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## LITURGICAL THEOLOGY AS POINT OF SYNTHESIS

It would be easy enough to find a drawer in which to file “liturgical theology” if we were to limit ourselves to the cabinets already offered by the academy. We might file it under “L” or under “T,” depending on whether we thought Liturgy was certain subject for theology, or Theology was a certain approach to liturgy.

File liturgical theology under “L” if you think liturgy is to be added to the range of theological topics already crowded with Bible, dogma, history, morality, ecclesiology, systematics, and practical concerns. It would be one more topic filed between process theology, feminist theology, liberation theology, and so on. From atop the ivory tower, the academic lighthouse trains its spotlight of theology upon a hundred topics on the landscape below, and the liturgy is thought to be one of them.

Or, file liturgical theology under “T” if you think that liturgy should be examined not only by historians, ritualists, medievalists and musicians, but also by theologians. The body of liturgical material could be approached by various specialists, like the human body could be approached by specialists in heart, eye, foot, stomach. Theologians would be one type of specialist who works on liturgy alongside the historian and the anthropologist.

I am a member of a relatively small school in the field of liturgical studies which believes that neither of these file drawers is the proper home for liturgical theology. I don’t object to the work they do, but I am attempting to carve out and defend another place to locate liturgical theology. In so doing, I believe that I am properly interpreting what Alexander Schmemmann, Aidan Kavanagh, and Bob Taft have said. The place where liturgical theology can be found is not on a scholar’s bookshelf, or in an academic’s mind,

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it is found where the Church is in motion. Liturgical theology arises from the Church's regular encounter with God, which occurs at the altar of the Lord where heaven and earth meet in the priesthood of Christ. The results of this encounter can be examined by the academy, but liturgical theology is something the academy *receives*, it is not something the academy *produces*. Liturgical theology comes from the heart of the Church, it does not spring from the head of an academic, like Athena sprang from the head of Zeus.

Schmemmann and Kavanagh propose that the Church is the natural habitat of liturgical theology. Kavanagh called the Church "a theological corporation."<sup>1</sup> Schmemmann says liturgy is the ontological condition for theology.<sup>2</sup> To make that claim — or even to make sense of that claim — requires a series of mental shifts in approaching liturgical theology, and that is what I would like to rehearse with you first. Then in closing I'd like to offer an assessment of the value liturgical theology holds.

A. TO MY FIRST TASK — I will mention five mental shifts I underwent to come to this understanding: this understanding of liturgical theology rests upon a particular understanding of tradition, ritual, asceticism, *theologia*, and *leitourgia*.

(a) TRADITION. In English this word can sometimes be used to mean nothing more than precedent, what has been done before, custom, habit. It is the sum of all the points of the line that went before the end point on which we now stand. By this understanding, almost anything becomes a tradition if it is done more than once. Even a mistake seems to qualify so long as it is repeated. True, the Church stresses the permanence of her faith through the ages, but George Florovsky points out that antiquity by itself is not an adequate proof of the true faith.<sup>3</sup> "In fact, 'antiquity' as such might happen to be no more than an inveterate error: 'for antiquity without truth is the age old error,' in the phrase of St. Cyprian. St. Augustine also used the same phrase: 'In the Gospel the Lord says – I am the truth. He did not say – I am custom.'"<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> In a response by Kavanagh, Geoffrey Wainwright wrote: *A Language in Which We Speak to God*, and Aidan Kavanagh wrote: *Response: Primary Theology and Liturgical Act*, both in "Worship" 57:1983 pp. 309-324.

<sup>2</sup> A. Schmemmann. *Liturgical Theology. Theology of Liturgy and Liturgical Reform*. "St. Vladimir's Quarterly" 13:1969 pp. 217-224.

<sup>3</sup> G. Florovsky. *St. Gregory Palamas and the Tradition of the Fathers*. In: *The Collected Works of Georges Florovsky*. Vol. I: *Bible, Church, Tradition. An Eastern Orthodox View*. Vaduz: Buchervertriebsanstalt 1987 p. 105.

<sup>4</sup> Idem. *The Authority of the Ancient Councils in the Tradition of the Fathers*. In: *The Collected Works of Georges Florovsky*. Vol. I p. 99.

