophers!) nervously checking the consistency and reliability of their visual input and output in relation to a web of established social networks and linguistically formed relations, and then, with a sigh of relief, pronouncing themselves "justified" in their belief that their perceptions are indeed reliable; and Alston (1991, 154–5) even criticizes Wittgenstein for attempting to defuse this question. Yet it is surely the intended impact of the approach outlined by Reid to declare an amnesty on such skepticism: a form of epistemic "credulity" is justly *prior* (and not just logically prior, but chronologically prior in our initial coming to terms with the furniture of the world) to the raising of such anxieties about deception. What, then, if we were to extend the notion of "doxastic practices" well beyond those of ordinary "sense perception" (Alston's SP), and well beyond such neurotic checkings for initial sensory "reliability," to include such richly coded social undertakings as the bodily performances of liturgy (let us call these LP: "liturgical practices")? Could we justly claim that such performances, too, were justifyingly truth-conducive, and if so, in what ways?

A *detailed* account of how a liturgy could be thought of as a doxastic practice (or several) would, to be sure, require some considerable development of Alston's argument. It is true that Alston (1991, 162) does sketch, briefly, some ways in which

ramified "practices" involve a whole range of overlapping or "mutual involvement" of practices of different sorts: practices are "irreducibly plural," he admits. The attempt to wrench them all into one underlying principle of justificatory efficacy is almost certainly doomed to failure: "Ultimate diversity is a fact of our epistemic life, however humbling this may be for our pride as theoreticians" (Alston 1991, 163). Liturgy too, it would seem, implicitly involves a full range of epistemological "practices" already sketched out by Alston: sense experience, introspection, memory, inference, evaluation, and so on. But there is something else that needs to be caught here. It is the *primary* modeling of Alston's argument on the case of "ordinary" sense perception that implicitly restricts his approach and, when applied analogously to "perceiving God," leads to a strangely naive failure to account for the utter *difference* between perceiving (say) a mango in a marketplace, and "perceiving" the source and cause of my very existence (God). Further, the specific, bodily ways in which Christians seek to "perceive" God through liturgy involve a range of ramified practices (including hymnody, or "walking in patterns," to revert to our opening cases), which are not merely straightforward analogues of perception in immediate response to God, but complex means of *training* the senses, over time, in order to come into a right relation with God. As Nicholas Wolterstorff (2006) has argued, it is these developmental and historically located features of our epistemic negotiations that have been so strangely ignored in most analytic philosophy of religion to date. As Wolterstorff (2006, 127) puts it:

> We human beings are all hard-wired for belief … That's the beginning of the matter … [But] It cannot be the end of the matter … New dispositions emerge as the result of experiences of certain sorts … [and] Much of our programming is social, with the consequence that tradition becomes part of our belief-forming self.

How, then, can such developmental, social, and tradition-based aspects of *liturgical* "cognition" be philosophically accounted for? And what, more fundamentally, is the ultimate matrix for such development in the first place? It is here that a brief excursus into feminist epistemology may greatly help our argument forward.

FEMINIST EPISTEMOLOGY AND KNOWLEDGE BY RELATIONSHIP

The underlying problem seems to be that secular analytic epistemology has been inordinately invested in giving an account of the successful perception of "medium-sized dry goods." The prioritizing of such a task then leads to a sidelining of other forms of "knowing," and a tendency to presume that "perceiving God" ought to have similar, or at least analogous, characteristics. But why should we take *this* form of knowing to be primary and basic? The important work of the Canadian feminist philosopher Lorraine Code may help here (Code 1992 and, in more detail, 1991). Code's sophisticated contribution to feminist epistemology questions the normative and paradigmatic status given in Anglo-American analytic epistemology to what she calls "perception at a distance" (that is, the conditions for the successful recognition of hard objects at a distance of five paces or so). Privileging *this* sort of knowledge,

and the necessary and sufficient conditions for it, says Code (1992, 15), allows exponents to ignore both the "identity, circumstances, and conditionedness of the knower" and the significance of the personal, familial, and communal interactions that enable and sustain such perception in the first place. Her point here is worthy of extended quotation:

> If epistemologists require paradigms or other less formal exemplary knowledge claims, knowing other people in personal relationships is at least as worthy a contender as knowledge of everyday objects. Developmentally, learning what she or he can expect of other people is one of the first and most essential kinds of knowledge a child acquires. She or he learns to respond *cognitively* to the people who are a vital part of and provide access to her or his environment *long before* she or he can recognize the simplest physical objects. Other people are the point of origin of a child's entry into the material/physical environment both in providing or inhibiting access to that environment—in *making* it—and in fostering entry into the language with which children learn to name. Their initial induction into language generates a framework of presuppositions that prompts children, from the earliest stages, to construct their environments variously, according to the quality of their affective, intersubjective locations … It is tempting to conclude that theorists of knowledge must either be childless or so disengaged from the rearing of children as to have minimal developmental awareness. Participators in childraising could not easily ignore the primacy of knowing and being known by other people in cognitive development, nor could they denigrate the role such knowledge plays throughout an epistemic history.
>
> (Code 1992, 32–3)

Code's insistence that we take the identity of the embodied knower (S) "into account" when we consider the conditions of "S knowing P" is, we note, in general accordance with the line opened up by Alston's occasional admissions about the social situatedness of all religious knowing. It is certainly in line with Reid's interest in primary childhood "credulity"—although Alston does little to explore that strand in Reid's thought. Code's further explication of the significance of personal relationships as a matrix for "knowing that" is, I submit, of vast potential significance (although she, as a secular writer, does not know it) for philosophical reflection on knowing *God*. For it is in our first negotiations of sensual life (at the breast, in the arms of the primary caretaker) that we forge the potential for all cognitive developments that will occur later: without primary relationships, without affective mobilization in the recognition of familiar faces, we will never even progress to the successful naming and negotiation of "medium-sized dry goods." All the more important, then, is the analogue here with "knowing God": whereas Alston often slips into talk about "perceiving God" in individualistic and merely *informational* terms, Code's insights about childhood psychology and epistemology suggest how the learned, sensual, and social responses of the liturgy might be the parallel, and indispensable, modes of coming to "know" the divine. For is not "knowing *God*"—"perceiving *God*"—more naturally analogous to encountering and loving and knowing a *person* (Christ, God incarnate) than it is to experiencing a moment devoid of hermeneutical content,

or to stubbing one's toe on a hard object, or to noticing a novel item floating in the room? Yet from one's reading of the standard literature of analytic philosophy of religion on the veridical force of "religious experience," one would not always realize that.

It is perhaps for that reason that Nicholas Wolterstorff too has, on occasion in our liturgy and philosophy working group, characterized Alston's project as a "paraplegic" epistemology. Its overriding concern for the "justified true belief" tradition in epistemology, along with its desire for passive zappings, which would signal a nakedly direct, but sporadic, perception of the divine, make it curiously blind to the possibility of a more fundamental, and ongoing, knowledge by acquaintance.

But this now brings me to the third strand in my argument.

THE "SPIRITUAL SENSES" TRADITION OF EPISTEMOLOGY

Let us suppose, then, that we have identified a possibly fruitful line of investigation for establishing how liturgy "is true" (that is, it irreducibly conveys, announces, and even "justifies" certain theological truths *along with, and in the light of*, a primary relational access to intimacy with God-in-Christ). LP involves a subtle and complex set of doxastic practices, is socially mediated, bodily enacted, sensually attuned, seeks ultimately to "know Christ," and commits no epistemic impropriety by *assuming*—until it is proven otherwise—that the social practices of the liturgy do give cognitive access to such personal knowledge.

But we have one more major and pressing question to answer, and it is this: what *sort* of epistemological apparatus is involved in this process of liturgical response and growth in intimacy with Christ? Clearly, the traditional mental faculties (intellect, will, memory) are actively involved in liturgical performance, and the intellect's significance in relation to propositional theological truth is self-evident. But what of the distinctly sensual dimensions of liturgy—do these not play some vital part in the growth in responsiveness to Christ's relational presence in intimacy, such as we have discussed? And do they not in some sense in turn inform our intellectual and affective responses? It is here that the so-called "spiritual senses" tradition in Christianity provides such an intriguing epistemological option, worthy now in my view of contemporary review and reconsideration.

It was Origen, in the third century, who was the first Christian author to argue that the epistemic and spiritual goal of the Christian life was to develop, over time, a sensual apparatus parallel to, but different from, the gross physical senses, and attuned finally to union with Christ. The development of these "spiritual senses," as he occasionally calls them, is for Origen a manifestation of the *mature* life "in the Spirit" (at the elite level of the contemplative, or *enoptic*), so that one can speak of an "inner" life of sense, which is, for Origen, safely *disjunct* from the snares of physical and material sensuality. Indeed, it has become subject to a unified and internal *noetic* focus, which alone is destined to be embraced by the divine *logos*. There is a deeply problematic Platonic disjunction then, where Origen is concerned, between the material realm of the physical senses and the spiritual realm where such

"spiritual sensuality" takes place, and this bespeaks a parallel problem in Origen's Christological teaching about whether our material bodies are, after all, the locus of final redemption.

But the matter is fascinatingly different in Origen's successor in this tradition, the late fourth-century Gregory of Nyssa. In his *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, Gregory can even talk, as Origen would never have done, of writing his commentary "*for* the fleshly minded"; for he sees the erotic metaphors of the *Song* as precisely those that will draw the attention of those seeking Christ and so lead them into the processes of sensual—and then also noetic—transformation (Coakley 2002).

It has been pointed out recently, in fascinating complementary studies on spiritual sight and smell in the fourth and fifth centuries, that the period after the Constantinian settlement marked a rich set of developments in reflection on this "spiritual sense" (Frank 2001; Harvey 2006). In part, this arose from the new perception that the effects of incarnation now infiltrated the very fabric of Roman and Byzantine political and liturgical life. It was a time of many adult conversions, and excitement over being prepared for baptism at the Easter vigil. It was a time, then, when catechists, such as Ambrose, Cyril of Jerusalem, and Theodore of Mopsuestia, were writing treatises for converts about what, sensually and spiritually, to expect as they moved through baptism into first communion and took Christ for the first time into their hands in the form of bread and wine. And it is important to understand, as Susan Harvey (2006, 5) stresses, that even as extreme forms of asceticism arose within early monasticism—which was in part, of course, a reaction to the same imperial settlement with Christianity—bodily asceticism was increasingly compensated for by a lusher and more sensuous liturgy, especially in the Greek East. Thus, the ascetic work on the body could involve extreme deprivations at one level, but simultaneous sensual retraining in the liturgical context.

As some of the special prayers of preparation (before the Gospel, before communion) in the Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom put it explicitly (drawing on the tradition founded by Origen and Gregory): "Illumine our hearts … and open the eyes of our mind to the understanding of thy Gospel teachings … that trampling down all carnal desire we may enter upon a spiritual manner of living … for thou art the illumination of our souls and bodies, O Christ our God." Or again, "receive me … and enlighten my spiritual senses, burning up my sinful faults by the prayers of her who gave birth to Thee." Or again, "Enlighten the simplicity of my five senses," and "recall my reasoning from its captivity."

Such strands in the liturgy are congruent with what I have argued, in a recent rereading of Gregory of Nyssa's doctrine of the spiritual senses, he himself took the doctrine to mean (Coakley 2012). For in his intriguing treatise *On the Soul and the Resurrection*, Gregory actually sketches out the possibility of *training* the gross physical senses so that they may come to anticipate something of the capacities of the resurrection body, and so not only sense Christ himself, but actually sense *as* he senses: "by the very operation of our senses," says Macrina, Gregory's sister and mentor in the dialogue, "we are led to conceive of that reality and intelligence which surpasses the senses" (Gregory 1992, 34). It is this very claim of

Nyssen's that I want to challenge analytic philosophy of religion to give its serious epistemological consideration.

Let me now sum up: why is this tradition of "spiritual senses" of interest for one seeking an account of the truth claims of LP? Well, it seems to me to provide the perfect explication of the complex cognitive state of the knowing subject who engages, over time, in LP. That is, the cognitive functioning of such a knowing subject is not simply a "given"—a flat or universal mental *receptiveness* such as we find in Alston's mystical perception. Nor is it a mere propositional consent with a nice aesthetic backdrop provided. Rather, what is distinctive to liturgical "knowing"—I have argued—is the way that bodily movement, sensual acuity, affective longing, and noetic or intellectual response are intricately entwined and mutually implicated in what is occurring, and indeed are being trained over time to intensify and deepen their capacity for response to the risen Christ. In an important sense, then, the epistemic apparatus of the liturgical subject is always *in via*.

What this line of approach suggests, then, is a liturgically conveyed form of the delivery of theological truth, which involves, as a vital part of its practice (LP), a project of the refinement and purgation of "sensuality," and the integration of that evolving "spiritual" sensuality with an (enlarged) intellectual and affective response to the presence and power of Christ. Liturgy is therefore on this view *not* an "affective" *complement* to intellectual reflection, but rather the means of a full integration of all aspects of embodied selfhood into the life of Christ.

Clearly, these are large and incautious claims to entertain afresh today. They are indeed to some extent "beyond [propositional] belief." They involve, among other endeavors, "singing hymns" and "walking in patterns," as we heard at the outset. And for analytic philosophy of religion to take on these suggestions again today, and give them a new cogency, would certainly involve philosophical boldness and innovation such as I have only hinted at preliminarily today. But as John Chrysostom put it in the patristic era, it is all a matter of making "the unseen visible from the seen" (Frank 2001, 635), a matter of training the bodily senses in attunement with Christ's presence. In the wonderful words of Cyril of Jerusalem on the physical reception of the Eucharist: "Do not have your wrists extended or your fingers spread, but making your left hand a throne for the right, for it is about to receive a King, and cupping your palm, receive the body of Christ" (Frank 2001, 629). If analytic philosophy is to make sense of liturgy, to explicate its *ratio*, as Nicholas Wolterstorff has put it, I suspect it must first acknowledge its own past rational limitations and past sins, and so cup its own empty palm to receive what only Christ can give.

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CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Corporate Liturgical Silence

JOSHUA COCKAYNE

SEEK FIRST GOD'S KINGDOM

Whenever I consider the role of silence in Christian liturgy, I am reminded of these words from Søren Kierkegaard (1997, 10–11), as he reflects on Christ's command to "seek first the kingdom of God":

> But what does this mean, what am I to do, or what is effort that can be said to see, to aspire to God's kingdom? Shall I see about getting a position commensurate with my talents and abilities in order to be effective in it? No, you shall *first* seek God's kingdom. Shall I give all my possessions to the poor? No, you shall *first* seek God's kingdom. Shall I then go out and proclaim this doctrine to the world? No, you shall *first* seek God's kingdom. But then in a certain sense it is nothing I shall do? Yes, quite true, in a certain sense it is nothing. In the deepest sense you shall make yourself nothing, become nothing before God, learn to be silent. In this silence is the beginning, which is to seek *first* God's kingdom.

I vividly remember quoting these words from Kierkegaard in a sermon while preaching at a lively Charismatic church, to which I belonged at the time. After reflecting on Christ's words to *seek first his kingdom*, I urged those gathered that Kierkegaard was right; seeking the kingdom must begin by becoming silent before God. I invited the room to sit still in silence for what felt like an age, but which was, at most, around five minutes. The buzzing of popular worship music and energetic preaching now gave way to the rustling of uncomfortable bums on seats and the coughs and heavy breathing of those attempting to seek first the kingdom in silence. After the service, I was approached by a member of the congregation who happened to be a successful businessman. After the usual pleasantries about enjoying the sermon, he told me that those five minutes were the longest he'd spent in silence for many years. While he had found the space to think cathartic, he simply wanted to ask, "What was I supposed to be doing?"

Many of us will identify with his question. For our lives are very rarely silent. Even the moments of tranquility we may find in our busy schedules are filled with

the background noises of modern life—the hubbub of social media or the endless and infinitely refreshing newsreel. When silence finally falls, in the bathtub, or collapsed on the sofa with a glass of wine, there may be little audible sound, but our thoughts are often occupied by the noise of the day's events and the expectation of the next. Many of us simply do not know how to be silent. But one place where silence might still be found in this age of noise is in the liturgical life of the church. Although there are many liturgical contexts (such as the church described in the anecdote above) that do not often make space for silence, this practice has been an important part of the liturgical tradition of Christianity for millennia.[1]

This chapter seeks to explore the role and significance of silence in corporate liturgy. Despite the so-called "liturgical turn" (Smith, 2018, 118) in recent philosophy of religion, the discussions of the role of silence in liturgy in this emerging literature has so far gone unaddressed. This chapter aims to expand the philosophical discussion of liturgical action in corporate worship to take account of the role of silence. The account builds on from Anglican theologian Evelyn Underhill's depiction of liturgical action in her magisterial work, *Worship* (1936). Drawing Underhill's insights into conversation with contemporary analytic philosophy of religion helps us to see the nature of group liturgical action and the role of silence within such an account.

