7-1-2014

Worshipping Meaningfully: The Complementary Dynamics of Liturgy and Theology in Worship

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WORSHIPPING MEANINGFULLY:
THE COMPLEMENTARY DYNAMICS OF LITURGY AND THEOLOGY IN WORSHIP

A Dissertation Presented to the Faculty of
Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Systematic Theology
in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

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July 2014

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To my beloved family: My wife Pamela; our children Raya, Faith, Osmo, Tom Jr. and Sheila.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation owes its success to more people than I can mention here, but I will mention a few. I am indebted to Concordia Seminary, St. Louis for funding my studies in the Ph.D. program. I particularly want to thank Dr. Bruce Schuchard for his support and encouragement during the four years of my study in the seminary. I also acknowledge the contribution of all the faculty members from different departments under whom I learned a lot in the faith during my course work.

Special thanks go to my doctoral adviser, Dr. Kent Burreson for overseeing this project wholeheartedly and for being available to me for guidance. I acknowledge his immense support and contribution to the project, especially for giving me direction, for introducing invaluable resources to me, and for giving me clarity of thought before and during the writing process. My interest in the topic of this dissertation is attributed to the liturgical theology course I took under him which exposed me to many issues and literary works in this area of research.

I also pay tribute to my family members for enduring my long absence during my study in the USA. I want to thank particularly my wife Pamela for ably taking care of our children back in Kenya and for encouraging me throughout the study. I will also not forget to thank my fellow student from Kenya, Christine Ouko, for proofreading the document.

ABBREVIATIONS

AC	Augsburg Confession
AP	Apology to the Augsburg Confession
CSL	Constitution on Sacred Liturgy
ELCK	Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya
IT	Ibada Takatifu
LC	Luther's Large Catechism
LSB	Lutheran Service Book
NIV	New International Version of the Bible
RCL	Revised Common Lectionary
RSV	Revised Standard Version of the Bible
SC	Luther's Small Catechism

ABSTRACT

Omolo, Joseph, T. "Worshipping Meaningfully: The Complementary Dynamics of Liturgy and Theology in Worship." Ph.D. diss., Concordia Seminary, 2014. 242 pp.

This dissertation is a work in systematic theology which explores the relationship between liturgy and theology in the current scholarship of liturgical theology. It examines how the complementary dynamics of liturgy and theology enhance the appropriation of meaning experientially and conceptually in the Christian assembly and thereby making worship a meaningful event. Worship is meaningful when the Christian assembly encounters the Triune God in his word and sacraments and the assembly responds in praise, prayer and thanksgiving. In such encounter the assembly experiences God's gift of salvation and apprehends the truth of the Christian metanarrative. Such experience and conception occur in the liturgical celebration and faithful theological reflection in the context of worship. This dissertation explores how both liturgy and theology contribute in their unique ways to meaningful worship and how the two aspects of meaning—experiential and conceptual—play out in the liturgical context.

Since Christian worship occurs in different milieus, this dissertation also examines how Christian worship can remain meaningful in different spatio-temporal contexts. God offers his gift of salvation to people in their own socio-cultural contexts and at different times. Liturgy and theology will thus mediate or communicate the unchanging meaning of the mystery of salvation in changing contexts, utilizing the local media of communication.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

"Liturgical theology" as an area of theological enquiry has gained prominence ever since the emergence of the contemporary "Liturgical Movement" in the early twentieth century.[1] Although there seems to be no absolute consensus among liturgical scholars on the methodology of this area of study and on what precisely constitutes its subject matter,"[2] there is common evidence from the major works in this field showing that its subject matter revolves around the church's worship in general and the liturgy in particular.[3] Dwight Vogel observes that "what is

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[1] See Timothy C. J. Quill *The Impact of the Liturgical Movement on American Lutheranism* (Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, 1997); James Herbert Strawley. *The Liturgical Movement: Its Origin and Growth* (London:A. R. Mowbray & Co., 1954); and James F. White, *Roman Catholic Worship: Trent to Today* (New York: Paulist Press, 1995). "Liturgical Movement" here refers to the movement that arose in the Roman Catholic Church in the early twentieth century which sought to reform the church's conception and practice of worship. The movement which had its roots in the liturgical reforms of the Second Vatican Council (Vatican II) began in the monasteries with its most important centers being the Abbey of Mont Cèsar, Louvain and the Abbey of Maria Laach in the Rhineland of Germany. The movement has since stamped its mark in other church traditions outside the Roman Catholic Church, including the Eastern Orthodox Church. Some of the major figures of the movement include Dom Odo Casel, Louis Boyer, Godfrey Diekmann, Balthasar Fischer, Romano Guardini, Gregory Dix, and Yngwe Brilioth.

[2] See Thomas Fisch, ed., *Liturgy and Tradition: Theological Reflections of Alexander Schmemann,* (Crestwood NY, St. Vladmir's Seminary Press, 1990), 7 and David W. Fagerberg, *What is Liturgical Theology* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1992). Scholars have divergent views on the relationship between "liturgical theology" and the "theology of liturgy." For example, Alexander Schmemann maintains that there is a distinction between the two.

[3] The terms *worship* and *liturgy* will be used here as closely related but with some degree of distinction. Dwight Vogel says that "worship as a human activity appears in both individual and social expressions. It does not have to be corporate in nature. Liturgy is corporate by definition; worship is not. Liturgy involves ritual action; worship may or may not." This means that worship in its wider sense subsumes liturgy, and in its narrow sense it may be synonymous with liturgy. See Dwight Vogel, ed. *Primary Sources of Liturgical Theology: A Reader* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2000), 6. Although Vogel's understanding of "worship" as "a human activity" may go against the grains of the Lutheran understanding of worship as primarily a divine act, *Gottesdienst,*

called 'liturgical theology' can be examined as a geography of the landscape of a certain kind of human activity."[4] In this respect, he further contends that "some liturgical theologians focus their attention on one part of the landscape, some on another."[5] One of the major parts of this landscape that liturgical theologians have explored is the question of the relationship between liturgy and theology/doctrine.[6] One of the main questions at issue in this field of study is whether the church's liturgy has a normative role in shaping what the people believe or whether it is the other way round, that is, what the church believes and teaches shapes and norms her way of worship, precisely the liturgy. This question of the relationship between the church's liturgy and her theology is, perhaps, as old as the church itself. It is thus neither unique to any one point of time in the history of the church nor is it peculiar to any one church tradition. It is a question that has confronted theologians across the divide: both ancient and contemporary; both in the Eastern

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his distinction is generally helpful for our purpose. We will therefore here use "liturgy" to refer mainly to the acts carried out in the formal public service and "worship" in its wider sense. However, such meanings will be determined by the context and sentence matrix.

[4] Vogel, *Primary Sources of Liturgical Theology*, 4.

[5] Ibid.

[6] The terms *theology* and *doctrine* are usually not easily distinguishable and have often been used interchangeably. But both may have different meanings depending on the context in which they are used. Here "doctrine" is used for what is believed and taught in the church, while theology denotes the articulation of such belief in a language intelligible to the people. However, theology, in a sense, is more than a systematic articulation of faith, which is mainly discursive. Hans Frei thus distinguishes "first-order theology" from "second-order theology," where the former refers to "statements or proclamations made in the course of Christian practice and belief," like confessions, witness, creeds etc., while the latter refers to "an endeavor to articulate the 'grammar' or 'logic' of first order Christian statements." See Hans W. Frei, *Types of Christian Theology* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 2. The understating and use of the term *theology* in this dissertation will thus embrace these two aspects of theology: as first-order activity like confession of sin and absolution, confession of faith etc., and as a second-order activity which involves reflections and presentation of faith and "doctrines" of the church in a logical and coherent manner. This is also reflected in Bradley C. Hanson's definition of theology as "a personally involved reflection on a religious faith," where faith here would be taken for doctrine. See Bradley C. Hanson, *Introduction to Christian Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), 4. Since theology and doctrine are so closely connected, our study will involve both in one way or the other and the two may often be used interchangeably. We will, however, explore the meaning of each of the terms in more depth.

and in the Western traditions of the church; both Catholics and Protestants. The ubiquity of the problem thus points to the significance of both liturgy and theology for the church's worship life.

The Thesis

This dissertation shows how a complementary relationship between theology and the liturgy would be significant and beneficial to the assembly of Christian worshippers. In offering a more balanced way of looking at the relationship of liturgy and theology, the dissertation argues that there exists an indissoluble nexus and a symbiotic relationship between the liturgy and theology such that the *lex orandi* and the *lex credendi* form a dynamic of mutual dialogue and critique which fosters catechesis among the community of faith in terms of the apprehension of meaning in the assembly's worship life, both conceptually and experientially. In this complementary dynamic, liturgy and theology inform and influence each other even as both are normed by the scriptural metanarrative.

The Current Status of the Question

To use Vogel's landscape analogy, this dissertation explores the part of the liturgical theology landscape that treats the dynamics between the liturgy and theology of the church with a view to establishing a symbiotic relationship between the two that will foster the apprehension of meaning among the people of God as a worshipping community. Theologians exploring this landscape have taken different routes as far as the question of the relationship between liturgy and theology in the worship life of the church is concerned.

The Case for Liturgy as Source and Norm of Theology

Due to their growing influence in the field of liturgical theology, Alexander Schmemann and Aidan Kavanagh, from Orthodox and Catholic traditions respectively, will be useful for the understanding of liturgy as source and norm of theology. Schmemann, a Russian Orthodox theologian, has remained influential in this field of study even over thirty years after his death. He distinguishes between two popular trends in understanding the relationship between worship and theology.[7] In the first place, liturgy[8] is viewed as "the basic source of theological thinking" in which case liturgy may be viewed as "a kind of *locus theologicus par excellence.*"[9] In the second place every liturgical experience is regarded as "a necessary *object* of theology."[10] These two trends are significant for our discussion for the reason that the problem of the relationship between liturgy and theology has a direct impact on the area of inquiry that this dissertation seeks to explore, how the complementarity of liturgy and theology inculcates meaning among the worshippers.

Schmemann invokes the authority of the early fathers to address this problem of the liturgy-theology relationship. He contends that "the problem of the relationship between liturgy and theology is not for the Fathers a problem of priority or authority" and that "liturgical tradition is not an authority or *a locus theologicus*," but rather, it is the "ontological condition of

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[7] It is noticeable that the terms worship and liturgy are sometimes used interchangeably although precise definition may reveal a certain level of distinction.

[8] Alexander Schmemann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, trans, Asheleigh E. Moorhouse (Crestwood, NY: Saint Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1986), 33. Schmemann here considers liturgy primarily as the basic underlying structure of worship. This structure he calls "Ordo," the "definite regulations" or "an order or rite established once and for all."

[9] Thomas Fisch, *Liturgy and Tradition: Theological Reflections of Alexander Schmemann*, 12.

theology."[11] Here one can find Schmemann's overarching framework for understanding the relationship between liturgy and theology: liturgy as the "ontological condition of theology." What this means can be seen in his interpretation of the patristic understanding of the old axiom that the law of prayer establishes the law of belief, *lex orandi, lex credendi.*[12] For the fathers, he argues, the axiom "means that the liturgical tradition, the liturgical life, is a natural milieu for theology, its self-evident term of reference."[13] He further observes that "the Fathers do not reflect on liturgy. For them it is not an *object* of theological inquiry and definition, but rather the living source and ultimate criterion of all Christian thought."[14]

Schmemann here points out that there seems to have occurred a paradigm shift during Scholasticism which witnessed the departure from the traditional patristic view of liturgy as the source and norm of theological reflection. In this shift, he notes, "the position of worship in relation to theology is reversed: from a *source* it becomes an *object*, which has to be defined and evaluated within the accepted categories."[15] The new *modus operandi* was such that "liturgy supplies theology with data, but the method of dealing with these data is independent of any liturgical context."[16] Schmemann thus argues that in such an unfortunate development "theology not only remained internally independent of worship, but claimed the right to control it, and to

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[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid., 18.

[12] This axiom has been attributed to St. Prosper of Aquitaine (c. AD. 390–c. 463). Its original form is *ut legem credendi lex statuat suplicandi*. More will be said later about the context of the axiom.

[13] Fisch, 12.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Ibid.

form it according to the *lex credendi*."[17] It is from within this backdrop that Schmemann's positive assessment of the Liturgical Movement can better be understood. He attributes "theological renewal of the church" to the movement and holds that "its fundamental presupposition is that the liturgy not only has a theological meaning and is declarative of faith, but that it is the living norm of theology."[18] It is evident here that there is a perceived supremacy war between liturgy and theology, with the normative authority assigned to one or the other. For Schmemann, liturgy remains the source and norm of theology or, in his own description, "the ontological condition of theology." He thus provides us with one line of thought with respect to the relationship between the liturgy and theology, a line of reasoning that has influenced the course of this discussion to a large extent.

Schmemann's position arises out of his general concern about doing theology *in abstracto*, a theology that is not connected to the real life of the church, especially the church's liturgical experience and piety. He is right in pointing out that theology or doctrine is meaningful only to the extent that it is connected to the daily life of the people of God as a worshipping community. He thus attempts here to offer a corrective measure with the effect of restoring liturgy as the source and norm of doctrine and theology, that is, what is to be believed and the church's reflection upon it. Schmemann therefore lays a good foundation for the reconnection of liturgy and theology in the worship life of the church. But his position on the relationship between liturgy and theology achieves little to resolve the perceived tension between the two. This is

[17] Ibid., 14.

[18] Ibid.

because he also seems to be playing the traditional power game, assigning liturgy normative authority over theology and doctrine, rather than offering a more balanced view.

Maxwell Johnson observes that this judgment on the relationship between liturgy and theology, where the former is the source and norm of the latter, stems from Schmemann's syntactical rearrangement of the axiom. Schmemann supplies the shortened form of the axiom with the verb "is" to predicate the "lex credendi," *lex orandi est lex credendi.*[19] The displacement of theology and restoration of liturgy as the norm only aggravates the problem. As Johnson puts it, "what is it in liturgy that makes the liturgical experience this 'epiphany' of the Church's faith in such a way that it is the ultimate source for theological reflection and discourse?"[20] Schmemann's answer to this question is the liturgical *ordo*, "the basic underlying structure and theology of liturgy enshrined, even hidden, within the various Byzantine *ordines* and *typical.*"[21] And it is this unchanging principle, *ordo*, which gives form to worship.[22] He holds that a theologian, and theology for that matter, "has to rediscover the oldest of all languages of the Church: that of her rites, the rhythm and the *ordo* of her *leitourgia* in which she conceals from the eyes of 'this world' her most precious treasure: the knowledge of that which 'no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived."[23] But if, in answer to Johnson's question, it is the *ordo* that makes liturgy the source and norm of theology, a legitimate question would be

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[19] Maxwell Johnson, "Liturgy and Theology," in *Liturgy in Dialogue: Essays in Memory of Ronald Jasper*, ed. Paul Bradshaw and Bryan Spinks (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1993), 205.

[20] Ibid., 206.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Alexander Schmemann, "Liturgy and Theology," *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 17, no. 1 (1972), 98.

whether the *ordo* is sacrosanct and, in that connection, whether it is itself subject to any other norming authority.

It is evident that Schmemann has a passionate clamor for the restoration of liturgy to its rightful position as the source of theology and doctrine. It would therefore be an overstatement to assert that he is not open to the reality of a double critique between liturgy and theology. When discussing the "wholeness" of the theological mind, for instance, he advocates for "a double task: a liturgical critique of theology and a theological critique of liturgy."[24] But this sentiment of double critique notwithstanding, Schmemann's overall conception of the relationship between liturgy and theology lacks such balance, for his understanding of liturgy as the ontological condition of theology manifests a lopsided approach, giving preeminence to liturgy as the source and norm of theology. For instance, commenting on the liturgical reforms sparked by the Liturgical Movement, especially in the West, he says that "the time thus is not for an external liturgical reform but for a theology and piety drinking again from the eternal and unchanging sources of liturgical tradition."[25] Here he alludes to some "eternal and unchanging sources," for both liturgy and theology, but he fails to mention or state clearly what he conceives those sources to be.

This lack of clarity and precision elicits criticism from Jarine Grisbrooke, his fellow easterner, who critiques him for being vague in his understanding of the relationship between liturgy and theology. Grisbrooke, thus writes, "How then can we talk of the 'unchanging sources of liturgical tradition'? Or are the sources of liturgical tradition external to the *lex orandi*, and if

[24] Schmemann, "Liturgy and Theology," 95.

so, precisely what are they, and what is the relationship of the *lex orandi* to them?"[26] Grisbrooke seems to be right in his critique because if there are other unchanging sources of liturgy, as Schmemann contends, then the liturgy cannot claim an absolute norming authority because it is also subject to norming authorities that are somehow external to the liturgy itself.

Furthermore, this sentiment seems to be repugnant to Schmemann's overall position on liturgy as the *culmen et fons* (source and summit) of theology, to use the Roman Catholic terminology. Speaking on the liturgical reforms, Schmemann observes that non-essentials must not be tampered with recklessly and that "rather than denouncing them in the name of liturgical purity we must strive to discover the *lex orandi* which none of these accidental ingredients has managed to obscure."[27] But here again, Schmemann does not mention the criteria or the standard measure by which the essentials in the liturgy would be discovered. One would therefore think of the role of theology and doctrine in this regard. Would theology and doctrine be helpful in measuring what is essential? What about the unchanging sources of liturgical tradition? Grisbrooke seems to have recognized some lacuna in the assertion about "eternal and unchanging sources of liturgy," since it calls for something else to give shape and form to liturgy, and it is thus clear that liturgy cannot be its own source and norm. This dissertation suggests that there are criteria outside of the liturgy that serve as sources and points of critique of the liturgy. Among these criteria, the Christian narrative as it unfolds in the divine revelation

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[25] Alexander Schmemann, "A Brief Response," *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 12 (1968), 174.

[26] W. Jarine Grisbrooke, "Liturgical Theology and Liturgical Reform: Some Questions," *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 13, no. 4 (1969), 214.

[27] Schmemann, "A Brief Response," 174.

qualifies for consideration as the unchanging source of and a guide to both liturgy and theology. In a sense, this is a case for the authority of scripture in matters liturgical and doctrinal.

Another prominent liturgical theologian who has made a strong case for the supremacy of liturgy over theology and doctrine is Aidan Kavanagh, a Roman Catholic who influenced and was influenced by Schmemann.[28] Kavanagh considers liturgy as *theologia prima*, and the reflection thereupon as *theologia secunda*, with the understanding that "liturgy is the basic way of doing theology"[29] and that "a liturgical act *is* a theological act of the most all-encompassing, integral, and foundational kind."[30] In this line of thought, liturgy as *theologia prima* assumes a higher status than doctrinal discourse, which is *theologia secunda.* This is evident in Kavanagh's syntactical analysis of St. Prosper's axiom, *ut legem credendi lex statuat suplicandi.* He argues that "the verb *statuat* subordinates the law of belief to the law of worship."[31] In this respect, he thus decries the perceived reversal of the axiom. He says, "The served has become the servant, mistress has become hand maid. . . . Our position on doctrine's control over worship, for example, is similar to someone in linguistics maintaining that language is controlled by philologists rather than by social transaction which is the act of speech itself."[32]

Kavanagh argues that "Christians do not worship because they believe." Rather, "they believe because the One in whose gift faith lies is regularly met in the act of communal

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[28] Aidan Kavanagh, *On Liturgical Theology* (New York: Pueblo, 1984), 89.

[29] Ibid., 78.

[30] Ibid., 89.

[31] Ibid., 91.

[32] Ibid.

worship."[33] To bolster this argument, he cites Moses' experience with the burning bush and the incident in which disciples came to Christ because of his presence and not because of their faith,[34] although Kavanagh fails to account for the large numbers that experienced Christ's presence but still went away in disbelief. The gist of Kavanagh's view of the relationship between the liturgy and theology is summarized in what he terms as the "taxonomy of primary theology." Of this taxonomy he says:

> The taxonomy is operationally rhythmic. It begins with the act of liturgical worship. This act precipitates change in the liturgical assembly, change which is not so much immediately apparent, perhaps, as it is long-term, even eschatological, and inexorable. To such change the assembly adjusts through critical reflection upon its own stance in faith before the God who gifts the assembly with its own existence and with a created world in which to stand and minister before him.[35]

In general assessment, Kavanagh's position is important as he appreciates the significant role liturgy plays in the life of the worshippers both collectively as a community of faith and individually as members of that particular worshipping community. It is notable, however, that Kavanagh employs some categories in this debate that seem to underrate the value of theology and doctrine in its relation to liturgy. For example, the categories of *theologia prima* and *theologia secunda,* as he employs them,[36] seem to imply a relationship of subordination in which

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[33] Ibid.

[34] Ibid., 92.

[35] Ibid., 93.

[36] It is to be noted that the distinction between primary and secondary theology, *theologia prima* and *theologia secunda,* is not intrinsically defective, even from a Lutheran standpoint, for in a way it may correspond to the first-order, second-order distinction as already noted above. But "primary" here is not synonymous with "primacy," so that liturgy takes precedence over theology and doctrine. Rather, it is to be understood that "the liturgy of any particular community is its primary theology," the basic way of living out and expressing her faith. See Kent J. Burreson, "Forming A Lutheran Liturgical Reader: The Appropriation of Meaning in Liturgy," *Lord Jesus Christ Will You Not Stay: Essays in Honor of Ronald Feuerhahn on the Occasion of His Sixty-fifth Birthday*, ed. J. Bart Day and John D. Vieker (Saint Louis: Concordia, 2002), 392.

doctrine and theology would be subservient to liturgy. This interpretation may be justified by his use of the similar metaphor of the master-servant relationship. In this regard, Kavanagh has failed to capture or provide for any interaction of mutual benefit and critique in the liturgy-theology dynamics. But his submission that the worshipping assembly "adjusts through critical reflection" points to the direction of mutual critique between the primary theology, the liturgy, and the reflective or secondary theology. Furthermore, the analogy of philology he employs could also suggest that a language needs rules and grammar if it is to be intelligible and that the grammar would be a criterion for understanding and interpreting the language itself.[37]

In agreement with both Schmemann and Kavanagh, David Fagerberg outlines the interplay between prayer and belief. He contends that the "encounter with God is the ontological condition for the law of prayer which establishes the law of belief, not vice versa."[38] It may seem that Fagerberg's scheme is a variant of Schmemann's position since he presents "encounter with God"[39] as the ontological condition for the *lex orandi*, which in turn establishes the *lex credendi*. So the scheme moves from encounter with God to prayer and finally to belief. But in essence Fagerberg's position is not substantively different from Schmemann's. Like Schmemann, he holds that "liturgy is the ontological condition for theology because here is where primary theology occurs," and that, like Kavanagh, "here is where the sources of second order theological conversation operate precisely as sources."[40] Fagerberg further argues that the "the *lex orandi*, as

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[37] See Johnson, "Liturgy and Theology," 223.

[38] Fagerberg, *What is Liturgical Theology?*, 21.

[39] It is not clear here what the "encounter with God" is and whether it occurs apart from the liturgical acts, the *lex orandi*, which it establishes.

[40] Fagerberg, *What is Liturgical Theology?*, 21.

exercised in liturgical rite, establishes *lex credendi*, as expressed in other forms."[41] Fagerberg has thus followed the trend that assigns normative authority to the liturgy over theology and doctrine.

This trend has also been followed, albeit more cautiously,[42] by Jaroslav Pelikan in his treatment of the historical development of dogma. Pelikan addresses two questions: "How has doctrine developed because of prayer?" and "at what point has prayer not shaped or should not shape the development of doctrine?"[43] Pelikan avers that the liturgy is not to be understood simply as an expression of doctrine, that is, what the church believes and teaches. But rather, it is to be regarded as the very source of doctrine. For Pelikan, therefore, the influence of prayer on theology and doctrine is "what the term *lex orandi* means."[44] To support his position, he alludes to Augustine's doctrinal battle with the semi-Pelagians and argues that "Augustine found little from the Fathers to defend himself, but found defense in the Fathers' prayer." That is, Augustine found much more help from the Fathers' liturgical texts than he did, if at all, from the Fathers' theological treatises and doctrinal propositions. For example, Pelikan argues, there were those who did not accept the divinity of Christ as dogma but nonetheless confessed him as Lord in the liturgy by the use of *Kyrie*.[45] He also cites the early development in which the *Gloria Patri* was used to establish the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. Pelikan here has generally gone the route of

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[41] Ibid.

[42] Pelikan argues for the authority of the liturgy but recognizes the role of doctrine in calling worship to order and, hence, their complementarity.

[43] Jeroslav Pelikan, "The Dogma of Prayer in Historical Perspective" (Lecture, St. John's University, Collegeville, MN, June 22, 1978).

[44] Ibid.

[45] Ibid.

Schmemann and Kavanagh in looking at liturgy as the source and, to an extent, norm of theology.

Maxwell Johnson in his critique of Kavanagh poses three critical questions that may fit all the instances in which the primacy, and hence "the foundational character,"[46] of liturgy is advanced, as in Schmemann, Fagerberg, and others. The first question focuses on "the evaluative criteria."[47] How would the church, as worshipping community, evaluate the correctness or orthodoxy of her liturgical acts in relation to her overarching narrative? The second question regards the cause-effect spiral of relation between liturgy and theology: Has there been no instances in the history of the church where reflection on the church's faith and doctrine, *theologia secunda*, led to liturgical adjustments?[48] Johnson contends that "the history of liturgy demonstrates that the liturgy itself, and hence the content of a particular liturgical *act*, is also shaped and "constituted, by secondary theology."[49] The third question regards the norming authority of the liturgy in relation to other authorities on faith and doctrine. Is there something else more primary than the liturgy and the liturgical act itself?[50]

The Case for the Supremacy of Theology

In this section, the discussion will engage Geoffrey Wainwright, a British Methodist minister who has become a major figure in liturgical theology in the circles of Protestantism.

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[46] Johnson, "Liturgy and Theology," 222.

[47] Ibid.

[48] Ibid., 223.

[49] Ibid.

[50] Ibid., 224.

Wainwright traces how the liturgy-theology dynamics have played out in the church over the centuries, and more especially among Catholics and Protestants. Vilmos Vajta, a Lutheran theologian of Hungarian origin, will be useful in shedding more light on Wainwright, especially pertaining to the perceived supremacy of theology over the liturgy.

The push for the primacy of the liturgy over theology and doctrine has been received with reluctance and even suspicion by some theologians and theological traditions. Wainwright has identified the two major Western church traditions with the traditional competing views of the *lex orandi–lex credendi* dynamics. Among the Roman Catholics, he says, "there the *lex orandi---lex credendi* most readily makes the (descriptive) pattern of prayer a (prescriptive) norm for belief, so that what is prayed indicates what may and must be believed."[51] In this sense, Wainwright argues, the general view among the Roman Catholics is that *lex orandi* gives form to *lex credendi*. This, in his assessment, is diametrically opposed to the general Protestant conception of the liturgy-theology dynamics. He asserts that "Protestantism characteristically emphasizes the primacy of doctrine over liturgy"[52] and that Protestants have not bothered themselves so much with the issue of the *lex orandi–lex credendi* axiom. Nevertheless, he maintains that "they would most easily take the dogmatic norm of belief as setting a rule for prayer, so that what must be believed governs what may and should be prayed."[53] Wainwright contends, for instance, that "it was the policy of the Reformers to establish doctrinal control over

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[51] Geoffrey Wainwright, *Doxology: The Praise of God in Worship, Doctrine and Life* (London: Epworth Press, 1980), 250.