In order to receive the *lex orandi* of the Church (instead of creating the *lex orandi* of our desires), one needs to be submissive to the tradition. In saying so, I roughly mean tradition as “the mind of the Church.” You know a person’s mind when he speaks and acts; we know the Church’s mind when she speaks and acts. This includes creedal definitions, but her primary speech is prayer, praise, sacrifice, the Gospel proclamation that tells us that death has been conquered, words of reconciliation that tell us our sin has been cleansed. Becoming a Christian means learning to think with this mind, and act with this will, because it is Christ’s own self shared with his mystical body, the Church. To swim is a verb, swimmer is the noun; liturgy is a verb, Church (plural) or Christian (singular) is the noun. Liturgy is the verb form of “Church” and Church is the noun form of “liturgy.” Vladimir Lossky said that Tradition is the Holy Spirit in action.

[Tradition] is not the content of Revelation, but the light that reveals it; it is not the word, but the living breath which makes the word heard at the same time as the silence from which it came .... The pure notion of Tradition can then be defined by saying that it is the life of the Holy Spirit in the Church, communicating to each member of the Body of Christ the faculty of hearing, of receiving, of knowing the Truth in the Light which belongs to it, and not according to the light of human reason.<sup>5</sup>

The Holy Spirit does not require a PhD or an MA of us in order to gain entrance to the mind of the Church. He communicates “to *each member of the Body of Christ* the faculty of knowing the Truth.” This is why Kavanagh calls Mrs. Murphy a theologian – that, and for reasons yet to be defined ahead. Liturgical theology occurs when we step into tradition, receive a power of sight from it, and theologize in obedience to the mind of the Church.

(b) RITUAL. This brings me to the second buttress, ritual. Sometimes scholars today employ ritual studies in order to pretend objectivity, looking at the form without worrying about content. What Kavanagh meant by ritual studies was something a little different, I think. He wanted to know how rite forms a person. He would say in class, “I do not go to mass because I’m Catholic, I am Catholic because I go to mass.”

So he writes that the Christian liturgy is not reducible to conceptual propositions, or to prayer, or to worship. It “is a fourth thing. It is rite.”

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<sup>5</sup> V. Lossky. *In the Image and Likeness of God*. Crestwood (NY): St Vladimir’s Seminary Press 1974 pp. 147-148.

Rite involves creeds and prayer and worship, but it is not any one of these things, nor all of these things together, and it orchestrates more than these things. Rite can be called a whole style of Christian living found in the myriad particularities of worship, of laws called “canonical,” of ascetical and monastic structures, of evangelical and catechetical endeavors, and in particular ways of doing secondary theological reflection. ... Rite in this Christian sense is generated and sustained in this regular meeting of faithful people in whose presence and through whose deeds the vertiginous Source of the cosmos itself is pleased to settle down freely and abide as among friends. A liturgy of Christians is thus nothing less than the way a redeemed world is, so to speak, done.<sup>6</sup>

He concludes, “This understanding of rite is hardly common today.”

What is uncommon about it, I think, is again the feeling that in Kavanagh’s understanding we are not creating rites, we are being created by rites. A Christian is created by his or her entire liturgical life: the seasons of the year, sacraments, sacramentals, spiritual exercises, and more. These become the sculptor’s tools that craft a stone into a statue, or the painter’s brushes that make us into an icon of the prototype. And there is a prototype in whose image liturgical rite desires to create us: Christ is the premier liturgist, and we are his apprentices.

(c) ASCETICISM. This brings us to a new front that I’ve been writing about recently, and that is asceticism. I owe more of this to Kavanagh than I realized, and although Schmemmann doesn’t seem to speak directly to the topic, I think it is in him, too. Kavanagh explains,

By asceticism here, one does not mean giving up candy during Lent, or flagellants and hair shirts. One means something broader, deeper, and harder; a kind of Zen in the art of maintaining a life of ‘right worship’ as the only way to live in the real order. ... This is a life expected of every one of the baptized, whose ultimate end is the same supreme beatitude. It is a life all the baptized share, a life within which the professed ascetic is nothing more or less than a virtuoso who serves the whole community as an exemplar of its own life. The ascetic is simply a stunningly normal person who stands in constant witness to the normality of Christian *orthodoxia* in a world flawed into abnormality by human choice.<sup>7</sup>

I am emphasizing that liturgical asceticism is a discipline of the passions that capacitates us for full participation in the liturgy.