Expanding this discussion, I then offer two accounts of silence, the first of which thinks of silence as a kind of *inaction* that makes space for God to work through the actions of participants. The second account thinks of silence as a kind of *listening*, such that when inaction gives way for action, we are guided by what we have heard in the silence. Finally, I conclude by considering the significance silence, particularly for those who are marginalized or silenced by the actions of the church.

LITURGICAL ACTION AND LITURGICAL SILENCE

It is important to see that liturgy is an essentially corporate act. As Evelyn Underhill (1936, 81) puts it in *Worship*:

> Christian worship is never a solitary undertaking. Both on its visible and invisible sides, it has a thoroughly social and organic character. The worshipper, however lonely in appearance, comes before God as a member of a great family; part of the Communion of Saints, living and dead. His own small effort of adoration is offered "in and for all". The first words of the Lord's Prayer are always there to remind him of his corporate status and responsibility, in its double aspect. On the one hand, he shares the great life and action of the Church, the Divine Society; however he may define that difficult term, or wherever he conceives its frontiers to be drawn. He is immersed in that life, nourished by its traditions, taught, humbled, and upheld by its saints.

As Underhill (1936, 93) argues, this observation about worship's thoroughly social character must inform our understanding of the "the practical conditions under which men and women can transcend the apparent isolation of the soul and unite in a common act of worship." One such *practical condition* is explored in Underhill's notion of "joint action." Such action occurs wherever gathered worship involves

performing some act together: singing, listening, speaking, and so on. Thus, Underhill (1936, 98) writes that joint action provides "an opportunity for the whole body, sinking differences of understanding and feeling, to join Angels and Archangels, saints and elders, and all the creatures of earth and sea in praising and glorifying the Holy Name." Joint action requires some kind of pattern or script, such that we are able participate in some action *together*; "such joint action is impossible without an agreed pattern, a liturgy; even though this pattern be of the simplest kind" (1936, 99).

We can unpack this notion of joint liturgical action in conversation with more contemporary discussions. Consider Nicholas Wolterstorff's recent account of group liturgical action. According to Wolterstorff, the seemingly random actions involved in liturgy (such as singing, speaking, listening, prostrating, eating, drinking) should be thought as instances of scripted act types, which make possible a kind of group engagement with God. In his words, liturgies are "types of sequences of actions of certain kinds" that always include bodily actions, such as "listening, speaking, singing … crossing oneself, distributing bread and wine … and more besides" as well as non-bodily actions such as blessing and thanking" (Wolterstorff 2015, 5). In the context of liturgy, bodily actions "count as performances of actions that are not bodily" (2015, 5). Thus, a liturgy is a "universal," that is, something that "can be repeatedly enacted," typically by means of following a script within the context of corporate worship (2015, 4). According to Wolterstorff (2018, 27), these scripted liturgical sequences provide a means of engaging with God: "when enacting a liturgy the participants *orient* themselves toward God … When we orient ourselves toward God by enacting a liturgy we engage God directly and explicitly."

Now, Wolterstorff is clear that liturgical action is a kind of participatory action that allows individuals to join in the worship of the church. As Wolterstorff (2015, 11) puts it:

> the church enacts the liturgy not to satisfy the needs and desires of individual congregants but to worship God. The church blesses God, praises God, thanks God, confesses her sins to God, petitions God, listens to God's Word, celebrates the Eucharist. It's not the individual members who do these things simultaneously; it's the assembled body that does these things.

In more recent discussions, Wolterstorff's has expanded this notion of liturgy as participation in the church. He writes:

> Together following the script is not sufficient for together enacting the liturgy. If one person, for example, says the creed very slowly and another says it very quickly, they are not saying the creed *together* … Normally the acting together that occurs in liturgical enactments is achieved by a blend of following the script and mutual responsiveness. When it comes to the people singing together in harmony, prescription necessarily falls short; mutual responsiveness is unavoidable.
>
> (Wolterstorff 2018, 64)

Thus, acting together in liturgy requires a kind of sensitivity to the actions of others and responsiveness to the intentions of those we act alongside. Drawing

on discussions of shared intentionality in the philosophy of mind, Wolterstorff thinks that such actions are best thought as instances of joint action. In such cases, individuals do not merely intend to perform a liturgical script, but rather, they do so with an awareness that they are contributing to the actions of collective; using John Searle's (2010) terminology, the participants "we-intend." For example, the intentions of a jazz quartet cannot be reduced to each player's intention to play their own instrument; they must intend to play *together*. Similarly, in reading the creed, to return to Wolterstorff's example, an individual must mesh or join their intention with their fellow congregants such that they read the creed *together*.

If Underhill (1936, 83) is right, then this kind of joint action allows the congregation to "incarnate" something of the mystical union of the church. Against the backdrop of this discussion of group liturgical action, we can think more carefully about the role of silence in liturgy.

SILENCE IN LITURGY

Continuing with Underhill's account of liturgical action for a moment, we can see that joint action may be the most *ideal* form of liturgical participation, but it is not the only form. Indeed, Underhill (1936, 95) thinks that silence can play an important role in our liturgies. She observes:

> the place of corporate silence is well marked in the early liturgies; and appears to be intimately connected with the development of the collect, or prayer in which the priest or leader gathered up the inarticulate supplications of the faithful and presented them to God … It is obvious that such an ordered use of corporate silence, with all its advantages of freedom, sincerity, and inwardness, must enrich and deepen the worshipping life of the Church; and should never have been allowed to fall into desuetude. Here the secret response of each soul to the one Spirit forms as it were a separate thread in the woven garment of the Bride.

Unlike the discussion above of joint action, Underhill's notion of liturgical silence puts the emphasis not on the joining of individual human actions, but on the mysterious work of the Spirit as the source of *jointness*. The Spirit weaves together the private prayers and reflections of the gathered congregation to form a kind of group action that transcends the jointness perceptible by those gathered.

Underhill frames her discussion around the silence preceding the use of the collect, a kind of silence that is dubbed by Chris Irvine (2001, 263) as a kind of "preparatory silence," providing space for each participant to "*recollect* themselves before the presence of God." But as Irvine (2001, 263) notes, there are a number of other points in which liturgical silence might be used in worship. For instance, there is

> the kind of silence which ought to be observed after the public reading of scripture. Such a silence … has two basic functions: it helps to create an atmosphere of attentiveness on the part of the worshippers, and closely bound up with this attentive listening, silence provides the space in which the Word may be received, assimilated and heard.

Silence may also be used "in vocalized prayer." Here,

> Spaces for the keeping of silence between the spoken or chanted prayers are an effective way of showing how, in prayer, words and silence are correlative terms, the one expressing our approach to God, and the other representing that without which we could not truly pray at all.
>
> (Irvine 2001, 263)

We might also note the use of silence in "waiting on God," as it is used in many Charismatic and Pentecostal traditions, as the worship leader leaves space for the congregation to attend the work of the Spirit among them (see Leidenhag 2020).

In many of these cases, Wolterstorff's account of group action looks like ill-fitted as an explanation of liturgical action. Being silent together may not involve any kind of intention meshing, as in the case of reading a creed together. Reading alongside someone requires being responsive to what that person is doing and ensuring that one doesn't speak out of time, but it seems possible, at least in principle, to be silent together while remaining completely oblivious to the actions of others. While this is surely true of reading or singing too, the difference is that the success of group singing or speaking depends on this responsivity, but the success of liturgical silence does not depend on how aware I am of the silence of my neighbor. Instead, as Underhill argues, liturgical silence counts as a group action if the Spirit weaves together the actions of individuals, such that God can act *through* the actions of the participants. In what follows, I offer two accounts of liturgical silence as group action, which can help make sense of liturgical silence, but which are not captured by Wolterstorff's account of joint action.

SILENCE AS INACTION

First, we might think of liturgical silence as a contrast to the actions otherwise involved in corporate worship. As Irvine (2001, 262) puts it:

> The patient waiting, which thus seems to be required of those who truly seek God, inevitably entails a deliberate withdrawal from the kind of world we live in which is so full of words and inane chatter, but is more than a conscious desire for that which we mean when we speak of the need for peace and quiet. The entering into and keeping of silence is not simply the absence of noise, but a deliberate disposing of oneself in order that the words one does speak are effective words, pregnant with meaning.

Irvine speaks here of the *deliberate withdrawal* involved in silence, which speaks of silence as an instance of ceasing to speak, sing, and so on, such that God can move through us more powerfully when we begin to speak again. In contrast to the sequences of liturgical action that Wolterstorff argues can enable us to engage with God, liturgical silence might be thought of, then, as an instance of ceasing to act, such that God can engage with us.

A brief foray into discussions of divine grace will help us to expand this notion of liturgical inaction more fully. In responding to the ancient debates around

Pelagianism, contemporary analytic theologians have attempted to explore the tension that exists between human responsibility and divine grace. As Simon Kittle (2015, 89) describes this tension, there are two seemingly conflicting claims, both of which are endorsed by Christian orthodoxy: "The first is that people are responsible for failing to come to faith in Christ and the second is that saving faith is entirely a gift from God, a gift that is not earned nor given based on any merit." Put simply, it is difficult to see how faith could be both an act of human will and also a divine act of unmerited grace. Responding to this problem, Eleonore Stump (2010) proposes her ingenious account of "quiescence," which she draws from Thomas Aquinas's account of the will. Rather than think of the human will as having two modes, resistance and acceptance, Stump argues there are in fact three: resistance, acceptance, and *quiescence*. Expanding this notion of quiescence, Stump (2010, 167) writes:

> Consider, for example, a person who is suffering a dangerous allergic reaction to a bee sting and who fears death, but who nonetheless vigorously refuses his doctor's attempt to inject him with the urgently needed antidote to the allergen because he has an almost ungovernable fear of needles. Such a person might not be able to bring himself to will that the doctor give him the much-needed injection. That is, if the doctor were to ask him whether he is willing to accept the injection, he might not be able to bring himself to say 'yes.' But he might nonetheless be able to stop actively refusing the injection, knowing that, if he ceases to refuse it, the doctor will press it on him. If he does this, then his will becomes quiescent with regard to the injection, neither accepting it nor refusing it, but simply turned off in relation to the injection.

Applying this analogy to the case of divine grace, Stump (2010, 167–68) continues:

> When God gives the grace of justifying faith to such a person, he is infusing that grace into a human will that has ceased to reject it but that has not yet accepted it either. The will of such a person is in a state of privation with regard to the volition in question; in this regard, the will is just inactive. But the inactivity is a surrender, not a calm, because the person moving into that quiescence understands his quiescence as a letting-go of resistance to God and God's grace, just as the bee sting victim understands his quiescence as a letting-go of resistance to the injection he fears.

Now, Stump's account of quiescence is not without its critics (see Timpe 2007; Kittle 2015). But we need not worry overly about these here, since our focus is not predominantly on questions of responsibility and causality, but rather, on the question of how acts of inaction might properly be related to *group* actions. Stump's notion of quiescence appears promising as a starting point.

In ceasing to act in liturgy, in the moments before a service begins, or in the brief pauses after the reading of scripture we might come to a state of quiescence. That is, in these moments, we cease to perform some action that is attempting to engage with God through petition or praise, and we cease trying to merge our actions with our fellow members in the body of Christ. But neither are we resisting God's will in uniting his church. And in so doing, much like in the quiescent bee-stung patient

analogy, we allow the Spirit to move in us and through us in ways that are not possible through our own efforts. In other words, in the moments before a service starts, or in short time of reflection after a reading, there is space for an individual to cease acting altogether and to be still. If this act constitutes a group action, as Underhill supposes, then it is not because we intend it to do so; the corporate use of silence makes space for the Holy Spirit to unite individual actions in ways far surpassing the unity we can engineer through our own schemes, however important these may be. Silence speaks powerfully of the truth that we are secondary agents in the liturgy of the church, and it allows the Spirit to do the work of drawing together the diversity of participants that have gathered to worship God together.

But while thinking of silence as inaction provides some helpful insight, it seems limited in some important respects in application to liturgy. Indeed, Underhill is aware that liturgical silence is lacking in certain ways as an ultimate explanation of corporate action in worship. She argues:

> this united act of wordless prayer could never by itself suffice to express that Church's full life of adoration; first because it is only appropriate to the spiritually mature, and secondly because—though it lifts the mind and heart to God—it leaves too much of our human nature behind. Here, too, the important reflex effect of symbolic action or expressive voice neglected; and thus the individual soul loses the education which it should receive by and through the common vocal worship of the Church.
>
> (Underhill 1936, 96)

Underhill's point is twofold—that silence is not helpful for the spiritually immature (think back to the question in the opening anecdote: "But what am I supposed to be doing?") and that it neglects the importance of our human contribution to the worship of the church, such that worship can no longer be educational.[2] We might put the point another way: if liturgical silence is thought of *only* as inaction, then it is difficult to see when liturgical action is supposed to re-emerge from the silence. As we saw from Irvine (2001, 262), liturgical silence has a purpose, namely that in "disposing of oneself" one might discover that the "words one does speak are effective words, pregnant with meaning."

SILENCE AS LISTENING

So how does one move from liturgical inaction back to liturgical action? To return to Kierkegaard, silence is not merely the space for one to *become nothing* and remain there, but rather, "to become silent and to remain silent, to wait until the one praying *hears* God" (Kierkegaard 1997, 11–12; emphasis added). In other words, to see the value of liturgical silence, we must also see it as facilitation of a certain kind of *listening*. Yet, as the comments in the introduction reflected on, it is not always clear what we are listening for. The cessation of liturgical action can be disturbing and disorientating, shifting our attention to the small disturbances that might otherwise have been ignored. And so, before asking this question in the context of liturgy, it is worth asking more generally: What are we listening *to* when we hear silence?

Roy Sorensen, in his philosophical account of perceiving absences, argues that "we hear silence, which is the absence of sounds. Silence cannot be seen, tasted, smelled, or felt—only heard" (2008, 268). Sorensen's account is a realist one—there are objective absences of sound that can be subjectively experienced by our capacity to hear. This is shown by the possibility of silence hallucinations, Sorensen (2008, 269) thinks:

> Consider a man who experiences auditory hallucinations as he drifts off to sleep. He 'hears' his mother call out his name, then wait for a response, and then call again. The cycle of calls and silence repeats eerily. As it turns out, his mother has unexpectedly paid a late-night visit and is indeed calling out in a manner that coincidentally matches the spooky hallucination. The hallucinator is not hearing the call and silence of his mother.

According to Sorensen, examples such as these show that silence can be heard (or, indeed, misheard), highlighting that there is a difference between the absence of hearing and the hearing of silence. In fact, he thinks, experiencing silence is only possible for those who can hear; the experience of deafness may be phenomenologically similar to silence, but it is objectively distinct. We can only experience the absence of sound if we can first experience its presence.

However, others think the notion of silence is in fact an impossibility. Consider the composition "4′33″" by the experimental composer John Cage (originally performed in 1952). During its four minutes thirty-three second duration, the score instructs the musicians not to perform their instruments at all, and the composer turns pages and pages of empty staves. What follows is a prolonged period of corporate silence, or so it seems. Reflecting on his own composition, Cage notes:

> There's no such thing as silence. What they [the audience] thought was silence, because they didn't know how to listen, was full of accidental sounds. You could hear the wind stirring outside during the first movement. During the second, raindrops began pattering the roof, and during the third the people themselves made all kinds of interesting sounds as they talked or walked out.
>
> (quoted in Kostelanetz 1988, 65)

The composition, "4′33″," supposedly demonstrates the impossibility of absolute silence. Those who have experienced liturgical silence will know all too well that Cage is right that corporate silence is rarely soundless. The pauses between lines of liturgy are filled with noises: the sound of birds outside, children running around and parents desperately attempting to quieten them, shuffling bums on uncomfortable seats, and the various coughs, sighs and nose whistles of the gathered congregation. Corporate silence is rarely silent, at least in the absolute sense.

Sorensen (2008, 289) thinks that the impossibility of silence cannot be demonstrated from Cage's symphony; in his words, "silence is hard to achieve—as is flatness, straightness, and cleanliness. But there is no reason to privilege high standards." However, even if Sorensen is right that "4′33″" is an instance of absence of sound (even if not in an absolute sense), this way of depicting silence seems particularly ill-fitted for the context of liturgy. For it seems strange to suggest that

it is the absence of sound which allows the Holy Spirit to work, or else a church building on a noisy street could never use corporate silence effectively.

A more helpful way of thinking about silence, at least for our purposes, is through the lens of what has been the "contrast view" of silence. As Ian Phillips (2013, 341) defines it:

> According to the contrast view, pauses and gaps are heard in virtue of hearing temporally separated sounds. Other silences may be heard just in virtue of hearing a single sound cease, as when we enjoy the silence at the end of an orchestral performance. If we think of pauses as auditory 'holes,' we can think of such phenomena as auditory 'edges' or 'cliffs.'