[52] Ibid.

[53] Ibid.

worship" and that "the critical primacy of doctrine in relation to liturgy has remained characteristic of Protestantism."[54]

Wainwright's claim on the elevation of doctrine over liturgy by Protestantism may be justifiable in light of the work of Vilmos Vajta who provides a glimpse of the Reformation approach to the liturgy-doctrine dynamics. In his work *Luther on Worship: An Interpretation*, Vajta gives an in-depth analysis of the place of worship in Luther's entire theology. Some of the introductory remarks here reveal that one of the main purposes of this work is to challenge the notion that Luther had little interest in liturgy and worship. In attempting to prove the contrary Vajta makes two claims that are of interest to this dissertation. First, he recognizes the mutual dialogue between liturgy and theology and observes that "through the history of the church worship and doctrine have developed in mutual dependence."[55] Second, he argues that Luther's theology of worship is traceable to his basic theological conviction: justification by faith alone.[56] Vajta here points to the connection between theology and doctrine and specific liturgical acts. He pays attention to Luther's interest in the external actions of the mass and how he resisted the reckless rejection of all the externals as was advanced by the Enthusiasts and the Radicals.[57] In this respect Luther, as presented by Vajta, was alive to the reality that the external liturgical actions have theological significance and may be determined by theology.

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[54] Ibid., 219.

[55] Vilmos Vajta, *Luther on Worship: An Interpretation* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 1958), ix.

[56] Ibid., xi.

[57] Ibid., 30.

Vajta's contention that Luther's theology of worship can be traced to his basic theological conviction of justification *sola fide* is in line with his observation that "Luther developed his theology of worship along two lines, as he proceeded from his picture of God or from his concept of faith."[58] This picture of the development of Luther's theology of worship may point to the major problem which this dissertation seeks to address, the strained relationship between liturgy and doctrine. In this respect Vajta presents Luther's theology of worship as one which reads the *lex orandi–lex credendi* axiom in reverse in which the law of belief establishes the law of prayer. This claim may be vindicated by Vajta's own description of the nature of Luther's liturgical reforms. He says that "the liturgical reforms which he touched off were direct outgrowth of his rediscovery of the gospel" and that "his newly found theological convictions led to a complete liturgical reorientation."[59] This means that the churches of the Reformation, and the Lutherans in particular, adjusted their worship and liturgies on the basis of their new theological orientation. This indeed lends credence to Wainwright's assertion that Protestantism has had the tendency to accord theology and doctrine primacy in its relationship with the liturgy.

Although Wainwright's main submission is that the Catholics elevate the liturgy over theology, while theology has an upper hand over the liturgy among Protestants, he is also aware that both traditions tend to acknowledge, to some degree, the harmony and complementarity between the two. He notes that both Catholicism and Protestantism recognize that "there is properly a complementary and harmonious relation between worship and doctrine, and that it is

[58] Ibid., 18.

[59] Ibid., x.

the business of worship and doctrine to express the Christian truth."[60] But he maintains his thesis that the two major Western church traditions "tend to differ on the question of which of the two, doctrine or worship, should set the pace."[61] It is also worth mentioning here that although Wainwright may be justified in identifying the two competing positions with the Roman Catholic on the one hand and the Protestants on the other, it is evident from the works we have considered so far that such generalization may do injustice to individual authors from across the traditional divides who hold views different from their respective church traditions. For instance, we have seen sentiments that seem to endorse the primacy of liturgy in Jaroslav Pelikan[62] and will shortly see a more balanced position from Edward Kilmartin, a Roman Catholic theologian.

The Middle Way: Towards Complementarity

In trying to reach a balance, Wainwright embarks on "a critical study of the relationship between *lex orandi* and *lex credendi*" as well as a brief survey of the use of the axiom in the history of the church.[63] In the movement to establish liturgy as the source and norm of theology, he traces the rise of interest in the *lex orandi–lex credendi* axiom to the discovery of discrepancies that existed in some of the early Eastern liturgies. He points out that the debate was prompted by questions that were raised about how "generally orthodox rites" existed in the

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[60] Wainwright, *Doxology*, 252.

[61] Ibid.

[62] Jaroslav Pelikan was a Lutheran minister and theologian at the time of this lecture but he converted to Orthodoxy late in his life.

[63] Johnson, "Liturgy and Theology," 210.

"officially heterodox churches of the Monophysites and Nestorians."[64] These rites included the singing of *Kyrie* in reference to Jesus by those who otherwise denied his divinity in their official teachings.[65] Wainwright attributes the idea of *lex orandi* establishing *lex credendi* to Augustine of Hippo whom he says upheld "the teaching power of the liturgy in respect of faith and morals."[66] He thus cites Augustine: "The liturgy itself is eloquent to teach the saving faith: its visible, physical, temporal figures, few and simple as they are, move the affection to things invisible, spiritual, eternal."[67]

Wainwright also alludes to a few cases of liturgy being a source of theology and doctrine. For instance, he cites the case in which worship of Jesus as the Christ and as Lord led to the affirmation of his divinity in later Christology.[68] He refers to the role that "the threefold pattern of baptism" played in the development of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity[69] and how "the popular devotion" led to Mariology.[70] Wainwright also cites the early practice of mystagogy in which the neophytes were instructed in the main doctrines of the Christian faith which were already embodied and expressed in the rites of the sacraments.[71] This practice of mystagogy in the early church may be taken as an instance in which the significance of liturgy in relation to theology is

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[64] Ibid., 219.

[65] Erwin Smuda, "Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi" (D.Min. thesis, Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, 1989), 4.

[66] Wainwright, *Doxology*, 228.

[67] Ibid., 228.

[68] Ibid., 250.

[69] Ibid.

[70] Ibid.

[71] Ibid.

portrayed. This is because what the converts experienced in the liturgy, the reality of the mystery of salvation in Christ, becomes a source of discourse and systematic reflection.

Although Wainwright appreciates the place of liturgy in the life of the church and would even readily concur that it is *a* source of theology, he would be skeptical about considering liturgy as *the* source and norm of theology. In this regard he asks, "*What gives the Church's worship any authority which it carries in matters of doctrine*?"[72] In response to this question he develops three "tests" to evaluate liturgy as the source of theology and doctrine. The first test is the test of "origin" in which "most weight will be given to ideas and practices which go back to Jesus."[73] The second test is "spread in both time and space." In this test, "the closer a liturgical item comes to the universality of the Vincentian *quod semper, quad ubique, quod ab omnibus*, the greater will be its importance as a doctrinal locus."[74] The third test is of "ethical correspondence." An example is given here where "Augustine and Prosper considered that the holiness of a Church indwelt and led by the Holy Spirit gave authority to its liturgical practice as a source of doctrine."[75]

The question of the extent to which liturgy may be regarded as a source and norm of doctrine and theological reflection arises out of Wainwright's general view of the doctrinal authorities in the church and how such authorities relate with each other.[76] One of his main concerns in this regard is the imperfection of human symbolical acts and cultural expressions of

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[72] Ibid., 242.

[73] Ibid., 243

[74] Ibid.

[75] Ibid., 245.

the faith. This means that liturgy has its own limitations and thus it cannot alone be *the* source of theology. He observes that liturgy and theology are not perfect since each has its own limitations and that there are possibilities of errors "in both liturgical and theological formulation by the present incompleteness,"[77] that is, liturgy and theology are not perfect in this present age. He thus concludes that "absolute certainty could not attach to any doctrinal conclusion drawn from the worship of the church" and that "such conclusions will possess varying degrees of probability" which "must remain open to revision"[78] and this he argues applies to "all doctrinal statements."[79]

By raising the question of limitations on the parts of both liturgy and theology, Wainwright opens the door for a more balanced understanding of the relationship between the two. Such relationship would call for a mutual dependence to guard against any excesses from both sides. For after appreciating the significant role of liturgy as "a source of doctrine in as far as it is the place in which God makes himself known to humanity in a saving encounter,"[80] he nonetheless maintains that "dogma is needed if prayer is not to be dissolved into individualism."[81] Proposing how the liturgy, doctrine and the magisterium[82] are to relate in the church, Wainwright says that "the magisterium has a responsibility *for* the liturgy as a doxological expression of the faith"

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[76] Ibid., 248.

[77] Ibid., 282.

[78] Ibid., 250.

[79] Ibid.

[80] Ibid., 242.

[81] Ibid., 281.

[82] The question here is that if worship has doctrinal authority how does it relate to other doctrinal authorities in the church. He mentions the other authorities such as Scripture and the magisterium but opposed to the Roman Catholic understanding, he maintains that Scripture remains the court of appeal and the yardstick. It follows therefore that the authorities mentioned are not at par with one another and thus do not have equal authority. The

such that "it should actively promote liturgical forms which reflect the true faith, and should nip in the bud any 'spontaneous' developments in worship which in its judgment distorts the true faith."[83] On this account Johnson concludes that Wainwright's overall position manifests a preference for the *lex credendi* as "the dominant of the two principles," since "the role he assigns to *lex orandi* in the development of doctrine is a very limited one." This he does despite his call for the "mutual or conjunctive interplay of both the *lex orandi* and *lex credendi.*"[84] But in comparison to Schmemann, Wainwright has made a very significant step toward complementarity of liturgy and theology. For instance, he contends that the magisterium "also has a responsibility *to* the liturgy,"[85] meaning that "it should draw on the experience of Christian worship, so that the doxological intention may spill over into doctrinal pronouncements and dogma may be shaped by prayer."[86] He states upfront in *Doxology* that one of the main purposes of this work is "to rescue the interplay of worship and doctrine—with both its problems and opportunities—as an area of interest for Protestant theology."[87] Although he might not have completely achieved this purpose, as Johnson intimates, this indeed is a significant move toward mutual benefit and critique advanced also by Regin Prenter and Edward Kilmartin.

In his article "Liturgy and Theology," Prenter treats the relationship between liturgy and theology in a manner that is insightful and will thus be helpful for the purpose of this

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magisterium may as well be said to have a derived authority.

[83] Wainwright, *Doxology*, 246.

[84] Johnson, "Liturgy and Theology," 217.

[85] Ibid.

[86] Ibid.

[87] Wainwright, *Doxology*, 219.

dissertation. Prenter's main argument is that there is, or should be, neither a theology that is not liturgical nor liturgy that is not theological. He contends that "our whole life, interpreted as divine liturgy, is theology, i.e. our way of speaking about God to God Himself and to our fellow men."[88] Liturgy itself, he says, is *theologia*, "a word speaking the truth about God in human, understandable terms."[89] In this respect Prenter lays much emphasis on the organic unity between liturgy and theology. He thus points out some of the dangers that would ensue should liturgy be separated from theology. For instance, if such separation occurs, "liturgy becomes an end in itself."[90] That is to say that "it is no longer in its essence 'theology' or true witness to the revelation of God."[91] But on the other hand, such separation may lead to theology becoming an end in itself,[92] meaning that "it is no longer seen as a part of the liturgy of the church."[93] The gist of Prenter's argument here is that "liturgy is in its essence theological, and the theology liturgical"[94] and as such both are integrally connected. In this regard, a Christian liturgy must be theological, expressing or witnessing to the truth of the divine revelation,[95] and a genuine Christian theology must be liturgical, giving reasonable service to God and man.[96]

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[88] Regin Prenter, "Liturgy and Theology," *The Musical Heritage of the Lutheran Church* 5 (1959), 7.

[89] Ibid., 12.

[90] Ibid.

[91] Ibid.

[92] Ibid.

[93] Ibid.

[94] Ibid., 16.

[95] Ibid.

[96] Ibid.

Prenter therefore is one of the figures who have pressed for unity between liturgy and theology arguing that both are integrally connected. Two things are particularly important for our discussion here. First, Prenter gives some consideration to the significance of meaning in any liturgical, and hence theological, act. He writes, "Liturgy finds its goal in theology insofar as no act of sacrificial love may be accomplished without some expression of its own meaning in terms of personal relationship. These personal relationships are always 'logical' terms, i.e. *meaningful* human words and actions."[97] Prenter here hints at the apprehension of meaning in the context of worship, which this dissertation seeks to pursue further. Second, Prenter recognizes the limitations of both liturgy and theology and points out the need for both to be subjected to the authority of the word of God and the biblical narrative as the guide and norm. He asserts that both liturgy and theology "need guidance from the light of the revelation of God."[98] This aspect of authority and norm is crucial to understanding and determining the relationship of liturgy and theology owing to their limitations. Besides, it helps defuse the perceived tension between liturgy and theology in terms of norming authority, for each needs an authority external to itself.

Similarly, Edward Kilmartin is one of the authors who have voiced concern over the traditional approach of playing liturgy and doctrine off against each other. He treats the question of the relationship between liturgy and theology in the context of his discussion of a "systematic theology of Liturgy and its sources." He observes that the main concern for a Catholic systematic theology of liturgy is to respond to the question of how one is to account for "the connection

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[97] Ibid., 7.

[98] Ibid., 16.

between the liturgical symbolic activity and the central mystery of the life of faith."[99] He further points out that "a response to this question requires taking into account the *law of prayer* (*lex orandi*), but also the other sources of theological knowledge."[100] Kilmartin thus attributes theological knowledge and the apprehension of theological meaning among the worshippers to different sources and thus seems to refute the claim for liturgy as the sole or primary source of theology or as *theologia prima.* He writes,

> The help of a variety of sources of theology is needed besides the liturgical practice. Each of these sources has a particular contribution to make to the theological enterprise. We can learn much from the liturgy itself about the profound mystery which it represents. But discursive thought is required to bring to the surface the Christian potential of meaning symbolized in liturgy. Special attention must be given to the *law of belief* (*lex credendi*), understood as the doctrinal formulation of aspects of Christian revelation.[101]

Kilmartin is here writing in response to the problem he terms as an "overdrawn identity of theory and practice"[102] in the debate about the relationship between the church's liturgy and theology among his fellow Catholic liturgical theologians. He cites the difference of views between Odo Casel and Pope Pius XII's encyclical *Mediator Dei* as an example of the "overdrawn identity" of liturgy and doctrine or the traditional trend of laying more emphasis on one or the other. While some, like Odo Casel, read the *lex orandi–lex credendi* axiom to mean that liturgy takes precedence as the source and norm of faith, others like Pope Pius XII, read it in the reverse to mean that the law of belief determines the law of prayer.

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[99] Edward Kilmartin, *Christian Liturgy: Theology and Practice* (Kansas City, MO: Sheed & Ward, 1988), 96.

[100] Ibid.

[101] Ibid.

[102] Ibid., 97.

Such a tug of war between liturgy and theology, Kilmartin argues, is detrimental to the worship life of the Church as it tends "to obscure the unique value of two different kinds of expression of faith."[103] To ease the perceived tension between liturgy and theology, he abandons the traditional "either or" approach and proposes a middle position that would recognize the significance of both realities in worship life. His thesis here is that "*the law of prayer is the law of belief, and vice versa.*"[104] In this regard, the axiom is to be read in both directions to avert any perceived zero-sum game between the two and to reflect the reality that "the two sources of knowledge are neither independent of one another nor serve precisely the same purpose."[105] Hinting at the complementarity and mutual dependency of liturgy and theology he says, "We can learn much from the liturgy itself about the profound mystery which it represents. But discursive thought is required to bring to the surface the potential of meaning symbolized in liturgy."[106] This means that secondary discourse is necessary not only for calling liturgy to order with respect to the church's doctrines or fundamental beliefs, but also for making the liturgical symbolism and the faith it represents meaningful and intelligible.

Kilmartin's position in this discussion seems to arise out of two significant concerns. First, operating with the view that liturgy is the sole source and norm of theological knowledge fails to recognize the limitation of liturgy. He observes that "one must reckon with the limits of the

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[103] Ibid.

[104] Ibid.

[105] Ibid.

[106] Ibid., 96.

liturgy as a lived practice of the faith."[107] In this respect he points out that history is replete with evidence of such limitations in which certain liturgical practices had to be abandoned to avoid misconceptions and heretical connotations.[108] Therefore, to check the *lex orandi*, "special attention must be given to the *law of belief* (*lex credendi*), understood as the doctrinal formulations of aspects of the Christian revelation."[109] In this regard, it is Kilmartin's argument that liturgy cannot be relied on as the only source of theological knowledge and that just as with the human reflection on the truth of the divine revelation, or theology, liturgy must be checked by other sources of theological knowledge. Therefore "other sources of theology must be introduced along with the liturgical-practical grounding of the knowledge of faith."[110]

Kilmartin's position on the interplay between liturgy and theology is to be understood in the larger context of his discussion from a Roman Catholic perspective, and some of the issues he deals with are not relevant to our purpose. But his proposition providing for mutual dialogue between liturgy and theology is legitimate and insightful. Kilmartin's position of complementarity in the dynamics of liturgy and theology resonates with Wainwright's effort "to rescue the interplay of worship and doctrine,"[111] which is a task of restoring the mutual interaction between the *lex orandi* and the *lex credendi*. The first step towards achieving this goal is thus to affirm the mutual dependency of liturgy and doctrine such that "doctrine, in a

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[107] Ibid., 97.

[108] Ibid.

[109] Ibid., 96.

[110] Ibid., 97.

[111] Wainwright, *Doxology*, 219.

comprehensive sense, both draws on and contributes to worship"[112] while "worship is locus for the reception and transmission of the vision which is believed, formulated and reflected on."[113]

The interest in liturgical theology in general, and the liturgy-theology dynamic in particular, is not limited to the theological arena of the mainstream churches. There are also some voices from evangelicalism[114] contributing to this debate. For example, Simon Chan, himself an evangelical Pentecostal, writes to critique evangelicalism for what he terms its lack of a sense of ecclesiology and, by extension, worship.[115] He decries the reckless innovations of worship rampant in the evangelical churches. He particularly isolates the regular structural adjustments made in worship without paying attention to the doctrinal or theological implications. In what seems to be the order of the day even in the traditional mainstream churches, he observes that "what is in the mind of the innovators is whether the worship is 'relevant' to the modern people, whether it meets their needs, whether it will attract and retain a crowd."[116] Besides such pragmatism,[117] Chan is here charging evangelicals with insensitivity to the doctrinal character or implication of liturgy.

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[112] Ibid., 9.

[113] Ibid.

[114] The term "evangelical" may be used to mean different things today. The churches of the Reformation use it on account of their faithfulness to the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ. But the term has however acquired other meanings and is here used to refer to those churches that have sprung up since the eighteenth century with biblicistic tendencies characterized with the emphasis on personal conversion and piety and which are generally opposed to the traditional liturgical practices and church authority.

[115] Simon Chan, *Liturgical Theology: The Church as Worshiping Community* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006), 41.

[116] Ibid.

[117] Pragmatism is the condition in which the end result or practical consequences form the criterion of judgment and the basis on which actions may be taken.

On the specific question of the relationship between the *lex orandi* and the *lex credendi*, Chan argues that "there is a dialectic relationship between the rule of praying and the rule of belief, between worship and doctrine."[118] In this regard, Chan also assumes the middle path taken by Wainwright, Kilmartin, and Prenter, the path of the complementary dynamics of liturgy and theology. He makes a strong case for the indissoluble connection between the two and observes that "in whatever way we understand the relationship, belief and worship are so inextricably linked that separation can only undermine the integrity of both doctrine and worship. Chan does not, however, provide any practical details regarding how such integrity could be undermined. But he is of the opinion that in the dialectic relationship liturgy shapes theology and theology shapes liturgy.

Three major lines of thought have been explored so far regarding the question of the relationship of liturgy and theology in the worship life of the church: the two traditional approaches in which either liturgy or theology is assigned some normative authority over the other, and the mediating path which appreciates the roles of both liturgy and theology in the church's worship, a move that seeks to bring harmony rather than antagonism between the two. But as Johnson observes, "beyond this general statement that liturgy and theology are companions, the precise meaning of that relationship is illusive and obscure."[119] This is because "the meaning of the relationship depends more on the particular interpretation and weight given to it in an individual theologian's approach."[120] Therefore the nature of this relationship and its

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[118] Chan, *Liturgical Theology*, 48.

[119] Johnson, "Liturgy and Theology," 224.

[120] Ibid.

meaning needs to be explored further. Besides the divergence of views as regards the nature and meaning of the relationship, despite the general call for mutual dialogue, it is also evident that the individual authors examined have employed various terms without clear definitions or distinctions. Furthermore, it is to be noted that each of the authors has a wider agenda to pursue beyond the relationship between liturgy and theology. In this regard, this subject matter seems to have not received the in-depth treatment it deserves, despite its significance for the life of the church. There is also need to move beyond this liturgy-theology relationship debate and pursue the relevance and significance of such dynamics in fostering meaning among the worshipping assembly.

The Dissertation in the Context of Current Scholarship

Much energy has been expended on the discussion of how liturgy relates to theology and doctrine, normally with the aim of establishing which of the two has an edge over the other in matters of influence or norming authority. In the course of such debates, other issues pertaining to the dynamics of liturgy and theology in relation to worship seem to have been neglected or given scant attention as evidenced in the analysis above. It may properly be said that the question of how liturgy relates to theology and doctrine in the overall Christian experience of the mystery of salvation remains a challenge despite the scholarly efforts that have been made by liturgical theologians. But even more significant is the question of how this relationship could be understood as beneficial to the worshipping community. I propose that a harmonious and complementary relationship between liturgy and theology, as will be explored in chapter three,

would make Christian worship[121] and its narrative more *meaningful* to the worshipping assembly both experientially and conceptually.

Worship as a Meaningful Event.

When Stanley Fish says that the ability to interpret is constitutive of being human and thus is not acquired,[122] he seems to suggest that man in his daily life is always faced with the task of establishing meaning from various events and communication media. In the same vein Margaret Mary Kelleher points out that "human living is no less than a struggle for meaning."[123] This means that "meaning" is a central and defining question,[124] not only in matters religious, but also in the daily life of man, individually and in interpersonal relations. The question of "meaning" has thus become a big issue in the postmodern world. Hermeneutics, the science of interpretation, has become a popular subject because, as David E. Linge observes, "its field of application is comprised of all those situations in which we encounter meanings that are not immediately understandable but require interpretive method."[125] This understanding of the function of hermeneutics renders it relevant also to our area of inquiry since liturgical acts,

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[121] The term "worship" is here used in its general sense of the relationship with God in our daily life. It does not, therefore, have here the connotation of the formal Divine Service of the assembly or liturgy in the public service. These two aspects are clearly distinguished in Peter Brunner's comment on Divine Service. He says: "The service of God which involves our whole life, has as its center the service of worship by the assembled congregation." In the first instance, the "service of God" means worship in its broader sense; in the second instance "service of worship" means the formal public service or the liturgy. See Peter Brunner, "Divine Service in the Church," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 7 (1954), 270.

[122] Stanley E. Fish, "Interpreting the *Variorum*," *Critical Inquiry* 2 no. 3 (Spring 1976), 484.

[123] Margaret Mary Kelleher, "Liturgy: An Act of Ecclesial Meaning," *Worship* 59 no. 6 (November, 1985), 483.

[124] Dennis Ford, *The Search for Meaning: A Short History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), viii.

symbolism, and theological language are subject to interpretation if they are to be meaningful to those who are involved in them. Anthony Thiselton therefore notes that "if doctrine may be perceived even in part as narrative or drama, the immediate relevance of hermeneutics becomes almost evident."[126] Christian worship involves both liturgy or ritual actions and theological statements which are expected to be meaningful to the members of the assembly. Christian worship thus involves interpretation in one way or another.

The current debate on the issue of interpretation in relation to meaning has raised a number of questions some of which will be relevant and significant for the purpose of this study, particularly the question of context and the concept of "interpretive community." As David Ford notes, "meaning is closely bound up with changing contexts."[127] For worship to be meaningful to the people, it must take into account the context of the worshippers among whom liturgy and theology are done, as will be shown in chapter five. Closely related with the question of context is the concept of "interpretive community," popularized by Stanley Fish, according to which texts and symbolic acts can only have meaning within a given framework of assumptions and beliefs as held by a particular interpretive community.[128] Thus James Voelz concludes with the early church that "only believers can truly interpret the sacred books."[129] This means that the Christian community is an interpretive community, although there could be smaller interpretive

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[125] Hans–Georg Gadamer, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), xii.

[126] Anthony Thiselton, *The Hermeneutics of Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: William Eerdmans, 2007), 65.

[127] David F. Ford and Rachel Muers eds., *The Modern Theologians*: *An Introduction to Christian Theology Since 1918* 3d ed. (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005), 5.

[128] Fish, "Interpreting the *Variorum*,"485.

[129] James Voelz, *What Does This Mean? Principles of Biblical Interpretation in the Post-Modern World* (Saint Louis: Concordia, 1995), 12.

communities within the church owing to multiple denominational divides and diverse cultural settings in which Christian worship is enacted. In this regard the question of meaning remains a big issue.

This dissertation will employ Ninian Smart's dimensions of religion, in chapter two, to delineate how meaning plays out in Christian worship. Smart, a renowned Scottish writer on religious studies, outlines the basic dimensions of religious experience[130] which directly or indirectly point to two aspects of meaning in worship: the experiential meaning and the conceptual meaning.[131] For instance, talking about the "doctrinal dimension," Smart states that "doctrines are an attempt to give system, clarity, and intellectual power to what is revealed through the mythological and symbolic language of religious faith."[132] By intellectual power, Smart seems to hint at the conceptual aspect of meaning in which the worshipping community grasps the truth and facts of the narrative or "myth"[133] that forms and informs its worship life. And here also one can find the significance of liturgy or "symbolic language" and "doctrine," joining together to give *meaning* to the worship of the assembly as Smart's statement reveals:

> Although men may hope to have contact with, and participate in, the invisible world through ritual, personal religion normally involves the hope of, or realization of,

[130] Smart is significant here because the aspects of religious experience he outlines are basic to any religious group or community of faith and are thus true also to Christianity in one way or another. The seven dimensions include the Ritual, the Mythological, the Doctrinal, the Sociological, the Ethical, the Experiential, and the Material dimension. These dimensions of religion are experienced in Christianity in one way or another.

[131] As will be shown in chapter two, the experiential meaning pertains to the relational value of God-man encounter while conceptual meaning, as the name suggests, regards the rational conception of factual truths surrounding such encounter.

[132] Ninian Smart, *The Religious Experience of Mankind*, 2d ed. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1976), 8.