Schmemmann says that liturgical theology is the reunification of three components that have drifted apart and lost contact with each other: theology, liturgy and piety. He writes,

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<sup>6</sup> A. Kavanagh. *On Liturgical Theology. Hale Memorial Lectures of Seabury-Western Theological Seminary 1981*. New York: Pueblo Publishing Company 1984 p. 100.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibidem* pp. 161-162.

The goal of liturgical theology, as its very name indicates, is to overcome the fateful divorce between theology, liturgy and piety — a divorce which, as we have already tried to show elsewhere, has had disastrous consequences for theology as well as for liturgy and piety. It deprived LITURGY of its proper understanding by the people, who began to see in it beautiful and mysterious ceremonies in which, while attending them, they take no real part. It deprived THEOLOGY of its living source and made it into an intellectual exercise for intellectuals. It deprived PIETY of its living content and term of reference. ... To understand liturgy from inside, to discover and experience that “epiphany” of God, world and life which the liturgy contains and communicates, to relate this vision and this power to our own existence, to all our problems: such is the purpose of liturgical theology.<sup>8</sup>

Each of the three need to coinhere in the other two. Taken alone, liturgy becomes only mysterious ceremony. Taken alone, theology becomes only an intellectual exercise for intellectuals. Taken alone, piety becomes only a private mood of our subjective self.

But when I name this third component, I prefer the term “asceticism” over the term “piety” or “spirituality,” for two reasons. First, the word brings with it a content, a method, a backbone. Asceticism is a thing to be done; spirituality too often becomes a mood to feel. There is a way to begin asceticism — fast! pray! give alms! keep the commandments! strive for humility! Second, the word is associated with deification. The word “asceticism” comes from *askein*, which means a regimen of training, a discipline, to practice. It was especially used of athletes who polished their skill. It seems proper to call this asceticism liturgical because it is the discipline that trains us for the Kingdom of God, that disciplines our passions and leads us to our deification through conformity to Christ. It comes from, and leads to liturgical life. If liturgy means sharing the life of Christ (being washed in his resurrection, eating his body), and if *askesis* means discipline (in the sense of forming), then liturgical asceticism is the discipline required to form us into an icon of Christ and make his image visible in our faces.

(d) *THEOLOGIA*. For a long time I thought that the word that needed clarification was the first word: liturgy. As I have reflected upon how people fail to understand me, I have come to think that a clarification of the second word is every bit as important: theology.

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<sup>8</sup> A. S c h m e m a n n. *Of Water and the Spirit*. Crestwood (NY): St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press 1974 p. 12.

Yves Congar wrote a “History of Theology,” which is not a history of the content of theology, but a history of how the word has been used.<sup>9</sup> He says in this essay that “we must wait for Abelard before the term *theologia* receives the meaning it has for us” (32). Up to that point it meant something different. For the fathers, *theologia* was a divine science that included a kind of participation. It was experimental knowledge, in the sense that it made meaning from direct experience. Congar writes,

For them it means a knowledge of God which is either the highest form of the gnosis or of that illumination of the soul by the Holy Spirit which is more than an effect since it is the very substance of its divinization or godlike transformation. . . . In short, it is that perfect knowledge of God which is identified with the summit of prayer.<sup>10</sup>

Evagrius identified three stages in the ascetical life. The first was a battle with the passions that he called *physike*. It was succeeded by two stages of contemplation: *praktike* contemplated God’s revelation in creation, and *theologia*, the third and most elevated stage, was union with God. Tomáš Špidlík (of blessed memory) urges us to find the splendor of words now shopworn after long use. “The ancient Christian East understood the practice of theology only as a personal communion with *Theos*, the Father, through the *Logos*, Christ, in the Holy Spirit – an experience lived in a state of prayer.”<sup>11</sup> Theology is as much a practice as it is a cognition. Faith is participatory knowledge.

This is behind Evagrius’ famous maxim that “If you are a theologian you truly pray. If you truly pray you are a theologian.”<sup>12</sup> I believe that the prayer Evagrius is talking about should be called *liturgical* prayer, because it is prayer done from the heart of the Church’s liturgy, with the mind of the Church. The Orthodox ascetical practice has proven valuable to me in understanding this. This is not because the west knows nothing about liturgical asceticism; it is because western scholasticism tends to restrict theology to the academy, so can’t make the connection between liturgy—

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<sup>9</sup> Published originally in *Dictionnaire de Theologie Catholique* as the article “Theology.” Then published as a stand-alone book by Doubleday & Company in 1968 entitled *A History of Theology*.