On the contrast view, silence is not directly perceived, as Sorensen supposes, but rather, it is perceived *indirectly* as the contrast between two or more auditory bookends. We might, on this view, argue that we do, in fact, experience silence when listening to a performance of "4′33″," or in a long period of quiet after the reading of the Gospel (even if many cars go by), for these pauses or gaps in our auditory experience are contrasted sharply with the experience of sound, such that we hear the absence of the spoken liturgy in the pauses allowed by the priest or minister.[3] Similarly, in the Charismatic tradition, when space is left to "wait on the Spirit," this can be thought of as corporate silence even in a very noisy environment. If this period of waiting is contrasted by the bookends of singing and speaking, for example, then the contrast provides an auditory hole in the liturgy.

The contrast view provides helpful insight to explain the use of silence in group liturgical action. More specifically, even if liturgical silence is not silence in its strictest sense, it does provide a hole or pause that draws sharp contrast to the acts of speaking, singing, and so on. So, regardless of whether we hear the noises of children chattering or cars passing, corporate silence provides a sharp contrast with what has come either side. This liturgical hole offers space in which we can become aware that we are participating in something more transcendent than we might have first appreciated. Consider Sarah Coakley's depiction of contemplative prayer, for example:

> What I realised I suppose after some period of attempting day by day to practice silence before God was there was something that was happening in that practice that wasn't being done by me. It was being done, if you like, as I perceived it, by the divine within me. That there was some kind of conversation going on between what Jews and Christians call the Father and between what Jews and Christians call the Spirit, into which I was being mysteriously drawn.
>
> (Coakley n.d.)

Similarly, the act of corporate liturgical silence can be thought of as pause into which we can become aware of the broader conversation into which we are being drawn. This brings a new meaning to Cage's remarks that the audience only experienced silence *because they didn't know how to listen.* While this may not come easily to some, silence provides the space to listen and to realize that we are not the sole, or even the primary, agents at work in the worship of the church. It allows us to

appreciate that the Holy Spirit draws our liturgical actions together in ways we cannot always fathom or perceive, and to recognize that Christ works on our behalf, even if we can contribute *nothing* to the worship of the church. In silence, the Holy Spirit breaks through our individual perceptions of who God is, fraught as they are with misconceptions, and draws our attention corporately to the living person of Christ who is present in our midst.

Thus, liturgical silence as an act of listening allows the Holy Spirit to *guide* the worship of the church in a more responsive way than the picture painted by the account of liturgical inaction. As Underhill makes clear, communities of gathered worship participate most faithfully in the life of the church, when they are responsive to the work of the Spirit. While this might often be thought of as a characteristic only of Pentecostal or Charismatic churches, this need not be the case. As Bruce Ellis Benson (2013, 140) writes, reflecting on his visit to Saint Gregory's, a formal liturgical church:

> In general, members of so-called nonliturgical churches value spontaneity, a feeling of being fresh and authentic, since those praying, for example, are speaking from their hearts. Conversely 'liturgical' churches find the depth and richness of their prayers which have been painstakingly written, to be preferable. But these assumptions are somewhat misleading. For example, one remarkable thing about the worship service at Saint Gregory's is that it feels so spontaneous. And yet it is actually highly scripted. In other words, it achieves what less liturgical churches often hope to achieve—a sense of openness, spontaneity, and lack of formality, and the sense that the Holy Spirit is alive and guiding the worship. But it does so by very closely following a script, one that gets modified on the basis of those short meetings after each service.

Those that lead the liturgy at Saint Gregory's achieve this responsiveness to the Holy Spirit not by an instantaneous spontaneity (although we should not rule out that this might be another way of the Holy Spirit guiding worship), but rather, by a regular prayerful reflection on the practices of worship that led them to adjust their performance of the liturgical script in the future. It is in the act of *listening* in the space provided by liturgical silence that this guiding and shaping by the Spirit might take place.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF SILENCE

So far, we have been reflecting on the nature of liturgical silence and its role in corporate worship. Let's conclude by considering the significance of such action for a worshipping community. It is commonplace to think of liturgical action in musical terms; the different voices of a choir or the different instruments of an orchestra come together to produce beautiful and harmonic music that they would be unable to produce alone. While there is some power in this metaphor, we might think instead, borrowing from Benson's work, that liturgical action is sometimes better thought of as producing dissonance, rather than harmony. In Benson's words, worshipping communities are composed of "multiple voices," which do not always

provide *polyphony* and which often remain "distinct and sometimes dissonant" (2013, 94). The church brings together a variety of individuals, who cannot always be made united through acts of liturgical worship.[4] But in the act of corporate silence, we make space for dissonance and polyphony in a way that can be difficult to achieve in joint action, while still emphasizing the corporate nature of liturgy.

Let's unpack this point more carefully. One advantage of liturgical silence is that it makes space for those who cannot engage through words or actions to participate in the liturgies of the church. Consider Rowan Williams' reflections on silence in his book *The Edge of Words*, for instance:

> notice the dangerous word – that a putative human organism (an unborn child, a severely challenged adult, a person with dementia or with a condition that radically isolates them from communication, a person in a so-called vegetative condition) is beyond the community of mutual sense-making, we need to pause and weigh the importance of recognising not necessarily another speech-user operating just like ourselves but another centre of meaningful experience, another point of view, the focus of another intelligible situation – and therefore a contributor in ways I may not easily grasp to my own intelligence.
>
> (Williams 2014, 115)

As Williams makes clear, we all too often risk equating meaning-making with speech. Limiting the boundaries of liturgy and, indeed, the church only to those who can enter into communities of mutual sense-making risks excluding other centers of meaningful experience from the community. This is because boundaries are often constructed by the limits of what we can grasp. But silence makes no such boundary. In fact, in silence, we learn that our contribution to the worship of the church is secondary at best, regardless of our abilities for meaning-making. We are *participants* and not actors (at least not in a primary way) in the worshipping life of the church. It is the work of the Spirit, which often eludes our grasp to determine the limits of such participation.

There are also many who have been silenced themselves through the horrendous evil and injustice they have suffered, and sometimes from within the church itself. Victims of abuse, racial injustice, and all of those who have been silenced by those in the church because of their sexuality or gender might find space in the voiceless worship of liturgical silence. We should note that the silence that facilitates the healing of the marginalized cannot be confused with the silence of inaction by the church on issues of injustice. A church that welcomes the marginalized might leave space for this kind of silence into which God can minister, but it cannot be the *only* means of integrating the traumatized into the ministry of the church.[5] As psychiatrist Bessel van der Kolk (2014, 43, 244) observes: "all trauma is preverbal … trauma victims themselves become literally speechless—when the language area of the brain shuts down." Van der Kolk (2014, 43) is describing the phenomenon that during traumatic events the Broca's area of the brain—the part of the neocortex responsible for regulating language—is severely compromised for trauma survivors, such that posttraumatic stress disorder has debilitating effects similar to the speech impairments of strokes. This is why survivors frequently find it exceedingly difficult

to find adequate language for speaking about the atrocities they have endured. The liturgy of the church may draw on powerful resources such as corporate silence to signal that the impairments of neuroatypical individuals, such as survivors of trauma with posttraumatic stress disorder, do not exclude them from participating in the work of the Triune God in the shared agency of the church's liturgy. Their speechlessness or inability to act does not preclude their participation in worship, or their belonging to the community. Liturgical silence can make space for an inclusivity that liturgical action can sometimes overlook.

In moving the point of focus from engaging with God in liturgy to allowing God to engage us in liturgy, silence is a leveler of sorts. For in silence no one is allowed to dominate or set the boundaries of participation. In silence, we are to begin by recognizing that we do nothing, and that doing nothing may be the most authentic kind of participation in the liturgy of the church.

CONCLUSION

Contemporary discussions of liturgy ignore the role of silence to their detriment. Silence is not merely the grammar, which emphasizes the importance of certain acts of liturgy. Rather, silence undergirds liturgy in an important sense. While we may engage God in a variety of ways through the liturgies of the Christian tradition, silence reveals the fact that liturgical actions do no *constitute* the worship of the church, at least not on their own. Indeed, in silence, by ceasing to act, we realize that worship does not cease because our own liturgical action has stopped. Rather, we see that the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit in the church is uniting those whom we may prefer to keep out with our boundaries and limits, to participate in the ongoing worship of God. In silence, we hear a voice that is often ignored, allowing God to shape our liturgies in ways we are simply unable to do by ourselves.

NOTES

1. See Diarmaid MacCulloch (2014) for an overview.
2. James Smith (2013) has explored this notion of liturgy as educational or formative in significant depth in his Cultural Liturgies series.
3. On the contrast view, we can also affirm Sorensen's intuition that silence can be hallucinated (as in the man drifting off to sleep) but attribute this experience of silence to a contrast between separated sounds. In Phillips' (2013, 343) words: "According to the contrast view, we can legitimately attribute hallucinations of silence to a subject in cases where the subject also has hallucinations (or normal perceptual experiences) of separated sounds. To distinguish hallucinating silence from the mere absence of experience, the view appeals to the experience of surrounding sounds. In virtue of these sounds, we can hear or hallucinate the interleaved silence. The contrast view does not provide room for hearing or hallucinating silence over long periods or for simply experiencing silence."

4. I explore this point in more detail in Cockayne (2018).
5. See Cockayne et al. (2022) for a more comprehensive account of trauma-safe churches. Thanks to J. Aaron Simmons for this helpful clarification.

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CHAPTER SIXTEEN

"You Have Given Us the Grace to Pray Together in Harmony": Orthodox Liturgical Singing as a Criterion for (Philosophical? Theological?) Aesthetics

BRIAN A. BUTCHER

INTRODUCTION

Let me begin with a framing prayer:

> May I attain to everlasting rest, where the sound of those who celebrate is unceasing, and unending is the delight of those who behold the ineffable beauty of Your countenance …[1]

It is well known that in the Christian East, unaccompanied singing abides as the ordinary, all-encompassing medium of public prayer.[2] Whether involving cantor, choir, and/or the whole congregation, such singing is always a conversation: ideally a three-way communication engaging also the voice of the deacon, as well as that of the presiding bishop or priest. Traditional practice in this regard raises interesting philosophical questions about the intersection between the phenomenology of singing, and the understanding and experience of beauty—arguably the defining, overarching category in Orthodox theological discourse.[3]

In what follows, I will seek to probe these questions in three steps. First, I draw upon the work of the late Sir Roger Scruton to propose a vantage point for an

aesthetic consideration of Eastern Christian chant traditions. Second, in light of the patristic witness, I offer a liturgico-theological account of how we might understand the pre-eminence of beauty in the Orthodox traditions, and its relationship to sacred song. The chapter closes with a survey of the musical paradigms discernible within Orthodox worship, and a sketch of the different hermeneutics they imply.

SACRED SONG AS A PLACE TO DWELL

I have found Roger Scruton (1944–2020) to be a congenial, if unexpected, guide through the dense forest of philosophical aesthetics, and across the boundaries this discipline shares with theology. In "Why Beauty Matters" (2018), Scruton offers a conspectus of ideas developed at length in his wider oeuvre, and it is an ideal starting point for our own discussion. He begins with the perennial debate over whether aesthetic determinations are subjective or objective, positing something of a *tertium quid*: objectivity, as such, is situated within the sociohistorical context of a cultural tradition constituted by subjects. Beauty, then, is "one of the instruments in our consensus-building strategies, one of the values through which we construct and belong to a shared and mutually consoling world." In turn, "judgements of beauty express *rational preferences* about matters in which the agreement of others is both sought and valued" (Scruton 2018, 11). That is—as he elsewhere clarifies—this kind of judgment "makes a claim about its object, and can be supported by reasons for its claim. But the reasons do not compel the judgement, and can be rejected without contradiction" (Scruton 2011, 7).

Although the frame of reference here is architectural, highlighting the significance of homebuilding and its extension into the forming of a neighborhood and ultimately a city, I propose that we can readily perceive avenues of approach to the issues at hand. Like the construction of a place to dwell, in which we can feel ourselves *chez nous*, singing in its own way tends to generate a certain experience of belonging, producing an ersatz "home away from home." Singing is not simply that which animates Eastern Christian liturgical space, that is, the quintessential element in what is conducted there; it suffices to (re-)create such space even in its formal absence. Whenever we chant, that is, we convert wherever we happen to be (however non-sacral the place may appear!) into a kind of church, albeit temporary—an aesthetic precinct determined, precisely, by the mutual decision to demarcate it in and through that which is sung. For singing, arguably, becomes a shared act if another person is even but listening; all the more so, if such a one joins in.[4]

To continue: if the establishment and transmission of architectural conventions assure the integration of a new building "as a fitting member of a community of neighbours"; if such conventions enable edifices to "fit in [and] stand appropriately side by side," we may perhaps also point to chant traditions as analogous exemplars of "the kind of practical knowledge that is required by neighbourliness" (Scruton 2018, 14). In our case, this involves the cohabiting of the ecclesial polis whose rights and responsibilities, roles and rules, need to be perpetually renegotiated across generations. Singing may be thus construed as a means by which the arguably arcane content of Orthodox dogma is effectively construed as a public possession, indeed,

as a territory jointly occupied by those who sing in the present and all those who, through the passing on of a body of chant, have made our own singing possible.

But we can proceed further along the present trajectory. "A true city," observes Scruton (following Jane Jacobs), "is built by its residents, in that every aspect of it reflects something that results from what uncountably many residents have wanted, rather than something that a few self-appointed experts have planned." Surely, one could hardly adduce a more appropriate metaphor for those chant traditions, such as the Syriac and Coptic, which have for centuries survived through effectively oral modes of transmission.[5] Music in their respective churches perdures even as those old cities whose architecture displays "organic complexity … [and] localised forms of symmetry and order," marked by a concern to "fit in to an existing urban fabric" (Scruton 2018, 12).[6] Newer melodies are integrated into an existing corpus—with improvisation extending, while also reinforcing, the received repertoire. Even the performance of Byzantine chant, which has long employed forms of musical notation, makes extensive use of unwritten conventions (e.g., in the melodies used to utter readings, biddings, and prayers); the services of the Slavic Churches, which predominantly use modern Western notation, similarly contain numerous practices that are, so to speak, more caught than taught.[7]

Finally, to the extent that Eastern Christian liturgies (with rare exceptions)[8] are not events in which a given utterance stands out by being sung, against the backdrop of other things being *spoken*—as is the case in most (although not all) iterations of Western Christian worship in our day—there obtains a diffusion of aesthetic focus, favoring a grasp of the *whole* as beautiful, rather than one particular part. This marks them as further akin to those old cities whose beauty, for Scruton (2018, 13), "arises precisely from the fact that attention is not centred but dispersed." The singing of the entirety of a service produces a peculiar *Gestalt*, readily appreciable by anyone who has participated in such: when greetings, blessings, readings, hymns, orations, commands/directives (e.g., "Wisdom! Let us be attentive!") are *all* chanted, each feature of the soundscape is perceived as blending into the others.[9] Indeed, some Eastern Christian communities prefer even to displace the homily from its classical position in the Divine Liturgy (subsequent to the chanting of the Gospel) to the end of the service (prior to, or even after, the dismissal), so as to minimize disruption of the musical flow of the rite.[10]

Lest one think it adventitious to have thus adverted to architecture as a frame for musical aesthetics, it bears recalling that the development of liturgical music, in the West no less than the East, has advanced *pari passu* with that of the buildings in which it has been performed. This is manifestly the case in the Byzantine tradition, in which the acoustics of its paradigmatic church, Hagia Sophia, were symbiotically related to the chant that evolved therein (Pentcheva 2017).[11] Similar relationships have obtained, as is well known, in such epicenters of Western liturgical music as Paris's Notre Dame or Venice's San Marco, for example. No less apropos for its ambiguous attribution is the dictum, "Music is liquid architecture; architecture is frozen music": the history of both arts well attests to their being on intimate terms.[12]

Famously, it was through the holistic experience of liturgy at Hagia Sophia that the Slavic peoples came to receive the Gospel—perhaps the only example in church

history of a properly aesthetic conversion. In what has become a *locus classicus* of popular Orthodox theology, not to say apologetics, *The Russian Primary Chronicle* relates how Vladimir, Prince of Kyivan Rus', having sent out emissaries to the four winds to find the true religion, was ultimately persuaded by the testimony proffered concerning the worship of the Great Church:

> The Greeks led us to the edifices where they worship their God, and we knew not whether we were in heaven or on earth. For on earth there is no such splendor or such beauty, and we are at a loss how to describe it. We only know that God dwells there among men, and their service is fairer than the ceremonies of other nations. For we cannot forget that beauty.
>
> (Cross and Sherbowitz-Wetzor 1953, cited in Romano 2020, 90)

Beauty in this instance equates to an ecology: the interaction of a variety of media and genres, of which singing is surely but one. And yet, Orthodox tradition undoubtedly accords it a pre-eminence echoed in the succinct judgment of the Second Vatican Council: "The musical tradition of the universal Church is a treasure of inestimable value, greater even than that of any other art. The main reason for this pre-eminence is that, as sacred song united to the words, it forms a necessary or integral part of the solemn liturgy."[13] Or, as poignantly put by Augustine in his *Confessions* (IX, 15), when ruminating on the novel "introduc[tion] of hymns and psalms after the custom of the eastern Churches" into the worship of Milan: "I was deeply moved by the music of the sweet chants of your Church. The sounds flowed into my ears and the truth was distilled into my heart" (2008, 165, 164).[14] Let us consider further, then, the connections between liturgy, singing, and aesthetics—and theology.