[133] Smart discounts any suspicion on the term *Myth*, arguing that the use of the term does not imply falsity or veracity of the story but that its use implies neutrality of the reporter as to the falsity or veracity of the story. See Smart, *The Religious Experience*, 8.

> experience of that world. . . . The Christian who prays to God normally believes that God answers prayer—and this not just 'externally' in bringing certain states of affairs, such as a cure for illness, but more importantly 'internally' in the personal relationship that flowers between the man who prays and his Maker.[134]

This experiential dimension of worship[135] looms large in Smart's analysis of the phenomenology of religion and, as he observes, is the bedrock of his argument in the entire book.[136] The experiential dimension also provides a better understanding of the term *meaning* with regard to the purpose of worship for which liturgy and theology are major players. The experiential dimension indicates how both liturgy and theology can "meaningfully communicate the religious experience and insight,"[137] as Michael B. Aune puts it. Worshipping *meaningfully*, as Christians, therefore means that the reality of the Christ event and salvation is communicated and experienced by the assembly "so that God's promises and blessings are perceptible to the senses, effectively present, and actually experienced by people in their lives."[138] Smart's categories thus help us to see that meaning in worship, mediated through rituals and narratives, touches on both the experience and the intellect of the worshippers.

Liturgy and Theology: Their Contribution to Meaningful Worship

An effective mediation and appropriation of the two aspects of meaning in worship requires the contribution of both liturgy and theology as Kelleher as insightfully demonstrated. In her

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[134] Smart, *Religious Experience*, 10.

[135] Worship is used here in its general sense as a way of relating to God, and not necessarily in a formal service.

[136] Smart, *Religious Experience* , 10.

[137] Michael B. Aune, "'To Move the Heart': Word and Rite in Contemporary American Lutheranism." *Currents in Theology and Mission* 10 no 4 (August, 1983), 213.

[138] Ibid., 212.

article "Liturgy: An Ecclesial Meaning," Kelleher draws from Bernard Lonergan to discuss the significance of liturgical action in the church with the thesis that "liturgy is an act of ecclesial performative meaning in which the church symbolically mediates itself."[139] She particularly presents Lonergan's concept of "collective subjectivity" in a manner that is insightful for our discussion of how liturgy and theology can together enhance the apprehension of meaning in worship. A collective subject "is a community, a group of persons who have achieved a certain degree of common meaning."[140] Such a community, the collective subject, "becomes a reality gradually as persons who share an experience come to understand that experience in common or complementary ways, to believe or judge certain things to be true about the meaning of that experience."[141] In this respect, the church of Christ, both at local and catholic levels, is a collective subject on account of "a shared meaning."[142] And, as Kelleher observes, the message of the Christ event, or the gospel, is constitutive of the community. The church as a collective subject "is a community which is the outcome of the gift of God's love or God's Spirit, and the message of Christ."[143]

In the realization of meaning in worship, the church may be viewed as a *Selbstvollzug*, "an ongoing process of self-realization," or "an ongoing process in which the constitutive, the affective, and the cognitive meaning of Christianity is consciously realized in ever changing

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[139] Kelleher, "Liturgy," 482.

[140] Ibid., 486.

[141] Ibid., 485.

[142] Ibid., 486.

[143] Ibid.

situations."[144] Here one can find both the experiential and conceptual aspects of meaning woven together in the dynamics of the church's worship and self-realization. Both liturgy and theology will play a significant role in the church's worship life, in making the worship meaningful both in terms of purpose and conception. Kelleher also makes an insightful distinction between "public" and "private" meanings in worship. Drawing from Lawrence Hoffman, she distinguishes between three sets of meanings: the assembly's "public horizon," "a world of meaning which provides a context for the assembly's worship;"[145] the official meaning as provided by the experts and "identified in official texts or commentaries;"[146] and the private meaning, which is "personally appropriated by members of the assembly."[147] An individual member may appropriate a certain meaning other than what is publicly held. Likewise, the publicly held meaning may be different from that which is officially held. As we look into how both liturgy and theology can contribute to meaningful worship, it will also be significant to consider the circumstances that may occasion the appropriation of different meanings in the same context of worship.

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[144] Ibid., 487.

[145] Margaret Mary Kelleher, "Liturgical Theology: A Task and a Method," *Worship* 62 (1988), 6. See also Lawrence Hoffman, "How Ritual Means: Ritual Circumcision in Rabbinic Culture and Today," *Studia Liturgica* 23 (1993), 80ff.

[146] Ibid.

[147] Ibid.

Catechesis and Meaningful Worship

The question of meaning also brings into this debate the issue of catechesis[148] as an important aspect of the dynamics of relationship between liturgy and theology, but which has not been given much consideration. As will be shown in chapter four, there is a reciprocal relationship of liturgy and catechesis with respect to the mediation and appropriation of meaning in worship. In this relationship the liturgy catechizes the assembly while catechesis illuminates the liturgy, making the assembly's worship more meaningful. In a sense, this reciprocity is an extension of the complementary dynamics of liturgy and theology which is beneficial to the worshipping community, especially as it makes worship a meaningful event.

Domenico Sartore, a Roman Catholic priest and theologian, and John Westerhoff, an Anglican clergyman, among others, have explored this significant link between the dynamics of liturgy-theology and catechesis. Sartore states that "the liturgy, indeed, can become for catechesis an inexhaustible source of symbolic elements and concrete starting points to introduce the individual aspects of the mystery of Christ."[149] Although this may appear to promote a utilitarian understanding of liturgy in which it is only used as a vehicle for teaching some ready-made doctrines, Sartore's assertion that liturgy can be useful in "cultivating faith and Christian

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[148] By catechesis here we refer not to the method and processes of instruction in the usual sense but to the grasp of the meaning of the faith in the lives of the worshipping assembly. M. E. Jegen observes that before Luther's Catechisms "the term catechism referred only to the content of catechesis. And in stating how Luther's theology got wings to spread rapidly, he says: "Martin Luther's teachings captured popular minds in large areas of Germany through the medium of a highly effective catechesis." *New Catholic Encyclopedia,* 2d ed., sv. "Catechesis, III (Reformation)."

[149] "Catechesis and Liturgy," *Handbook for Liturgical Studies*, ed. Anscar Chupungco (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1998), 107.

life"[150] is telling. This is even more apparent in his statement that "the task of catechesis with regard to liturgy begins by showing the meaning of liturgical actions in salvation history and the life of the church and by shedding light on the anthropological and sociological foundation of Christian rites and their deep roots in human nature and in community."[151] This means that catechesis enables the worshippers to decipher meaning from the liturgical actions in light of the Christian narrative.

Traditionally catechesis has been understood as a method of giving religious instruction to neophytes or catechumens in the process of initiation into the Christian community, and hence the name catechumenate.[152] In looking at the liturgy-theology dynamics as a potential tool for catechesis, this dissertation, however, attaches a broader meaning to the concept of catechesis. This is in line with John Westerhoff's definition of catechesis as "the process by which persons come to know (understand), internalize (live) and apply (do) God's word in their individual and corporate lives."[153] Westerhoff's definition here is significant because it portrays catechesis as encompassing all aspects of the Christian life.[154] He observes that "liturgy nurtures the

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[150] Ibid.

[151] Ibid., 106.

[152] Limiting catechesis to initiatory instructions seems to go against the Lutheran understanding of the meaning and purpose of catechesis. Luther himself, a priest and a Doctor of theology, states that he could not master the content of the Small Catechism and needed to learn it daily. (See "Martin Luther's Preface" (1530) to the Large Catechism in Robert Kolb and Timothy Wengert, eds. *The Book of Concord* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 380.) If John Pless' description of Catechism as "a roadmap to the Scriptures, a survival kit for Christians, a whetstone for the church" is accurate, then it follows that catechesis goes beyond the initiatory instructions to the catechumenate. See John T. Pless, "The Hammer of God as Catechesis," *Logia*, 18 no 3 (2009): 65–72.

[153] Gwen Kennedy Neville and John Westerhoff, *Learning through the Liturgy* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1978), 93.

[154] A. L. Barry, *What Does This Mean: Catechesis in the Lutheran Congregation,* (Saint Louis: Concordia, 1996), 1. Barry observes that "catechesis is much more than simply imparting facts about Christianity" and that it is "the ongoing application of the Word of God to the lives of the people so that there is renewing of their minds and

community of faith through celebrative symbolic acts."[155] He further observes that this manner of fostering meaning does not amount to teaching by or with the liturgy, as merely a didactic tool, but that "we learn through the liturgy" and that "our rituals shape and form us in fundamental ways."[156]

The significance of catechesis for the liturgy-theology dynamics in relation to meaning in worship can also be appreciated in the practice of mystagogy, or post-baptismal catechesis. According to Craig Satterlee, mystagogy "has as its goal the formation *of* Christians rather than providing religious information *to* Christians."[157] Satterlee argues that "mystagogy draws the hearers into the mysteries, moving them to enter spiritually and intellectually into the rites in which they have previously participated but may have understood only in terms of sense-perception."[158] It is in this regard that Sartterlee says that catechesis could be considered as mystagogy "in highest meaning of the term" as "it should lead the faithful to live the mystery of Christ."[159] In view of such significance, this dissertation explores this area within the landscape of liturgical theology that has received scant attention, but which is critical for the worship life of the church. The dissertation supplements earlier works that have attempted to support the catechetical role of the liturgy through a broader understanding of the concept of catechesis. It

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hearts in conformity with the will of Jesus Christ."

[155] Ibid., 92.

[156] Ibid., 90.

[157] Craig Alan Satterlee, *Ambrose of Milan's Method of Mystagogical Preaching* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2002), xxiii.

[158] Ibid.

[159] Ibid.

does this by linking catechesis to the role of liturgy-theology dynamics in the spiritual formation and growth of the members of the worshipping assembly.

The Methodological Procedure to Be Employed

In examining the relationship between liturgy and theology with a view to properly constituting the relationship for the sake of the worshipping assembly, this dissertation assumes a methodology in liturgical theology which Kevin Irwin identifies as "*Doxological Theology*."[160] In this approach, theology is "oriented to praise and the acknowledgment of God in both prayer and reflection."[161] This dissertation thus takes the experience and acknowledgment of God's mystery of salvation as central to both liturgy and theology, as Irwin observes: "what is operative in this approach to theology is the important notion of how the *mystery* that is God and that is of God is experienced through both liturgy and theology."[162] This approach has two important elements taken up by this dissertation.

First, this discussion gives due consideration to both the primary (liturgical) and secondary (reflective) senses of theology. It considers theology as an activity of faith in the God-man relationship, as a cultic reality, and hence a "first-order" activity and a way of "Christian self-description,"[163] as Hans Frei describes it. Liturgy as theological locus mainly belongs in this category. But on the other hand, the discussion also takes into account the scientific nature of

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[160] Kevin Irwin, *Context and Text: Method in Liturgical Theology* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1994), 52.

[161] Ibid.

[162] Ibid.

[163] Frei, *Types of Christian Theology*, 20.

theology and considers it as "an orderly and systematic procedure"[164] that employs certain tools of inquiry made available by other fields of study, especially the social sciences.[165] For instance, certain aspects of semiotics and certain hermeneutical principles will be necessary for establishing the meaning experienced in the liturgy. Therefore, as Irwin notes, this approach requires "theology to be both reflective of the act of faith expressed in the liturgy as well as rigorously scientific because liturgical experience leads to second-order reflection in theological discourse.[166]

Second, this discussion will proceed in a way that holds liturgy and theology in unity as they relate to one another. This is in line with Prenter's approach which holds that theology is liturgical and vice versa. This is because "all of the elements of Christian liturgy express the proclamation of the Gospel" and "its responsive confession in the prayer of hope, the witness of faith, and the thanksgiving of love."[167] The strength of this approach is that it keeps liturgy and theology together as two complementary realities of worship with distinctions as two sides of the same coin, distinguishable but inseparable. This unity of liturgy and theology is also underpinned

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[164] Ibid., 38.

[165] Justo Gonzalez and Zaida Maldonado Perez observe that "today we are able to understand much better than before to what degree our own perspective and condition affects? What we see and how we see it." And that this is as a result of the emergence of the human and social sciences. In the same vein, they hold that theology may be regarded as a discipline in the sense that "it is a field of research with its own methodology" and thus entails critical inquiry. See Justo Gonzalez and Zaida Maldonado, *An Introduction to Christian Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002), 23, 25.

[166] Irwin, *Context and Text*, 52.

[167] Prenter, "Liturgy and Theology," 12.

by the basic assumption that, due to their limitations, both liturgy and theology "need guidance from the light of the revelation of God"[168] in their conveyance of meaning in worship.

Another significant element of *Doxological theology* that is basic to this dissertation is the approach in which theology concerns itself with both the heart and the intellect of the worshipper. This is what Irwin means when he says that "this kind of theology would emphasize notions of conversion and growth in the faith as well as growth in understanding."[169] This method attends to the ways in which both liturgy and theology are involved in making worship meaningful to the assembly through experience and understanding of the Christian faith and narrative.

The Outcomes Anticipated

Many authors have ventured into the landscape of liturgical theology attending to different issues, although many have given attention to the question of the relationship between liturgy and theology. Although a sizeable number of liturgical theologians have emphasized the need for a close connection between the two, none appear to have connected the relationship to the critical issues of discerning and constituting meaning in worship. This dissertation aims at making a dual-faceted contribution to the debate over the relationship. In keeping with the proposed method that binds together first-order and second-order theology, its contribution touches on both the church's life and the scholarly debate on the question at issue. That is to say that it provides a balanced approach to the liturgy-theology dynamics debate and it will also lead to the

[168] Ibid., 16.

[169] Irwin, *Context and Text*, 52.

appreciation of worship as a context for Christian formation through the interaction of liturgy and theology. In this respect, the dissertation offers a new way of looking at the relationship between liturgy and theology so as to buttress the discernment and constitution of meaning in worship. Perceiving worship as a meaningful event thus presupposes a necessary link between the church's liturgy and theology.

This understanding of worship as a meaningful event has implications for how the church views liturgy and theology, and how the two relate to each other in contributing to meaning for the worshipping assembly. In this regard any perceived antithesis between liturgy and theology is rendered untenable because only in conjunction with each other will liturgy and theology give meaning to the church's worship. This, in a sense, deals a blow to the erroneous notion that theology belongs in the academy while liturgy resides in the ecclesia. As a result each of the two realities of worship life will be appreciated in their own rights as contributors to the meaning of the church's worship. In other words, this dissertation provides a prism through which the church can see worship not as something vain, having no purpose and significance, but as an event meaningful to the church here and now as it receives God's gift of salvation in Christ Jesus. Through such a prism it is also possible to see that worshippers, as rational beings, naturally grasp and conceptualize the content of faith which constitutes "worship in the name of Jesus."[170] In this respect, this dissertation is an invitation to reflect more on how ecclesial ritual actions and theological reflection serve the purpose of fostering meaning existentially and conceptually in as the midst of the assembly of Christian worshippers. This dissertation is also an intra-disciplinary

[170] See Peter Brunner, *Worship in the Name of Jesus*, trans. M. H. Bertram (Saint Louis: Concordia, 1968).

critique. Besides being an additional voice in liturgical theology that calls for the unity and complementarity of the *lex orandi* and the *lex credendi*, the dissertation provides one possible ground on which liturgical theology can transcend the liturgy-theology debate. It thus points out that there are other significant issues that lay beyond the fundamental relational question between liturgy and theology, which liturgical theology can meaningfully explore.

CHAPTER TWO

WORSHIP AS A MEANINGFUL EVENT

Introduction

The church of Christ on earth has been described as *ecclesia orans*, a praying church, owing to the centrality of worship to her being and life. But one would say that the phenomenon of worship extends beyond the borders of Christianity and that man by nature is *homo orans*, the praying man, or *homo adorans*, the worshipping man. This is because "the worship of God is at the very core of what it means to be human."[1] As Vilmos Vajta observes in his book *Luther on Worship*, "worship is inherent in the created nature of man. As man must form a concept of God, so he must worship."[2] He "cannot live without rites" and "he cannot do without worship."[3] Such contentions would be informed and corroborated by the universality of the phenomenon of worship in the cultures of the world as revealed by studies in the phenomenology of religion, especially comparative religious studies. In his book *The Concept of Worship* Ninian Smart says that worship "is central to religious belief and experience,"[4] and that "nobody does not worship."[5] On that ground it may therefore be argued that every religious group worships in one way or another. This universality of worship among the human race is captured in the fourth

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[1] S. Massey, *Christian Worship* (New Delhi: Sumit Enterprises, 2008), 2.

[2] Vilmos Vajta, *Luther on Worship*, 12.

[3] Panikkar, Raimundo, *Worship and Secular Man: An Essay on the Liturgical Nature of Man* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1973), xi.

[4] Ninian Smart, *The Concept of Worship* (London: Macmillan, 1972), vii.

[5] Harold M. Best, *Unceasing Worship: Biblical Perspectives on Worship and the Arts* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 17.

chapter of Luther's commentary on Genesis where he observes that all men are worshippers. He writes, "Thus the Greeks worshiped Apollo, and others worshiped other demons; the Egyptians worshiped Arubis, Serapis, crocodiles, garlic and onion; the Romans worshiped Jupiter, Quirinius, and those execrable images, Priapus, Venus, etc."[6] Luther's observation here is that no human being is exempt from the phenomenon of worship, though the objects and the manner of worship vary.

Given the centrality of the phenomenon of worship in human life, one may conclude that such an act of worship has some meaning to the worshippers. But what is meaning in worship or how is worship meaningful? What meaning do people appropriate when they gather to worship? These are some of the questions we are going to explore in this chapter. We will look at what meaning is and how it is appropriated in worship, specifically in the Christian context. This chapter will argue that worship has both experiential and conceptual dimensions of meaning which together make it a meaningful event. Smart's delineation of six dimensions of religion will be helpful in accomplishing this because they lay out the connection between experience and the teaching relative to religious life and provide a framework for delineating the experiential and the conceptual dimensions of meaning in worship. The purpose of the chapter is therefore to lay out our understanding of meaning and to elucidate on its two dimensions in worship. In that respect, this chapter will lay the ground for the entire discussion of the dissertation with regard to what constitutes meaningful worship.

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[6] *Luther's Works*. American Edition. General editors, Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut Lehmann. 55 vols. Philadelphia: Muhlenberg and Fortress Press, and St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1955–99, 1:249.

Meaning in Worship

What is Meaning?

The best way to begin a debate is normally to lay out the meaning of the subject under discussion. Since the subject matter of this chapter is meaning in worship, we will begin by looking at what meaning is. The question of meaning has, however, become a significant issue for debate in the postmodern world due to the emergence of many competing literary theories pertaining to meaning, most of which advocate for pluralism in interpretation. Although these theories are mainly associated with linguistic methods or the use of language as a medium of communication, some of the principles derived from them affect other areas where interpretation is involved such as philosophy, theology and art. Our space and focus does not allow for examination of the details of these theories but examination of the primary theories, from which others stem, is desirable due to their influence and implications.

The first set of theories fall under the broader category called "deconstructionism," a linguistic methodology attributed to Jacques Derrida, a French philosopher from whom "a refutation of the notion of singular meaning"[7] has largely been drawn. The denial of singularity or univocality of meaning is evident in Derrida's own work, *Writing and Difference*, where he advances the theory of infinite interpretation underpinned by the assumption that nothing that might be described as "the original or transcendental signified"[8] exists. Derrida argues that "the absence of the transcendental signified extends the domain and the play of signification

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[7] Stanley Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1996), 146.

[8] Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1978), 280.

infinitely."[9] Stanley Grenz understands this to mean that "the process of interpreting the text can never reach a conclusion."[10] A brief consideration of the characteristics of deconstructionism will be in order here. Nancey Murphy has identified some general traits of deconstructionism. She says that in this theory "external reference is denied; the author's intentions are concealed; conventions are ignored."[11] This means that there are no objective data or facts to which a text refers, neither can the author's intention be established. Deconstructionists thus hold that "any and every text inevitably undermines its own claims to determine meaning. As a consequence, the role of the reader must be emphasized in the production of meaning."[12] And since meaning is not inherent in a text itself,[13] "all that emerges from the process of knowing is the perspective of the self who interprets reality."[14] This further means that a text, or any other object of interpretation, whether symbol, ritual, or gesture, "has as many meanings as it has readers" or interpreters.[15] As beauty is said to reside in the eyes of the beholder so is meaning said to lie with the interpreter.[16] Lawrence Hoffman thus concludes that in the postmodern era it is "less clear that rituals have any single meaning at all."[17]

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[9] Ibid.

[10] Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism*, 146.

[11] Nancey Murphy, *Anglo-American Postmodernity: Philosophical Perspectives, on Science, Religion, and Ethics* (Oxford: Westview Press, 1997), 136.

[12] Ibid., 137.

[13] Ibid., 6.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Ibid.

[16] This is strict deconstructionism. There are other softer forms of deconstructionism.

[17] Hoffman, "How Rituals Mean," 79.

Another postmodern literary theory which has had a great impact on determination of meaning is "structuralism." The root of this theory is traced to Ferdinand de Saussure, a Swiss linguist who has been considered "the founder of modern linguistics."[18] Saussure's structuralism regards language as a social convention,[19] which means that language is a social, rather than an individual, phenomenon. On this basis "structuralists seek to discover the relations within a linguistic system that can account for the form and meaning of literary works"[20] and it is believed that "linguistic meaning arises from structures of relations rather than from some ideal correspondence between sound and sense."[21] Saussure thus compares language to "a work of music"[22] in which understanding of a symphony would require a "focus on the whole work rather than on individual performances."[23] For structuralists, therefore, "the key to a text is form: structures of sound, rhythm, sequences of images, even ratios of active to passive verbs."[24] It follows that syntactical analysis is crucial to the determination of meaning of any given text. James Voelz reflects this when he says that it is only within a given context that words have meaning. Voelz contends that "if context is essential to determine the meanings of words, then the essential unit of meaning of any communication is not the word but units as large as

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[18] Murphy, *Anglo-American Postmodernity*, 135.

[19] Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism*, 115.

[20] Ibid., 120.

[21] Ibid., 150.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Ibid., 115.

[24] Murphy, *Anglo-American Postmodernity*, 136.

necessary for the thought."[25] "Units" here can be understood as the structure, bearing individual parts, like verbs, nouns, prepositions, and other parts of speech which together make sense in relation to one another within a given sentence or a paragraph. Voelz, however, observes that "the meaning of the whole is *not* the sum of the meaning of individual parts *but* the meaning of parts *as* a whole."[26] Applied to the liturgical context, the corporate worship liturgy could be considered as an essential structural unit constituted by individual parts like actions, words, gestures, and movements, which can only be meaningful in relation to one another within the setting of a corporate liturgical celebration. Liturgy thus forms "a structure in which various elements are related to each other and only in this relation reveal their true meaning."[27]

Closely linked to structuralism is Ludwig Wittgenstein's "language game" theory which holds that "languages are human social conventions that map the world in a variety of ways, depending on the context in which we are speaking."[28] In this theory "each use of language occurs within a separate and apparently self-contained system complete with its own rules."[29] It is held that "no proposition can be limited to a single meaning" because "its meaning is necessarily dependent on its context, 'the language game' in which it appears."[30] This means that "each linguistic 'game,' is defined by a system of rules that govern the way words are used

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[25] Voelz, *What Does This Mean?* 113.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Alexander Schmemann, *Liturgy and Life: Lectures on Christian Development through Liturgical Experience* (New York: Department of Religious Education, Orthodox Church in America, 1974), 24.

[28] Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism*, 42.

[29] Ibid., 113.

[30] Ibid., 114.

within that context."[31] One of the implications of the "language game" theory, as Grenz notes, is that it does not allow "any sort of private meaning" because "language is not a private phenomenon, arising when an individual mind grasps a truth or fact about the world and then expresses it, but rather that language is a social phenomenon, acquiring its meaning in social interaction."[32]

The theories of meaning that have taken cue from Saussure's structuralism and Wittgenstein's "language game" differ substantially from those modeled after Derrida's deconstructionism in various ways. One of these differences is that deconstructionists locate meaning in an individual interpreter whereas structuralists recognize community as an interpretive unit. In this respect, structuralism fits the discussion of this dissertation because its communal approach to interpretation and determination of meaning places the community at the center of interpretation and thus provides a better ground for meaning in the liturgical context. The location of meaning within the context of the interpretive community as advanced by structuralism resonates with this dissertation's concept of corporate worship and liturgical celebration as a context in which meaning is generated and appropriated. Within continuity with the structuralist approach Graham Hughes, in his book *Worship as Meaning*, argues that communal context is necessary for making and appropriating meaning in worship. He writes:

> Being now launched into the question of meaning in worship, however, I began to see (no wondrous discovery, either, though somehow these things take longer than they might) that meanings are not made in a vacuum. In other words, I began to see that the entire constellation of significations called service of worship could only be

[31] Ibid., 42.

[32] Ibid., 114.

> meaningful for worshippers, individually and collectively, to the extent that these meanings were capable of being joined to, or set in relationship with, what, since Edmund Husserl, we have learned to call the worshippers' 'lifeworld.'[33]

One of the factors that make community an interpretive unit has been identified as a common "narrative." Each community has a narrative that binds its members together and in light of which they interpret actions and events. On this basis, we can define meaning as *what makes sense in light of a particular set of narrative histories*. This means that words, symbols, actions, gestures, and others, are only understood, and hence *mean* something, when the sense attached to them has some relationship to the narrative of the community in which one participates. Since "our language games color our world,"[34] a community's narrative is significant because it affects the "language game"[35] in that particular context and provides the prism or grid through which that particular community sees the world. The church of Christ in the world perfectly qualifies to be considered as one such community with her own set of narrative histories, even though the local assemblies worship in particular contexts.[36] So when Voelz says that it is only believers who are able to interpret the Scriptures[37] he means the church, the community of believers who are drawn from all nations and cultures, and not just a few Christians in a particular geographical or cultural setting. But it is important to note here that

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[33] Graham Hughes, *Worship as Meaning: A Liturgical Theology for Late Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 1.

[34] Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism*, 114.

[35] "Game" here is understood as "a system of rules that govern the way words are used within that context." See Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism*, 42.

[36] Meaning in context will be discussed more in chapter five.

[37] Voelz, *What Does This Mean*, 12.

whereas there are broader, mega-narratives that bind Christians together as one community of faith, there are also local and particular narratives within particular contexts.

The idea of narrative as an interpretive grid makes context a significant factor in interpretation and appropriation of meaning. Alasdair MacIntyre reflects this reality in his book *After Virtue* where he observes that "setting" is central to interpretation and meaning reception. Talking about how settings make behavioral intentions intelligible, he writes:

> I use the word 'setting' here as a relatively inclusive term. A social setting may be an institution, it may be what I have called a practice, or it may be a milieu of some other human kind. But it is central to the notion of a setting as I am going to understand it that a setting has a history, a history within which the histories of individual agents not only are, but have to be, situated, just because without the setting and its changes through time the history of the individual agent through time will be unintelligible.[38]

MacIntyre further says that "in successfully identifying and understanding what someone else is doing we always move towards placing a particular episode in the context of a set of narrative histories."[39] Among the Christian community, the setting is the events of salvation history re-enacted within the liturgical assembly as Kevin Irwin observes in relation to meaning in the Christian liturgical context. Irwin says that "meanings are derived from salvation history as events are paradigmatic or applicable in the present experience of salvation through liturgy."[40] Irwin further notes that "these meanings from salvation history most often articulate obvious positive meanings or they give a positive dimension to what could be understood as a negative

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[38] Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue,* 3d ed. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008), 2010.