<sup>10</sup> Y. Congar. *A History of Theology*. Garden City (NY): Doubleday 1968 p. 31. Thomas only uses the term three times in the *Summa*, usually preferring *sacra doctrina*, which occurs about eighty times

<sup>11</sup> T. Špidlík. *Spirituality of the Christian East. A Systematic Handbook*. Kalamazoo (MI): Cistercian Publications 1986 p. 1.

<sup>12</sup> Evagrius Ponticus. *The Praktikos & Chapters on Prayer*. Trans. and intro. by John Bamberger. Kalamazoo (MI): Gorgias Press & Cistercian Publications 1981 p. 65.

asceticism—theology. For the west, theology is a science practiced in the hall of sciences. Worship tends to be either an expression of belief, or an instrument for the creation of belief. Theology’s origin, then, is not thought to be in liturgy, it is thought to be in texts — and its output is yet more texts for the next generation of theologians to critique and surpass. If we could rise above the boundaries of school theology, then we might see *theologia* as more than a second-order, cognitive activity. In his *Journal* Schmemmann writes,

Pascha. Holy Week. Essentially, bright days such as are needed. And truly that is all that is needed. I am convinced that if people would really hear Holy Week, Pascha, the Resurrection, Pentecost, the Dormition, there would be no need for theology. All of theology is there. All that is needed for one’s spirit, heart, mind and soul. ... Not only is it revealed, it simply flows in one’s heart and mind.<sup>13</sup>

Our physical eyes see by the physical sun; liturgical theology sees by the light of Mount Tabor. And Mrs. Murphy can have her cataracts removed by sacramental grace and see by this light. That is the reason why Kavanagh calls her a ‘theologian.’

The language of the primary theologian . . . more often consists in symbolic, metaphorical, sacramental words and actions which throw flashes of light upon chasms of rich ambiguity. As such, Mrs. Murphy’s language illuminates the chaotic landscape through which I must pick my professional way with the narrow laser-like beam of precise words and concepts—which is why what she does is primary and what I do is secondary; which is why, also, what she does is so much harder to do than what I do. My admiration for her and her colleagues is profound, and it deepens daily.<sup>14</sup>

“Mrs. Murphy” is the personalized image of the corporate body of Christians which has been formed by traditional, ritualized, ascetical practices to become theologians. To talk about consulting Mrs. Murphy is to talk about making contact with the tradition, it does not mean to do a public opinion poll.

(e) Finally, *LEITOURGIA*. A mental shift in what “liturgy” means was my point of breakthrough. I began to sense different ways people used the term. For some, “liturgy” simply meant a festive, but ordered, ritual activity — like the gentleman who said to me “If you like liturgy, then wait until you see a Notre

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<sup>13</sup> A. Schmemmann. *The Journals of Father Alexander Schmemmann 1973-1983*. Crestwood (NY): St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press 2002 p. 13.

<sup>14</sup> Kavanagh. *Response: Primary Theology and Liturgical Act* p. 323.

Dame football game.” Or they meant the public ceremonies of the Church, sometimes affectionately called “smells and bells.” But then I would come across the word used in a different way, like this case from Macarius of Egypt:

The soul that has not yet acquired this citizenship in heaven and is not yet conscious of the heart’s sanctification should be full of sorrow and should implore Christ fervently ... [The soul will then go forward,] receiving unutterable gifts and advancing from glory to glory and from peace to greater peace. Finally, when it has attained the full measure of the Christian life, it will be ranged among the *perfect liturgists* and faultless ministers of Christ in his eternal Kingdom.<sup>15</sup>

What would it mean to become “a perfect liturgist?” I was driven back to theology and asceticism to answer the question, not able to adequately do so by the human sciences alone. There seemed to be a thin and thick use of the term. I began to use “liturgy” to name the thin sense, and “*leitourgia*” to name a thicker sense.