BEAUTY AND SINGING IN THE CHURCH FATHERS

To grossly simplify, discussion of aesthetic theory may be said to oscillate between the traditional view of beauty, as held by Plato and patristic and medieval theologians in turn, with the influential alternative view of Kant and those following in his wake.[15] For the former, beauty is, of course, one of the three transcendentals, alongside truth and goodness, and thus an aspect of *all* being, to varying degrees. Hence, the classical definition of Aquinas: "For beauty includes three conditions, integrity or perfection [*integritas*/*perfectio*], since those things which are impaired are by the very fact ugly; due proportion or harmony [*proportio*/*consonantia*]; and lastly, brightness or clarity [*claritas*], whence things are called beautiful which have an elegant color."[16] Perhaps surprisingly, to those unfamiliar with the *Summa Theologica*, the Angelic Doctor presents the foregoing definition in the context of a *quaestio* considering the unity and distinctions obtaining among the persons of the Holy Trinity. We will return to this theme below; for the moment, we note simply that Aquinas well recapitulates the Church Fathers in envisioning God as the source of beauty; anything beautiful perforce *participates* in some measure in the divine life.

Indeed, one need only consult the covertly influential figure known as Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite (henceforth, Dionysius), whom Aquinas quotes more than

any other Church Father after Augustine and Gregory the Great, to appreciate the characteristic equivalence drawn between beauty and the Godhead—introduced, evocatively, by the notion that the doctrine in question is articulated in *song*:

> The sacred writers lift up a hymn of praise to this Good. They call it beautiful, beauty, love, and beloved. They give it the names which convey that it is the source of loveliness and is the flowering of grace. But do not make a distinction between 'beautiful' and 'beauty' as applied to the Cause which gathers all into one. For we recognize the difference in intelligible beings between qualities that are shared and the objects which share them. We call 'beautiful' that which has a share in beauty, and we give the name of 'beauty' to that ingredient which is the cause of beauty in everything. But the 'beautiful' which is beyond individual being is called 'beauty' because of that beauty bestowed by it on all things, each in accordance with what it is. It is given this name because it is the cause of the harmony and splendour in everything, because like a light it flashes onto everything the beauty—causing impartations of its own well-spring ray. Beauty 'bids' all things to itself (whence it is called 'beauty') and gathers every thing into itself. And they name it beautiful since it is the all-beautiful and the beautiful beyond all.
>
> (Pseudo-Dionysius 1987)[17]

Several points in this admittedly dense passage warrant our attention. First, the "sacred writers," i.e. the authors of the scriptural texts, "lift up a hymn of praise"—that is, they engage in doxology as the mode of their consideration of the divine beauty. As once was more commonly the case in the West, the Christian East yet maintains, by and large, the practice of *singing* even the biblical "readings" prescribed for a given service. If, as Canadian media theorist Marshall McLuhan famously quipped, "The medium *is* the message" (McLuhan and Zingrone 1997, 151), then this mode of delivery arguably implies that divine revelation is not to be apprehended solely with the left brain, as it were, but with the right—to wit, in an integrated, holistic manner in which the intuitive, no less than the discursive, faculty plays its respective role (McGilchrist 2019, 74–5). Again and again, indeed, does Dionysius fall back upon the metaphor—if indeed he intends to speak metaphorically!—of *chanting*, to describe the process of *philosophizing*: truth, remarkably, is (made) known in and through song.[18]

Second, we see Dionysius presume the *participation* of what is beautiful in "Beauty" writ large: earthly beauties, by their very nature, point to that from which they derive, to that which is their *cause*.[19] Aesthetics, then, is necessarily rooted in theology as the ground from which it springs—theology being taken here as no mean exercise in ratiocination, but rather as tantamount to *pietas*: at once noetic and ascetic, resulting in a mystical union with the One contemplated. Liturgy, in this regard, plays an irreducible role: as the Byzantine Eucharist phrases it, "Let us who mystically represent the Cherubim, and sing the thrice-holy hymn"—that is, the cry of the heavenly host, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth" (cf. Isaiah 6:3)—"now lay aside all cares of life, that we may receive the King of all, invisibly escorted by ranks of angels" (Galadza et al. 2004, 421).

Third, beauty is "the cause of the harmony and splendour in everything," which summons (in an already-extant play on the homonymy of the Greek words for

"beauty" and "to call") and gathers. As we have noted, "harmony" and "splendour" are, for Aquinas, attributes of beauty itself. They are, moreover, readily applicable to our experience of music, not least in a liturgical context. Now harmony, that is, *proportion*—the balanced relationship of parts to whole—served in Dionysius's context principally as an architectural, if also a musical, descriptor. However, tonal harmony proper, that is, the simultaneous sounding of multiple notes, is far from what the Church Fathers had in mind when invoking the concept to express their ecclesiological or liturgical principles, despite the evident ubiquity of such harmony in the ancient world.[20]

Thus, for Clement of Alexandria (1885), in a well-cited passage: "The union of many in one, issuing in the production of divine harmony out of a medley of sounds and division, becomes one symphony following one choir-leader and teacher, the Word, reaching and resting in the same truth."[21] Similarly, in a comment of Ambrose, equally well known: a psalm's "symphonia joins those with differences, unites those at odds and reconciles those who have been offended, for who will not concede to him with whom one sings to God in one voice?"[22] The musical ideal for these churchmen is, categorically, that the many should sing *monophonically*, and indeed, such an approach, once universal across Christendom, has remained normative in the Coptic and Ethiopic Churches.[23] There, down to the present, liturgical singing is not only unaccompanied—a characteristic common to the worship of most, if not all, Byzantine Rite communities, although not that of the Armenians nor, increasingly, that of the Syriac Churches—but also executed in *unison*.[24]

Johannes Quasten (1983, 67) explains the rationale for the traditional discipline as follows: "With the understanding that unity and harmony stood in opposition to duality and disharmony the primitive Church rejected all heterophony and polyphony. The greatest possible harmony was pursued as the musical expression of the union of souls and of the community, as it prevailed in the early Christian liturgy." He continues by explaining the manner in which such singing was seen (heard!) to emulate that of the celestial worshippers: "It was precisely because the heavenly hosts sang their praise of God in a single voice"—as affirmed, Quasten (1983, 68) notes, by early liturgical texts referring to praise in *una voce*—"that the primitive Christians thought of this singing as so marvelous … In [their] view the earthly liturgy was understood to be a replica of the heavenly ritual."

Nonetheless, the Christian East no less than the West, although at a different pace and in a rather different way, was destined to move beyond the hermeneutic articulated on behalf of, and indeed through, unison singing. We turn now to the alternatives, and how they may express both continuity and change with respect to the patristic ethos.

ORTHODOX CHANT TODAY: THREE AESTHETIC PARADIGMS

In the chant traditions under consideration, one can observe certain basic polarities corresponding to the common underlying structure of all traditional forms of Christian liturgy. Melodies oscillate between simplicity and complexity, for instance: where longer texts are to be declaimed, practicality requires that plainer melodies

generally prevail, while shorter, frequently repeated (or especially significant) texts tend to receive more intricate settings. Again, those parts sung by all the people together (where this practice obtains) are typically simpler than those assigned to a soloist or group of chanters, although the contrary dynamic of clergy's parts being kept simple (in the Byzantine tradition, for example) may also prevail.

Now, according to the imagery of the Church Fathers discussed above, the unity of the different persons engaged in worship is seen to be illustrated by the monophonic assimilation of the many into one, of individual voices into an aurally cohesive whole. Although implicitly, this account of "harmony" seems to also validate the coordination of multiple roles according to a dialogical pattern, that is, the classical liturgical tripartite arrangement of Eastern liturgy, referred to at the outset of this chapter, in which the musical roles of the priest, deacon, and people (and/or cantor/choir) are balanced and integrated.

Cuneo (2016, 138) astutely draws attention to the phenomenology deployed in such a context, when "one's attention is simultaneously directed to one's own singing and others' singing." This simultaneously requires and produces a "*coordinated real-time responsiveness*," a meshing of actions, if not intentions, which although not unique to singing—inasmuch as dance and certain kinds of sport would seem to function similarly—is pre-eminently found there. Contemporary science, for its part, would undoubtedly point out that group singing has impressive physiological effects (such as the releasing of oxytocin and dopamine, the synchronizing of heart rates, and so on), readily giving rise to the kind of experience of interpersonal bonding that anthropologist Victor Turner (2018, 45) characterizes as *communitas*, although he locates such transpiring in *unstructured* encounters, rather than in the sort of scripted events that liturgies, by definition, are. For Cuneo (2016, 127): "Singing the text of the Eastern liturgies is an activity of such a kind that its form guarantees that those who engage in it instantiate important elements of its content [including] the understanding of *shalom*/*eirene* [peace] that the liturgical text itself calls for its participants to enact."[25]

Continuing in a phenomenological vein, we might ask what is added, in the practice of Greek, Romanian and Bulgarian traditions, inter alia, when the melody is supplemented and supported by a drone (*ison*)—the characteristic manner in which Byzantine chant is performed. Here, the discursive content of the liturgy, conveyed by those executing the melody, is combined with a non-discursive element, the drone being typically a sustained vowel sound rather than a reiteration of the text. The wordlessness of the drone, it seems to me, serves to introduce an apophatic "note" into the chant; in this, it is unlike an instrument, which *cannot* produce intelligible sound. The voice can and, moreover, is normally expected to. To hear it deployed in the manner of the drone, therefore, is to confront an aural enigma: the kataphasis, as it were, of that which is articulated in the melody is arguably complemented by a kind of 'unsaying," one entirely consonant with the tendency of Byzantine-Rite prayers and hymns to abound in apophatic terminology.[26] This is not to say, of course, that apophasis is absent from other Eastern Christian chant traditions. Along with the Byzantine, these revel in ecstatic melismas (the stretching of many notes over one syllable), not least in the service of sacrosanct terms like *alleluia* or *amen*: the mystical significance of such has long been located not in their propositional

content, inasmuch as the words have been preserved in Hebrew (rather than being translated) in all forms of Christian worship, but rather in their manifest potential to evoke the numinous. Hence, Augustine's famous comments on the melismatic form called the *jubilus*:

> The jubilus is a melody which conveys that the heart is in travail over something it cannot bring forth in words. And to whom does that jubilation rightly ascend, if not to God the ineffable? Truly is He ineffable whom you cannot tell forth in speech; and if you cannot tell Him forth in speech, yet ought not to remain silent, what else can you do but jubilate? In this way the heart rejoices without words and the boundless expanse of rapture is not circumscribed by syllables. Sing well unto Him in jubilation!
>
> (Augustine 2000, 111–12)

Byzantine music also knows the intriguing practice of the *terirem* or *kratima*, in which ostensibly nonsense syllables serve a function akin to Augustine's *jubilus*, allowing the suprarational to pour forth (Moody 2015, 359). What is perhaps distinctive, however, about the drone, above and beyond its capacity to "speak" apophatically, is the manner in which it paradoxically suggests *stasis* within movement, changelessness within change—bearing in mind that the representation of ordered movement in time is one angle on what makes music beautiful. Compellingly, such a verdict dovetails with that of recent neuroscience as evidenced, for instance, in the work of Iain McGilchrist. In his magisterial interdisciplinary study of the interaction of the left and right brains in human experience, McGilchrist (2019, 77) weighs in as follows: "Music takes place in time. Yet music also has the capacity to make us stand outside time … Music does not so much free time from temporality as bring out an aspect that is always present within time, its intersection with a moment which partakes of eternity." The theological connotations are readily apparent, if unfortunately left undeveloped by McGilchrist himself. To return then to Augustine: "There is a sound which time cannot seize"—an aspect of the beauty sought in the love of God, although recognized in and through the "melodies and sweet chants commonly used for David's Psalter" (*Confessions* 2008, X, 8, 50).[27]

The third paradigm for liturgical singing would be that of harmonized chant, both homophonic—wherein the voices sing different notes, but effectively on the same syllable, at the same time—and polyphonic, wherein the voices enjoy a degree of independent movement. Both styles are to be found in the Slavic Churches, with the former (being far more straightforward to execute) understandably more common. As with those already mentioned, there is obviously a vast literature on this style of Orthodox music. In keeping with the spirit of this chapter, therefore, I would simply propose that harmonized chant, in its own way, fulfills the desiderata of the early Church Fathers discussed above. For here, the many are still heard to become one, but in a manner suggestive of the plurality-within-unity of the Trinitarian persons, in which the distinctiveness of musical personhood, so to speak, is safeguarded within the sonic affirmation of a common will, energy, and activity—to adopt the standard terminology of Orthodox triadology.

Consider that in homophony or polyphony, there is a more or less equal ownership, by all singers, of the appointed verbal content—and thus a concomitant emphasis on kataphasis, as presented above. But the musically distinctive engagement with the liturgical text assigned to each individual voice part also implies an acute appreciation of alterity: this, because in singing homophony, and especially polyphony, I become readily aware that other singers do not appropriate what is common in quite the same manner as I do, and that I require, moreover, *their* appropriation even to successfully effect my own. The artifice of composition that unleashes this dynamic conceals a remarkable sociological fact, discussed in the abovementioned work of McGilchrist: namely that there is an emergent scientific consensus regarding the evolutionary precedence of music over language itself, inclusive of the proposition that human beings originally communicated with each other, that is, understood themselves as selves-in-relation, in and through music (McGilchrist 2019, 105–6).

Harmonized chant and, a fortiori, polyphony are correspondingly predicated on the ability of singers to maintain, while also transcending, their personal identity; to engage, we might say, in a kind of *perichoresis*—a term adduced by Gregory of Nazianzus, Maximus the Confessor, and other Greek Fathers, to describe the ineffable self-effacing "dancing around" of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And to strain the Trinitarian analogy: if Slavic homophony and polyphony, having incorporated Baroque and subsequent Western influences, display a "subordinationist" tendency to give pride of place to the soprano voice, the unique features of traditional Georgian three-part polyphony arguably result in a more nuanced, "orthodox" representation of hierarchy-within-unity (Freedman 2019).

TOWARDS A CONCLUSION

The foregoing presentation of Eastern Christian chant may appear rather idyllic, so I would like to reflect, in closing, on the aesthetic significance of the all-too-common impediments to liturgical singing—for even the *absence* of beauty may be revelatory. We must, on the one hand, confront the very real prospect of disharmony, of failing to "join together," whether in terms of tuning, rhythm, dynamics, or blend. Singing well involves a veritable struggle to overcome chaos to not only attain but *sustain* order: invariably, it induces the experience of *hamartia*: "a missing of the mark" on the part of oneself, as well as that of others. Failing to sing well, to coordinate the respective voices in concert, may even elicit a kind of aural "theodicy": Is the problem me, or someone else? Are we possessed of insufficient talent, or have we simply failed to cultivate the requisite musical virtues, so to speak, whether attentiveness, respect, perseverance, humility, equanimity, forbearance, and so forth?[28] Is our singing getting in the way of our prayer (or vice versa)? And, like classical attempts at theodicy, there may be differing accounts of the relative place of musical "evil." Following the second-century Church Father Irenaeus of Lyon, some may even construe the *chiaroscuro* produced by the encounter with bad singing to be valuable, if not necessary, for the fostering and evaluation of good singing as such: Without disharmony, could we even come to know harmony for what it is?[29]

On the other hand, the abovementioned metrics do not likely suffice to reckon the factors impeding musical beauty. In the Eastern Churches in the diaspora (that is, outside their historical homelands), for instance, there often occurs the polyvalent phenomenon of liturgical multilingualism, in which a sacral idiom such as Coptic is used alongside one or more vernaculars: Coptic parishes in Montreal, for example, readily sing also in Arabic, English, and French. The enterprise of adapting traditional melodies to new languages can produce not infrequently bizarre results, and not only in the Coptic context, of course: this, because the languages in question may well have their natural diction and cadence subverted in order to cram them into the received melodies, where the latter are believed to have a canonical, even immutable, status. By contrast, said languages might also find themselves privileged, whether through the simplification or even suppression of the melodies in question, causing a dramatic shift in the liturgical *Gestalt* for those accustomed to the classical marriage of verbal content and musical form within a given tradition. As anyone familiar with Eastern Christian parish life can attest, conflicts over language, to wit, over the linguistic-sonic environment of worship, readily degenerate to the point of splitting communities. In such contexts, aesthetics can prove tantamount to politics.

To return to the architectural analogy with which we began, courtesy of Scruton, we can observe that liturgical singing implies the maintenance of a kind of musical neighborhood, in which not only the objective structures complement each other, but those residing in them, as it were, are free to move and interact—even at the risk of committing crimes. And the threshold of how much diversity a given "neighborhood" can bear—not only melodic and linguistic, but temperamental and performative—before its unity and, in consequence its beauty, is confounded, is certainly not obvious. Musical structures are particularly fragile, the challenge of preserving their "facade" amid the impetus to "renovate"—of conserving their beauty while allowing people to participate in it, as it were—being formidable indeed. I would conclude by recalling the subtitle of this chapter: it denoted an ambivalence in regard to the sort of aesthetics under consideration, which has remained unresolved, if not intensified, throughout. If this is at all excusable in a volume dedicated to philosophical approaches to liturgy, it is so in the spirit of Michael Oakeshott's dictum: "Philosophy is really the clear thinking of what is felt in religion—the oneness. If we have no religion we have but a poor starting place for philosophy" (Oakeshott 2014, 13).