[39] Ibid., 211.

[40] Irwin, *Context and Text,* 143.

meaning."[41] A word, a symbol, or an action may be considered to have a positive meaning if it advances the cause or interest of a person or a community and thus has significance and value to the community. In the reverse, meaning would be considered negative if it undermines the course and interest of the community. The cross can be a good example to illustrate what Irwin means by positive or negative meanings. In the ancient world, including the Old Testament context, the cross had a negative meaning, used to punish serious offenders. In the Roman world "death on the cross was used for rebellious slaves and bandits,"[42] and "the Roman citizens were rarely subjected to this method of execution,"[43] because it was regarded as shameful. But the cross became "the chief symbol of the Christian religion,"[44] especially from the time of Constantine.[45] For Christians, the cross came to have a positive meaning as it symbolized "the very heart of the Christian faith."[46] The positive meaning of the cross lies in its symbolic salvific value to the Christian community. To Christians, the cross communicates the message of salvation and hope because on it redemption was achieved by way of Christ's death.[47] In light of the Christian narrative, therefore, the cross becomes a positive sign, a sign of victory and salvation. It *makes*

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[41] Ibid.

[42] Ronald F. Youngblood *et al.* eds. *Compact Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, TN: 2004), 156.

[43] Ibid.

[44] Cyril E. Pocknee, *Cross and Crucifix in Christian Worship and Devotion* (London: A. R. Morbay & Company Limited, 1962), 7.

[45] Although the use of the sign of the cross was evident among believers very early in the history of the church's worship, especially in connection with the rite of baptism, Christians did not make physical depictions of the cross until the time of Constantine the Great in the fourth century. The wide spread use of the physical depiction of the cross is attributed to two main factors: Constantine's vision of the cross as a sign of victory just before the Battle of the Milvian Bridge in AD 312, and the discovery of the relic perceived to be of the true cross of Jesus by Helena, the mother of Constantine, in AD 326. See Pocknee, *Cross and Crucifix in Christian Worship*, 33.

[46] Youngblood, *Compact Bible Dictionary*, 156.

[47] 1 Corinthians 1:18.

sense in the context and in light of that particular story. Therefore a Christian seeing the cross or crucifix hanging over the altar in the sanctuary or held high in a worship procession will connect it to the community's narrative of salvation history and thus appropriate the meaning within and in light of that story. Those who are not within the Christian community will, however, see the cross as a piece of wood or metal that does not make any sense to them. They may *know* the history, but it does not signify or mean anything to their lives.

The structuralist concern for the appropriation of meaning within a particular narrative setting or context is vital to the meaningfulness of the liturgical event. In this regard Ford distinguishes between "knowing *about* myth"—or a narrative—and "*living mythically*" and he observes that "we miss something essential" if we fail to make that distinction.[48] Ford contends that living mythically is "living within the meaning of a story."[49]Distinguishing between "knowing *about* myth" and "living mythically," he writes:

> The word *about* connotes a separation between the knower and the known that is alien to genuine myth. One can formulate propositions that are either true or false about an object. Persons outside a myth can characterize and describe myth, as I am doing here, but knowing about a myth is different from living from within it. I may know all the statistics of Atlanta Braves baseball team—how many games they've won and lost, their team batting average and ERAs—but that is different from being a fan who identifies with the team and the mythology of baseball.[50]

Ford's observation on mythical living sheds more light on the significance of a common narrative and a shared meaning as the context within which texts, rituals, symbols, and actions

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[48] Ford, *The Search for Meaning*, 32.

[49] Ibid., 31.

[50] Ibid., 32.

become meaningful.[51] He further points out that "from inside a myth, we become more authentic, and life gains greater significance and meaning, the more we identify with the mythic tale."[52]Someone from outside one's interpretive community cannot comprehend the meaning or the sense of what is going on in another community. Ford rightly contends that every community has its own "language game" which is derived from its narrative and this implies that the deciphering of meaning requires familiarity with the "language game" of that particular community. But it is significant to note that language here is not limited to vocables. As Burreson observes, "other forms of communication, in so far as they consist of ordered and ruled patterns of symbols that engender meaning, can also be considered languages."[53] This applies to the liturgical context in which communication involves words, symbols, actions, gestures, and bodily movements. Ford gives the example that "for the outsider, Westminster Cathedral is a tourist attraction" but "for the devout, it is a place of worship."[54]In a similar vein Smart argues that "the usage of physical movements in ritual supplies a range of gestures, and these in a sense constitute a language," which only the insiders can understand. Similar to Ford's baseball analogy, Smart gives the example of a soccer game and says: "if we describe soccer as twenty two men chasing a piece of leather around the field, we miss the meaning of the activity. But that could come from a non-fan perspective. From the fan perspective it would be a game of two

[51] The term *myth* has often been understood to designate a story or tale which has morals but which is not a true accounting of real life experience. Smart uses the term to express neutrality as regards the veracity or falsity of any religious account and as a convenient way of including other historical events other than the biblical stories. In this understanding, myth is used synonymously or interchangeably with communal narrative. See Smart, *The Religious Experience of Mankind*, 8.

[52] Ford, *The Search for Meaning*, 36.

[53] Burreson, "Forming a Lutheran Liturgical Reader," 376.

teams."[55] In view of all this, our definition of meaning as what makes sense in light of a particular narrative is justified. Only within a narrative context can actions be explained and understood.

Appropriation of Meaning

Structuralism is useful to the course of this dissertation in as far as it provides a communal basis for interpretation and the appropriation of meaning. This contention directly applies to worship since liturgical celebration is corporate and, therefore, communal in nature. However, the communal context does not necessarily entail that meaning is unified and utterly consistent and, therefore, it would be naïve to assume that structuralist assumptions guarantee unity of meaning in every context. This means that even within one particular interpretive community there is the possibility of having a multiplicity of meaning due to individual interpretations and appropriation. Thus, it is important to account for the question of multiplicity of meaning within a communal context that strives for unified meaning, such as the context of the church's liturgical gathering.

Mary Kelleher and Larry Hoffman provide helpful tools for addressing this issue. They have identified three levels of appropriation of meaning within one interpretive community. Drawing from Bernard Lonergan, Kelleher asserts that every member of a community has some horizon, "a world of meaning" or "the limit or boundary of the world within which that person

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[54] Ford, *The Search for Meaning*, 36.

[55] Smart, *The Concept of Worship*, 7.

lives."[56] The meanings "personally appropriated by the members of the assembly" will thus be commensurate with the individual's horizon, his or her world of meaning.[57] Kelleher also distinguishes between the official meanings, meanings "identified in official texts or commentaries on a rite," and a public horizon, "a world of meaning which provides a context for the assembly's worship."[58] This public horizon, she says, is mediated symbolically when an assembly as "a collective subject"[59] engages in worship and liturgy through its ritual praxis.[60] The public horizon thus "sets out a public spirituality, a vision of what it means to live as a member of the Christian community."[61] But Kelleher notes that the horizon, both individual and public, is "handed on by others," and thus expands or changes as it is shaped by factors like the *Zeitgeist*—the spirit of the time, the social environment, education levels, among other factors. This is because members of the assembly are also exposed to other social milieus and worldviews. In the case of the public horizon, change may occur "as a result of decisions made within the collective subject."[62] That is to say that an assembly or a community may formally decide in its practice to embrace a new worldview or abandon one that has been held for some time. Regarding such adjustments in horizon, Kelleher writes: "In its liturgical/ritual action, an assembly performs its corporate meaning and contributes to the ongoing creation of itself as a collective subject. The

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[56] Kelleher, "Liturgical Theology," 6.

[57] Ibid.

[58] Ibid.

[59] "Collective Subject" is a theory drawn from Bernard Lonergan which refers to members of a particular community who possess a shared narrative and meaning.

[60] Kelleher, "Liturgical Theology," 6.

[61] Ibid.

[62] Ibid., 7.

performed meaning may also include new meanings which are being made available for a community's appropriation as well as some which are being criticized, rejected or transformed."[63] But Kelleher's observation that public horizons are bequeathed or handed down by others points to the importance of the communal narrative context in appropriating meaning. For what is handed over becomes part of the community's tradition or story which is a strand of the overarching narrative. This means that the community itself both preserves and maintains the story but also controls the degree to which it is contextualized or even radically transformed.

The individual horizon, the public horizon, and the official meaning of liturgical acts all reflect the multiplicity of meaning within the liturgical assembly and the various levels of appropriation of meaning relative to the liturgical acts. The multiplicity of meaning arising from different levels of appropriation also applies to various ritual communities. Referring to the Jewish context, Hoffman has identified three senses, corresponding to Kelleher's categories, in which rituals have meaning, namely, private, official, and public meanings. Rituals within a particular assembly can convey private meanings through "whatever idiosyncratic interpretations people find in things."[64] To illustrate this point Hoffman says that pilgrims converging at a place may appropriate different meanings other than the intended purpose of the event.[65] For example, he says that some people will have the sense of belonging and family; others will have a feeling of the presence of the almighty, and still others will see it as "an occasion for inner peace." Yet,

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[63] Ibid., 6.

[64] Hoffman, "How Ritual Means," 80.

[65] Ibid.

even more meanings are possible.[66] These individually appropriated sets of meanings could, however, be different from the official, or *de jure* meanings, which are "the things expert[s] say that a rite means."[67] These are official interpretations or agreed-upon meanings as found in books and official texts.[68] The public—or *de facto*—meanings on the other hand are those "meanings shared by a number of ritual participants even though they are not officially preached by experts."[69] Hoffman here gives an example with the Jewish *seder*[70] which he says publicly means family time, a get together, "whether the officials say so or not."[71] From the Christian context of worship, individual members can appropriate different meanings from a "Good Friday" service. For example, while for some it is a joyful moment, a moment of victory and thus an expression of the good news of the gospel itself as the name "good" suggests. For others it could be interpreted as an experience of law pointing to their sins as the cause of Christ's death on the cross and thus a sorrowful moment. Another example would be the celebration of Christmas. Officially it is a time to celebrate the nativity of the Lord Jesus and the redemption accomplished in him. But in many places, the world over, it has become a time to get together with family members and dine together. In Kenya, for instance, it is a time that family members will get together and eat rare delicacies. In most cases, the get-together–eat-together meaning

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[66] Ibid.

[67] Ibid., 81.

[68] Ibid.

[69] Ibid.

[70] Seder is a ritual feast in the Jewish calendar that marks the beginning of the Passover.

[71] Hoffman, "How Ritual Means," 82.

overshadows the official meaning to the extent that people are most likely gathered together in worship but cannot wait to get back home to participate in the "real" meaning of the day!

The challenge that the recognition of a multiplicity of meaning in the Christian liturgical context raises is that the desire for a degree of unity in meaning for the sake of the whole body of Christ is potentially destroyed. Whereas there is the possibility for individual interpretation and appropriation of meaning, it would not be in the interest of the whole body of Christ that in the context of worship something—say a word, symbol, or gesture—means absolutely anything, depending solely upon the interpreter. This would not only fracture the body of Christ but it would also call into question the community's existence and life as one body if the members cannot see things from a common perspective. A complementary dynamic of liturgy and theology can help minimize a deconstructionist perspective that would multiply pluralities of interpretation, multiply meaning exponentially, and destroy the possibility for a healthy unity of common meaning within the community.

Experiential Meaning in Worship

Few would contest that the God-man relationship is basic to worship. *Cultus* is the Latin word for worship[72] and "in the cult we are dealing with a relationship between worshippers and a personal being who is worshipped."[73] On this account, it can be argued that meaning generated and appropriated in the context of worship has value and significance to the personal life of the worshippers in relation to the object of their worship. The value of this relational experience of

[72] Ibid., 82.

[73] Ibid., 6.

the God-man encounter constitutes the experiential meaning which is a central component of Christian worship. Such meaning entails the experience of the worshipper in relation to the object of his worship. This means that meaning in worship entails much more than an intellectual apprehension of factual truths associated with the rituals. As Kent Burreson cogently argues, therefore, "any theory of how meaning is appropriated in Christian ritual must recognize that only part of that ritual appeals to people cognitively."[74] This further means that worship itself is relational in nature. The experiential dimension of religion as outlined by Smart in *The Religious Experience of Man* shows that it is not without a purpose that man enters into relationship with "god," whichever that "god" is. In such a relationship, man is perceived to experience blessings from "god" in various ways, depending on the concept of the relationship.[75] The term *experience* has, however, remained problematic ever since Friedrich Schleiermacher laid emphasis on "human *subjectivity*"[76] as one of the epistemological bases of Christian theological knowledge.[77] In such debate, experience as a source for theology has been negatively understood as some "vague, prearticulate sensation or perception of a *mysterium tremendum*, an aesthetic dimension of reality, or a broadly transcendent dimension of existence with moral overtones that one may come in contact with in discrete moments of life."[78] The proponents of experience in this regard,

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[74] Burreson, "Forming a Lutheran Liturgical Reader," 388.

[75] Every religion or community of faith has its own concept and views on the nature of the god-man relationship and the benefits therein.

[76] John Webster, Kathryn Tanner, and Ian Torrance, eds. *The Oxford Handbook of Systematic Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 325.

[77] Experience has been considered by some theologians as a possible source for Christian theological knowledge alongside divine revelation, reason, tradition etc.

[78] Webster, *The Oxford Handbook of Systematic Theology*, 422.

however, take it to be more than that.[79] Smart himself is aware of this problem and makes a distinction between intuitive revelations or "inner experiences of an individual" and the experience that "occurs 'externally' through historical events such as the crossing of the Red (or Reed) Sea and the crucifixion of Jesus."[80] But it is evident, even from Smart's own description, that worship will always have some degree of subjectivity to it. According to Smart, the experiential dimension of religion points to the significance and value of the historical events celebrated in worship for the life of the individual worshipper and for the entire worshipping assembly. He writes:

> Although men may hope to have contact with, and participate in, the invisible world through ritual religion normally involves the hope of, or realization of, experiencing the world. The Buddhist monk hopes for nirvana, and this includes the contemplative experience of peace and insight into the transcendent. The Christian who prays to God believes normally that God answers prayer—and this not just "externally" in bringing about certain states of affairs, such as a cure for illness, but more importantly "internally" in the personal relationship that flowers between the man who prays and his maker.[81]

Here we find much value and significance attached to worship in relation to the worshipper. Such value and significance of worship to the life of the worshippers constitutes the essence of experiential meaning in worship. The relational character of worship involves a personal contact with the object of worship, an encounter which is expected to bring both external and internal blessings to the worshippers. This means that in worship man expects to realize some deep rooted hopes and to experience blessings of the invisible world. This would

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[79] Ibid., 413–52.

[80] Smart, *The Religious Experience of Man*, 14.

[81] Ibid., 10.

also explain the significance of the acts of worship, like rituals, sacrifices, and words, to the relationship of the object of worship and the worshippers and it would mean that such acts of worship have meaning to the worshippers beyond the external acts or elements themselves. Along that line, Smart observes that "the understanding of the ideas about God requires close attention to their milieu in men's religious life" and that "the rituals men direct to God and gods need in turn to be understood by reference to their inner side, and thus ultimately by reference to a man's religious experience."[82] Smart thus contends that the significance of the religious externals like rituals, ceremonies, arts and others can only be seen when "approached through the inner life of those who use these externals"[83] and that "we must see the way in which the externals are fused together."[84] Further elucidating the experiential meaning as a primary element of worship, Panikkar says that whichever forms worship may assume, it is underlain by the same basic structure: "an act of the person by which he or she enters into contact with something or somebody that is transcendent and superior either to give or receive something material or spiritual."[85] Panikkar's designation of worship as "an act of the person" may be problematic from a Christian standpoint as it could be understood to reduce worship to a mere human act. However, his argument that in the context of worship there is contact with God for the purpose of giving or receiving something supports the contention for a primary experimental mode for the appropriation of meaning in worship.

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[82] Ibid., 17.

[83] Ibid., 3.

[84] Ibid.

[85] Panikkar, *Worship and Secular Man*, 7.

Worship among Christians is not any different when it comes to experiential meaning, understood as the value and significance of the relationship between God and humans, especially to human beings themselves as worshippers. However, it would be farfetched to claim any complete consensus on the nature or direction of such experiential meaning among Christians. The relational nature of worship has been understood in two main ways among Christians: worship as a *beneficium*, benefaction, or worship as *sacrificium*, sacrifice.[86] As a *sacrificium*, worship is viewed as a human act which is meant to induce God into action and thus elicit God's blessings. The *beneficium* concept on the other hand views worship as a purely divine initiative. But whichever the direction, each of the two concepts reveals that reception of God's gifts and blessings—the experiential meaning—lies at the heart of worship. The blessings may be induced sacrificially or received as a benefaction, depending on the view of the worshippers regarding their relationship with God. Nonetheless, reception of such blessings remains a significant factor or motivation in worship.

Properly understood, however, *beneficium* and *sacrificium* are not mutually exclusive in worship.[87] The Lutheran concept of worship, for example, captures these two elements of worship but with a proper distinction and in the right biblical order of receiving and giving. Peter Brunner describes the God-man relationship in worship from a donor-donee framework. He says that in worship a Christian is one who is "a donee with regard to forgiveness and re-creation, [and] may become a donor and let the ray of God's love beam back in gratitude, adoration,

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[86] Vajta, *Luther on Worship*, 27.

[87] More will be said about the nature of worship in the next chapter.

praise, and glorification."[88] He further says, that "the presentation of the gift of salvation by the donor, God, and the glorification of God by the donee, man, are two sides of the reality in the essence of worship."[89] That is to say that the worshippers receive God's gifts and blessings and respond in giving praise and thanksgiving. The two remain together as important experiential realities of worship. Worship is therefore not an act of vanity. It has a purpose and it means something to those who experience a relationship with God as they worship.

With regard to the above description of experiential dimension of meaning, one would rightly say that human life—both here and hereafter—is a major goal of worship as Mowinckel suggests. He says, "If we look in the Bible for a single word which can express what worship seeks, then we meet both in the Old and New Testament the word 'life.' It is life that humans seek through worship, prayer, and the cultic place."[90] If it is life that man seeks in worship, then worship touches on the very existence of man. In what may look similar to Smart's categories, Maschke has given four dimensions of worship[91] which connect to man's very life in both the vertical—God's service and man's response—and the horizontal—life together—directions of worship.[92] One of the dimensions is "encounter" which seemingly corresponds to Smart's experiential dimension to a great extent. It is the dimension which presents worship as "a

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[88] Brunner, *Worship in the Name of Jesus*, 91.

[89] Ibid.

[90] Sigmund Mowinckel *Religion and Cult: The Old Testament and the Phenomenology of Religion* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2012), 61.

[91] The four dimensions are encounter, education, expression, and evangelism.

[92] Timothy H. Maschke, *Gathered Guests: A Guide to Worship in the Lutheran Church* (Saint Louis: Concordia, 2003), 20.

profound encounter with God and His manifold gifts to His people."[93] It is "an encounter with the blessings God has given His gathered guests as expressed in particular symbols, people, actions, locations, relationships, and, ultimately, faith."[94] This encounter is an aspect of experiential meaning in which the worshippers experience God himself and his precious gifts and blessings, both physical and spiritual.

The reception-response understanding of the fundamental divine and human relationship in worship underscores the importance of experiential meaning in worship. In a more elaborate description, Kevin Irwin has described Christian liturgy in the following experiential terms:[95] *anamnetic*, *epicletic*, and *ecclesiological*.[96] The Christian liturgy—and by extension worship— is understood to be *anamnetic* in the sense that in it "the paschal mystery in ritual actions through which Christ's high priesthood and intercession for humanity's salvation are continually made alive."[97] Liturgy thus makes the past events of the Christian narrative a present reality in the life of the worshippers. "Through anamnesis, the worshippers are enabled to experience in their lives God's work of salvation and"[98] and in this regard liturgy brings the past into the present for the benefit of the worshippers. Anamnesis is therefore not a mere psychological remembrance, but a bringing of the past reality of the paschal mystery of salvation to the present life of the

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[93] Ibid.

[94] Ibid., 21.

[95] Although this is specifically a reference to the liturgy, it is to be noted that liturgy is an act of worship and therefore it is not misplaced to attribute such characteristics to worship.

[96] Irwin, *Context and Text*, 67.

[97] Ibid.

[98] Anscar J. Chupungco, "A Definition of Liturgy," *Handbook for Liturgical Studies* 1: *Introduction to the Liturgy* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1997), 7.

worshipper. This is what Smart calls "the performative character of worship rituals."[99] He writes, "Why then do hymns and prayers so often go on to say things about God? Things, moreover, which are usually very well known to the hearers and presumably also to the Lord. The reason lies in the performative character of these descriptions; for their function is celebratory."[100] For example, he says, "in telling God at Easter that he raised his Son up from the dead, the worshipper is not reminding God or the congregation, but re-presenting the event."[101] This re-presentation of the historical events of the paschal lamb, making them a living reality, and thus meaningful to the assembly, is the chief aim of *anamnesis*. Through *anamnesis*, the worshippers experience the meaning of the events in their own lives here and now.

Anamnesis thus points to the sacramental presence of God among the worshipping assembly through the means of grace celebrated in the liturgy. As James Brauer says, when we go to God's house for worship, "we go to meet *God*, to interact with him, to sense his love once more, and to express our thanks for his caring."[102] It is this dual-faceted encounter or dialogue with God that Brauer calls "the meaning of worship,"[103] which, he says, has the word and sacrament as its "high points."[104] In this respect, therefore, worship has experiential meaning to the assembly and to the individual members. The rituals, the ceremonies and the arts, all communicate something of significance and value to the lives of the worshippers. Smart provides

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[99] Smart, *The Concept of Worship*, 27.

[100] Ibid.

[101] Ibid.

[102] James Brauer, *Meaningful Worship: A Guide to the Lutheran Service* (Saint Louis: Concordia, 1994), 9.

[103] Ibid.

[104] Ibid., 11.

the example of infant baptism to demonstrate that worship-related rituals have meanings to those who celebrate them. He says that unless one knows the Christian concept of baptism and "the hopes and feelings" associated with it, one cannot understand what it means to the participants.[105] This can be understood even better in light of Luther's theology of the sacraments. For Luther, baptism "works forgiveness of sins, rescues from death and the devil, and gives eternal salvation to all who believe" the promise of God associated with the ritual.[106] This understanding also applies to the Lord's Supper so that "in the Sacrament forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation are given" through the word.[107] Whoever believes the promise in baptism and in the Lord's Supper receives the blessings therein. These physical rituals— baptism and Lord's Supper—therefore mean life and salvation to those who celebrate them in faith and trust. Furthermore, the relational nature of worship is here depicted in that the sacraments effect a right relationship with God at God's own initiative. Through baptism, for example, we become rightly related with God as our justification is effected through the waters of regeneration. Worshippers thus experience the great gift of life and right relationship with God offered in the sacraments even though to an outsider such eating and bathing may not mean much beyond the physical act. So when Luther asks "what does this mean"[108] about baptism, the Lord's Supper, and the rest, he does not merely ask about their definition or people's conception of them, though that is an important aspect. He

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[105] Smart, *The Religious Experience of Man*, 3.

[106] Martin Luther, *Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1986), 204.

[107] Ibid., 233.

[108] Ibid.

asks about the gift and blessings associated with them which the worshippers experience as they celebrate the rites. It is a question of experiential meaning in the sacraments.

Worship is *epicletic* in that it "derives from and is dependent upon the action of the Holy Spirit . . . who transforms faith communities through their liturgical experience of the paschal mystery."[109] It is through the power of the Spirit that Christians meet the Lord Jesus Christ in his word in its verbal and sacramental forms and in the same power they experience the mystery of salvation in him in the context of worship. Vajta expresses this experiential meaning in worship in a typically Lutheran way:

> Since Christ's presence in the Word is the place of his "presence-for-us," worship may be defined as his presence in Word and sacrament within the communion of saints. His presence is related to his people and cannot be divorced from them. It cannot be considered "by itself." The Word and the sacraments are for the benefit of men, not in the sense that they concern mankind by virtue of their objective value, but only in the sense that as realities they bear a personal reference.[110]

Christ's presence-for-us in the word is thus realized through the work of the Holy Spirit who creates faith and strengthens us through the means of grace as the place where we meet the Lord whenever we are gathered for worship. Worship is therefore *epicletic* in the sense that "it is the Spirit who initiates, sustains and will bring liturgy to its fulfillment in the kingdom."[111]

Since the celebration of the paschal mystery (*anamnesis*) and the transformation of the worshipping community (*epiclesis*) take place in the liturgy of the corporate service, worship is also *ecclesiological.* For it is "in the Church assembled at prayer"[112] that the liturgy gets its

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[109] Irwin, *Context and Text*, 48.

[110] Vajta, *Luther On Worship*, 91.

[111] Ibid.

[112] Ibid.

meaning.[113] In this respect, Irwin argues that "to stress the ecclesiology of liturgy is to stress theologically the particularly soteriological aspect of liturgy."[114] And this is because "the Church at prayer is the Church in need of redemption" and "through the liturgy it experiences its hoped for redemption."[115] In a sense, this is a case of experiential meaning in worship whose essence is the relational encounter with God as Irwin points out. He says, "When the Church celebrates the liturgy it partakes in the mystery of the Trinity in the sense that the essential interrelatedness of the three persons in God is again made manifest in the liturgy in a way that both invites and draws its participants into greater and deeper communion in the life of the Triune God."[116] Experiential meaning of worship is thus relational in nature and purpose.

Conceptual Meaning in Worship

The experiential meaning which points to the benefits and blessings of the human-divine relationship in worship is based on certain historical events that constitute the narrative or story of any worshipping community. In order for the members of any particular community of faith to appreciate the blessings communicated through the rituals and ceremonies, and to participate in those rituals more meaningfully, they will need some familiarity with the story itself and its details and this involves intellectual or rational reflection and inquiry. Such intellectual or rational reflection on the ritual and liturgical experiences constitutes the conceptual meaning in worship. Smart's elucidation of religions in a comparative manner in *The Religious Experience*

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[113] This implies that liturgy is not a private function.

[114] Irwin, *Context and Text*, 48.