And that forced the question whether every liturgy is a *leitourgia*? I sometimes say that “I wrote myself into the Catholic Church in chapter five of my dissertation.” Here is the very passage:

A difficulty presents itself right away. The distinction between liturgy and *leitourgia* might imply that while nearly all worship services have some sort of liturgy, i.e., function according to a more or less loosely defined protocol, not all worship services could be characterized as *leitourgia*. We do not deny the implication. . . . Need they be? The Church has historically appeared to say so, yet more recently *leitourgia*’s absence seems to be not greatly missed. Fr. Kavanagh traces the loss of rite to developments culminating by the sixteenth century, developments which continue to leave their mark upon the modern world.

When I felt the answer “Yes” swell up in reply to my self-imposed question, “Need they be?” I think I became Catholic. It took about three years to finish up the paperwork with Rome.

B. TO MY CLOSING TASK – what is the value of this definition of liturgical theology? What does it permit or make possible? I would answer that it redirects our focus. Instead of looking *at* the liturgy, we look at all things *by means of* the liturgy. Liturgical theology isn’t a scholarly theologian looking at the rites of the Church; liturgical theology is Mrs. Murphy seeing the cosmos in light of the Church’s rites. The ritual liturgy is connected with her

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<sup>15</sup> Macarius of Egypt. *The Philokalia*. Vol. 3. London: Faber & Faber 1986 p. 334. Emphasis added.

lived liturgy. And that is how, and why, liturgical theology synthesizes all theological activity.

The second part of the Catechism of the Catholic Church is about “the celebration of the Christian mystery.” After establishing that the Father works the mystery of his will in an economy of salvation that flows from him, through the Son and the Holy Spirit, it arrives at its definition of liturgy in paragraph 1069:

The word “liturgy” originally meant a “public work” or a “service in the name of/on behalf of the people.” In Christian tradition it means the participation of the People of God in “the work of God.” Through the liturgy Christ, our redeemer and high priest, continues the work of our redemption in, with, and through his Church. (CCC 1069)

The work of a few on behalf of the many – in this case, the work of God on behalf of the human race, which stands cut off from God, alienated in death. The Father’s will is to destroy death and raise us to eternal life through the Son and Holy Spirit. The work of God is salvation unfolded from the bosom of the Father and offered to us in the Son and Spirit, and liturgy is the participation of Christians in this *Opus Dei*. This suggests that the origin of the liturgy is in a place where we don’t normally look. Scholars look for the origin of liturgy in ancient history, in religious ritual, in human need, in communal fellowship. But it turns out that we do not begin the liturgy, the Trinity does. The origin of the liturgy is not a human decision, but a divine decision. So Virgil Michel, the American Benedictine pioneer in the liturgical renewal, connects liturgy and Trinity this way:

The liturgy, through Christ, comes from the Father, the eternal source of the divine life in the Trinity. It in turn addresses itself in a special way to the Father, rendering him the homage and the glory of which it is capable through the power of Christ. The flow of divine life between the eternal Father and the Church is achieved and completed through the operation of the Holy Ghost.

The liturgy, reaching from God to man, and connecting man to the fullness of the God-head, is the action of the Trinity in the Church. The Church in her liturgy partakes of the life of the divine society of the three persons in God.<sup>16</sup>

I’m always therefore looking for the most expansive and complete definition of *leitourgia* I can come up with. Currently I am proposing this one:

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<sup>16</sup> V. Michel. *The Liturgy of the Church According to the Roman Rite*. New York: Macmillan 1938 p. 40

*Liturgy is the Trinity's perichoresis kenotically extended to invite our synergistic ascent into deification.*

In other words, the Trinity's circulation of love turns itself inside out, and in humility the Son and Spirit come to us in order to work the Father's good pleasure for all creation, which is to invite our ascent to participate in the very life of God; this cannot be forced, it must be done with our cooperation, which is the ascetical component to the definition.

This means that liturgy is not window dressing on faith; it is not a hobby, like stamp collecting; it's not for high church clerics who get a thrill out of rubrical tidiness; it is not confined to the temple, and not restricted to Sunday. *Leitourgia*, as the will of the Father, runs the warp and woof of history, like a red thread woven down the length of a strip of white cloth. The public, liturgical cult that we can see is only like the tip of an iceberg; it's only the part we can see above the water line. The ritual is connected to a massive work of God below the sacramental water line, invisible to us. I don't object to using the term "liturgy" to mean the public collection of official services, rites, ceremonies, prayers and sacraments of the Church. But what is the deeper reality that lies below the ceremonial surface? "Liturgical theology" as an academic discipline wants to know what this cult is connected to. Such an attempt discovers connection between cult and cosmos, sacred and profane, church and world, ritual liturgy and lived liturgy — a connection between liturgy, theology and asceticism.