NOTES

1. Prayers after Holy Communion (Galadza et al. 2004, 325).
2. The title of this chapter is taken from the Prayer of the Third Antiphon, Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom (Galadza et al. 2004, 107).
3. For the purposes of this chapter, by "Orthodox" I intend the full spectrum of Eastern Christianity, as opposed to that of the West, whether Latin-Rite/Roman Catholicism or Protestantism. The four Eastern Christian "families" include the Assyrian/Ancient Church of the East, the Eastern Orthodox Church(es), the Oriental Orthodox

Churches, and the Eastern (-Rite) Catholic Churches. For a survey of these traditions, treating both their unity vis-à-vis those of the West, along with their internal diversity, see Butcher (2016, 1711–18). For further reading, see Parry (2007).

4. Burgeoning scholarship is examining the way digital communication, under the conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic, is revolutionizing how we experience "sacred space" (and time): live-streaming liturgical services, for example, or even celebrating them with others via Zoom, Microsoft Teams, or other similar platforms. Debate abounds concerning the varying ways embodiment is attenuated or, alternatively, accentuated, in and through participation in such forms of prayer. See Feulner and Haslwanter (2021).

5. Of course, the situation is changing today: despite the continued disinterest in notation, there is now the possibility for audio and video recordings of chant to be widely disseminated, engendering musical cross-pollination, at one level, and standardization, at another, to the extent that a given recording can be presented and preserved as normative. And yet, one can observe in Coptic and Syriac Churches—which unlike their Armenian and Ethiopian counterparts have generally embraced the multilingualism of their respective diasporas—a process of experimentation by which new vernaculars (Spanish, English, Norwegian, etc.) feature in liturgical worship, the traditional melodies being adapted more or less successfully, depending on the complexities of the language in question and the competence of the cantors and clergy. Not infrequently are the natural characteristics of a language, such as where stress falls in a given word, and the cadence of a given phrase, subordinated to musical considerations.

6. Scruton proceeds to cite James Howard Kunstler as a scholar who has furthered the theories advanced by Jacobs. Kunstler's words seem equally apropos to oral musical traditions such as those mentioned above: "The culture of good place-making, like the culture of farming or agriculture, is a body of knowledge and acquired skills. It is not bred in the bone, and if it is not transmitted from one generation to the next it is lost" (1994, 113).

7. For a brief overview of the variety of chant traditions in the Christian East, see Parry (2007, 328–31).

8. The lamentable phenomenon of Eastern Catholics celebrating "Low Mass," that is, reciting rather than chanting their Eucharistic service—a practice that arose and has continued, to varying degrees, in certain Eastern-Rite Churches (such as in some quarters of my own Ukrainian Greco-Catholic Church) in imitation of Latin-Rite Catholicism—is to be noted and, in the same breath, discounted as representative, inasmuch as it is effectively unknown in the Orthodox sister churches from whom, according to the Second Vatican Council, Eastern Catholics are to differ as little as possible (cf. *Orientalium Ecclesiarum*, paras 5–6, www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19641121_orientalium-ecclesiarum_en.html, and "Instruction for Applying the Liturgical Prescriptions of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches," para. 21, www.ewtn.com/catholicism/library/instruction-for-applying-the-liturgical-prescriptions-of-the-code-of–canons-of-the-eastern-churches-2257).

9. The ancient and once universal practice of singing *the* Mass, rather than merely singing *at* Mass, remains a desideratum for many Western liturgists. See Wadsworth (2010). For a masterful exposition of the interrelation of different musical genres within traditional Latin-Rite worship, see Mahrt (2011).
10. Other "pastoral" justifications for this practice may also be furnished, such as waiting until all potential attendees at a given service have shown up.
11. For my review of this monumental work, see https://readingreligion.org/books/hagia-sophia.
12. The quote is variously attributed to Goethe and Schelling; although the exact phrase is not to be found in his famous lectures on the philosophy of art, the latter does say, "Architecture is indeed solidified music," in the context of a detailed discussion of the mutual influence of ancient Greek music and architecture upon each other's development. See Schelling (1989, 177).
13. *Sacrosanctum concilium,* para. 112, www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19631204_sacrosanctum-concilium_en.html.
14. *Confessions* provides rich insight not only into fourth-century Western liturgy, but an emerging patristic theology of music exemplified in the following passage from Book X, 49: "I feel that when the words are chanted well, our souls are moved and more religiously and with a warmer devotion kindled to piety than if they are not so sung. All the diverse emotions of our spirit have their various modes in voice and chant appropriate in each case, and are stirred by a mysterious inner kinship" (Augustine 2008, 207–8).
15. For a concise treatment of Kant's views, see https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/kant-aesthetics.
16. *Summa Theologica*, I, 1–39:8 (Aquinas 1920).
17. *The Divine Names* 4, 7, 701C–701D (Pseudo-Dionysius 1987, 76–77).
18. For example, in this passage from *The Divine Names* 13, 3, 980C–981D: "Given this power of God's unity, we must be returned from the many to the One and *our unique song of praise* must be for the single complete deity which is the one cause of all things and which is there before every oneness amid multiplicity, before every part and whole, before the definite and indefinite, before the limited and the unlimited"; and, "There is the transcendent unity of God and the fruitfulness of God, and as we prepare to sing this truth we use the names Trinity and Unity for that which is in fact beyond every name, calling it the transcendent being above every being. But no unity or trinity, no number or oneness, no fruitfulness, indeed, nothing that is or is known can proclaim that hiddenness beyond every mind and reason of the transcendent Godhead which transcends every being [emphasis mine]" (Pseudo-Dionysius 1987, 129).
19. As also for Augustine, in *Confessions* X, 53, with respect to the fine arts, in a passage surely also applicable in its own way to music: "For the beautiful objects designed by artists' souls and realized by skillful hands come from that beauty which is higher than souls; after that beauty my soul sighs … From this higher beauty the artists

and connoisseurs of external beauty draw their criterion of judgement, but they do not draw from there a principle for the right use of beautiful things" (Augustine 2008, 210).

20. See Sachs (1943).
21. *Exhortation to the Heathen (Protrepticus)*, 9 (Clement of Alexandria 1885).
22. *Expositio evangelii secundum Lucam* 7:238, as cited in Stapert (2007, 27).
23. Ethiopic chant, although described above as monophonic, actually merits the more rarefied designation of heterophony, or "pseudo-unison" (Kebede 1980). A phenomenon observable in disparate contexts, for example, in the Gaelic psalm-singing of the Free Presbyterians of the Isle of Lewis in the Hebrides, heterophony involves each person singing the same melodic line, but each in their own way, with their own inflections, at something of their own tempo. The result is that voices cascade over one another, at times rendering the text less than intelligible but creating a mesmerizing effect: aural waves ebbing and flowing.
24. Coptic chant does permit the triangle, however, and small cymbals, in order to keep time during certain chants performed at a quick tempo. In the Ethiopian tradition, several percussive instruments are used to similar effect, including drums and sistra. The Armenian Rite also provides for cymbals and, along with the West Syriac, features liturgical fans, adorned with small bells, which are agitated to dramatic effect during services. All of the above, along with the Byzantine tradition, generally employ censers with bells, unlike those typically used in the Latin West and in the Assyrian Church of the East. The marked frequency of incensation in Eastern Christian services results in such censers serving as salient symbols on both the auditory and olfactory levels. In the early twentieth century, the Armenians embraced the pipe organ, which also became de rigueur in Greek and Antiochian Orthodox communities throughout North America. Much more recently, the electronic keyboard has gained widespread acceptance across the Syriac Churches, regardless of jurisdiction; it is difficult to exaggerate the radical transformation of their respective liturgical soundscapes. The Syriac Christians of Kerala, India, in particular, have exploited—for better or worse—the limitless harmonic and percussive potential of this instrument.
25. Cuneo points to the Psalms, which certainly do constitute the "bread and butter" of the Eastern Rites, especially in the Liturgy of the Hours, although also in the rites for the Eucharist. He further observes, drawing on Martha Nussbaum, that there is a certain "fittingness" operative between the form of Orthodox worship and its content: "The themes of shalom/eirene figure heavily … [this being] a state that supervenes on agents bearing normative relations of various kinds to one another and the natural world" (Cuneo 2016, 140). Cuneo's examples are drawn from the Byzantine Rite, but the assertion holds, *mutatis mutandis*, in regard to other Eastern traditions: the Copts end their Eucharist, for example, praying, "O king of peace, grant us peace, administer it upon us; and forgive us our sins. For thine is the power, the glory, the blessing and majesty forever, Amen. Hear us when we say: Our Father …", after having invoked, extended, and otherwise named the divine

eirene, in the case of the customary Liturgy of St. Basil, two to three dozen times. And the Armenian *Surp Badarak* ("Holy Offering," i.e., Eucharist), amid over four dozen references to peace, contains the achingly beautiful prayer to the Holy Spirit of Gregory of Narek, in which the celebrant resolves to "go on repeating in the same sequence of words until the certainty in the upward contemplation of light is miraculously revealed, stirring us to proclaim anew the good news of ever more peace." Further examples from other traditions could readily be adduced, it being noteworthy that in all the Eastern Rites, the most common kind of reference is the hortatory "Peace be with you/us/all."

26. Papanikolaou (2008, 234) neatly captures the dialectic of kataphatic and apophatic in discussing the legacy of seminal twentieth-century Orthodox theologian Vladimir Lossky: apophaticism is not just "the assertion that one 'knows' God through the affirmations of what God is not," nor "that one can never make positive statements about God. Drawing primarily on Dionysius, Lossky explains that insofar as God reveals himself, kataphatic or positive names can be attributed to God, such as 'God is good.' God, however, is simultaneously the transcendent and immanent God; hence, language used to express what God is cannot be construed as literal. God's revelation is always excessive, which means that there is always a gap between our language about God and what God is. In an apophatic approach, theology attempts to stretch language in order to express the central antinomy revealed in the Incarnation – God's transcendence and immanence." For a hermeneutical analysis of how this operates in the discourse of the Byzantine Rite, see Butcher (2018, ch. 4).
27. Augustine (2008, 183, 208)
28. An interesting discussion of how virtue ethics, in the mode of Alasdair MacIntyre, intersects with music can be found in Dell'Antonio (2004, ch. 2).
29. The vademecum on theodicy in the Christian tradition is undoubtedly Hick (2010).

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CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Liturgy and Eschatological Hope

J. AARON SIMMONS AND ELI SIMMONS

In this chapter, we will argue that *religious* liturgies are distinguished from other forms of liturgical practice, at least in part, by the sort of hope they call forth and cultivate. In particular, we will propose that religious liturgies, when appropriately oriented, ought to invite what we will term "eschatological hope," as distinguished from the "existential" and "existentiell" hopes made possible by other non-religious liturgical practices. In the end, we are not interested in ranking these different kinds of hopes or in playing them off one another, but instead in offering something of a typology of hope as liturgically situated in our embodied practices.

We will begin by motivating the concerns of this chapter by discussing the cultural context, both philosophical and religious, in which our considerations of liturgy will unfold. Then, we will look at three different accounts of religious liturgy as offered by Nicholas Wolterstorff, Jean-Yves Lacoste, and Bruce Ellis Benson. These accounts offer a range of options for how to understand the specificity of the "religious" modifier. Then, we will draw on recent philosophical considerations of hope (from both analytic and continental perspectives) in order to offer the constructive suggestion that *religious* liturgy (of whatever form) ought to be understood as distinguished by its hope for what is variously understood as *unhoped for* (Chrétien), a matter of *hope against hope* (Caputo), and what we will term the *unconditioned* (drawing loosely from Marcel). Although this chapter will merely be a first step toward thinking through the relation between religious liturgy and hope, we think it is a step worth taking.

WHERE WE FIND OURSELVES: LITURGY AND CONTEMPORARY CULTURAL IDENTITY

For many religious people, especially within some Christian traditions, the notion of "liturgy" conjures up the "bells and smells" to which so many non-denominational churches (whether "mega" or not) offer themselves as "culturally relevant" alternatives. In this semantic context, liturgy is often taken to be, or presented as being, synonymous with an embrace of some sort of religious "tradition." Yet,

tradition, here, is not usually understood in common parlance as an expression of historical sensitivity to the complicated manifestations of ecclesial practice, say, but rather as an identity that is out of step with the modern (or postmodern) world. In this sense, liturgy is the stuff that happens at the churches our parents used to go to, but that one can escape by embracing music from Australia, fashion from Nashville, and a biblical hermeneutic shaped in Dallas. Of course, to be part of this liturgy-free context is, in part, to remain ignorant of such influences and the ideological frameworks on which they depend.

Defenders of non-liturgical Christian communities are likely to undergird their approach to such topics with the assumption that one's own church is the only one to have come so close to understanding correct biblical revelation, Christian Truth (always with a capital T), and the cultural oppression of all the Christians who display such awareness. It should come as no surprise, then, that part of being a participant in one's Christian community is the embrace of identifying markers that not only distinguish you from other religious traditions (cross necklaces, or ichthys bumper stickers, and so on), but from other "rival" churches: T-shirts with slogans or trademarks that show your true allegiance to *this* church rather than *that* one. As Merold Westphal (2009) has demonstrated, drawing on the work of Hans-Georg Gadamer and Alasdair MacIntyre, belonging to a particular Christian community is marked not only by the company *you keep* but also by the hermeneutic approach that *keeps you*, as it were. Accordingly, being opposed to/distinguished from liturgy, or liturgical churches, often says more about one's tacit framework of theological meaning than it does about one's own explicit theology or philosophy of liturgy.

Importantly, philosophers and theologians from a variety of Christian backgrounds and scholarly approaches have recently begun to challenge such facile notions of liturgy so commonly found on display in the contemporary Christian (especially American Evangelical) marketplace. In an impressive display of philosophical common cause, analytic philosophers such as Nicholas Wolterstorff (2015) and Terence Cuneo (2016), as well as continental thinkers like Bruce Ellis Benson (2013), Jean-Yves Lacoste (2004), Christina Gschwandtner (2019), and Emmanuel Falque (2016) have all offered substantive considerations of liturgy as a legitimate concern for philosophical inquiry.[1] The degree to which such considerations have displayed specific confessional commitments varies with the thinker and the methodology in play, but all such work represents a positive step forward in philosophy of religion for at least three reasons.

First, it collectively challenges the idea that "liturgy" is something that characterizes more "traditional" churches and that has been overcome or abandoned by "contemporary" and "culturally relevant" churches. In other words, regardless of philosophical approach or religious conviction, this work all supports the idea that a non-liturgical church is simply not a church at all—either it is a "church" in name only but has abandoned the religiously significant components of Christian communal worship, or it has maintained such components but under other guises that ought to be named and considered as "liturgies" all their own.

Second, it shows liturgy, whether understood as a specific approach to "scripted" religious practice (Wolterstorff 2015), a phenomenological approach

to religious existence as "before God" (Lacoste 2004), or as a broad cultural manifestation of the "work of the people" (Benson 2013), to be primarily a matter of identity formation within the embodied practices of specific discursive communities.

Third, following from this last point, the recent philosophical work on liturgy interrupts the ease with which we might try to distinguish between the theory and practice of religious life. Our practices are where our theories not only get enacted but also get formed, as recent work in embodied cognition and religion has demonstrated (for example, see Sanders 2016). But, simultaneously, our theories are what give shape to our practices as formatively instructive for our shared communal narrative, which in turn shapes us.

These three overarching characteristics of the philosophy of liturgy ought to be understood as offering a philosophical challenge to the contemporary understanding not only of much of contemporary Christian (market) culture but also to the philosophy of religion that would continue to try to engage in purely theoretical abstraction about aspects of religious life. In other words, theory is good, but *lived* theory is where we always find ourselves, one way or another, as we embody our religion, our identity, and our history in the practices that we so often take for granted. Only when we overcome the implicit cognitivist assumptions of philosophy of religion will our philosophical accounts of religious existence begin better to reflect the embodied realities of religious persons (see Schilbrack 2014).