[115] Ibid., 49.

of Man provides a picture of the distinction between the experiential and conceptual aspects of meaning in worship.[117]

Smart expresses the place of the conceptual meaning in worship when he explains the interaction of his various dimensions of religion. He asserts that "there is an interplay between the experiential and the mythological and doctrinal dimensions"[118] and that in some religions people "interpret their experiences in terms of received doctrines and mythologies."[119] In the mythological dimension, for instance, "myths"[120] are said to be those stories which form the narrative of a particular community and these stories also form and inform the worship of that community. Such stories are also embedded and reflected in the worship rituals. In order to grasp

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[116] Ibid.

[117] Smart, *The Religious Experience,* 4. Smart contends that his primary aim in writing the book is to try to convey the facts about the religions he examines "in relation to the experiences" which those religions attempt to express, and not to pass any value judgment upon them. This task, he says, is "a scientific undertaking" which looks at "the facts dispassionately and objectively," or, it can be said, without commitment in faith to any of the religions. On this basis he dismisses as "a dangerous exaggeration" any conclusion that "it is impossible to appreciate a faith to which one is not committed." This reflects Smart's own conviction that all religions are grounded in a common sociological and anthropological experience of the various human attempts to relate to the divine and also reflects the wealth of his personal study as a Christian theologian and a scholar of the phenomenology of religion. Within the field of the comparative study of religion he has amassed a great wealth of knowledge of other religions and the chief elements of their faith and worship. He is conversant with the main concepts and ritual practices of those religions and what those concepts and rituals mean to the adherents. Yet, he is able insofar as he recognizes his own convictions and prejudices to interpret the various religions in an objective manner. Although meaning in the worship of those other religions is accessible to him conceptually, presumably he does not fully, personally experience what they are said to offer and hence they are not *religiously* or *theologically* significant to him. This is so because he has no personal encounter with the deities of those religions and the narratives informing the worship of those religions do not have effect in his life. In Ford's language Smart—and any other person from outside those religions—could know a lot *about* the myths of those religions, that is, he could have a lot of information about those religions, but such conceptual knowledge may not mean much to him if he does not live mythically, or if his life is not formed and informed by the myth or narratives of those religions as his sentiments on the scientific nature of his inquiry reveal.

[118] Smart, *The Religious Experience of Man*, 15.

[119] Ibid., 11.

[120] Smart dispels the fear that the term "myth" may imply falsity of the said story. But in a manner that befits studies in religious phenomenology, which is free from any value judgment, he uses the term to imply neutrality as to the veracity or falsity of the story. See Smart *The Religious Experience*, 8.

the meaning in worship, the worshippers are thus expected to have some knowledge or concepts behind those worship rituals in which they participate in terms of their historical facts and doctrinal content. Ford appreciates the role of myth in the appropriation of meaning when he says:

> Loss of meaning occurs because we have "forgotten" the mythic stories. Simply stated, we cannot relate our own current experience to the life-informing stories of myth *if we do not know the stories*. From this perspective, meaning has been lost because we have failed to learn the sacred stories and social practices that support them . . . a mythic strategy for meaning requires learning the vocabulary of myths and being attentive to the social practices and rituals that sustain them.[121]

Regarding the doctrinal dimension, Smart says that "doctrines are an attempt to give clarity, and intellectual power to what is revealed through the mythological and symbolic language of religious faith and ritual."[122] Since worship involves rituals with doctrinal overtones, it requires rational reflection to comprehend the meaning of such rituals. Thus the mythological and doctrinal dimensions shed light on the experiential and the ritual dimensions which together make the worship of the community of faith meaningful. The experiential and conceptual dimensions of meaning in worship interact with one another and exhibit a certain mutual dependency upon one another.

It is true that there is a lot of mystery that surrounds God's relationship with the world and His salvation in Christ that we cannot fully comprehend. But it is also true that there are historical events forming the narrative of the Christian faith that are accessible to human intellect and can be grasped conceptually. In matters of religious adherence, faith—especially as an act of

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[121] Ford, *The Search for Meaning*, 50.

[122] Smart, *The Religious Experience*, 8.

believing—looms large and, in fact, is considered as "the essence of worship."[123] Christian worship thus entails faith but in dual aspects: *fides qua creditur*, faith as an act of belief— "the trust in the gracious promise of the gospel,"[124] and *fides quae creditur,* faith as the content of such belief or the Christian doctrine.[125] While the experiential meaning of worship plays out in the reception of the divine gifts when the worshippers encounter Christ and experience his gifts and blessings through faith, *fides qua,* the conceptual meaning in worship comes into play in the comprehension of the content of the Christian faith, *fides quae*, as lived and expressed in worship. Since Christianity is neither a mystery religion nor a "kingdom of fools,"[126] Christians have the possibility, or even responsibility and "the task," of comprehending the essential content of the faith[127] that permeates the forms of their worship, for lack of knowledge among worshippers is ultimately destructive.[128]

Christian worshippers are therefore expected to be familiar with the key concepts of their faith, "grounded, well versed, and skillful" in the word of God so that they are "ready to defend their faith" and also "to teach others."[129] As Geoffrey Wainwright puts it, the church of Christ is

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[123] Vajta, *Luther on Worship*, 3.

[124] Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics* (Saint Louis: Concordia, 1951), 2: 450.

[125] Ibid.

[126] I stumbled upon a book in the library at Concordia Seminary entitled "Kingdom of Fools." Out of curiosity occasioned by the title, I flipped through the pages to found out what the content was all about and it turned out to be about the history of the early church. It shows that for the outsiders, Christianity only attracted "the foolish, dishonourable and stupid people." In that respect, Christians were regarded as "ignorant, or unintelligent, or uneducated, or foolish persons . . ." See Nick Page, *Kingdom of Fools: The Unlikely Rise of the Early Church* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2012), 2.

[127] Robert Kolb, *Confessing the Faith: Reformers Define the Church, 1530–1580* (Saint Louis: Concordia, 1991), 16.

[128] Hosea 4:6.

[129] Maschke, *Gathered Guests*, 24.

both *ecclesia docens*, a teaching church, and *eccleia discens*, a learning church, and both foundationally occur in the milieu of worship.[130] Learning occurs in the liturgical context and it involves the conception and understanding of factual truth as Ralph Smith says:

> In this praying we clearly learn about God. We do receive information about who God is. We tell the story (made up of facts, people, places—all information) of how God has been known to us in the past. We tell the story of Jesus' birth, life, death, and resurrection. In all this we are giving and receiving knowledge that is accessible to anyone who is willing to learn. In the church, just as in the world, this knowledge is power.[131]

Smith says that worship fosters learning through the rich "mixture of people, words, actions, tastes, sights, and sounds experienced in a given place and time in the light of the Gospel." This means that in worship people learn and conceptualize the content of the faith and in this regard, conceptual meaning is crucial to the assembly's growth in Christian knowledge.

Meaningful Worship: Both Experiential and Conceptual

For worship to be meaningful it needs to entail the interaction of both experiential and conceptual dimensions. The experiential meaning is located in the inner aspect of ritual—what the ritual signifies to the worshipper in terms of his relationship with God—while the conceptual meaning involves the narrative framework and factual truth of that relationship as signified by the ritual. Smith's analogy of love would be helpful in illustrating the significance of the experiential and conceptual aspects of meaning in worship. He writes, "Worship is the equivalent of saying 'I love you.' Theological reflection in the broader educational ministries of the church

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[130] Wainwright, *Doxology*, 247.

[131] Ralph Smith, "Worship as Transformation," *Currents in Theology and Mission* 18 (1991), 346.

is our attempt to take a step back from that experience and talk about what such love means."[132] In relationships people experience love from others and such love has meaning in and for those relationships. It shows the bond, for instance, between a husband and a wife, a child and parents, and signifies what one *means* to the other, not conceptually but experientially. The conceptual meaning would give factual truth of that very love which is experienced relationally.

In demonstrating the need for both experiential and conceptual aspects of meaning, Smart contends that when rituals lose their inner meaning, that is, their relational value and significance, or if the inner meaning is overshadowed by the factual side of meaning, the "ritual thing degenerates into a mechanical or conventional process."[133] He further says that "if people go through the motions of religious observance without accompanying it with the intentions and sentiments which give it human meaning, ritual is merely an empty shell."[134] It means that if the relational aspect of worship rituals, and thus the experiential meaning, is overshadowed by the intellectual conception of ideas, or if it is lost, the worship becomes a mere "formalism" or ritualism without any value and significance to the lives of the worshippers. In other words such worship ultimately would be meaningless even if the worshippers were knowledgeable in the historical facts that inform the worship rituals. Propositions and data alone surrounding the worship cannot mean much as Anthony O'Hear writes:

> Something that is known merely in the way a distant scientific or historical fact is known could hardly fill the center of anyone's affective and moral concern, even if that fact were something apparently remarkable or miraculous. Thus, if Christians

[132] Ibid., 349.

[133] Smart, *The Religious Experience of Man*, 7.

[134] Ibid., 8.

> were moved at all by "historical evidence" for the resurrection, this is surely not because of its historical cogency, for equally cogent "proofs" could no doubt be found for other miracles of other faiths, and Christians are not generally moved by them, but because of the way the Resurrection is part of their religious faith and connected to their experience of religion.[135]

The argument for interdependency of the experiential and conceptual aspects of meaning in worship has some support in the Reformation attempt to elucidate worship. In view of the centrality of faith to the act of worship, the Reformers were concerned that saving faith as trust of the heart, *fiducia cordis*, by which the worshippers encountered the Triune God and thereby experienced his blessings was eclipsed or reduced to the knowledge of historical facts, *notitia historica*[136] and the acceptance of such facts, *assensus historica.* It was argued that it takes more than an "empty concept"[137] to experience God's gift of salvation in true worship of the Lord. However, despite the spirited defense of *fiducia cordis* as the chief element of faith by which worshippers experience the blessings of God in worship, the Reformers neither trivialized nor considered dispensable the conceptual meaning in worship. They did not recommend *fides carbonaria,*[138] "a blind trust in what the Church believes without knowing what this belief is."[139] Rather, in what would correspond to the balance of experiential and conceptual meanings, it was held that true worship entails faith as "knowledge of Christ coupled with trust."[140] The Reformers

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[135] Anthony O'Hear, *Experience, Explanation and Faith* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984), 25.

[136] Pieper *Christian Dogmatics*, 2: 426.

[137] Vajta, *Luther on Worship*, 6.

[138] A story is told of a charcoal burner who was once asked to give an account of his faith or tell what he believed in but he said that he believed what the church believed. Meaning that, out of ignorance, he could not articulate or tell the content his faith.

[139] Pieper *Christian Dogmatics,* 2: 422.

[140] Ibid., 423.

were well aware of the potential dangers of any attempt to jettison or underrate the value of conceptual meaning in worship. When this occurs, worship degenerates into human subjectivism. The need to keep the two meanings together could be seen in the extreme situations of Lutheran Orthodoxy and Pietism. Both sides emphasized edification in worship, but their understanding of and approach to edification was quite different. While Orthodoxy "made edification to consist chiefly in the furtherance of Christian knowledge,"[141] Pietism capitalized on the "promotion of Christian life."[142] As Pietism emphasized "a personal experience," its view of worship was "excessively subjective and personal,"[143] focusing mainly on the experiential meaning. Frank Senn says that in "public cultus" among the pietists, "the personal, subjective element and individual experience were struggling for expression"[144] and he goes on to say:

> Pietists were not in a position to abandon or replace authorized worship books, but they were in a position to influence the conduct of the public worship and the development of new resources. Thus, Pietist influences were evident at points in the liturgy where extempore prayer could be offered, as in the pulpit office, and where hymns could be selected. The old objective church hymns, which celebrated the saving acts of God in Christ, were set aside in favor of hymns that concentrated on the conditions of the soul.[145]

This indicates how the conceptual side of meaning in worship was overshadowed by the experiential aspect through overemphasis on subjectivity in worship. Orthodoxy on the other

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[141] Henry C. Dequin. "Pietism and the Traditional Worship Practices of the Lutheran Church" (Master of Sacred Theology Thesis, Concordia Seminary, 1955), 30.

[142] Ibid.

[143] Ibid.

[144] Frank C. Senn, *Christian Liturgy: Catholic and Evangelical* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1997), 498.

[145] Ibid.

hand became "extremely objective and impersonal,"[146] stressing knowledge more, and hence the conceptual meaning in worship. But a balanced concept and act of worship entails and appreciates both the experiential and conceptual dimensions of meaning in worship.

In summary, worship is by definition relational. It is a matter of fellowship with God and one another in faith. Such fellowship is, however, not an act of vanity. The worshippers find meaning in such an act. The human being is inherently a worshipper and one of the major goals of his worship is to find meaning, especially in his relationship with the divine. In worship, therefore, meaning is transmitted and the degree of its meaningfulness is "effected through various forms of signification," both linguistic and extra-linguistic.[147] For the purpose of our discussion, liturgy and theology will be considered in the next chapters as such forms of signification through which meaning, in both its experiential and conceptual dimensions, is communicated.

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[146] Ibid.

[147] Hughes, *Worship as Meaning*, 117.

CHAPTER THREE

LITURGY-THEOLOGY DYNAMICS AND MEANING IN WORSHIP

Introduction

Worship has both experiential and conceptual aspects which together make corporate worship meaningful to the assembly. Yet the generation and appropriation of such meaning depends on the relationship between liturgy and theology, which forms the foundation on which our discussion of meaning in worship is based. It is necessary, therefore, that we look in detail at the nature of this relationship. In this chapter we are going to look at some of the fundamental questions that have been raised regarding the relationship between the church's *worship*, the *lex orandi*, and the church's theology,[1] the *lex credendi*. How does liturgy relate to theology in the church's worship life? Which one, between liturgy and theology, has influence and normative authority over the other? What does "norming" mean in this regard, and to what extent may one be considered the source and norm of the other, if at all? And what is the nature of complementarity in such a relationship?

Some of these questions are not unique to our time or any one particular church tradition. The church of Christ on earth has grappled with similar questions throughout the history of her existence as Christians tried to reflect on their worship and their language about God and God's relationship with his creation. Some theologians have laid more emphasis on the significance of the liturgy and its influence upon the church's theology, while others have upheld the dominance

[1] Theology is used here in a broader sense, including doctrine and doctrinal formulation and expression. A detailed distinction of theology and doctrine is given below.

of theology over the liturgy. This chapter will argue that there is a double influence and mutual dependency between liturgy and theology and that such a symbiotic relationship, and complementarity therein, is necessary for meaningful worship.

In this respect, the chapter will look at how liturgy and theology influence each other in the church's worship life and the need for mutual dependency between the two. But before proceeding to that, two things are necessary. First, we need to look at the meaning of some of the key terms and concepts employed in our discussion but which seemingly defy any precise definition as they have been understood and used in various ways. These terms are "liturgy," "worship," "theology," and "doctrine." Second, we also need to look at the original context and the modern usage of the axiom, *lex orandi, lex credendi*, which has become the catchphrase of the liturgy-theology dynamics debate.

Definitions

Worship and Liturgy

Worship and liturgy as concepts have the potential to be defined in various ways depending on the context of the definition. Each of the two can be viewed as a general feature of the phenomenology of religion as Smart has shown through the methodology of comparative religions. However, the two terms can also be viewed and defined as concepts within the context of a particular religious community. This discussion examines both concepts within the context of Christian spirituality, but with the recognition that there are divergent views concerning their meaning even in that particular context, especially within the scope of various church traditions. A brief look at the concepts as general elements of religion is, however, in order for a better understanding of their definition in the Christian context.

Despite the apparent universality of worship as a phenomenon in the known religions of the world, the concept of worship seems to lack a precise definition and theologians hardly agree on its meaning,[2] probably because it "takes up a wide variety of ritual manifestations."[3] A dictionary definition would render worship as "the reverence or veneration tendered a divine being or supernatural power."[4] This definition is based on the etymology of worship as derived from the Anglo-Saxon word *weorth* which means "*worth,* value, and thus stands for esteem, and honour."[5] The object of worship is therefore valued and honored by the worshippers. But theological terms and concepts cannot properly be defined and understood based entirely on their etymologies because words are known to acquire new meanings over a period of time. In this case, worship may have acquired another meaning or meanings than what the etymology provides. However, it can be pointed out that whichever definition it may be given, the god-man relationship remains a basic feature of worship. Smart outlines some of the basic elements of worship which not only depict God as the focus of worship but also reflect the relational character of such worship. He says:

> Worship is relational; it typically involves ritual; this ritual expresses the superiority of the Focus; it also sustains or is part of the power of the Focus; the experience which worship tries to express is the numinous; and the object of worship is thus perceived as awe-inspiring; worship involves praise, but addressed direct to the Focus; this Focus transcends, however, the manifestations. All this implies the personalized character of the Focus.[6]

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[2] Panikkar, *Worship and Secular Man*, 1.

[3] Smart, *The Concept of Worship*, 5.

[4] *Webster's Third New International Dictionary.*

[5] Panikkar, *Worship and Secular Man*, 6.

[6] Smart, *The Concept of Worship*, 51.

The basic features of worship as described relationally by Smart are captured by the term *cultus*, the Latin word for worship.[7] "In the cult we are dealing with a relationship between worshippers and a personal being who is worshipped."[8] This relational character of worship is twofold: it touches on both the God-man relationship and the relationship of man and his neighbor.[9] In the vertical dimension, worship "aims at coming into contact with the ground of all reality, God."[10] This vertical contact brings with it a horizontal dimension which is the "collective life of a community."[11] Since these two levels of relation are central to religion, "worship" as a concept and as an act can attach to many religions, for "to be committed to worship is to be involved in religion."[12] However, specific details of relationship the vertical and the horizontal realms vary from one religion to another.

Although worship expression varies according to religions, one would say that one thing remains common to all instances of worship, and that is the existence of faith. This is to say that every religious commitment involves faith—confidence and trust of the heart[13]—from the part of the worshipper. Luther seems to support this view in his understanding of worship as "fellowship with God by faith."[14] Luther however, distinguishes between true and false worship on the basis

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[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid., 6.

[9] "Neighbor" here might be understood in a more cosmic sense, to include other creations, rather than strictly in an anthropocentric sense.

[10] Kilmartin, *Christian Liturgy*, 37.

[11] Ibid., 36.

[12] Smart, *The Concept of Worship*, 31.

[13] Vajta, *Luther on Worship*, 4.

[14] Ibid., 12.

of the object of faith. He says that worship can be "either true communion" when man "believes and trusts the Creator, or a false one where he puts faith in the created things of the earth."[15] It can therefore be said that worship as a universal phenomenon finds different expressions in different religions because "there is an internal relationship between concepts of god and worship"[16] so that "a person's picture of God determines his idea of worship."[17]

This relational definition of worship remains today as a key feature of the concept in the Christian context. The general conception and practice of worship among the mainline church traditions recognize that Trinitarian worship, in its relational character, involves fellowship with God and with one another in faith, which fellowship is realized in Christ Jesus[18] in the power of the Holy Spirit.[19] Such fellowship with the Triune God occurs both at the individual and at the public level. In this respect, worship has a broader sense which encompasses the dimensions of the daily life of an individual Christian in relation to God even outside of public corporate worship. This has also been called, private worship, *cultus privatus*, and it includes personal devotions and rituals in the private life of a Christian.[20] Corporate worship, *cultus publicus*, on the other hand is the life of the Christian assembly as together it assembles for public worship. This reflects Smart's social dimension of religion, which is "the mode in which the religion in

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[15] Ibid., 6.

[16] Smart, *The Concept of Worship*, 51.

[17] Vajta, *Luther on Worship*, 3.

[18] Ibid., 15.

[19] It is to be noted that Christians are not agreed on the details of the nature and form of such relational fellowship. The divergent views on worship by Christians will be addressed below after defining "liturgy." This is because of the proximity between the two terms in which they are sometimes even used interchangeably.

[20] Kilmartin, *Christian Liturgy*, 33.

question is institutionalized, whereby, through its institutions and teachings, it affects the community in which it finds itself."[21] Even outside the circles of Christianity, human life has an inherent social dimension as "people belong together"[22] and thus always need one another. Such communal faith and life calls for specific "times and places to be together"[23] in accordance with apostolic instruction.[24] Christians have a long tradition of weekly gathering for breaking bread on Sunday in remembrance of Christ's resurrection and other gatherings associated with his lordship. This may be called worship in the narrow sense or Christian public worship, which Peter Brunner describes under "the collective term *Gottesdienst.*"[25] He writes:

> Men and women, baptized in the name of the Triune God, assemble on certain days at a definite time for an appointed meeting. The place of the meeting is situated so that everyone who is willing may reach it on time. This meeting is distinct from all others for which people convene. For in this assembly of Christians virtually everything is done with prayer. The characteristic feature of this gathering lies in the fact that it is a being-together in the name of Jesus, that it is marked by invocation of its Bearer. In view of this, one might call it a prayer meeting, not because an occasional prayer is spoken in it, but because all that happens there is embraced and supported by prayer.[26]

It is to be noted, however, that despite the distinction between private and public worship, as Harold Best rightly observes, "continual worship is not of a different substance than worship that takes place at a set time and in a certain place."[27] This is so because "the faith by which we live

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[21] Smart, *The Religious Experience of Man*, 10.

[22] Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 62.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Hebrews 10:25.

[25] Brunner, *Worship in the Name of Jesus*, 22.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 28.

and the faithfulness of God cannot be separated."[28] But the public worship assumes certain forms, the agreed-upon rituals carried out when the assembly is gathered. For instance, there is a specific place or a particular way to begin and end the service of the assembly. This is a question of liturgy, "the ritual of Christian worship."[29]

In his article "A Definition of Liturgy," Anscar Chupungco has given a brief survey of the development of the term *liturgy* from the classical Greek world to Vatican II. Etymologically, liturgy comes from two Greek words *laos*, people, and *érgon*, work. The "immediate meaning of the compound word *leitourgia* is public works or state projects"[30] and it "indirectly refers to the public office one undertakes."[31] Later "in the Hellenistic period, *leitourgia* acquired broader meaning to include the work done by slaves for their masters and even the small acts of service one did for one's neighbor."[32] The term is employed in the Septuagint for "the levitic cult, a divine institution entrusted to the care of Israel's nobility, the levitic priests."[33] The word *leitourgia* and its cognates occur in the New Testament to denote different functions like the "secular function of magistrates (Rom 13:6), the Old Testament priestly office of Zechariah (Luke 1:23), Christ's sacrificial or priestly offering . . . (Heb 8:2), the spiritual sacrifices of Christians (Rom 15:16), and the cultic celebration of the Christians who 'made liturgy to the

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[28] Ibid., 28.

[29] Senn, *Christian Liturgy*, 1.

[30] Chupungco, "A Definition of Liturgy," 1: 3.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Ibid.

Lord.'"[34] Chupungco says that "the early Christian writers retained this cultic meaning," and that the word was not in use in the West until "it appeared for the first time in the official Latin documents during the pontificate of Gregory XVI" in the early nineteenth-century.[35]

The term "liturgy" may have various meanings today depending on the context in which it is used. Gwen Kennedy Neville and John H. Westerhoff suggest a wider semantic field for liturgy than the structure of Christian worship. They distinguish between "the formal ritual and the informal or folk liturgies."[36] The former is said to "belong to formal liturgical tradition associated with the practice of religion"[37] while the latter, "folk liturgy," "could be identified as the set sequences of daily, weekly, or other recurrent regularized forms of prescribed behavior for certain events, not necessarily religious."[38] An example of folk liturgy given here is "the regularized set of prescriptive behaviors for a dinner party" which "includes timing, manner of serving, appropriate conversation topics, categories of food normally served, type of seating (at a table or on the floor), arrangement of people at the meal, the dress of these people, the way they hold their forks and knives and which fork they use in what order,"[39] and the rest. This observation agrees with James White's consideration of Christian worship as belonging to "a wide category of human behavior known as ritual,"[40] where *ritual* is repetitive behavior with a

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[34] Ibid.

[35] Ibid., 4.

[36] Neville and Westerhoff, *Learning Through Liturgy*, 29.

[37] Ibid., 29.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Ibid.

[40] James White, *Introduction to Christian Worship*, 3d ed. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000), 19.

social dimension and communal function.[41] White says, "Various kinds of ritual are necessary to the cohesive existence of any human community. Whether it is the celebration of a national holiday, opening of a new highway, or a college football weekend, ritual plays a vital role in making a proper observance. Family rituals include birthday parties, anniversary celebrations, and visits from grandchildren."[42] In this respect, Christian worship is "a repeated social behavior with definite purpose."[43] This *repeated pattern of public worship, with prescribed symbolic actions, words, and gestures*, is what has been called liturgy in the narrower or technical sense.

Liturgy in this narrower sense therefore refers to "the words and acts that constitute the public worship of God. This meaning, however, may extend by metonymy to the written services that are provided in officially sanctioned books of worship."[44] The content of such books usually include the rites of the divine service—the service of the word and sacrament, as well as rites of baptism, confirmation, daily offices, and others. Liturgy, in its narrower or technical sense, is therefore communal and public rather than individual and private. A family devotion or a private prayer can therefore never be called liturgy, even though they are acts of worship, *cultus privatus*. This means that worship is broader than liturgy in the narrower sense as an act of public worship because, as Brunner points out, [45] Christian worship encompasses far more than what is done in the assemblies once in a week.[46] Worship thus "includes the devotional practices of

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[41] Ibid.

[42] Ibid.

[43] Ibid.

[44] *Encyclopedia of Protestantism*, s.v. "Liturgy."

[45] Chan, *Liturgical Theology*, 62.

[46] Brunner, *Worship in the Name of Jesus*, 23.

individuals and households as well as public praise and common prayer."[47] As Dwight Vogel rightly observes, the numerous elements of worship "may be manifested through ritual expressions, but they are not restricted to those expressions."[48] For instance, "praise of God is worship whether or not it is embodied in ritual."[49]As was already mentioned, therefore, "worship appears in both individual and social expressions"[50] but "it does not have to be corporate in nature."[51] In other words, "liturgy is corporate in nature; worship is not. Liturgy involves ritual action; worship may or may not."[52] In a nutshell, as Simon Chan puts it, "liturgy may be described as embodied worship."[53] "It is worship expressed through a certain visible order or structure"[54] and hence the phrase "order of service." But this distinction notwithstanding, liturgy and worship are so closely related that, just as heat cannot be separated from fire, we cannot think of one apart from the other. And in this regard, as Vogel notes, "sometimes the words are used interchangeably" and the distinction between them is not self-evident."[55] This interchangeableness between the two terms may occur in our discussion, but by and large the distinction will be retained with liturgy mostly employed in its narrower or technical sense for

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[47] Senn, *Christian Liturgy*, 3.

[48] Vogel, *Primary Sources of Liturgical Theology,* 5.

[49] Ibid.

[50] Ibid., 6.

[51] Ibid.

[52] Ibid.

[53] Chan, *Liturgical Theology*, 62.

[54] Ibid.

[55] Vogel, *Primary Sources of Liturgical Theology,* 5.

the ordered or patterned rituals of the public worship. Worship, in its public expression, is therefore liturgical inasmuch as it takes a specific ordered pattern of rituals.