Kavanagh used to say that liturgy is "doing the world the way the world was meant to be done." We don't go to mass to escape the world, we go to stand aright in the presence of God the Father, reconciled to him by the High Priest who has penetrated heaven, and who has sent the Holy Spirit to make us into temples of righteousness. *This is a LITURGICAL COSMOLOGY.* By man's participation in this cosmic liturgy, matter is spiritualized and directed toward its proper end. We join the angelic voices singing praise to God, which is the very place that the sons of Adam and daughters of Eve were meant to occupy. *This is a LITURGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY.* Our vocation is to be cosmic priests; the fall is a forfeiture of our liturgical career. *This is a LITURGICAL UNDERSTANDING OF SIN.* Then a second Adam, a new Adam, the last Adam (eskata) came and restored our work, inviting us into it. *This is a LITURGICAL CHRISTOLOGY.* Christ's work is to glorify God and sanctify mankind, and all the baptized are liturgical apprentices to co-operate in his *leitourgia* on behalf of the world. *This is a LITURGICAL ECCLESIOLOGY.* And so forth.

Liturgical theology is the root and flower of all other theological subjects. Liturgical theology involves ecclesiology, because it creates the Church, the people of God. And ecclesiology involves Christology, since that's whose body the church is. And Christology from above involves a doctrine of the Trinity. And Christology from below involves a doctrine of salvation (soteriology). And soteriology illuminates an understanding of sin, which assumes knowledge of what it means to stand aright, which is a doctrine of creation. All these theological topics can — and I say for fullness, should — be approached liturgically.

However, doing so requires the mental shift that sees the ceremonial liturgy connected to cosmic and eschatological ends. I will give two examples.

First, a liturgical history. I will give you an anecdote to make my point. Once upon a time I was asked to teach a course on "Liturgical History." Just for a moment, my mind went comically in this direction: "Yes, I will. Liturgical history is an important topic; where shall we begin? I suppose start with Abraham, then find ourselves with Moses at the burning bush, and then Israel's kings and prophets. No, wait, probably the Noachic covenant needs to be mentioned to reveal the cosmic dimensions of the subject. No, actually liturgical history would begin with Adam and Eve, their priesthood, the forfeiture of their liturgical career in the fall, and then develop into the long story of salvation history designed to restore man and woman to their liturgical state by becoming apprentices to Christ, the premier liturgist, who will lead us into the heavenly Jerusalem. That would be a liturgical history of man and creation and redemption." Then I realized the course on liturgical history was probably intended to be a course on the history of the liturgy. Those are two different notions.

Second, a liturgical anthropology would look at man and woman as created in the image of God to grow into the likeness of God, in order to be perfect liturgists. Patristic authors describe the image being like an artist's charcoal sketch, but the likeness being like an artist's finished painting. From the charcoal, you'll be able to tell it's a sketch of the king. But it will look more like the king when it has been filled in with flesh colors, and royal purple, and the gold of the crown. Gregory of Nyssa says our Maker wants "the portrait to resemble His own beauty, by the addition of virtues, as it were with colours."<sup>17</sup> And here is how Methodius speaks of it.

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<sup>17</sup> Gregory of Nyssa. *On the Making of Man*. Chapter 5 Section 1: *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*. Vol 5. Peabody (MA): Hendrickson Publishers 2004 p. 391. <http://www.elopos.net/elpenor/physics/nyssa-man/5.asp> [Access 2011.11.22]

Man had indeed been brought forth “after the image” of God, but he still had not yet achieved such “likeness” itself. In order to complete this task, the Word was sent into the world. First he assumed our human form, a form marred by the scars of many sins, so that we, for whom he took this form, would be enabled on our part to receive his divine form. For it is possible to achieve a perfect likeness of God only if we, like talented and accomplished painters, depict in ourselves those traits that characterized his human existence, and if we preserve them in us uncorrupted, by becoming his disciples, walking the path he has revealed to us. He who was God chose to appear in our human flesh so that we could behold, as we do in a painting, a divine model of life, and thus we were made able to imitate the one who painted this picture.<sup>18</sup>

Such a creature is magnificent to behold, as we know from coming face to face with saints. There is only one sorrow — not being a saint. And while the religious man stands before God and lifts up his human worship, the saint stands within the Trinity and participates in the love that circulates between the Son and Spirit and the Father. That’s the difference between religion and liturgy. Religion is natural to Adam; liturgy is the cult of the new Adam, continued in us.