And yet, given the increasing work in the philosophy of liturgy, it is important not to fall too quickly into assumptions about the idea of liturgy as necessarily a *religious* conception. Indeed, Pierre Hadot's (1995) account of ancient philosophy as "a way of life," rather than as an academic discourse, highlights the ways in which philosophy was a "spiritual exercise" oriented toward the care of one's soul (see also Benson 2013, 130–1). In this sense, philosophy, at its roots, could rightly be understood as a kind of "liturgical" practice—a work of the people devoted to cultivating themselves in relation to truth, goodness, and beauty. Indeed, when we think of early philosophical movements, the different communities (Stoics, Epicureans, Pythagoreans, Cynics) were not simply distinguished by different beliefs, but by different ways of enacting their embodiment in a social world. Yet, it would be wrong to confuse such philosophically oriented "spiritual exercises" with religious practices aimed at soteriological outcomes. Accordingly, it is important to make clear that not all liturgies are religious, and in light of Hadot, as well as more phenomenological approaches to the notion of "dwelling" in particular contexts of meaning (see Heidegger 1971), it makes sense to realize that liturgical existence, more broadly, is possible regardless of one's determinate religious commitments. If, then, the notion of "religious liturgy" is not simply a tautology (on the order of an "unmarried bachelor"), then what work does the "religious" modifier do? In order to take up this question, and then attempt to answer it in relation to the work of hope, we will begin by looking at three particular accounts in order to map a spectrum of philosophical options for how to understand liturgy and its relation to religious life and practice.

ASSESSING THE SPECTRUM: THREE ACCOUNTS OF LITURGY

Nicholas Wolterstorff: Liturgy as Scripted Practice

In *The God We Worship: An Exploration of Liturgical Theology*, Nicholas Wolterstorff's purpose is to "[make] explicit the understanding of God implicit in Christian worship and then, at a few points, to articulate that understanding, that is, to explain it, develop and elaborate it, and defend it" (Wolterstorff 2015, 2). Thus, as the title of the text suggests, Wolterstorff is not acting here only in his role as philosopher of religion but also and primarily in the role of theologian; that is, he is not developing a philosophical position on liturgical existence, but is elucidating the determinate (even if only implicit) theological positions manifested by Christian liturgical practices (such as prayer, communal worship, the Eucharist). This fact distinguishes Wolterstorff from the other thinkers we will be considering. While Jean-Yves Lacoste draws primarily upon the work of Martin Heidegger, and Bruce Ellis Benson upon the work of Jean-Louis Chrétien—both thinkers associated with the phenomenological tradition in philosophy—Wolterstorff draws primarily upon the work of liturgical theologians like Alexander Schmemann and J.J. von Allmen.

According to Wolterstorff (2015, 7): "To participate in the enactment of a liturgy is … to perform scripted, rule-governed, actions." Central to Wolterstorff's account is the notion that liturgy is always shaped and actualized by a *script*, which he describes as "the complete set of rules for a correct liturgical enactment, both those specified in the liturgical text and those to be found in the relevant liturgical culture" (Wolterstorff 2015, 7). Thus, the script for liturgy can be written or unwritten, communally or privately enacted, but it must always be operative in and behind acts of worship in order for those acts to count as liturgical. For Wolterstorff (2015, 8), "Acts of worship are liturgical when they are scripted." Even though he does not explicitly include an "only if" qualifier in his account here, the clear suggestion is that liturgy is meant to be understood as the enactment of a script as guiding proper participation in particular rule-governed sequences of actions that, for Wolterstorff at least, thus enable communal Christian worship.[2]

Two points emerge from Wolterstorff's account as we have briefly described it: first, liturgy is necessarily and primarily a *religious* concept and, second, not all acts of worship are liturgical. On the first point, Wolterstorff (2015, 8) explicitly defines liturgical actions as a particular "species of acts of Christian worship" and never (in this particular text) does he explicitly depart from this relatively narrow conception. Liturgy just *is* scripted acts of Christian worship, and liturgy just *is* the rightful performance of rule-governed actions relative to particular determinate religious contexts.[3] On the second point, for Wolterstorff (2015, 8), worship is not necessarily liturgical, insofar as some worshipful actions are supposedly not scripted, or undertaken in radically individual ways separate from communal participation, but all properly liturgical actions are necessarily worshipful. We can see here that the second point actually serves to reinforce the first point; namely since liturgical actions are instances of worship, they are thus necessarily religious phenomena and deserve to be considered as such.

Jean-Yves Lacoste: Liturgy as Existential Orientation

In *Experience and the Absolute* (Lacoste 2004), Jean-Yves Lacoste's phenomenological articulation of liturgical existence departs from Wolterstorff's account insofar as liturgy for Lacoste does not primarily describe a particular sequence of actions, whether scripted or not, but instead describes a kind of existential orientation. For Lacoste (2004, 37), liturgy can certainly take the form of particular acts of worship, but it can never be easily reducible to those embodied acts. Instead, liturgy is *primarily* an existential posture of the individual in relation to "the divine Absolute," a posture by which the individual enters into and maintains this relation as a way of navigating the world as meaningful. Lacoste calls this posture *being-before-God* and understands it as occurring both in relation, and also in contrast, to Heidegger's notion of being-in-the-world. Thus, Lacoste (2004, 39) writes that, "we have defined liturgy as the resolute deliberate gesture made by those who ordain their being-in-the-world a being-before-God, and who do violence to the former in the name of the latter." Notice that, for Lacoste, the emphasis is on the mode of one's being as a lived directionality, rather than on doing this or that thing internal to the scripted traditions of a religious community.

Whereas, in broad strokes, Heidegger maintains the temporality of worldliness (in his earlier work)[4] and, then, the strife between world and earth (in his later work)[5] as key determining horizons of human existence and experience, Lacoste posits that being-in-the-world, in this Heideggerian sense, is not constitutive of one's ultimate identity. Instead, being-before-God as a liturgical mode of human existence places being-in-the-world in subordination to one's relation to the Absolute as the condition of how to relate to the "world" in the first place. This shift in priorities allows one to *live a liturgical life* that may, and likely will, manifest itself in more explicitly *liturgical actions* now understood as specific historical religious phenomena. The play of world and earth in their different modes of existential significance, what Lacoste (2004, 46) calls "the chiaroscuro order of the world," are transcended by liturgical existence. "By giving itself, from within the world, a horizon not of the world," Lacoste (2004, 43) explains, "liturgy proves that the world is not intranscendable." Here, we see Lacoste reject any sort of reductionism that would attend human existence. The world is not a limiting horizon, but instead importantly shaped by, and interpreted according to, what one considers ultimate. Thus, standing before God is a mode of existence such that the world is then lived into as non-final. It is worth noting that Lacoste does not argue that one can permanently liturgically transcend the horizons of the world or the earth; the chiaroscuro continues to offer the sensibility of light and shadow into which we live as before-God. Thus, in a discussion of the Heideggerian fourfold, Lacoste (2004, 42) writes:

> our inherence in the world, or the shelter given to us by the earth, can suffice to qualify what we are: we can choose to exist solely in the mode of Dasein or in that of the 'mortal.' But just as we are free to affirm the existence of an Absolute who is someone with whom a relation has been promised, so we can choose to exist in his presence: to expose ourselves to him.

We might go so far as to suggest that Lacoste provides a final escape from the ontotheological framework of which Heidegger was himself so critical. By rejecting a hermeneutic reduction of liturgical existence to a matter of being-in-the-world, Lacoste repositions lived existence as a task of world creation, and does so by opening spaces for appealing to that which would give itself as beyond or above the world. In this way, God or the Absolute would serve a structural function for how we take ourselves up as being-in-the-world in the first place, rather than simply a modification of our being-in-the-world in particular ways.

That said, for Lacoste, we can say that liturgy remains a fundamentally *religious* concept insofar as it entails a relation to the divine Absolute, but nonetheless that it signifies as a mode of existence rather than necessarily a set of social practices (contra Wolterstorff). Put differently, for Lacoste, a liturgical existence can lead into acts of worship, whereas for Wolterstorff, a worshipful existence can lead into acts of liturgy. Lacoste conceives of worship as showing up possible moments in the liturgical life, but those moments of worship are not tantamount to the liturgical life as such. Accordingly, he can claim that

> what 'liturgy' designates … is, in fact, as convention would have it, the logic that presides over the encounter between man and God writ large … the limits of what I understand here by 'liturgy' exceed the limits of worship—though I concede unreservedly that anything to do with worship is not foreign to the domain of the 'liturgical.'
>
> (Lacoste 2004, 2)

Bruce Ellis Benson: Liturgy as a Way of Life

Benson's position shares characteristics of both positions we have introduced, such that he appreciates the embodied practice of liturgical actions and also the existential orientation of lived engagement, but departs from the specific ways that Wolterstorff and Lacoste develop these positions in substantive ways. In *Liturgy as a Way of Life: Embodying the Arts in Christian Worship* (2013), Benson articulates what we might call an "improvisational phenomenological anthropology." His most basic, and also most original, claim is that humans are fundamentally improvisational beings. Drawing upon sources as varied as the liturgical tradition of the Episcopal Church, the history of jazz music (and his own experience as a jazz musician), and Pierre Hadot's work on the notion of ancient philosophy as spiritual exercise, Benson demonstrates that to live artistically is not to create *ex nihilo*—as in the Romantic notion of the isolated genius that breaks away from all tradition to create something fundamentally "new." Rather, Benson deploys the idea of improvisation to argue that as artists (in a specific or extended sense), we are only ever improvising upon what precedes us. We inherit the general historical melody, as it were, but allow it to be a composite track over which we can solo and create music that has never been heard in precisely this way. Absolute novelty, like the idea of the wholly other, we would argue, comes close to being unintelligible. We need to have a frame of reference in relation to which the novelty can be considered as such. "As improviser," Benson (2013, 93) notes, "one is aware of being wholly indebted to the past. As improviser,

one speaks in the name of others. As improviser, one joins a conversation." Benson thus subverts problematically framed individualistic articulations of human creativity in order to present a fundamentally and necessarily communal conception of human personhood and embodied action. In this way, Benson avoids any egoistic account of creative practice, while affirming the importance of some degree of self-creation. Situating his notion of liturgy—and of what it means to live liturgically—within this context of improvisational selfhood, communal participation, and "regulative practices that shape and form us," Benson (2013, 41) sees liturgy as an invitation to contribute something new, not a requirement of repeating what others have required of us. Liturgy as a way of life is a *life-with-others*, but never a *life-dictated-by-others*.

If, for Wolterstorff, liturgy signifies a certain set of scripted religious social practices, and for Lacoste liturgy signifies a particular way of being-before-God, then, for Benson, liturgy signifies a particular way of "improvisationally" taking oneself up as a work of art. Indeed, Benson (2013, 127) writes that "liturgy properly defined is all about our becoming living works of art." It is important to think carefully about the relation between living liturgically and living artistically. Surely just because someone is a sculptor or an oil painter, that person is not necessarily living liturgically. Alternatively, liturgically becoming a living work of art does not mean that one begins to watch more Bob Ross or throw some clay on a wheel. By "work of art," Benson is engaging here in metaphorical description. Becoming a living work of art via a liturgical mode of existence is a matter of not being reducible to the self we have been made by others. It is a realization that we are empowered (by God?) to be co-creators of the world and our identity within it.

In the attempt to allow for diversity in such creative acts, Benson introduces multiple categories of liturgical practice. For instance, he acknowledges that something like liturgy—a "regulative practice that shapes and forms us"—occurs in a tradition like jazz music, or other historical artistic endeavors (painters innovate on the basis of general color theory, potters innovate in relation to the realities of human bodies, and dancers innovate in the context of stylistic histories), but he also uses the terms "intensive" and "extensive" liturgy to define the specific practices occurring in the liturgical life of the Christian church more specifically. For Benson, "intensive" liturgy is what the church does when it gathers to perform its scripted, communal—and thus improvisational—acts of worship; "extensive" liturgy, on the other hand, is that which occurs as we seek to "live artistically" after being sent out into the world as shaped and transformed by the intensive liturgy. In other words, the intensive liturgy is how we worship on Sunday, while the extensive liturgy is how we live liturgically throughout the week. Benson (2013, 143) puts it this way: "The liturgy on Sunday provides the context for the other days of the week, reminding us that the liturgy *continues* throughout the week in the form of extensive liturgy." In this way, Benson again appropriates and yet challenges the alternatives presented by Wolterstorff and Lacoste. In particular, we might say that intensive liturgy is the primary focus for Wolterstorff and extensive liturgy (understood in a deep sense) is the primary focus for Lacoste.

Drawing on Greek culture and the Early Church Fathers, as well as upon the etymology of liturgy itself (λειτουργία/*leitourgia*) (Benson 2013, 23–4), and situating

his argument within the context of Chrétien's call and response structure (2004), Benson (2013, 127) demonstrates that liturgy is not exclusively about secular social practices or about religious church services—although liturgy can certainly involve both of these—but is instead primarily about cultivating a particular kind of self—"becoming living works of art."

MAPPING THE SPECTRUM

While there are similarities between the arguments of each of the philosophers we have introduced, we think that their positions diverge enough such that they provide a rough outline of multiple ways to understand the general *philosophical* ways of appropriating the relation of religion and liturgy. Roughly, Benson and Wolterstorff serve as respective poles for this spectrum, with Lacoste falling somewhere between them. For Benson, while we can certainly understand (intensive) liturgy as the worshipful practices of Christian communities, we can also understand liturgy as the formative communal practices of jazz musicians, or painters, or baseball players, or trout fishers, such that we can take up liturgy as a call to particular kinds of social formation or aesthetic engagement. While Benson does bookend *Liturgy as a Way of Life* with an articulation of a particularly religious and specifically *Christian* conception of liturgy, it seems to us that Benson views liturgy as not fundamentally a matter of Christian worship but as a "way of life." In this sense, he is closer to Lacoste than he is to Wolterstorff, since he is concerned with a mode of being-in-the-world through which one lives improvisationally within the call/response structure and takes up one's own life as a work of art. Yet, Benson differs from Lacoste when it comes to the content of this "way." Whereas Lacoste explicitly locates the relation to the Absolute as the key to such a liturgical orientation, Benson offers a position whereby the explicitly religious and the determinately liturgical need not necessarily accompany one another. Instead, liturgy can show up at every region of human existence and experience, not showing up exclusively as the intensive liturgical practices of Christian communities on a Sunday.

It is clear then that, in contrast to Benson, Wolterstorff serves as a model of what might be the opposite end of this liturgical spectrum. For Wolterstorff, as we have already stated, liturgy just *is* Christian worship, and it is specifically the performance of scripted, rule-governed, worshipful sequences of actions. Certain sequences of actions in other institutions and social practices may certainly involve scripts (implicit or explicit) and be rule-governed, such as musical performance or spectator sports, but, according to Wolterstorff's view, these actions would not count as liturgical since they do not involve the determinate commitments and expressions of Christian worship.[6] Thus, Benson and Wolterstorff provide two respective poles for an examination of liturgy as a religious (or non-religious) conception.

Lacoste falls somewhere between these respective accounts. For Lacoste, liturgy is not simply worship or the liturgical practices of a particular community (Wolterstorff), nor is it simply regulative communal practices that shape and form us (Benson), but is instead being-before-God as such. For Lacoste, liturgy is the act and the mode of existence by which one makes oneself vulnerable to the Absolute,

entering into relationship with the God before which one finds oneself exposed. Liturgy, being-before-God, is thus not simply some set of practices, but is, as already mentioned, a way of being human, although without the artistic and improvisational dynamics that are so central for Benson. For Lacoste, liturgy is certainly "a way of life" (Benson) and can certainly show up in acts of worship (Wolterstorff), but liturgy cannot be reduced to either of these accounts. For Lacoste, liturgy is conceptually and phenomenologically excessive, such that it resists categorization as either a set of religious practices or an artistic way of life. On this account, as we have suggested, liturgy is best understood as describing a fundamental existential posture and orientation. It is a way of being human that does not allow being-in-the-world solely to determine one's humanity, but instead enables one's being-before-God to determine how one takes up the relation to the world.

PHILOSOPHIES OF HOPE AND LITURGICAL EXISTENCE

In the preceding analysis, we have seen that philosophers (even religiously oriented philosophers) offer varying accounts of the relation of liturgy to religion. For our part, we feel a proximity to Benson in that we find existential liturgy, as it were, not to be reducible to communal religious practices. Yet, in support of Lacoste, we think that there are important liturgical possibilities available for broadly religiously phenomenological ways of life. Moreover, with Wolterstorff, we contend that there is something distinctive about specific liturgies undertaken in the context of determinate religious traditions (and according to "scripts" handed down in those traditions). We see no contradiction in such liturgical pluralism, but it does raise important philosophical questions. In particular, given these divergent views, what work does the "religious" modifier do when applied to liturgy? Our constructive suggestion is that the different sorts of liturgy yield different forms of hope as lived expectations. Although all liturgical modes of life and practice are hope-inspiring, only religious liturgy opens onto what we will term "eschatological hope." Our account here is simply a sketch of how this might work, but (hopefully) we expect that it will articulate at least one possible way of making sense of how the philosophy of liturgy can find traction in our finitude.

Philosophical considerations of hope are wide-ranging and increasingly prominent in the contemporary literature.[7] Rather than give a survey of this terrain, we will instead depend on, and extend, the account that J. Aaron Simmons (2017) has developed elsewhere. In his essay "Living Joyfully after Losing Social Hope: Kierkegaard and Chrétien on Selfhood and Eschatological Expectation," Simmons argues that there are ultimately three sorts of hope: *existentiell*, *existential*, and *eschatological*. Existentiell hope is perhaps best defined as a hope or expectation for a particular future possibility that can be instantiated at a given time. For example, one might hope for a new car, a new job, or even a new world (free of pandemics and racial injustice, say). In this way, existentiell hope is fundamentally an object-oriented hope. It hopes for X and ultimately X either will or will not become actual.