Thus far, the discussion in this section has centered mainly on the semantic consideration of the terms *worship* and *liturgy*, which has revealed their relational nature and intertwined connection. It is important at this point to briefly look at how the relational nature of worship has been construed among Christians, especially along the lines of the major traditions of the western church, that is, the Catholics, the Reformed, and the Lutherans. James Brauer has sampled some these views concerning the meaning of Christian worship in terms of the God-man relationship in his book *Worship, Gottesdienst, Cultus Dei* where two main lines of thought which were previously mentioned in chapter one stand out: worship as a human act which is meant to induce God into action, eliciting his blessings, and thus endeavoring to keep alive the relationship with God; or worship as a divine act of grace.

The Roman Catholic tradition has high regard for liturgical worship. For the Catholics "it is through the sacramentality of liturgy that the people are drawn into the mystery of Christ."[56] However, the human side of the liturgy is emphasized as the "liturgy circumscribes a holy people who are called to offer sacrifice of Christ and to participate in his paschal banquet."[57] Liturgical worship thus becomes "the action of the church in which Christ becomes present."[58] Chupungco attests to this understanding, citing the encyclical *Mediator Dei* where liturgy is defined as "'the

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[56] James Brauer, *Worship, Gottesdienst, Cultus Dei* (Saint Louis: Concordia, 2005), 17.

[57] Ibid.

[58] Ibid.

worship rendered by the Mystical Body of Christ in the entirety of its head and members.'"[59] The dominant human aspect of the liturgy has largely been perpetuated through the idea of the Mass as "a sacrifice offered to God for the benefit of the living and the dead."[60] However, the liturgical celebration among Catholics recognizes the relational nature of worship, for in worship "the faithful both as a body and as individual members enter into the presence of the Triune God." Such encounter is personal on the part of the faithful as well as on the part of God."[61]

In the classical Reformed tradition, the human action in worship took a different form, with more emphasis on "didactism,"[62] the desire to promote theological learning and self-discipline in in worship. In his general observation of the traditional concept and practice of worship among the Reformed, Brauer says that "it sought to serve discipline and promote instruction from patristic times—to cultivate a penitential piety" and that "its Biblicist version in the United States[63]. . . eventually developed a liturgy that was a tool for creating commitment to Christ and a moral behavior."[64] As reflected here, the Reformed understanding of the relational nature of worship implies that the God-man relationship hinges on the human side of the bargain, that is, it depends more on the human moral standing than the divine initiative of grace.

These two views, the Catholic and the Reformed, differ significantly from the Lutheran concept of worship drawn from Luther and affirmed in the Lutheran confessional writings. One

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[59] Chupungco, "A Definition of Liturgy," 4.

[60] Brauer, *Worship, Gottesdienst, Cultus Dei,* 15.

[61] Ibid., 6.

[62] Ibid., 20.

[63] Here Brauer refers especially to the Anabaptists and Puritans.

[64] Brauer, *Worship, Gottesdienst, Cultus Dei,* 21.

of the central features of the Lutheran concept of worship is the recognition that "worship is not something that the 'church' does."[65] Rather, as Vajta says, it is "the ministry of God (*Dienst Gottes*) in and by which he comes to men"[66] and therefore "the work by which God continues his creative activity."[67] For the Lutherans, therefore, the essence of true worship is "'to receive forgiveness of sins, grace, and righteousness,' and that 'the service and worship of the Gospel is to receive good things from God.'"[68] Such great divine gifts, the *beneficium*, are, however, received with praise, prayer, and thanksgiving, the *sacrificium*. In the Lutheran view, therefore, the gifts and the acknowledgment constitute Christian worship, but with the proper distinction between them. This concept of worship as a context in which God comes to the assembly with his gift of salvation provides a better framework for understanding meaning in worship, especially the experiential meaning, as an encounter with an existential significance to the worshippers.

Theology and Doctrine

The dynamics between liturgy and theology is crucial to the appropriation of meaning in worship as described above. Yet in order to appreciate such dynamics one needs an understanding of what theology means given the fact that "there are as many definitions (or conceptions) of theology as there are theologians."[69] It is therefore important at this point to

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[65] Ibid., 196.

[66] Vjata, *Luther on Worship*, 142.

[67] Ibid., 143.

[68] Brauer, *Worship, Gottesdienst, Cultus Dei,* 294.

[69] H. Wayne House, *Charts on Systematic Theology: Prolegomena* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications,

locate our bearing within the broader discussion of the meaning of theology and its relation to doctrine.

Etymologically, theology is a compound of two Greek words, *theos*, "God," and *logos*, "word," 'reason," or "study," which would simply denote the field of study whose subject matter is God. However, this is not simply the case since the term has been used in more expansive ways than the simple etymological delineation. On what appears to be an epistemological basis, H. Wayne House has grouped definitions of theology into two broad categories of "objective" and "subjective" theologies.[70] Characteristically, objective theologies are said to "prioritize God's revelation in the *knowing* process" and they tend to "focus more on the transcendent nature of truth."[71] In this respect, "the task of objective theologies is to articulate the reality of the transcendent God and His relation to the created order in new situations and contexts."[72] In contradistinction from the objective theologies, House says that subjective theologies "pay attention to the 'bias principle,' which focuses on the perspectival nature of knowledge and truth."[73] Here theology is considered as "a personal perspective, an individuated (though not necessarily *individual*) response to the reality of God and of divine things."[74]

House has further given examples of divergent views within each of these categories. Two of these views are more relevant to this discussion: "Theology as conversation and

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2006), 1: 15.

[70] Ibid.

[71] Ibid., 16.

[72] Ibid.

[73] Ibid.

[74] Ibid.

proclamation"[75] (objective) and "theology as communal language" (Subjective). As conversation and proclamation, theology is understood as "an encounter with the living God in Word and Spirit" and "a communication of truth and ideas—from the theologian to his or her community."[76] This definition entails both *ontic* and *noetic* elements: "We have knowledge (*noetic*) of God only because we exist in a real (*ontic*) relationship with God."[77] As communal language, theology is viewed as "the ongoing task of 'meaning-making'" which is grounded in "local, communal understandings, interpretations and applications of Scripture."[78] House lists George Lindbeck and Stanley Grenz among the representatives of this view. Despite these distinctions, House recognizes that an overlap of elements occurs as one type of definition shares "commonalities with those represented by other types."[79] On the ground of such commonalities and shared definitive elements, it can be said that Christian theology has both objective and subjective dimensions as described by House, a reality reflected in Michael Jinkins' definition of theology which seems to fit this discussion.

In his book *Invitation to Theology*, Jinkins defines theology as "*the essential business of faithful reflection on human life lived consciously in the presence of God.*"[80] In other words, he says, "theology is our critical (that is, analytical) and prayerful reflection on the totality of life."[81]

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[75] This view is attributed to Richard Lints and Helmut Thielicke, among others.

[76] House, *Charts on Systematic Theology*, 16.

[77] Ibid., 17.

[78] Ibid., 22.

[79] Ibid., 15.

[80] Michael Jinkins, *Invitation to Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 17.

[81] Ibid.

This definition is close to that of Joe R. Jones' in *A Grammar of Christian Faith* where theology or the task of theologizing is regarded as "*that multifaceted reflective process by which the church pursues responsible understanding of the Gospel and the reality of God by constructing and critiquing its own living witness.*"[82] These two definitions basically agree with Bradley C. Hanson's definition of theology as "a personally involved reflection on a religious faith."[83] To some degree, these definitions point to Frei's distinction[84] of first-order and second-order activities.[85] Theology as a first-order activity involves "Christian witness, including the confession of specific beliefs (for example, the creeds) that seem on the face of them to be talking about acknowledging a state of affairs that holds true whether one believes it or not."[86] But as a second-order activity, theology is a rational activity that involves the principles of critical thinking and may share "criteria of intelligibility"[87] with other academic disciplines. In this sense, theology is *Wissenschaft*, science involving systematic inquiry and learning.[88] At this level, theology is a "reflection on the ruled use of the Christian community's language"[89] of God and his relationship with the creation.

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[82] Joe R. Jones, *A Grammar of Christian Faith: Systematic Explorations in Christian Life and Doctrine* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2002), 35.

[83] Hanson, *Introduction to Christian Theology*, 4.

[84] It is to be noted, however, that both of Frei's categories involve objective and subjective dimensions.

[85] Frei, *Types of Theology*, 2.

[86] Ibid., 20.

[87] Ibid., 2.

[88] Ibid., 3.

[89] Ibid., 21.

How then does theology relate to doctrine? Talking specifically about the relationship between systematic theology and doctrine, Jones says that "*Systematic theology aims to identify, explain, and assert the basic doctrines of Christian faith.*"[90] But he poses a question: "What, then, is a doctrine?"[91] According to Jones, doctrines would belong in the realm of those "*teachings*, *convictions*, and *beliefs* that claim to be true about God, human life, and the world."[92] House suggests that such teachings, convictions and beliefs have Scripture as their source. He thus defines doctrine as "the teaching of scripture, interpreted and reiterated within the historically and socially conditioned community of faith."[93] House's definition here implies that doctrines—the teachings, convictions, and beliefs—are derived from the Scriptures either as clear and obvious statements of truth or as products of interpretation and systematization. Along this line, the joint Committee on Doctrinal Unity of Concordia Seminary and Concordia Theological Seminary of 1956 defines doctrine as "*an article of faith which the church in obedience to her Lord, and in response to her specific needs, derives according to sound principles of interpretation from Scripture as the sole source of doctrine and sets forth in a form adapted to teaching.*"[94] To improve on this definition, the Report of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod surveyed the use and meaning of doctrine at three levels—doctrine in the English language generally, in the

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[90] Jones, *A Grammar of Christian Faith*, 36.

[91] Ibid.

[92] Ibid.

[93] House, *Charts on Systematic Theology*, 45.

[94] LCMS, "A Review of the Question, 'What is Doctrine?'" (CTCR, 1967), 3.

New Testament, in the Lutheran Confessions, and in the Lutheran Dogmaticians.[95] The result was the affirmation that doctrine is "'that which is taught or set forth for acceptance or belief,'"[96] and that the Scriptures often present doctrine in the singular as one body of truth but that the term can also be used for particular articles of faith. In its broader sense, therefore, "doctrine" means the whole body of truth as taught in the word of God. In this sense, it may refer to the gospel itself as embodied in the apostolic teaching and preaching.[97] In its narrower sense, however, it may mean an article of faith, "official formulations of the faith,"[98] or "articulated beliefs."[99] But, as George Lindbeck points out, doctrines may be explicit and officially declared or implicit and operational in life experience even if not proclaimed in official statements.[100] This would further mean that doctrine is not entirely propositional. For example, one may talk of baptism as a lived doctrine experienced by the baptized or baptism as a doctrinal proposition.

Although doctrines have developed in various ways and, arguably, from different sources, the Holy Scriptures—The Old and the New Testament—have been regarded as the primary source of Christian doctrine.[101] However, as Maurice Wiles rightly observes, "Scripture in the sense in which we use it today could not be the source of the earliest developments in Christian

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[95] The report was a review of a common definition of doctrine which had been reached by faculties of Concordia Seminary and Concordia Theological Seminary in 1956. The two faculties defined a doctrine as "an article of faith which the church in obedience to her Lord, and in response to her specific needs, derives according to sound principles of interpretation from Scripture as the sole source of doctrine and sets forth in a form adapted for teaching."

[96] LCMS, "A Review of the Question, 'What is Doctrine?'" (CTCR, 1967), 6.

[97] 1 Timothy 4:6, 16; Acts 2:42.

[98] Wainwright, *Doxology*, 9.

[99] Frei, *Types of Theology*, 23.

[100] Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, 61.

doctrine for the very obvious reason that it was not then in existence in its present form to fulfil that role."[102] Although the Old Testament was already in existence, "the more specifically Christian content of the faith, both the historical facts and the pattern of their interpretation, was at first a matter not of written record but rather of oral transmission."[103] For quite some time, therefore, "the method of oral transmission continued to be regarded as the basic way in which the substance of the Christian gospel was to be learned and passed on."[104] If the content of the oral transmission was the same divine revelation recorded in the Scriptures, then one can say that biblical narrative predated the Christian Bible itself. And on this basis, one can further argue that biblical narrative has a place in doctrinal development as an interpretive grid for the Christian community."[105] This agrees with MacIntyre's view on the role of narrative as mentioned in the previous chapter. Basic to MacIntyre's concept of community is the "narrative," a shared story which defines the existence of a particular community.[106] MacIntyre thus understands a community as a bearer of a tradition or a worldview that guides its thought and its definition of the reality around it. He writes:

> For all reasoning takes place within the context of some traditional mode of thought, transcending through criticism and invention the limitations of what had hitherto been reasoned in that tradition; this is as true of modern physics as of medieval logic. . . . So when an institution—a university, say, or a farm, or a hospital—is the bearer of a tradition of practice or practices, its common life will be partly, but in a centrally

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[101] House, *Charts on Systematic Theology*, 45.

[102] Maurice Wiles, *The Making of Christian Doctrine: A Study on the Principles of Early Doctrinal Developments* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 41.

[103] Ibid., 43.

[104] Ibid.

[105] Ibid., 81.

[106] MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 210.

> important way, constituted by a continuous argument as to what a university is and ought to be or what good farming is or what good medicine is. Traditions, when vital, embody continuities of conflict.[107]

MacIntyre's sentiment here emphasizes the role of a shared story in determining the community's thought pattern and judgment. This would mean that the oral deposit of the Christian narrative was instrumental in the development of the Christian doctrine and that such tradition would also shed light on the interpretation of the Scriptures, the written record of the story, which gives rise to doctrine.

It is to be noted also that some doctrines may be explicit in the Scriptures while others may be implicit and implied.[108] For example, the doctrine of the Virgin Birth is explicitly stated in the Scriptures while that of the Holy Trinity is implied. Such implied doctrines can be formalized and crystalized through such diverse theological methods as hermeneutics, systematic creedal formulations, apologetics, and polemics.[109] This means that doctrine and theology are distinct but correlated. About that relationship, Lindbeck says, "That they are distinct is evident: there can be great variety in the theological explanation, communication, and defense of the faith within a framework of communal doctrinal agreement."[110] While doctrine is what is taught, confessed, and believed, both in life experience and proposition, theology, in its second-order level, is "the *interpretation, justification* and *defense* of doctrines."[111] This distinction, however, is not in black and white as these terms often overlap in usage and meaning and it is not uncommon to find

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[107] Ibid., 222.

[108] Ibid., 78.

[109] Wiles, *The Making of Christian Doctrine*, 19.

[110] Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, 64.

"theology" used as an umbrella term for faith and/or doctrine and doctrinal formulation and expressions. The usage of the terms *theology* and *doctrine* in this discussion therefore bears the mark of such correlation.

Lex orandi, lex credendi: The Origin of the Axiom

As was already mentioned in chapter one, the phrase *lex orandi, lex credendi* has become an important principle for liturgical theology in the contemporary debate touching on the relationship between liturgy and theology. Major works in this discussion invoke the axiom in one way or another to espouse certain views regarding this relationship. The axiom is generally translated, or interpreted, to mean that the law of prayer establishes the law of belief.[112] For a proper understanding of its meaning and significance, especially for the purpose of our discussion, an overview of the trajectory of the axiom will be in order. We will briefly look at its meaning in the original context and compare that to how it has been used in the contemporary debate. Paul De Clerck's work, "'*Lex orandi, lex credendi*': The Original Sense and Historical Avatars of an Equivocal Adage," will be valuable in this regard.

De Clerck traces the origin of the axiom to the semi-Pelagian controversy of the patristic period.[113] The axiom was contained in chapter eight of the Celestine *capitula*, a ten-chapter canonical document authorized by Pope Celestine (AD. 422–32) at the request of two Frankish monks, Hilary and Prosper. The document was intended for the defense of Augustine against the

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[111] Ibid.

[112] Kilmartin, *Christian Liturgy*, 96.

[113] Paul De Clerck, "'*Lex orandi, lex credendi*': The Original Sense and Historical Avatars of an Equivocal Adage," *Studia Liturgica*, 24 no. 2 (1994): 180.

semi-Pelagians "to prove the necessity of grace for the *initium fidei*," the beginning of faith,[114] and since then the document, and hence the axiom therein, has been attributed to Saint Prosper of Aquitaine.[115] A parallel text also appeared in *De vocatione ominium gentium*, the call of all nations, another document on grace also attributed to Saint Prosper. Here is the text from article eight of the *Capitula*:

> These are the inviolable decrees of the Holy and Apostolic See by which our holy Fathers slew the pride of the baneful heresy and taught us to ascribe to the grace of Christ both the beginning of our good dispositions and the growth of our praiseworthy efforts and our final perseverance in them. Let us next look also at the sacred prayers which in keeping with the apostolic tradition our priests offer after one norm the world over in every Catholic church. Let the rule of prayer lay down the rule of faith. When pastors of the Christian people discharge their mandate and mission, they plead the cause of the human race with the divine mercy and, in union with the supplications of the entire church, beg and pray that faith may be given to unbelievers, idolaters freed from the errors of their ungodliness, Jews relieved of their mind's veil and shown the light of truth, schismatics given the spirit of a new charity, sinners granted salutary penance, finally catechumens led to the sacrament of regeneration and admitted into the court of divine mercy.[116]

Here we find an admonition on the necessity of prayer or intercession for different categories of people, including unbelievers, that they may come to faith and be in God's grace. De Clerck thus understands the text as developing "a biblical and liturgical argument in favor of grace."[117] In his interpretation of the text he writes:

> Prosper bids his readers to take into consideration the rites (*sacramenta*) of supplication made by priests, rites which are celebrated uniformly in the whole

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[114] *Initium fidei* is a Latin phrase in Augustinian theology of grace used to describe the beginning of faith or the process of coming to faith.

[115] De Clerck, "*Lex orandi, lex credendi*," 180.

[116] Prosper of Aquitaine, *Defense of St. Augustine*, trans. P. De Letter (Westminster, MD: The Newman Press, 1963), 183.

[117] De Clerck, "*Lex orandi, lex credendi*," 182.

> church, since they have been transmitted by the apostles. They are going to serve as an argument in the theological controversy in such a way that "the order of supplication determines the rule of faith," *ut legem credendi lex statuat supplicandi.*[118]

A parallel text in the *De vocatione,* which is more of an exposition or a commentary on 1 Timothy 2:1–6, will shed more light on the meaning of the axiom as regards the relationship between supplication and faith in the context of this controversy. Part of chapter twelve of book one of *De vocatione* reads:

> The Apostle commands—rather, the Lord speaking through the Apostle commands through him—*that supplications and intercessions, thanksgivings be made for all men, for kings and for all that are in high station.* All priests and all the faithful adhere unanimously to this norm of supplication in their devotions. There is no part of the world in which Christian peoples do not offer up these prayers. The Church, then, pleads before God everywhere, not only for the saints and those regenerated in Christ, but also for all infidels and all enemies of the cross of Christ, for all worshippers of idols, for all who persecute Christ in His members, for the Jews whose blindness does not see the light of the gospel, for heretics and schismatics who are alien to the unity of faith and charity.[119]

As De Clerck points out, we find in this text the expression *lex suplicanis*, the norm or law of prayer, which is akin to *lex supplicandi* that we saw in the *Capitula* text.[120] De Clerck's reading of the axiom in its context shows that there is a general rule or law for the church, "*a regula doctrinae apostolica*, an apostolic precept which the universal Church obeys everywhere," and this rule or precept is to pray not only for the saints but also for the unbelievers and those in serious doctrinal errors[121] in accordance with the admonition in 1 Timothy 2:1–6. De

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[118] Ibid.

[119] Prosper of Aquitaine, *The Call of All Nations*, trans. P. De Letter (Westminster, MD: The Newman Press, 1952), 52.

[120] De Clerck, *"Lex orandi, lex credendi,"* 185.

[121] Ibid.

Clerck's conception of the axiom is heavily influenced by Karl Federer's work *Liturgie und Glaube, Eine Theologiegeschichtliche Untersuchung*, in which the axiom is paraphrased in summary that "*the necessity of prayer for grace is a proof of the necessity of grace.*"[122] This paraphrase can be understood better in its context in Federer's interpretation of the axiom as quoted by De Clerck:

> It is not a question of the liturgy in general, but solely of liturgical prayer; and not just any liturgical prayer, but only the kind which are called the intercessions (fürbitten); and these because they were transmitted—composed?—by the apostles and recommended by Paul. The expression "lex supplicandi" does not signify "liturgy" or "liturgical prayer," but rather "the injunction made by the apostle to pray for all," just as Paul gave it in I Tim. 2:1–2. . . . *the order given by apostle Paul to pray for everyone*—an order which the church obeys even in its liturgy, everywhere and each day—*logically obliges one to believe that already the beginning of all salvation comes from God.*[123]

Federer's interpretation here gives us a better glimpse of how the axiom is connected to the semi-Pelagian controversy. This is seen especially in the last statement that "the beginning of all salvation comes from God," which is a rebuttal of the semi-Pelagian understanding of grace and salvation that attributes the initiation or beginning of saving faith to the free will of man. Augustine and the Fathers, as presented by Saint Prosper, on the other hand attribute all to God, the cause for which the apostle orders the church to plead for mercy that the unbelievers may be saved since they cannot come to faith on their own. Federer thus answers the question of what *lex supplicanis/lex supplicandi*, the law of prayer, is: the apostolic precept or order to the whole church to pray for all, including the unbelievers. Kevin Irwin observes that traditionally such

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[122] Ibid., 186.

[123] Ibid.

intercessions were offered on Good Friday,[124] and this probably was an indication that the grace of God in the painful death of Christ is sufficient for all. In light of both Federer and De Clerck, Irwin points out how the *lex credendi* surfaces in the context of prayer. He says, "Prosper's point in referring to the Good Friday solemn intercessions is that in asking that God's grace come to various groups of people, the Church asserts her belief (against the Pelagians) that it is grace and not works that lead to salvation."[125]

On the basis of De Clerck's and Federer's interpretations of the texts in the *Capitula* and *De vocatione*, some conclusions can be reached on the meaning of the axiom in its original context. First, it is clear that Saint Proper does not address the question of the relationship between liturgy and theology as it is featured in the contemporary debate. His concern is the misconception of grace by the semi-Pelagians. Scholars have therefore often used the phrase in ways that Prosper did not intend. But one would say that any new usage, in an attempt to deal with new questions, must recognize and declare that it is not based upon or grounded in the original use. Second, *lex orandi/suplicandi* here neither refers to liturgy in general nor to any "specific formula of the prayer itself,"[126] but to the intercession for all, both believers and unbelievers. Although the axiom in its original context has little to do with the liturgy-theology dynamics, it has come to be a label for this debate and one must attend to it in the discussion of liturgy and theology.

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[124] Kevin W. Irwin, *Liturgical Theology: A Primer* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1990), 11.

[125] Ibid.

[126] Ibid.

The axiom has been appropriated and used in different ways in the contemporary liturgical discussion. For example, as was already noted, Schmemann has appropriated the axiom to mean that it is in the *context* of liturgy "that the church's faith is revealed and expressed" and liturgy thus "becomes the 'source' for theological reflection and discourse."[127] For his part, Aidan Kavanagh maintains that "the old axiom means what it says," that "it is the liturgical act which founds the faith of the Church."[128] Kilmartin, on the other hand, strikes a balance in which the law of prayer and the law of belief ground each other in mutual dialogue and critique.[129] He says, for instance, that "the law of belief must be introduced because the question of the value of a particular liturgical tradition requires the employment of theoretical discourse."[130] The meaning of the axiom in its original context, however, has the potential for complementarity as advanced by this dissertation because the absence of any antithetical contention or war of supremacy between *lex orandi* and lex *credendi* in the original texts leaves room for harmony and complementarity between liturgy and theology, a relationship that is significant for the apprehension of meaning in worship. It is to this relationship of double critique between liturgy and theology to which we now turn.

The Double Critique of Liturgy and Theology and Meaning in Worship

Theology and liturgy stand in a relationship that has been conceived in various ways as was mentioned earlier. The nature of this relationship has normally been described by terms such as

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[127] Johnson, "Liturgy and Theology," 208.

[128] Ibid., 209.

[129] Vogel, *Primary Sources of Liturgical Theology*, 107.

source and/or *norm* so that, with the help of the *lex orandi, lex credendi* axiom, one is regarded as the source and/or norm of the other usually with a view to either "giving priority to liturgy over theology" or "giving priority to theology over liturgy."[131] However, what it means to be the "source" or "norm" of the other has remained unclear. It is therefore necessary to look into what it means for one of the two to be the source and/or norm of the other. In the same breath, it is also necessary to make clear what the nature of complementarity is and how it enhances the apprehension of meaning for which this dissertation advocates.

Liturgy Influencing Theology

There are a number of voices in liturgical theology which have advocated for the recognition of liturgy as the source and/or norm of theology. These voices can be grouped into three camps, albeit with some overlap, according to Vogel's mapping of the liturgical theology terrain.[132] In one view, or "province" in Vogel's language, liturgy is taken as the source of theology in the sense that it is "a theological act"[133] and its celebration "is itself liturgical theology."[134] Here the liturgy is regarded as "our *theologia prima*, our primary theology," which is "the generative source and basic expression of faith."[135] Aidan Kavanagh is one of the chief representatives of this "province" which Vogel calls "Liturgy as Theology."[136] Another school of

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[130] Kilmartin, *Christian Liturgy*, 97.

[131] Irwin, *Context and Text*, 3.

[132] Vogel, *Primary Sources of Liturgical Theology*, 4.

[133] Ibid., 7.

[134] Ibid.

[135] Ibid.

[136] Ibid.

thought understands liturgy as "a source for systematic theology."[137] According to this view, "theology is informed by liturgy" so that "we come to understand many things through prayer and as a result of prayer."[138] This is the approach Vogel calls "Theology in Liturgy" which has three distinct strands.[139] In the first strand—exemplified by the patristic period and represented by Alexander Schmemann in the contemporary debate—"liturgy is a source of theological assertions and has priority over them."[140] The last "province" in Vogel's map is "Theology because Liturgy" or "Doxological Theology"[141] which is somewhat identifiable with "Theology in Liturgy." According to this view, "*the entire theological enterprise* is understood to be generated by and reflective of liturgy"[142] and therefore "theology can only take place 'because' of liturgy."[143] In this respect, "the very nature of theology ought to be oriented to praise and the acknowledgment of God in prayer and reflection"[144] This last view, "Theology because Liturgy" and its doxological orientation, is captured to some extent in Wainwright, Kilmartin, Prenter, and Kavanagh. In all these approaches, liturgy is presented as the source of theology in one way or another, sometimes in an overlapping manner. However, our discussion on the influence of

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[137] Ibid., 10.

[138] Ibid.

[139] In the second strand, attributed to the Reformation and the Protestant theologians, like Peter Brunner, Vilmos Vjata, "theology has priority over liturgy." In the last strand, "Liturgy and theology affect and ground each other and exist in a creative and symbiotic relationship." Kilmartin and Prenter would be good representatives of this group. These two will be considered in the subsequent sections.