This is what I mean when I say *lex orandi* establishes *lex credendi*. I’m not asking theologians to rifle through a sacramentary to justify the doctrine of the Trinity by finding a prayer formula that uses three names – I mean that the Church was first swept away by all three persons of the Trinity in her liturgical worship, and then reasoned it out in creedal form. I’m not saying Christology has to be justified by examining the content of prayers from the liturgy, I’m saying Christ’s continued presence in his Mystical Body is experienced liturgically, and so proclaimed in the ceremony’s prayers and in the council’s creeds. *Lex orandi* is the source of the Church’s belief. It’s not so much that we look *at* the liturgy, rather we look at the world *through* the liturgy, by means of the liturgy. Mrs. Murphy sees matter, time, the virtues, her neighbor, alms-giving, politics, culture, and everything else in the world in the light of Mt Tabor.

My reason, then, for pursuing liturgical theology by this method is to appreciate the connection between Church and world, Christ and life, supernature and nature. Christ did not come so we could have rubrics, and have them abundantly. He came so we could have life eternal — a different kind of life than the world can offer. It is offered liturgically. It is celebrated cultically. But the life itself is the topic of liturgical theology.

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<sup>18</sup> Found in Ch. S c h ö n b o r n. *God’s Human Face*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press 1994 p. 56.

Kallistos Ware says that for the Orthodox, “Theology is above all an articulation of the Church’s self-awareness as a worshiping community.” I think that can be asserted of Catholicism, too, if we restore the place of liturgy to our theology and spiritual life. This eternal happiness the liturgy celebrates, and asceticism accomplishes, and theology can contemplate it from a position of union with God.

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## TEOLOGIA LITURGICZNA JAKO PUNKT SYNTEZY

## Streszczenie

Autor wyjaśnia w artykule własne rozumienie relacji: *lex credendi i lex orandi*. Według Fagerberga *lex orandi* ustanawia *lex credendi*. Stwierdza przy tym: „Nie proszę teologów, aby przeszukiwali mszał w celu uzasadnienia nauki o Trójcy przez wyszukanie formuły mszalne, stosującej trzy imiona – sądzę, że Kościół najpierw został porwany przez wszystkie trzy Osoby Trójcy w naszym kulcie liturgicznym, a następnie wyraził to w formie wyznania wiary. Nie twierdzą, że chrystologia musi być uzasadniona za pomocą badania zawartości modlitw liturgicznych. Mówię, że obecność Chrystusa, podtrzymywana w Jego Mistycznym Ciele jest doświadczona liturgicznie i przez to wyrażona w jej modlitwach i w soborowych wyznaniach wiary. *Lex orandi* jest źródłem wiary Kościoła. Nie o to chodzi, że my patrzymy na liturgię, lecz raczej patrzymy na świat przez pryzmat liturgii, z pomocą liturgii. Pani Murphy [Kowalska] postrzega materię, czas, cnoty, swojego sąsiada, dawanie jałmużny, politykę, kulturę i wszystko inne na świecie w świetle Góry Tabor”. Powodem zajmowania się teologią liturgiczną w taki sposób jest dla Autora to, aby uwypuklić związek, jaki zachodzi między Kościołem i światem, Chrystusem i życiem, światem nadprzyrodzonym i naturą. Chrystus bowiem nie przyszedł po to, „abyśmy mogli mieć rubryki i mieli je w obfitości. On przyszedł, abyśmy mogli mieć życie wieczne – inny rodzaj życia niż jaki może dać świat”. To [życie] jest dane [nam] liturgicznie. Jest ono celebrowane kultycznie. Boże życie, udzielane człowiekowi, jest przedmiotem teologii liturgicznej. Dzięki temu teologia liturgiczna jest syntezą teologii, celebracji i życia.

*Streścił ks. Bogusław Migut*

**Key words:** theology, liturgy, worship, *leitourgia*, liturgical theology, theology of liturgy, theology from liturgy.

**Słowa kluczowe:** teologia, liturgia, kult, *leitourgia*, teologia liturgiczna, teologia liturgii, teologia z liturgii.