Alternatively, existential hope is the attitude or orientation that accompanies all thought and action insofar as it is temporally located. Existential hope is the perspectival companion to temporal existence, as such. For example, even when I am not hoping for X, I am still living forward and risking myself with an expectant direction. I live into the present as hopeful for the future. Unlike the object-orientation of existentiell hope, existential hope is inherently subjective. It is a matter of being invested in one's own becoming as a historical possibility.

Finally, eschatological hope is of a different sort altogether. It is not oriented toward an object X that can become historically actual, but neither is it a matter of historical possibility that defines my selfhood as temporally situated. Instead, eschatological hope is a refusal to allow historical possibility to have the final word. Eschatological hope is premised on the idea that all such possibilities are themselves anchored in the actuality of the eternal. Existentiell hope is a hope for what is "not yet" the case, but might be. Existential hope is a hope for what is "not yet" the case, but structures who I am. Eschatological hope is a hope that is "already/not yet" insofar as it frames my very becoming and the objects that I desire as both matters of who it is that I already am and what is already the case about reality. Eschatological hope is "religious" in ways that existentiell and existential hope are not. The eschaton is not simply something for which we strive, but something in the light of which we live. It is not simply the fact that our existence is defined by the "maybe" of the future, but the fact that our "maybe" is already established by the proclamation "it is finished" (John 19:30). As Kierkegaard (1990) notes, the "expectancy" or "hope" of faith is victory. Importantly, though, all three modes of hope are manifestations of lived faith—a risk with direction. Existentielly, we risk ourselves to obtain a particular goal. Existentially, we risk ourselves by moving forward despite an uncertain future. Eschatologically, we risk ourselves by refusing to affirm a temporally constrained value theory.

Drawing on this topology of hope, we want to offer the constructive suggestion that only religious liturgy invites eschatological hope and, in this way, we can begin to formulate an account of the work that the "religious" modifier is doing. We do not mean to propose some sort of triumphalist or supercessionist conception of religious liturgy as related to other modes of liturgical practice and life. Just as eschatological hope is not somehow better or more significant than other modes of hope, religious liturgy is not superior to other modes of liturgy. Instead, the eschatological hope enacted in religious liturgy is simply a distinctive way of relating to time, expectation, and identity that is worth taking seriously. Even if one rejects the truth of Christian theism, say, or is critical of all religious institutions, our proposal here is a matter of phenomenological philosophy. We are not contending that religious liturgies are veridical, but simply that they are phenomenologically distinctive in ways that open onto further philosophical and theological questions.

Let's look at the three forms of hope and see how they can map onto the three conceptions of liturgy that we have considered here.

First, Wolterstorff, Lacoste, and Benson all present conceptions of liturgy that involve some dimensions of existentiell hope. For Benson, liturgy as a "way of life" requires us to enact spiritual practices in such a way as to become a living

work of art. Even though this is less concrete than getting a new car, say, it is nonetheless something toward which one strives and, in practice, living in such a way will require a variety of specific enacted outcomes as markers along one's path. Similarly, Lacoste's account is one that seeks transformations in the way that one relates to the world. In light of such transformed being-in-the-world as being-before-God, it stands to reason that one would have a revised sense of what objects are truly worthy of desire and devotion. But, a revised desire is not an elimination of desire. Living forward without any objective aims is an empty mode of existence. Lacoste's account of liturgical existence is actually offered as a fulfilled way of life. It doesn't eliminate existentiell hope, but simply reorients it. Moreover, Wolterstorff's scripted enactment of community practice is anchored in specific beliefs about God and articulates concrete hopes for the transformation of the world in light of God's presence. Indeed, Wolterstorff (2015, 9) will even suggest that liturgy is the "actualization of the Church." In this case, the church actually stands as the futural object toward which one aims in the enactment of liturgical practice. But, once the church is actualized, it then, itself, aims at particular outcomes in history. Perhaps the best manifestation of such liturgical existentiell hope for Wolterstorff would unfold in the act of petitionary prayer. Praying for X, as an individual, and as a community, is a matter of existentiell hope.

Moving on to existential hope, it is also the case that all three display this aspect of how we are human. Benson and Lacoste are especially fecund sources of existential hope due to their deep phenomenological inheritance. Benson's engagement with art is not simply a matter of object-oriented intention, but is more a matter of taking oneself up as a creative agent. Art is possible for beings like us due to our way of being—our temporality, our constructive capacity, our ability to transform the world rather than merely to inhabit it. Benson invites us to existential hope when he explains who it is that we are in our embodied potential. We are only able to *become* living works of art because we are beings who are always *becoming something*.

Lacoste's proposal of liturgy as being-before-God is similarly a matter of transformed living insofar as it depends upon a broadly Heideggerian conception of human existence as temporally defined. "Being-before" is not simply a spatial metaphor in the sense of standing-in-front-of. It is also a matter of temporal indexed desire. We exist in this way as an orientation for our continued existence. We are who we are becoming. Existential hope is an intrinsic feature of *Dasein* and this forms the background conditions of Lacoste's religious revision of Heidegger's specific conception of how this hope will play forth.

Wolterstorff's approach to liturgy is distinctive from Lacoste's and Benson's in the way that it focuses on what our liturgy tells us about God—or at least about our belief in God. He is attempting to unpack what we are implicitly saying about "the God we worship" in what we say in our liturgies. As such, he identifies Christian liturgy as revealing a God who is vulnerable, participates in mutual address, listens, and speaks. Notice that all of these characteristics are decidedly personal and temporally located. God is affected by our prayers, our beliefs, and our actions. God is invested in hearing what we ask and speaks back in ways that open the future in specific ways. All of this mutual engagement among persons occurring in Christian

liturgy is anchored in the idea that we are beings who have "a future and a hope" (Jeremiah 29:11). For Wolterstorff, we are who we are insofar as we are moving forward as God moves with us. Existential hope is perhaps the best philosophical name for the key to this theological anthropology.

Even though all three thinkers offer liturgical accounts of the workings of existentiell and existential hope, it is only in the specifically religious aspects of their thought that we begin to find openings onto eschatological hope. It stands to reason that Wolterstorff's explicitly (and perhaps exclusively) religious account of liturgy would be eschatologically oriented. The idea that God listens and speaks back is not something that should exalt us into humanistic idolatry, but instead should humble us as in relation—indeed, constituted by—to a God that transcends history itself and yet kenotically meets us where (and when) we are. The eschatological hope that results is neither for this or that outcome in the world (even though, as previously mentioned, such existentiell objects are not put out of play), nor is it simply a matter of reminding us of our human temporal condition as expectant (although, again, such existential qualifications remain hermeneutically applicable). Rather, this eschatological hope is found in the idea that the God who hears our prayers, who is present in the Eucharist, who is affected by our becoming, is also the God who reminds us of the non-ultimacy of historical possibility precisely by inviting us to see history as meaningful. As Wolterstorff (2015, 145) writes:

> The God of unsurpassable greatness and excellence humbles himself and elevates us by listening to what we say to God in our enactment of the liturgy. That same God humbles himself and elevates us by consenting to being represented by a mere human being in our enactment of the liturgy, so that what that human being sys counts as God here and now saying something to us.

Notice that Wolterstorff begins by acknowledging God's qualitative difference from the historical world. Yet, he then quickly pivots and affirms God's kenotic example as invested precisely in that history. Eschatological hope is not tethered to what happens tomorrow. It is the idea that we rest in the God regardless of what tomorrow holds. Eschatological hope is inherently a matter of openness and, as such, is not an expression of a theological commitment to meticulous providence. In fact, Wolterstorff's open theism comes through quite clearly throughout his account as he continues to stress the trust that occurs in relation to a personal God. Wolterstorff does simply not trust that God will do X, but that God is trustworthy.

Eschatological hope thereby overcomes a facile economic logic of hope grounded in an exchange function (prayer for results, worship for elevation, sacrament for blessing). Eschatological hope recognizes that God has "already" assured the future, regardless of what the future looks like. This is important because eschatological hope makes possible what both Søren Kierkegaard (1990, 82–3)[8] and John Caputo (2015) will term "hoping against hope." It is hope that is not defeated when existentiell hopes look hopeless. It is hope that propels us forward not toward a specific outcome, but as hopeful, as such. The importance of "religious" liturgy for eschatological hope becomes clear when we begin to appreciate the hallmark

of the "religious" as the non-ultimacy of the world (in the Heideggerian sense). Eschatological hope shifts our orientation, not simply from this object to that one (existentiell), not simply from being to becoming (existential), but from our being-in-the-world to the world as conditioned by something beyond it.

Like Wolterstorff, Lacoste also situates his account of liturgy in this relationality to the beyond. Being-before-God is not just a reminder about our temporal status (although it is that too) but also a rejection of the primacy of being-in-the-world. Even though Lacoste has a more expansive conception of how liturgy functions—not simply within the practice of the church, but as a matter of religious subjectivity—he and Wolterstorff are on the same page when it comes to how liturgy humbles us in relation to God's elevation, and elevates us in our participation in God's humble invitation. Being-before-God and viewing life itself as potentially liturgical allows Lacoste to expand our expectation beyond what we can imagine. Eschatological hope is more properly situated in relation to what Jean-Louis Chrétien (2002) terms the "unhoped for." Chrétien (2002, 104) rightly notes that "hope disassociates itself from all calculation." But, notice that existentiell hope requires some degree of calculation or otherwise it would merely become irrational wishful thinking. The hope to which Chrétien refers is eschatological hope. The unhoped for is eschatologically directed because it is not concerned with outcomes, but with "what transcends all our expectations, and the inaccessible is that to which no path takes us, whether it is one that is already traced or one that we project in thought" (Chrétien 2002, 105).

One other helpful conversation partner here is Gabriel Marcel. In *Homo Viator*, Marcel (1962) offers a "metaphysic of hope" in which he distinguishes between hope that is conditioned on specific historical realities and hope that is unconditioned, we might say, *as such*. It is the latter conception that we find to resonate with the notion of eschatological hope we are proposing here. Marcel's formula for this sort of hope is that we do not hope for X, but instead "we hope in thee for us." Pay attention to the personal framing and relational dynamics here. Marcel's account is engaging a similar conception of "the God we worship" as found in Wolterstorff. The aim is not a historical outcome, but rather a way of being who we are meant to be in God—as Wolterstorff says, it is in this sense that liturgy actualizes the church: it forms the "we" as this particular "us" in relation to "thee." This hope is unconditioned because it is not concerned with the realities of worldly existence, but resituates those realities as not the final word on who we are, who we are becoming, and why it matters.

Hope against hope. The unhoped for. The unconditioned. Eschatological hope is not for an object, or even for ourselves, but a matter of being grounded in the victory, the accomplishment, the "already" that is nonetheless countenanced in the "not yet" of our temporal existence.

With this proposal of the eschatological hope as located in Wolterstorff and Lacoste, we want to make clear that Benson's account is not somehow diminished because it does not stress this religious aspect. Indeed, he does not reject the possibility of religious liturgy, but simply understands liturgy as not restricted to the category of the religious. Accordingly, Benson's proposal stops short of enacting

the eschatological hope we find in the religious dynamics in Lacoste and Wolterstorff. Becoming a living work of art is not something that requires a reprioritization of historical possibility. Living works of art can be entirely invested in the historical world—and in some ways, perhaps, they become more compelling precisely because of this fact. Artists are not necessarily saints and in this way Benson opens a door for all of us regardless of our convictions about the divine. Although eschatological hope is manifest for Lacoste and Wolterstorff in God's kenotic hospitality, Benson suggests that hospitality is not restricted to those who identify with any particular religious community.

Ultimately, our suggestion that the distinctiveness of "religious" liturgy lies in its enactment of eschatological hope is not meant to be a divisive, exclusivist, or triumphalist proposal. Again, our *hope*, as it were, is that a philosophical consideration of the idea of eschatological hope can be received in a phenomenological register rather than a theological one.

CONCLUSION: ESCHATOLOGICAL HOPE AS LITURGICAL TASK

The task we have set for ourselves in this chapter is quite modest. We did not set out to propose a comprehensive conception of liturgy, religious or otherwise. Instead, we began by acknowledging that others have done that expansive work in a variety of important ways. Yet, their work illustrates that important philosophical questions remain regarding the proper domain in which "liturgy" is meant to signify. By focusing on three accounts, in particular, we did not set out to survey the entire literature in the philosophy of liturgy, but merely to sketch a spectrum of possibilities for how to approach liturgy itself: as a communal religious practice (Wolterstorff), a mode of religious existence (Lacoste), or a way of life irrespective of religious identity (Benson). Our proposal was that we can distinguish among these different approaches by identifying the specific ways in which hope works within them. Specifically, our thesis is that "religious" liturgy is defined by an enactment of eschatological hope: a hope that reorients and humbles our very existence in relation to that which transcends the world itself.

When understood in this way, religious liturgy should not be confused with the facile debate in contemporary culture regarding some churches being "liturgical" (read: boring and traditional), and other churches being "non-liturgical" (read: exciting and loud). If we are right, then the phenomenology of liturgy and eschatological hope that we have provided here should cause us all to recognize that liturgy is not a matter of style, but positioning. Insofar as some churches would problematically claim to be non-liturgical, we think that this should amount to the claim that they are no longer religiously concerned. A church that is not "religious" in this sense is a community that has eliminated the appropriate understanding that, as Kierkegaard says variously throughout his authorship, it is an upbuilding thought that in relation to God we are always in the wrong. If we are not wrecked by eschatological hope enacted by religious liturgy, then our standard of value remains worldly. It remains ultimate. As such, it potentially remains idolatrous. We grant that

such a judgment would push us beyond the philosophical work we are doing here, so instead it is here that we will stop, but we welcome more theologically inclined voices to take up that suggestion in light of the phenomenology we have provided.

NOTES

1. Moreover, Brian Butcher (2018) brings together the liturgical theology of Alexander Schmemann with the philosophical hermeneutics of Paul Ricœur. For an account of Falque's philosophy of liturgy and its relationship to the idea of postmodern apologetics, see Gschwandtner (2012, ch. 9).
2. It is important to note that Wolterstorff (2015, 3) acknowledges a plurality of Christian liturgies and thus also a plurality of Christian theological conceptions implicit within those liturgies, but he chooses in *The God We Worship* to "concentrate on the points of convergence among" the liturgies of the Orthodox Church, the Catholic Church, the Episcopal Church, the Lutheran churches, and the Reformed and Presbyterian churches, "not on their idiosyncrasies."
3. Wolterstorff's decision to affirm a more traditionally exclusive religious interpretation of liturgical practice may be contextually specific. Wolterstorff is articulating a liturgical *theology* and not a liturgical *philosophy*, and so it makes sense that he would assume a primarily religious definition of liturgy relative to his particular project.
4. See Heidegger *Being and Time* (1996).
5. See Heidegger *Basic Writings* (1993) or *Poetry, Language, Thought* (1971).
6. It does seem entirely plausible that Wolterstorff's account could accommodate other historical religious traditions, but the specificity of the tradition itself is the context in which liturgy emerges as possible in the first place. So, it seems that, unlike Benson and Lacoste, there could be no liturgical existence, in general, for Wolterstorff, but instead specific liturgical practices would emerge within the scripts provided by historical conceptions of Christianity, Islam, or Judaism, and so on, and the communities defined by those conceptions that then perform the scripts.
7. For just a few approaches to the philosophy of hope, see Marcel (1958); Bloch (1970); Godfrey (1987); Shade (2001); Waterworth (2004); van Hooft (2011); DeYoung (2014); Döring (2014); Cobb (2015); Kadlac (2015).
8. For more on Kierkegaard's account of hope, see Fremstedal (2012).