[140] Vogel, *Primary Sources of Liturgical Theology*, 11.

[141] Ibid.

[142] Ibid., 14.

[143] Ibid.

[144] Ibid., 11.

liturgy on theology draws from the last two views, "Theology in Liturgy" and "Liturgy because Theology" as they provide a better framework for a complementary dynamics of liturgy and theology.

The influence of liturgy on theology in terms of doctrinal development and expression can be tied to an intimate interplay between Scripture, liturgy, the life of the church, and doctrinal expression. Wiles reflects this reality as he provides a twofold function for worship as an influence on theology. The first is a "conservative" function according to which worship "proved an effective medium for memorable expression of the ideas of one place or one generation and transmitting them to other people and subsequent generations."[145] This is in accordance with Saint Jerome's contention that "a universal practice of the church can be equivalent to an express biblical command,"[146] a contention echoing the famous Vincentian canon of Catholicity, *quod ubique quod semper quod ab omnibus creditur est.* The second is a "creative" function in which later doctrinal definitions had to conform to or be consistent with the traditional liturgical piety. In the same vein Wiles cites an example in which "the continuing practice of invoking the name of Jesus in worship helped to ensure that when the time came for more precise doctrinal definition of his person it would be in terms which did not fall short of the manner of his address in worship."[147] In this respect, "the worship and glorification of Jesus, being at the heart of the church's piety, [148] became a *norm* or standard by which Athanasius and other Nicene fathers

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[145] Ibid., 65.

[146] Wainwright, *Doxology*, 230.

[147] Wiles, *The Making of Christian Doctrine*, 65.

[148] Ibid., 71.

rejected Arianism on the ground that it made Christians worshippers of a creature.[149] In a sense, this is a case in which *orthodoxia*[150] as right worship guided "orthodoxy" as doctrinal correctness.[151] Wiles therefore provides a good example of how liturgy can be viewed as a *norm* of theology, that is, liturgy guiding the course of theological discourse and doctrinal expression. Other specific examples given of how worship and liturgy influenced theology and doctrinal development include the baptismal formula—the threefold immersion—and the development of the doctrine of Trinity.[152] The same formula, Wiles says, was invoked to establish the full divinity of the Holy Spirit despite little textual evidence.[153] In an attack on modalism, "Tertullian cites the practice of the triple immersion at the mention of each of the three names . . . as evidence for faith in the three distinct persons of the godhead."[154] Wiles thus concludes that "in the dormant years when little theological interest was shown in the person of the Holy Spirit, it was the continuing fact of baptismal practice that kept alive the idea of the Holy Spirit as a third alongside the Father and the Son."[155] In the same breath, it can be said that "the whole context of

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[149] Ibid., 75.

[150] The term *orthodoxy* derives from two Greek words *orthos*, which means straight, right or correct, and *doxa*, which means glory or praise. Originally the term was used for right praise, and hence right worship. But over time it came to denote doctrinal correctness. For example, it is in this latter sense that we find the term used for the Lutheran Orthodoxy, an era in the history of Lutheranism which was characterize by strict emphasis on doctrinal correctness on the basis of the Confessions put together in the Book of Concord in 1580.The term has since almost lost its original sense of "right praise." But embedding the original meaning in the current usage would provide a reasonable way of balancing the church's *orandi* and her *credendi*.

[151] Wiles, *The Making of Christian Doctrine*, 75.

[152] Ibid., 63ff.

[153] Ibid., 80.

[154] Ibid.

[155] Ibid.

debate which gave rise to Basil's famous treatise of the Holy Spirit was a context of worship, not indeed of baptismal practice but of the correct form of doxology."[156]

This reality of liturgy having an influence on theology did not end with the era of the early church. Similar situations have been witnessed in modernity. For example, both Wiles and Wainwright cite the development of the doctrine of Mariology out of "popular devotion" in the nineteenth-century in the Roman Catholic Church.[157] Wiles quotes a Protestant scholar as saying: "'Those who know the history of Mariology . . . know how weighty theologians stood shoulder to shoulder against its uncontrolled growth, but how the pious monks and the simple devotion of the people kept pushing along the glorification uncontrollably until today we have, even officially, the doctrine of the Bodily Assumption.'"[158] On this ground Wiles admits that there is a possibility of undue influence from "the worshipping instinct" based on "untutored popular devotion." He points out that if such occurs "we must pause before we accept its validity uncritically."[159]

Wiles' observation that the theology cooked from the pot of liturgy cannot be bought wholesale is an indication that liturgy—though it may properly be viewed as a norm of what is believed and taught (doctrine) and a guide to its expression and articulation in an intelligible language (theology)—does not qualify for or meet the threshold of a *norma normans*, a norming norm. This means that liturgy can be classified under *norma normata*, the normed norm. In his

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[156] Ibid.

[157] Wiles, *The Making of Christian Doctrine*, 89.

[158] Ibid.

[159] Ibid.

critique of Dom Odo Casel for making the *lex orandi*, the law of prayer, a law "'unto itself,'" by giving it a status undue to it, Kilmartin writes:

> According to him, the truth of the faith is made accessible not simply in a unique way through the liturgical celebration of the faith of the Church. Rather the liturgical expression of the self-understanding of the Church, while not rendering other modes of expression of the faith superfluous, is clearly superior from all points of view. The authentic liturgical traditions are not simply one among many sources of knowledge of faith, but *the source and central witness* of the life of faith and so of all theology. As a consequence of this one-sided stress on the value of liturgical-practical grounding of theological knowledge, Scripture, and other sources of theology are placed in the background of his theological reflection.[160]

Kilmartin here recognizes the fact that liturgy itself has its own inadequacies and limitations and must thus be complemented. This inadequacy and limitation of liturgy means three things with respect to liturgy's relationship with theology. First, that liturgy is both susceptible and subject to theological influence. Second, that liturgy is not an infallible norm of theology[161] and as such has no absolute norming authority. Third, and as a corollary of the first and second points, liturgy and theology are to be subjected to a norming authority external to both them.

Theology Influencing the Liturgy

There are multiple cases in the history of the church's worship that vindicate the argument that liturgy has influence on theology. Yet, as Wiles rightly observes, the influence has been, and still remains, "a two-way traffic."[162] This means that theology also has its fair share of influence

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[160] Kilmartin, *Christian Liturgy*, 96.

[161] Theology is used here as an umbrella term for what is believed and taught (doctrine) and its expression and articulation.

[162] Wiles, *The Making of Christian Doctrine*, 87.

on the church's prayer, and hence Kilmartin's thesis, "*the law of prayer is the law of belief and vice versa,*"[163] which seeks to establish a relationship of mutual dialogue and critique, holds true.[164] De Clerck has thus rightly pointed out that this double influence in the liturgy-theology dynamics plays out more clearly in the periods of "fixed liturgy" and of liturgical reforms. He writes:

> It is clear, indeed, that the liturgy is understood differently in a period of fixed liturgy than in a period of change. In the former case, the liturgy tends to be considered as a closed and well-defined ensemble, as a euchological *corpus*; besides, has not the liturgy been defined by what is deposited in the liturgical books? In such a period one could say: observe how the church prays and you will know what it believes. In a period of liturgical reform, on the contrary, the reasoning tends to be reversed. The very idea of reform gives primacy to the content of the faith: Is it not in terms of certain new or renewed ideas that one tends to revise practices or texts which no longer, or badly, correspond to them? The appeal to the liturgy as a norm consequently appears much unconvincing, for one can hardly know in terms of which stream of thought, of which articles, or indeed under which personal influence, this or that element of the liturgy was deleted, kept, or modified."[165]

De Clerck is right that liturgy often finds itself on the receiving end in its relationship with theology. This scenario in which theology exerts influence on the liturgy often plays out in reforms where liturgy is adjusted to fit the theological framework of the time. As Kilmartin notes, "history has taught as that forms of liturgical prayer and ritual activity, however orthodox, often had to be dropped or changed to avoid heretical misunderstanding."[166] The history of the church is thus replete with cases of such influence, and it will suffice for our purpose in this dissertation to observe a few examples of such dynamics.

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[163] Kilmartin, *Christian Liturgy*, 97.

[164] We will see more of this when we will be looking at the nature of such complementary dialogue.

[165] De Clerck, "*Lex orandi, lex credendi*," 179.

Besides Pauline admonitions to the effect of right worship, Wainwright begins the survey of theology's influence on worship from the *Apostolic Tradition* in which Hippolytus is said to have directed the presiding ministers in the Christian assemblies to ensure that their extemporaneous prayers were "correct and right in doctrine."[167] The liturgy experienced several changes in the early church as the church sought to define itself in terms of doctrine, especially in the face of the Arian and Pelagian controversies. And, as Wainwright observes, "it was not only 'heretics' who changed words and practices in the liturgy during the early centuries. The church's liturgy was also adapted in order to *exclude* positions judged heretical and to *promote* the orthodox doctrine in contradistinction to heresy."[168] In what may look like the writing of a constitution only to become subject to it when it is promulgated, there was a notable influence of liturgy on the development of certain doctrines, but after the settlement, the liturgy came under the control of theology.[169] For instance, "after the fourth-century councils of Nicaea and Constantinople had excluded Arianism and affirmed a fully Trinitarian doctrine of the Son and the Spirit, the liturgy of the Church began to show the consequences of developed trinitarianism."[170] The phrase *as it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever* was apparently added "to refute the Arians who held that the Son had a beginning."[171]

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[166] Kilmartin, *Christian Liturgy*, 97.

[167] Wainwright, *Doxology*, 254.

[168] Ibid., 256.

[169] Ibid., 257.

[170] Ibid.

[171] Ibid., 258.

The influence of theology on the church's liturgy is not confined to the early church. In medieval Roman Catholicism, for instance, there was what Wainwright has called the "passive" influence of theology on the liturgy. This occurs when doctrinal conclusions are derived from liturgical practices on the ground that such practices were traditionally sanctioned by the magisterium, the teaching authority.[172] For example, the Council of Trent declared the Roman Mass-Canon *ab omni errore purum*, free from all error, because such status was confirmed by the magisterium.[173] The post-Tridentine rubrics, "that the words of institution effect consecration, and that any other words which follow are not essential," thus became the ground on which genuflection and adoration of the host was based.[174] An argument was advanced that "it was impossible that an officially introduced rubric should daily lead countless priests and believers into formal idolatry, as would be the case if they worshipped the elements before consecration."[175] This is an instance in which liturgical practice derives its legitimacy from the realm of theology.

The influence of theology on liturgy was probably even greater in the scene of the Reformation. Luther's theological differences with Rome did not remain in the university, for his evangelical presuppositions and discoveries led to an overhaul of the public worship in the churches of the Reformation. Vajta is therefore right that "the difference between their views of God accounts for the divergence between Luther's idea of the mass and that of the Roman

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[172] Ibid., 259.

[173] Ibid., 236.

[174] Ibid.

[175] Ibid., 237.

church,"[176] and that "Luther's concern for the Mass is his concern for a true idea of God."[177] He further writes:

> Thus the difference between the mass of Christ and the sacrifice of the mass goes back to the difference between a merciful and giving God (Creator and Redeemer) on the one hand and an angry, demanding God on the other. And as the difference cannot be bridged, the two views of God cannot be reconciled either. Luther drew this conclusion in denouncing the picture of an angry God in the mass as a figment of the imagination.[178]

Vajta notes that theological meaning was a key factor in Luther's liturgical reforms.[179] The most offensive theological element in the Roman Mass that he sought to excise was the sacrificial concept of the Mass, particularly the Eucharist understood as a repetition of Christ's sacrifice with propitiatory effect. Luther's harsh tone against the sacrificial nature of the Roman Mass is evident in his three early, foundational writings on liturgical reform: *Concerning the Order of Public Worship* (1523), *Formula Missae* (1523), and *Deutsche Messe* (1526). In the *Formula Missae*, Luther says that his liturgical reforms seek to provide "an evangelical form of saying the mass."[180] He writes: "It is not now nor ever has been our intention to abolish the liturgical service of God completely, but rather to purify the one that is now in use from the wretched accretions which corrupt it and to point out an evangelical use."[181] Luther advocated for celebration of the Supper in its simplicity according to its institution, without elaborate

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[176] Vajta, *Luther on Worship*, 33.

[177] Ibid., 35.

[178] Ibid., 37.

[179] Ibid., 44.

[180] William R. Russell, ed., *Martin Luther's Basic Theological Writing*, 3d ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2012), 311.

[181] Ibid., 312.

ceremonies of the canon.[182] He particularly took issue with those parts of the canon which portrayed the Eucharist as a sacrifice. For example, in both the *Igitur* and *Memento Domine* prayers, the priest humbly beseeches God to accept the "holy unspotted sacrifices," which Christians offer "for the redemption of their souls" and "for the hope of their salvation and welfare."[183] Luther considers it a "sufficient insult and blasphemy that a sinful human being presumes to take up bread and wine for all holy Christians everywhere."[184] It may thus be concluded that Luther's liturgical reforms were in the interest of theology, a case of theology directly influencing the course of the liturgy.

This reality of theology's influence on the liturgy can also be seen in various forms in our own time, particular in writing new hymnals[185] as changes or innovations may be introduced on theological grounds. For example, in "A Three Year Lectionary of the LCMS Hymnal," Dean D. Pittelko gives an account for the adoption and adaptation of the three-year lectionary. Some of the reasons he gives for the adjustments to the three-year lectionary to fit theological concerns in the LCMS may be of interest to our discussion. In point one he states that "the readings be chosen for their 'congruity with the gospel,' that is, 'the good news of God concerning the redemption of man,' (not simply the appointed Gospel for the day)."[186] In this respect, choosing

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[182] Vajta, *Luther on Worship*, 28.

[183] *LW*, 36: 316.

[184] Ibid.

[185] Some of the newest hymnals in the Lutheran circles include *Lutheran Service Book* (LSB) of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) of 2006, and *Ibada Takatifu* of Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya (ELCK) of 2013. We will look at *Ibada Takatifu* in chapter six, as a case study.

[186] Paul J. Grime, D. Richard Stuckwisch, and Jon D. Vieker, eds., *Through the Church the Song Goes On* (Saint Louis: Concordia, 199), 27.

of the readings is guided by the evangelical concept of the gospel. Furthermore, Richard Stuckwisch in "Doing Our Own Thing with the Lectionary" says that the *Revised Common Lectionary* (RCL), adopted by most of the Protestant churches, closely follows the three-year lectionary but "unfortunately, where it differs from its predecessor, it has been driven and shaped by modern liberal agenda," that is, "it was heavily influenced by feminist and liberationist critiques."[187] This means that the lectionary revision was carried out in the interest of certain theological trends. And since the lectionary functions as an integral part of liturgy, such revisions or adaptations would properly be considered as examples in which theology exerts influence on the course of liturgy.

A similar situation can be seen in the recent revision of liturgical texts. Robert A. O. Clancy alludes to the move by the English Language Liturgical Consultation (ELLC) to revise the language of the common liturgical texts, like the *Kyrie*, *Gloria Patri*, *Sanctus*, and others, to provide "a unifying bond between churches."[188] One of the guidelines for the task, he notes, is that "sensitivity should be shown to the need for inclusive language."[189] In view of this, one may contend that the revision of the texts is carried out in the interest of an ecclesiology or a theology of the church which advocates for the external unity of the church.

From all these examples, there seems to be a sufficient ground for the conclusion that theology has a significant degree of influence on the church's liturgy. This further leads to the conclusion that both stand in "a dialectical relationship with each other" so that "liturgy shapes

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[187] Ibid., 36.

[188] Ibid., 186.

[189] Ibid., 187.

theology and theology shapes liturgy."[190] The examples drawn from different times in church history, and from different traditions, are enough to indicate and justify the argument that the dynamics in the relationship between liturgy and theology entail a dialogue of mutual influence and critique. It can, however, be argued that such dialogue further has a functional dimension in which liturgy and theology[191] complement each other to achieve the purpose of mediating and enhancing the appropriation of meaning in worship. It is therefore important at this point to consider the nature of such complementarity.

The Complementary Dynamics

The complementarity dynamics here refer to how liturgy and theology can together, in their unique qualities, contribute to and enhance the apprehension of meaning in worship, both experientially and conceptually. *Webster's College Dictionary* defines "complement" as "something that completes or makes perfect." This would mean that if two things are complementary, one is regarded as a *sine qua non* for the perfection or completeness of the other. This would sound far-fetched or incorrect according to any theory that is inclined to promote a lopsided authority between liturgy and theology or their independence of each other. But it holds true to the liturgy-theology relationship because the contribution of one is needed in order for the other to achieve its purpose. In the case of the relationship between liturgy and theology that purpose is fostering meaning among the assembly of Christian worshippers. Both liturgy and theology contribute—each in its own unique ways— to make Christian worship meaningful:

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[190] Chan, *Liturgical Theology*, 49.

[191] Theology is here used in its broader sense for both doctrine and its expression and articulation.

Liturgy providing the context of experiencing the mystery of salvation as it unfolds in the Christian narrative; theology and doctrine of providing the conceptual framework and the grammar for praxis. Kilmartin says that "liturgy serves the indispensable function of establishing and maintaining Christian identity, mediating the meaning whereby the community is held together."[192] In so doing, it "perpetuates God's actions and interventions in human history,"[193] offering to the worshippers God's grace in the paschal mystery through the sacramental actions. Liturgy thus communicates God's saving grace to man. But it can be argued that Christian theology— understood as conversation and proclamation, that is, "an encounter with the living God in Word and Spirit" and "a communication of truth and ideas,"[194] or as "*faithful reflection on human life lived consciously in the presence of God*,"[195]—also shares and contributes to the same purpose. As Jones rightly observes, "the full meaning and intentionality of Christian discourse are inseparable from the pragmatics—the concrete, communal/personal practices—in which Christians live in the church, with the world, and before God."[196] In recognition of the complementarity between liturgy and theology for the purpose of effectively communicating God's grace, Kilmartin says, "We can learn much from the liturgy itself about the profound mystery which it represents. But discursive thought is required to bring to the surface the potential of meaning symbolized in liturgy."[197] This means that secondary discourse is necessary

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[192] Kilmartin, *Christian Liturgy*, 94.

[193] Chupungco, "A Definition of Liturgy," 7.

[194] House, *Charts on Systematic Theology*, 16.

[195] Jinkins, *Invitation to Theology*, 17.

[196] Jones, *A Grammar of Christian Faith*, 25.

[197] Kilmartin, *Christian Liturgy*, 96.

not only for calling liturgy to order with respect to the church's doctrines or fundamental beliefs, but also for making the liturgical symbolism and the faith it represents meaningful and intelligible.

A classic example of this complementarity of liturgy and theology can be seen in the Lutheran Reformation where Luther employed both liturgy and theology, in their unique roles, to achieve his purpose of having a meaningful worship in the churches of the Reformation as the preamble of the *Formula Missae* reveals. He writes:

> Until now I have only used books and sermons to wean the hearts of the people from their godless regard for ceremonial; for I believed it would be a Christian and helpful thing if I could prompt a peaceful removal of the abomination which Satan set up in the holy place through the man of sin [Matt. 24:15; 2 Thess. 2:3–4]. Therefore, I have used neither authority nor pressure. Nor did I make any innovations. For I have been hesitant and fearful, partly because of the weak in faith who cannot suddenly exchange an old and accustomed order of worship for a new and unusual one. . . . But since there is hope now that the hearts of many have been enlightened and strengthened by the grace of God . . . we must dare something in the name of Christ. Therefore, most excellent Nicholas, since you have requested to it so often, we will deal with an evangelical form of saying mass (as it is called) and of administering communion. And we will so deal with it that we shall no longer rule hearts by teaching alone, but we will put our hand and put the revision into practice in the public administration of communion.[198]

The first and the last sentences show that Luther had laid the groundwork for a *meaningful* worship by putting in place an evangelical framework of theology, which he had taught at the discursive level through books and lectures. But he decided no longer "to rule hearts by teaching alone" and committed to "dare something in the name of Christ." In a sense, Luther and the Lutherans recognized the reality that liturgy had to complement the discursive theology, if the evangelical course was to achieve its end. The conceptual tools that they had provided in the

second-order discourse could only find their meaning in the worship assembly through the liturgy in which they experienced God's saving grace. Again here we find the convergence of the experiential and conceptual aspects of meaning for the purpose of making Christian worship meaningful to the assembly. And the seriousness with which the Reformers treated the Mass reforms shows that worship was a weighty matter for them, a matter of salvation and life. The realization of this purpose of worship requires the contribution of both liturgy and theology in their unique ways. De Clerck reflects this complementarity of liturgy and theology when says: "The liturgy is fundamentally a celebration of the mystery of Christ. It is the same mystery into which the theological effort will look in a particular culture. But the liturgy will express it in its own manner, in an evocative, symbolic, and more existential way."[199] In a nutshell, liturgy and theology have a close relationship of double critique in which "the manner in which prayer is said in the liturgy indicates what must be believed; and that which must be believed influences the manner of prayer," as Vagaggini puts it.[200]

Mutual Dependency

We have seen the relationship between liturgy and theology is one of complementarity and dialogue of mutual influence and critique for the purpose of fostering meaning, experientially and conceptually, among the assembly of Christian worshippers. Before closing this chapter, it is

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[198] Russell, *Martin Luther's Basic Theological Writings*, 311.

[199] De Clerck, "*Lex orandi, lex credendi*," 199.

[200] Cypriano Vagaggini, *Theological Dimensions of the Liturgy*, trans., Leonard J. Doyle and W.A. Jurgens (Nashville: The Liturgical Press, 1976), 509.

important to note that the liturgy-theology dynamics are also characterized by mutual dependency in their conveyance of meaning.

Regin Prenter has tied liturgy and theology together in unity so that liturgy is theological and theology is liturgical.[201] He says that our whole life may be viewed as liturgy and service to God and that is theology,[202] and that "whether a good or a very poor theology, it is nevertheless, a theology."[203] In the same vein, Don E. Saliers in his book *Worship as Theology* writes under the thesis that worship is in itself theological and eschatological. He says that "continuing worship of God in the assembly *is* a form of theology."[204] One would say that the act of gathering for public worship is theological because it is done in recognition of the presence of God and his gift of life in the means of grace, his word and sacraments; and it is eschatological because the assemblies worship as they wait for the return of the Lord to gather his church throughout the world for eternal praise. The worship of the assemblies in this age is thus a prolepsis of the eternal doxology in the world to come. As we have already seen, liturgy in its nature as a relational first-order activity is often regarded as *theologia prima*, performing certain rituals or symbolic actions which are theologically significant. Baptism would be distinguished from swimming in the sense that—though both involve water—the former is sacramental, having salvific value and thus theologically significant, while the other is not.

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[201] Prenter, "Liturgy and Theology," 16.

[202] Ibid., 15.

[203] Ibid., 7.

[204] Don E. Saliers, *Worship as Theology: Foretaste of Glory Divine* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), 15.

Viewing liturgy and theology as integrally connected as Prenter does also avoids theologizing in an abstract manner which has no connection to the church's worship life on the one hand, and worshipping in contempt or neglect of theology on the other hand. This raises the question of the place of theology in university education today. If theology is categorized under "a general philosophical *Wissenschaftslehre*,"[205] and thus an independent field of inquiry without any connection to the church's worship life, it loses its experiential meaning and may be categorized with philosophy of religion. In the same breath, worship assumes certain forms which are to be theologically intelligible and which need theological elucidation. As a result of this connection, it would follow that by doing theology we worship and by worshipping we theologize, as Prenter would put it.[206] In summary, the mediation and appropriation of meaning in Christian worship requires not only a relationship of mutual dialogue and critique between the church's liturgy and her theology, but also a functional complementarity in which each contributes in its own unique ways to make Christian worship meaningful to the assembly.

[205] Frei, *Types of Theology*, 3.

[206] Prenter, "Liturgy and Theology," 7.

CHAPTER FOUR

CATECHESIS AND MEANING IN WORSHIP

Introduction

The previous chapters examined the meaning of worship among Christians in terms of factual conceptions and the experience of newness of life in the person and work of Christ, and how the complementary relationship between liturgy and theology would enhance the reception of such meaning in the worship life of the church. This chapter will examine the catechetical dimension of the relationship between liturgy and theology and how catechesis relates to both with respect to apprehension of meaning among Christian worshippers.

The concept of catechesis is neither a novelty nor an invention of one church tradition. On the contrary, one would say that it is a concept and a practice which, today in many churches, has almost lost its value[1] and the vigor with which it was carried out in the early church, especially in the patristic period. In those church traditions, like Roman Catholic and Lutheran, where catechesis is still practiced today, it is largely tied to the rite of confirmation and initiation of adults into the church. But is there a way in which the role and significance of catechesis might be appreciated in the church beyond such initiatory rites? Could catechesis be relevant and applicable to the daily worship life of the church? How might liturgy be considered catechetical in its relationship to theology, and how would such liturgico-theological catechesis enhance the appropriation of meaning in worship? The primary argument of the chapter is that worship is a

[1] Charles Arand, "Meeting the Challenge for Tomorrow," in *Formation in the Faith for Tomorrow*. Concordia Seminary Symposium Papers no.7 (Saint Louis: Concordia Seminary, 1997.), 51.

context for and a vehicle of catechesis. In this context, liturgy and catechesis stand in a hermeneutical circle of relationship in which catechesis flows from and thrives in the liturgy while at the same time it leads back to a more meaningful participation in the liturgy. Catechesis is thus a significant component of the liturgy-theology complementary dynamics with regard to fostering meaning in its experiential and conceptual aspects in the Christian assembly. The significance of catechesis, as the Catholic *General Catechetical Directory* rightly states, lies in that it promotes "an active, conscious, genuine participation in the liturgy of the Church, not merely by explaining the meaning of the ceremonies, but also by forming the minds of the faithful for prayer, for thanksgiving, for repentance, for a community spirit, and for understanding correctly the meaning of the creeds."[2] In this consideration, the general definition and scope of catechesis will be established first. Then the chapter will consider the catechetical dimension of liturgy and the role of catechesis in making Christian worship meaningful. Following that, the role of theology in the concept and practice of catechesis will be probed. Lastly, mystagogy as a possible point of convergence for both liturgical and theological modes of catechesis will be explored.

Definition and Scope of Catechesis

In order to comprehend the catechetical dimension of the liturgy-theology dynamic, there is need to first understand the meaning of catechesis and its scope in the church, both as a formal program with a specific timeframe and target audience and as a lifelong process in the Christian

[2] Catholic Church, *General Catechetical Directory* (Washington, DC: Publications Office, United States Catholic Conference, 1971), 23.

life.[3] The term *catechesis* itself comes from the Greek word *κατηχεω*, a term that occurs in various forms in the Scriptures with the basic meaning of Christian instruction. In its development, the word came to mean an oral instruction given by one person to another.[4] In the early church, catechesis referred to either the instruction given to the candidates for baptism or the literary resources used for that purpose,[5] and from this came the word "catechism" which traditionally referred to either "the actual spoken instruction or the written manual of catechesis."[6] From the same root also came the word "catechumens," Greek *κατηχουμενος*, which the early church used for the new converts who were undergoing instruction in the Christian faith. In this sense, as Marcel Caster notes, catechesis has often been viewed in terms of didactics as "the presentation of doctrine in a classroom situation"[7] to a particular category of people in the congregation—the catechumens. However, catechesis has a broader sense than this doctrinal presentation and a wider scope than the catechumenate. In a sense, catechesis is a lifelong process aimed at all members of the body of Christ, the church.