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INDEX

Aaron (Biblical Character) 133 n.21
Abraham (Biblical Character) 51, 84, 90
Adams, Francis 67
Adams, Marilyn McCord 85, 93
Adams, Robert 54
Agaësse, Paul 213
Alighieri, Dante 51
Alston, William P. 9, 225, 248–53
Ambrose of Milan 254, 276
Aquinas, Thomas 17, 31–2, 178–9, 182, 210, 262, 274, 276, 282 n.16
Arendt, Hannah 7, 175–7
Aristotle 17, 22, 24 n.2, 108–111, 207–8, 217
Armour, Ellen 179
Asad, Talal 247
Ásta 150n13
Augustine of Hippo 8, 17, 29–32, 51, 107, 207–18, 218 n.1, 219 n.7, 274–5, 278, 282 n.14, 282 n.19, 283 n.19, 284 n.27

Barbaras, Renaud 160
Barcelona, Antonio 67
Barrett, Justin 62
Barth, Karl 162
Barton, Carlin 151 n.20, 151 n.22
Barton, Richard 180, 183
Beethoven, Ludwig van 176
Bell, Catherine 247
Bengson, John 243 n.3
Benson, Bruce Ellis 1, 5–6, 11, 97, 103, 114 n.3, 204, 205 n.16, 266, 287–290, 292–300, 301 n.6
Benton, Jennifer 67
Benton, Matthew 9, 225, 228–31, 243 n.4, 243 n.6
Bergen, Benjamin 63
Bérulle, Pierre de 31
Biden, Joe 101
Bloch, Ernst 301 n.7
Blumenthal, David 85
Boethius 209
Bonaventure 178
Bonhoeffer, Dietrich 177
Bonilla–Silva, Eduardo 148
Borger, Joyce 238
Boroditsky, Lera 63, 68
Bourdieu, Pierre 247
Bourget, David 39n1
Boyarin, Daniel 151 n.18, 151 n.20, 151 n.22
Brandom, Robert 168
Brewer, Talbot 21–2
Brison, Susan 79, 83
Brock, Rita 81
Brown, Warren 64
Brueggemann, Walter 85
Bultmann, Rudolf 177, 209
Burgtore, Jochen 187n3
Butcher, Brian 9–10, 271, 281 n.3, 284 n.26, 301 n.1

Cage, John 10, 264–5
Calvin, John 42 n.25, 113, 161
Campbell, David 113
Caputo, John D 169 n.18, 192–5, 197, 199, 202, 204 n.6, 205 n.9, 205 n.11, 205 n.12, 205 n.15, 287, 298
Carlisle, Clare 3–4, 15–18, 21–2, 24 n.1
Chalmers, David 39
Chignell, Andrew 149 n.3
Chrétien, Jean-Louis 86, 94 n.2, 287, 290, 294–5, 299
Chrysostom, John 54, 128, 240, 254–5, 280 n.2
Cicero 113–14
Clement of Alexandria 276, 283 n.21
Clore, Gerald 67

Cobb, Aaron 301 n.7
Cockayne, Joshua 9–10, 78–9, 257, 269 n.4, 269 n.5
Code, Lorraine 9, 251–2
Cooper, John 63
Copeland, Shawn 173
Corby, Robert 81
Cottingham, John 3–4, 47, 50–1
Cross, Samuel 274
Cuming, Geoffrey 244 n.15
Cuneo, Terence 4–6, 28, 34–5, 39 n.3, 42 n.20, 54–6, 87–8, 117, 132 n.12, 132 n.15, 225, 277, 283 n.25, 288
Cyril of Jerusalem 254–5

Damasio, Antonio 110
Dancygier, Barbara 64
Darwin, Charles 48, 113
David (Biblical Character) 85, 278
Dawkins, Richard 51, 112
De Bruin, Leon 12 n.5
De Cruz, Helen 11 n.1
De Gramont, Jérôme 218
De Libera, Alain 208
Deleuze, Giles 17, 24 n.1, 158
Dell'Antonio, Andrew 284 n.28
Denhollander, Rachel 79
Dennett, Daniel 112
DeRoo, Neal 1, 7, 157, 168 n.3, 168 n.9, 169 n.10, 170 n.19, 170 n.20
Derrida, Jacques 30, 160
DesCamp, Mary Therese 69
Descartes, René 29, 31, 110, 176
DeYoung, Rebecca 301 n.7
Dooyeweerd, Herman 170 n.21
Döring, Sabine 301 n.7
Downen, Robert 79
Dubuisson, Daniel 143
Durkheim, Émile 112–3, 147

Ebeling, Gerhard xi, xii
Eckhart, Meister 7–8, 187 n.2, 191–203, 204 n.2, 204 n.3, 204 n.5, 204 n.6, 204 n.7, 204 n.8, 205 n.9, 205 n.10, 205 n.11, 205 n.13, 205 n.14, 205 n.15
Edwards, Jonathan xi
Efird, David 78–9
El–Sharif, Ahmad 66, 68
Eliade, Mircea 42 n.24
Elkins, James 9, 225–8, 231, 243 n.5
Ellis, Fiona 17
Engelke, Matthew 169 n.11
Ezekiel (Biblical Character) 91

Falque, Emmanuel 7–8, 100, 207–8, 219 n.7, 288, 301 n.1
Farley, Wendy 7–8, 78, 173, 191, 193, 196–8, 202–3
Ferrari, Martina 160
Feulner, Hans-Jürgen 281
Field, Sean 179, 187 n.3
Foucault, Michel 213
Frank, Georgia 254–5
Freedman, Nun Sidonia 279
Fremstedal, Roe 301 n.8
Fricker, Miranda 80–1
Friesen, Chris Kelland 64

Gadamer, Hans-Georg 110, 115 n.10, 288
Galadza, Peter 275, 280
Galilei, Galileo 31, 176
Gallagher, Shaun 12 n.5
Gao, Xiuping 66
Gibbs, Raymond 62, 69
Gilbert, Margaret 139–40
Godfrey, Joseph 301 n.7
Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von 282 n.12
Gregory of Nazianzus 279
Gregory of Nyssa 9, 254
Griffiths, Paul 53
Grillmeier, Aloys 209
Grimes, Ronald 151 n.15
Gschwandtner, Christina 3–4, 27, 39 n.2, 40 n.5, 41 n.11, 41 n.12, 42 n.23, 43 n.26, 288, 301 n.1

Habakkuk (Biblical Character) 84
Hadot, Pierre 289, 292
Hamer, Fannie Lou 185
Hanegraaff, Wouter 146
Harding, Rosemarie Freeney 186
Harris, Sam 112
Harvey, Sophie 67
Harvey, Susan 254
Haslwanter, Elias 281 n.4
Hauser, David 64

Heffner, Blake 205 n.15
Hegel, Georg W.F. xii, xiii, 6, 102, 107–10, 168 n.4
Heidegger, Martin xiv n.3, 8, 98–100, 114 n.2, 207–17, 289–92, 297, 299, 301 n.4, 301 n.5
Heimlich, Janet 79
Henry, Michel 160
Hereth, Blake 11n1
Herman, Judith 81–2
Hick, John 284 n.29
Hitchens, Christopher 112
Hollywood, Amy
Houck, Davis 185
Hume, David 17, 110
Husserl, Edmund 6–7, 99–100, 158–160, 168 n.7, 176–7, 180, 184, 186, 186 n.1, 210, 211–12, 216

Irvine, Christopher 260–1, 263
Isaiah (Biblical Character) 67, 275

Jacob (Biblical Character) 85
Jacobi, Friedrich Heinrich xii, xiii
Jacobs, Jane 273, 281 n.6
James, William 16–17, 147, 151 n.23, 249
Jasper, Ronald 244n15
Jaspers, Karl 177, 184–6
Jean–Luc Marion 4, 28–33, 36, 40 n.6, 40 n.7, 40 n.8, 40 n.10, 40 n.11, 40 n.12, 40 n.13, 51, 207–8, 210–12, 215, 217
Jennings, Willie James 174
Jesus (Biblical Character) 6, 34, 40 n.9, 63, 65–9, 85, 89–91, 101–7, 113, 117, 124–7, 132 n.14, 191, 197–8, 200, 202–3
Job (Biblical Character) 84–5, 87
John (Biblical Character) 209, 249
John of the Cross 181, 249
Johnson, Mark 62–4
Jonathan Haidt 6, 192, 111–12
Jordan, Mark 187
Jungman, Joseph Andreas 173

Kadlac, Adam 301 n.7
Kant, Immanuel 6, 102–3, 108–9, 176, 249, 274, 282 n.15
Kearney, Richard 7, 157, 168, 170 n.24
Kepler, Johannes 31
Kerr, Fergus 247
Kierkegaard, Søren 3, 10, 15–7, 22, 98, 213, 218, 257, 263, 295–6, 298, 300, 301 n.8
King Philip IV 180
King, Barbara 150 n.14
Kittle, Simon 262
Kocher, Suzanne 181
Krueger, Derek 43 n.28
Küng, Hans 209
Kunstler, James Howard 281 n.6

Lacoste, Jean–Yves xi, 2, 11, 40 n.5, 99–100, 168, 287–97, 299–300, 301 n.6
Lakoff, George 63–4
Lan, Chun 66
Laub, Dori 79
Lear, Johnathan 22
Lee, Morgan 79
Lee, Spike W.S. 67
Leibniz, Gottfried Wilhelm 168 n.7
Leidenhag, Joanna 261
Leunig, Michael 51
Levinas, Emmanuel 4, 7, 58–9, 177–8, 181–2, 184, 186 n.1
Lewes, George Henry 137, 150 n.9
Lossky, Vladimir 284 n.26
Luke (Biblical Character) 107, 191
Luther xi, 104, 207, 301 n.2

MacCulloch, Diarmaid 268 n.1
MacIntyre, Alasdair 109, 115 n.9, 284 n.28, 288
Macrina the Younger 254
Mahrt, William Peter 282 n.9
Mandler, Jean 65
Marcel, Gabriel 7, 177–80, 182, 287, 299, 301 n.7
Martha (Biblical Character) 8, 191–2, 198, 201–3, 205 n.15
Martin, Craig 143
Martin, David 247
Mary (Biblical Character) 8, 70, 191, 198, 201–3, 205 n.15
Masuzawa, Tomoko 12 n.2
Matthew (Biblical Character) 104, 124, 211, 218

Maximus the Confessor 279
McCutcheon, Russell 12n2, 143, 146, 151n19, 151 n.21
McGilchrist, Iain 59 n.1, 275, 278–9
McGinn, Bernard 192–3, 197, 199, 201–2, 205 n.10
McLuhan, Marshall 275
Mechthild of Magdeburg 196, 198–9, 202
Meeks, Wayne 103
Meier, Brian 64, 67
Merleau–Ponty, Maurice 160, 168 n.8
Mersenne, Marin 31
Meyendorff, Paul 131 n.2, 132 n.17
Milazzo, G. Tom 85–86
Miller, Taylor–Grey 132 n.18
Minister, Stephen 169 n.18
Mitchell, Nathan 41 n.13
Moffett, Marc 243 n.3
Montemaggi, Vittorio 51
Moody, Ivan 278
Moon, Dawne 79
Morales, Nathaniel 79
Moses (Biblical Character) 84
Mulgan, Tim 48

Nagel, Thomas 4, 47–9, 51
Nassar, Larry 79
Newen, Albert 12 n.5
Nietzsche, Friedrich 30, 108, 111
Nongbri, Brent 146
Núñez, Rafael 66
Nussbaum, Martha 54, 283 n.25
Nye, Malory 145

Oakeshott, Michael 280
Origen 9, 253, 254
Osgood, Charles 67

Panchuk, Michelle 5, 77–9, 81, 90, 92
Papanikolaou, Aristotle 284 n.26
Parker Brooks, Maegan 185
Parker, Rebecca 81
Parry, Ken 281 n.7
Pascal, Blaise 30–1, 40 n.8, 48–9
Paul (Biblical Character) 51, 88, 102–3, 109, 133 n.21, 207
Pelikan, Jaroslav xi, xiv n.2
Petry, Ray 200
Philip the Fair 180
Phillips, Ian 265, 268 n.3
Pickstock, Catherine 24 n.1
Pineda–Madrid, Nancy 80–2, 86
Plantinga, Alvin 104
Plato 17, 63, 71, 101, 108–10, 181–2, 209, 211, 253, 274
Plotinus 210
Pope Benedict XVI 104 (*see also* Joseph Ratzinger)
Porete, Marguerite 7–8, 174, 178–88, 192–4, 196, 199, 203
Porpora, Douglas 150 n.10
Proust, Marcel 18
Pseudo–Dionysius the Areopagite 29–30, 173, 181, 274–6, 282 n.17, 282 n.18, 284 n.26
Pulkkinnen, Simo 159, 168 n.5
Putnam, Hilary 4, 47, 49, 51
Putnam, Robert 113
Putt, Sharon 7, 191

Qoheleth (Biblical character) 86
Quasten, Johannes 276

Radler, Charlotte 194, 199
Ramscar, Michael 63
Ratzinger, Joseph 104 (*see also* Pope Benedict XVI)
Ravaisson, Félix 17
Rea, Michael 85
Reid, Thomas 237, 244 n.12, 250, 252
Ricoeur, Paul 43 n.26, 301 n.1
Riesebrodt, Martin 40
Robinson, Marilynne 132, 223
Robinson, Michael 67
Romano, John 274
Rorty, Richard 168n1
Rosch, Eleanor 12n5
Ross, Bob 293
Rublev, Andrei 67
Russell, Bertrand 51, 100
Ruysbroek, John van 179
Ryle, Gilbert 56, 102

Sachs, Curt 283 n.20
Saint Gregory of Narek 284 n.25
Saint Gregory the Great 266, 275

Saint Monica 8, 213–215
Sanders, John 3–4, 61–2, 64–6, 69, 289
Saussure, Ferdinand de 168 n.1
Schelling, Friedrich Wilhelm 282 n.12
Schilbrack, Kevin 5–7, 12 n.6, 12n7, 40 n.4, 97, 105, 149 n.7, 151 n.17, 151 n.21, 151 n.23, 162, 170 n.23, 289
Schiller, Friedrich 176
Schleiermacher, Friedrich D. D. xi, xii, xiv n.1
Schmemann, Alexander 119–20, 131 n.8, 132 n.11, 290, 301 n.1
Schnall, Simone 67
Schumann, Robert 124
Schwartz, Norberto 67
Scruton, Roger 10, 271–3, 280, 281 n.6
Searle, John 260
Senn, Frank 64
Shade, Patrick 301 n.7
Shapiro, Lawrence 12 n.5
Sherbowitz–Wetzor, Olgerd 274
Sherman, Gary 67
Shortt, Rupert 52
Simmons, Eli 9–11, 287, 295
Simmons, J. Aaron 1, 9–11, 169 n.18, 287
Simons, Walter 187 n.2
Sivanathan, Niro 67
Smith, Daniel 158
Smith, James K.A. 7, 157, 159, 164–5, 167, 169 n.17, 170 n.22, 170 n.25
Smith, Jonathan 12 n.2
Smith, Wilfred Cantwell 106
Solomon, Robert 115 n.9
Sommer, Christian 207
Sophocles xiv n.3
Sorensen, Roy 10, 264–5, 268 n.3
Sosa, Ernest 229
Spiro, Melford 170 n.23
St. Andrew of Crete 43 n.28
St. Anselm 21, 47, 183
St. Basil 87, 284 n.25
Stanley, Jason 243 n.1
Stanley, Sharon 83
Stec, Kashmiri 65
Stein, Edith 7, 177
Sterelny, Kim 140
Stewart, Pamela 12 n.3
Strathern, Andrew 12 n.3
Strawn, Brad 64
Strejcek, Brendan 67
Stump, Eleonore 10, 50, 225, 262
Suárez, Francisco 32
Sweetser, Eve 64–6, 69
Symeon the New Theologian 43 n.29

Taliaferro, Charles 98
Talmy, Leonard 63
Taylor, Charles 159
Telx, Martin 238
Teresa of Ávila 249
Thearose, Marie 91
Theodore of Mopsuestia 254
Thomas of Erfurt 208
Thompson, Evan 12 n.5
Thompson, Michael 275, 280 n.1, 280 n.2
Tillich, Paul 147, 177
Tim Mulgan 48
Timothy (Biblical Character) 51
Timpe, Kevin 11 n.1, 262
Tobin, Theresa 78–9
Treanor, Brian 170 n.24
Trump, Donald 101
Turner, Victor 277
Tylor, Edward 147, 151 n.23

Underhill, 10, 258–61, 263, 266

Vallier, Robert 168 n.8
van der Kolk, Bessel 81, 83, 267
van Hooft, Stan 301n7
Varela, Francisco 12n5
Vasquez, Gabriel 32
Vladimir the Great 274
von Allmen, Jean–Jacques 124, 131 n.7, 132 n.16, 290

Wainwright, William 53
Waterworth, Jayne 301 n.7
Weil, Simone 184
Westphal, Merold 288
Wildman, Wesley 151 n.16
William of Paris 180
Williams, Rowan 51, 267
Williams, Scott 11n1
Williamson, Timothy 243 n.2
Wilson, David Sloan 113
Wittgenstein, Ludwig xiv, 50, 243 n.10, 249–50

Witvliet, John D. 238
Wolterstorff, Nicholas 2, 4, 9–11, 28, 32–8, 41 n.3, 41 n.14, 41 n.16, 41 n.17, 41 n.18, 41 n.19, 42 n.20, 42 n.22, 42 n.24, 42 n.25, 97–8, 114, 119, 128, 131 n.7, 131 n.9, 131 n.12, 131 n.16, 135–6, 139–41, 144, 148 n.1, 148 n.11, 223, 243 n.1, 243 n.7, 243 n.9, 244 n.12, 244 n.16, 251, 253, 255, 259–61, 287–300, 301 n.2, 301 n.3, 301 n.6
Wood, William 149 n.2
Woods, Richard 202, 205 n.14
Wright, N. T. 119, 132 n.10

Zaccheus (Biblical Character) 103
Zawidzki, Tadeusz Wiesław 140
Zedong, Mao 138
Zhong, Chen-Bo 67
Zingrone, Frank 275
Zinzendorf, Nicolaus Ludwig von xi, xiv n.2