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[3] In the early church tradition, catechesis was largely associated with the catechumenate, a period of instructions in the run up to baptism, and the mystagogy—the post-baptismal instruction into the mysteries experienced in the sacraments. In the first phase of the catechumenate, the "candidates for baptism had their lifestyle scrutinized, memorized the Creed, and learned the Lord's Prayer." In the mystagogical phase, they were "instructed into what it means to be a Christian." See Berard L. Marthaler, *The Catechism Yesterday and Today* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1995), 9. The separation of baptism and confirmation into distinct rites due to the "increased number of infant baptisms" brought with it the need to raise the baptized children in the faith. See Arthur Repp, *Confirmation in the Lutheran Church* (Saint Louis: Concordia, 1964), 18. Besides such formal initiatory purpose, catechesis has increasingly been viewed as a lifelong phenomenon in the Christian life.

[4] Barry, *What Does This Mean?*, 7.

[5] Dominic F. Ashkar, *Transfiguration Catechesis: A New Vision on the Liturgy and Catechism of the Catholic Church* (San Jose, CA: Resource Publications, 1996), 35.

[6] Barry, *What Does This Mean?*, 8.

[7] Marcel Van Caster, *The Structure of Catechetics* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1965), 12.

Along this line of broader understanding, John Westerhoff and Gwen Kennedy Neville, in *Learning through the Liturgy*, define catechesis as "the process by which persons come to know (understand) internalize (live) and apply (do) God's word in their individual and corporate lives."[8] This is echoed in *Liturgy and Learning through the Life Circle* where John Westerhoff and William Willimon define catechesis as "the process by which persons are initiated into the Christian community's faith, revelation and vocation" and that it is "the process by which persons, throughout their lives, are continually transformed and formed by and in the community's living tradition."[9] This perfectly agrees with Alvin. L. Barry's[10] definition of catechesis as "a lifelong process of learning and growing in Christian faith and life."[11] Mary J. McDonald shares this view from the Roman Catholic experience and holds that there is no specific age-group target as far as catechesis in general and liturgical catechesis in particular is concerned. In *Building a Eucharistic Community*, She writes: "There are no age requirements; the church's catechetical documents of the recent years affirm that catechesis be a lifelong conversion of every member of the Body of Christ. Therefore, it is a process of formation rather than a program of instruction."[12]

Although the formal program of instruction aimed at giving the basics of the Christian teaching to the neophytes for the purposes of initiation or confirmation remains a significant part

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[8] Neville and Westerhoff, *Learning Through Liturgy*, 93.

[9] John Westerhoff and William Willimon, *Liturgy and Learning through the Life Circle* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1980), 17.

[10] Dr. A. L. Barry was the president of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod between 1992 and 2001.

[11] Barry, *Catechesis in the Lutheran Congregation*, v.

[12] Mary J. McDonald, *Building a Eucharistic Community: A Handbook for Liturgical Catechesis* (San Jose, CA: Resource Publications, 2001), 2.

of catechesis, it is not the whole picture of catechesis. Catechesis broadly understood is the whole process of "learning the truth of the Christian faith" which is "a lifetime interaction with the Scriptures, hearing them read and explained, and applied to our lives."[13] Caster presents this broader concept of catechesis in a more comprehensive manner in his book *The Structure of Catechetics* where he assigns to catechesis a threefold task comprising instruction, formation, and initiation. These tasks will be explored below as integral components of the catechetical aspect of the liturgy. In view of all this, catechesis may therefore be regarded as a continuous process in which the word of God and the Christian faith sound again and again into the life of a Christian, as the literal meaning of *κατηκχεω* suggests. It is "all activity which 'resounds' the word of God, in short, all activity which makes divine revelation known and which aims at awakening and developing faith."[14]

The understanding of catechesis merely as a seasonal program of instruction to the neophytes is probably partly responsible for the biblical—and hence theological—illiteracy that has been witnessed among Christians in many churches, even during the Reformation era.[15] This is because many Christians hardly remember all that they learned in their catechism class. Besides, the perception that the instruction is done in a classroom setting seems to paint catechesis with a purely academic picture. But catechesis properly understood should lead the Christian worshippers into "a deeper appreciation for the church's history, its doctrines, its

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[13] Ibid., 2.

[14] Ibid., 12.

[15] Luther's Catechisms were written in response to the biblical illiteracy, and hence the need for knowledge, that was witnessed in the churches of the Reformation during the parish visitations as Luther's preface to the Small Catechism reveals.

practices and all that these mean for the Christian."[16] Catechesis thus remains relevant and significant for the life of the church and the life of individual Christians at all times. But one would say that such relevance of catechesis to the Christian life can be appreciated more in its interaction with liturgy in the context of worship.

The Hermeneutical Circle: A Mutual Interaction for Meaningful Worship

Liturgy is Catechetical

The first important thing to note about the interaction between liturgy and catechesis is that liturgy has a catechetical dimension involving the entire scope of catechesis as laid out above and it thus entails all the three components of catechesis outlined by Caster: liturgy has instructional, formational, and initiatory roles in the life of the church. Caster draws an insightful parallel to human development from anthropological categories to illustrate how these three tasks work and how they relate to each other in catechesis.

In the first[17] place, liturgy has the important task of instruction in which man is said to *have* knowledge, that is, "data which man assimilates and masters." This plays out at the "level of objectivity" where catechesis seeks to teach or instruct the worshippers on the divine revelation "borne in events and truths."[18] Such data or events and truths of the divine revelation—embodied in the biblical narrative—constitute the content of the Christian liturgy which the worshippers are exposed to in the context of worship. In this regard, it can be said that liturgy imparts

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[16] Barry, *What Does This Mean?*, 2.

[17] "First" here is not to be understood in the order of significance or causal sequence.

[18] Caster, *The Structure of Catechetics*, 13.

knowledge of the content of the Christian faith. John T. Pless, writing about catechesis and worship in the Lutheran Confessions, recognizes this reality when he states that liturgy is catechetical because "it provides ongoing catechesis in the doctrinal content of the Christian faith."[19] He writes:

> Long before there were Sunday schools, the Church was teaching her people—both young and old—in the liturgy. The Gospel-laden canticles of the liturgy like the Gloria in Excelsis and the Agnus Dei proclaimed the incarnation and atonement of Christ week after week. The lectionary carried the hearers into the depths of the Scriptures. The Creed was confessed and the summary of the faith once delivered to the saints. Hymns gave doxological expression of the dogma of the Church. The early Lutherans would abandon none of this. It was crucial not merely to preserve good order and a sense of decorum, but for the sake of those who were being catechized in the Gospel.[20]

The contention that liturgy, in its instructional function, provides an ongoing catechesis in doctrinal content of the Christian faith is justified by the manner in which liturgy has been used to advance certain doctrinal positions in different church traditions. In Roman Catholic worship, for example, the congregation confesses sins with these words: "I confess to almighty God, and to you, my brothers and sisters, that I have sinned through my own fault in my thought and in my words, in what I have done, and in what I have failed to do; and I ask blessed Mary, ever virgin, all the angels and saints, and you, my brothers and sisters, to pray for me to the Lord."[21] This prayer seems to be foundational for the notion of Mary as a co-mediatrix with the Son, together with the cult of saints, as revealed in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. The catechism reads:

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[19] John T. Pless, "Ceremonies for Seekers: Catechesis as a Fundamental Criterion for Worship in the Lutheran Confessions," in *Congress on the Lutheran Confessions: Worship* 2000, ed. John A. Maxfield and Jennifer H. Maxfield (Saint Louis: Luther Academy, 2010), 35.

[20] Ibid., 36.

[21] *New Catholic Hymnal*, Congregation Edition, ed. Anthony Petty and Geoffrey Laycook (New York: St.

"We believe that the Holy Mother of God, the new Eve, Mother of the Church, continues in heaven to exercise her maternal role on behalf of the members of Christ."[22] This is put even more vividly in *What Catholics Believe: A Pocket Catechism.* It is asked, "Why do we pray to saints?" And the answer is given: "Our faith tells us that in heaven the saints pray for us on earth. Just as we might ask a friend on earth to pray for us, we ask these good friends in heaven to pray for us."[23] The same notion is found in the Hail Mary where the mother of Jesus is regarded as an advocate who petitions the Son on behalf of the church: "Hail Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death."[24] Here Roman Catholic worship fosters the cult of saints with the understanding that Mary and other saints have a sacrificial role of interceding for the church. In the same manner, the Reformed tradition continues to perpetuate their polemic against the "real presence" in the Lord's Supper through the liturgy. This is noticeable in the order of worship as well as in the hymns. For instance, most of the communion hymns in *The Presbyterian Hymnal* refer to Christ in one way or another as "the bread of heaven"[25] and never as true body and true blood as one would find in a Lutheran hymnody. This reflects the teaching of *The Larger Catechism of the Westminster Assembly* on the Lord's Supper where it is taught: "As the body and blood of Christ are not corporally or carnally present in, with, or under the

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Martin's Press, 1971), 228.

[22] *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2d ed. (Washington, DC: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1994), 254.

[23] Mike Aquilina and Fr. Kris D. Stubna, *What Catholics Believe: A Pocket Catechism* (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 1999), 16.

[24] Ibid., 64.

[25] See hymn 501 in *The Presbyterian Hymnal* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1990).

bread and wine in the Lord's Supper, and yet are spiritually present to the faith of the receiver, no less truly and really than the elements are to their outward senses."[26]

The instructional role or function of the liturgy as outlined above is realized in worship through different components of the liturgy. For instance, hymnody has been hailed as one of the components of liturgy which effectively instructs the worshippers. It is in this regard that Pless sees Luther's hymns as accenting the connection between worship and catechesis[27] because they "give the doxological expression to dogmatic themes that Luther will weave into his exposition of the chief parts of Catechism."[28] Pless cites, for example, *Here is the Tenfold Sure Command*,[29] a hymn that reflects Luther's explanations to the Ten Commandments. Take, for instance, the third stanza:

> "Do not My holy name disgrace,
> Do not My Word of truth debase.
> Praise only that as good and true
> Which I Myself say and do."
> Have mercy Lord![30]

This corresponds to the explanation to the third commandment in the Small Catechism: "We should fear and love God so that we do not despise preaching and His Word, but hold it sacred and gladly hear and learn it."[31] Referring to the impact of Luther's hymns in spreading the evangelical message, the Jesuits are said to have complained that Luther's songs "destroyed

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[26] *The Large Catechism of the Westminster Assembly* (Philadelphia: The Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1919), 283.

[27] Pless, "Ceremonies for Seekers," 39.

[28] Ibid.

[29] The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, *Lutheran Service Book* (Saint Louis: Concordia, 2006), 581.

[30] Ibid.

more souls than his writings and speeches."[32] This is because the hymns became "a formidable means of disseminating doctrine."[33]

Such instructional power of the liturgy can be attributed to its personal engagement and repetitive rhythm as it is said that repetition is the mother of learning, *repetitio mater studiorum es.* The *Constitution of the Sacred Liturgy* (CSL), a document of the Second Vatican Council on matters liturgical, recognizes this instructional nature and role of the liturgy. Article III: 33 of CSL reads in part: "Although the sacred liturgy is above all things the worship of the divine Majesty, it likewise contains much instruction for the faithful."[34] The said *fidelis eruditionem*, instruction for the faithful, comes about through different ways in the context of worship, and most importantly through the communal framework in which the word of God is "proclaimed, explained, reflected upon, and lived out."[35]

The instructional aspect of the liturgy can also be seen in certain symbolic actions or gestures. Learning of the faith in the context of corporate worship comes about "through the readings and prayers, actions and gestures, rites and symbols of the eucharistic celebration."[36] Neville and Westerhoff are therefore right that "even though the purpose of worship is the praise and adoration of God and nothing else, while we are praising and adoring in our rituals, we are

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[31] Ibid., 320.

[32] Senn, *Christian Liturgy: Catholic and Evangelical*, 287.

[33] Ibid.

[34] *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, Art. III: 33

[35] Ashkar, *Transfiguration Catechesis*, 38.

[36] McDonald, *Building a Eucharistic Community*, 14.

also learning through our rituals."[37] In his forward remarks to Anthony Coniaris' book, *Sacred Symbols that Speak*, Alkiviadis Calivas appreciates the power of symbolism in communication. He defines symbol as "words, things, or actions" which "lead to the knowledge of something other than themselves."[38] He says that "symbols can help us to sense truth, beauty, goodness and holiness" and that "they are visual homilies; a canvass of a million words compacted gently into a single phrase, or a simple gesture, or a commonplace thing."[39] Symbols thus "transmit ideas and feelings, and synthesize the ethos and worldview of a community."[40] To depict the power of symbols in communication, Coniaris writes: "The smile of one small child tells more about joy than a whole book. The tears of a family by graveside express grief in a way that frustrates words, however eloquent. The sight of a person on his knees speaks of faith in its fullness, beyond efforts to define."[41] A few examples from Coniaris' description of the symbols, from the Eastern Orthodox perspective, will suffice to illustrate how liturgical symbols are powerful means of instruction. About making the sign of the cross, he says:

> To make a sign of the cross we join the thumb, the index and the middle finger of the right hand at their tips, and at the same time we rest the fourth and little finger in the palm of the hand. . . . The thumb, the index and middle finger touching each other at their tips represent the Holy Trinity: God the Father who created us, God the Son who saved us, and God the holy Spirit who abides in us: three persons—the Holy Trinity. Then we let the fourth and little fingers representing the two natures of Jesus—human and divine—drop into the palm of the hand to denote that Jesus "came down from heaven" and became man for our salvation. Thus we make the

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[37] Neville and Westerhoff, *Learning Through Liturgy*, 2.

[38] Anthony C. Coniaris, *Sacred Symbols that Speak: A Study of the Symbols in the Orthodox Church* (Minneapolis, MN: Light and Life Publishing Company), 1: iv.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Ibid.

[41] Ibid., 6.

> sign of the cross to remind ourselves of who God is and what He did for us. Every time we cross ourselves we recall the great price he paid to redeem us.

This description of the meaning of the symbolic action of making the sign of the cross justifies Calivas' observation above that symbols are "millions of words compacted gently into a single phrase or a simple gesture." This is because we find in this description a whole range of Christian teachings about the being and mission of God compacted together; we find the doctrine of the Holy Trinity in both its immanent and economic expressions connected, as well as a Christology expressed through the two natures. Another example of symbolic instruction through the liturgy is the early tradition of nakedness in baptism, a tradition which is still practiced in some Orthodox churches.[42] Coniaris says that entering into the church naked through baptism symbolizes the fact that "we enter the church: not covered with robes of self-righteousness, but naked, asking to be covered with the robe of God's grace."[43] Similarly, it can also be said that a congregation kneeling or standing at a semi-circular communion rail as they receive the sacrament will perhaps be reminded each week that they are not the only members of the church of Christ. They are one part of the Church catholic whose membership comprises people from all nations and all times, who together form a complete circle as the people of God, just as they confess the existence of that church in the Creed. Or, as worshippers plead for mercy by way of singing *Kyrie*, will they not be reminded each week of their helplessness and their inability to save themselves, and hence the need for God's grace and mercy?[44] In the same manner, the

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[42] Ibid., 89.

[43] Ibid.

[44] Brauer, *Meaningful Worship*, 31.

congregation is reminded again and again of the christocentricity of the gospel message when they stand for the Gospel readings to signify the presence of Christ and that he himself is talking to the congregation in the words read.

The second task of catechesis which is realized through the celebration of the liturgy is Christian formation. This task "constitutes the Christian scale of values adopted as a new 'mentality' of the individual, 'a Christian mentality.'"[45] In the anthropological parallel, it corresponds to "the very 'being' of the human himself, his development, his values of thought and action."[46] It is on account of this view of liturgy as shaping the way of life that Philip Pfatteicher calls worship a school. In his book *The School of the Church*, Pfatteicher argues that "like any good school the liturgy expands our horizon."[47] He says that "the purpose of the liturgy is not to express our thoughts and feelings but to develop them," and this occurs through the subjective-objective dynamics in the liturgy. He writes: "Liturgical worship provides what we in the depth of our being need: something external to us by which we can test ourselves, something beyond us by which we can shape our lives. Worship as it is enshrined in the liturgy presents us with an objective reality which stands over against us as judge, to challenge, to provoke, to entice."[48] Westerhoff and Willimon view liturgy in the same manner, as a context of formation. They say that "the Sunday liturgy of the church and in particular the actions persons perform

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[45] Caster, *The Structure of Catechetics*, 14.

[46] Ibid., 15.

[47] Philip H. Pfatteicher, *The School of the Church: Worship and Christian Formation* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1995), 104.

[48] Ibid., 98.

during the ritual express and shape their perception."[49] Mary McDonald reflects this dynamic when she writes:

> Liturgical catechesis is not just another catechetical tool to add to your existing program for children, youth, and adults. Where would you find time for that? It is not a program of instruction *about* the liturgy. Rather, it is a process, a way to approach all catechesis that is *grounded in and permeated by liturgy* as the source and summit of Christian life. It is a different way of catechizing, a different model or paradigm, a process of formation in Christian living, rather than a curriculum-based program. Though the *content* of the faith is still learned, the *context* for that learning is the Christian community assembled for worship rather than classroom.[50]

Communal consciousness could be one instance of Christian formation that is brought about by the liturgy. The sense of togetherness is created and nurtured in the worshippers through the communal character of the liturgy in corporate worship as opposed to an individualistic mindset. For example, partaking of the Lord's Supper together instills in the communicants a sense of brotherhood and common life and this could be one of the reasons why some congregations hold on to the common cup. It is expected, therefore, that in its catechetical function, liturgy "aids persons to grow in the knowledge of God to live in closer relationship to God and to act more faithfully with God in the world."[51]

The third, and most important, task of catechesis that plays out in the liturgy is initiation.[52] This, according to Caster, is an invitation to individuals "to share actively in the activities of

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[49] Westerhoff and Willimon, *Liturgy and Learning*, 41.

[50] McDonald, *Building a Eucharistic Community*, 14.

[51] Westerhoff and Willimon, *Liturgy and Learning*, 17.

[52] Caster is here operating with a broader concept of "initiation" than the usual understanding of initiation as the initial rites and ceremonies by which one is integrated into the community of faith.

Jesus Christ in his Church, especially that of knowing the Father."[53] From Caster's anthropological analogy, it corresponds to the category of being with others, which points to the communion with God and with one another through God's word. For Caster, therefore, initiation is not just a one-time phenomenon in the usual sense of inducting new members into the community. Rather, it is a lifelong and an ongoing encounter or communion with the Triune God. In initiation, God "invites man to live with him, in Jesus Christ."[54] It is in this respect that Caster regards it as the "absolute" task of catechesis.[55] He says that "instruction and formation are at the service of initiation and therefore must be determined by it. Caster, however, observes that these aspects of catechesis must be held in a synthesis so that "no matter what subject is treated, it always requires: the teaching of the truth; the formation of the student in view of the implied value of a truth; and the initiation into an encounter with God in his revelation of this truth."[56] And if encounter with God is at the heart of catechesis, as Caster points out, then one would rightly argue that liturgy is the appropriate context for catechesis because such encounter as described is exemplified in the context of corporate worship, in the liturgy. In this regard, therefore, to say that liturgy is catechetical is not to say that it only exposes the worshippers to the content of the Christian faith for the sake of information alone. Rather, and more importantly, it also leads to Christian formation and shapes a way of living.

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[53] Caster, *The Structure of Catechetics*, 15.

[54] Ibid.

[55] Ibid., 17.

[56] Ibid.

These three aspects of catechesis—instruction, formation, and initiation—are woven together in the liturgy and they accent both conceptual and experiential realities of worship. The liturgy conveys the truth of the gospel that sets the sinful man free from sin, the devil and the world, and binds him to God in a new relationship and a new life. Neville and Westerhoff reflect this catechetical dimension of liturgy when they address the questions surrounding the interplay between liturgy and the process of Christian education:

> We humans cannot live without ritual or exist without shared understandings of the world and established correct ways of living. These understandings and ways (faith) are expressed collectively through symbolic narratives (sacred stories) and symbolic acts (rites and rituals). Through rites of community (following the calendar, once a week or year), the church sustains and transmits its faith. Through rites of initiation and life crises the church enables persons to make transitions in their faith pilgrimage and life circle.[57]

This means that worship creates an atmosphere that fosters learning of the Christian faith and truth that embraces both experiential and conceptual aspects of meaning. Neville and Westerhoff here see liturgy as a vehicle for transmitting the Christian knowledge and faith. However, they maintain that they do not intend to say that worship of God is a mere pedagogical tool to educate.[58] They are aware of the meaning of worship and liturgy beyond the cognitive domain, but they want to uphold both the experiential and conceptual aspects of meaning as realities that play out in the context of worship. They give preaching as an example of liturgical catechesis and observe that "the sermon or homily has always been understood as having catechetical function in terms of both *kerygma* (proclamation for conversion) and *didache*

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[57] Neville and Westerhoff, *Learning Through Liturgy*, 94.

[58] Westerhoff and Willimon, *Liturgy and Learning*, 2.

(interpretation for nurture)."[59] That preaching is a liturgical element with a catechetical impact is probably most appreciated in the Reformation, especially among the Lutherans, where preaching of the word was restored "to its right place"[60] as the *Hauptpunkt*, the highest or chief point, of worship. This is not merely because of the doctrinal content of preaching meant for instruction, but more importantly because of its existential significance as a life-giving proclamation. Luther was well aware of the power of liturgy as a catechetical tool for mediating meaning to the assembly. This liturgy-catechesis connection is evident in his worship reforms where he not only mentions catechism in the worship reform documents,[61] but he also focuses on catechetical preaching to cultivate the meaning of the Christian truth in the congregation. The existential value of proclamation is that by it "God himself imparts the benefits of his redemptive work through the Holy Spirit,"[62] and this is true of the word of God in all its forms.

An example of the catechetical aspect of the liturgy in relation to its experiential and conceptual bearing can be seen in the preparatory part of the Divine Service in most Lutheran liturgies today. The service begins with the confession of sin and absolution in recognition of the sinful human condition and the need for God's grace. After the Invocation and the Versicle, the minister calls the congregation to confession and the congregation responds in a plea of mercy, acknowledging their wretched condition, their guilt and their inability to free themselves.[63] And upon that confession the minister declares God's grace to the congregation: "Almighty God in

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[59] Ibid., 20.

[60] Vajta, *Luther on Worship*, 67.

[61] Luther mentions Catechism in the preface to the German Mass, *Deutsche Messe* of 1526.

[62] Ibid., 71.

His mercy has given His Son to die for you and for His sake forgives you all your sins. As a called and ordained servant of Christ, and by His authority, I therefore forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."[64] Here in the liturgy are the two parts of confession as taught in the Small Catechism: "Confession has two parts. First, that we confess our sins, and second, that we receive absolution, that is, forgiveness, from the pastor as from God Himself, not doubting, but firmly believing that by it our sins are forgiven in heaven."[65] And here in the confession and absolution are both the experiential and conceptual aspects of meaning. While the Lutheran worshippers are expected to know *about* the two parts of confession as taught in the Small and Large Catechisms, they also experience that forgiveness in the performative words of absolution pronounced by the minister in the stead and by the command of Christ. As was mentioned earlier, in chapter two, the worshippers do not merely comprehend or learn *about* the love of God conceptually, they really experience that love. The "I love you" of God is experienced by the worshippers in the personal language of the liturgy. As opposed to classroom-based instruction or religious education, liturgy fosters the appropriation of meaning both experientially and conceptually in a communal context of interpersonal relations—relationship with the Triune God and with one another. It is on this account that Pless says that in its catechetical function "liturgy is fundamentally something greater than a didactic device."[66] This is because, he says, "the liturgy is the vehicle through which Christ comes to us

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[63] *Lutheran Service Book*, 151.

[64] Ibid.

[65] Ibid, 326.

[66] Pless, "Ceremonies for Seekers," 30.

with His words and gifts imparting the forgiveness of sins."[67] In the same line of thought, Barry rightly observes that the Sunday morning Divine Service is a primary forum for catechesis[68] because in the service "the pastor is proclaiming the truth to more people than he can in other settings."[69] However, the truth proclaimed in the service is not merely an address to the mind for intellectual conception but one which offers divine blessings to the worshipper and shapes life. Liturgy is therefore a context of catechesis with a great value of Christian instruction, initiation and formation.

Catechesis Illuminates the Liturgy

Yet, there is a reciprocal interplay in which catechesis leads to a more meaningful celebration of the liturgy. Whereas liturgy has a catechetical dimension in which it fosters learning and apprehension of meaning, catechesis on the other hand is resourceful to liturgy as it prepares the assembly for a more meaningful participation in the liturgy.[70] Catechesis "prepares persons for conscious, active, and genuine participation in the community's rituals."[71] This reciprocal interaction implies that "meaningful liturgy calls for informed participants; and faithful participation calls for deeper understanding."[72] Jane Marie Osterholt reflects upon this reciprocal dynamic between liturgy and catechesis in this manner:

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[67] Ibid.

[68] Ibid.

[69] Ibid.

[70] Westerhoff and Willimon, *Liturgy and Learning*, 2.

[71] Ibid., 17

[72] Ibid.

> Both are rooted in the Church's faith, and although they do so in different ways, both strengthen faith and both summon Christian conversion. In liturgy the Church is at prayer, offering adoration, praise and thanksgiving to God and seeking and celebrating reconciliation. Here one finds both an expression of faith and a means for deepening it. Catechesis prepares people for full and active participation in liturgy by helping them understand its nature, rituals and symbols. At the same time, catechesis flows from liturgy; by reflecting on the community's experience of worship, catechesis seeks to relate those experiences to daily life and growth in faith.[73]

Osterholt here appreciates the role of catechesis in illuminating the liturgy by helping the people to understand the rituals in which they participate. In a similar view, Barry says that "as we catechize, we are also leading our people into a richer and more meaningful life of worship"[74] and that through catechesis we "help our people grow in their awareness of and appreciation for the Lord who works in their lives through the preached Word and the administered Sacraments."[75] In this line of understanding, Daniel Haertling also assigns to catechesis the important role of making Christian worship a meaningful event by illuminating the liturgical acts and symbols. In the preface to *Witnessing Through Symbols*, he writes:

> In a Christian church it helps to a great extent to know which and in what manner to employ the Christian symbols to give a church a devotional and Godly appearance. Such symbols may be employed in stained glass, paintings, carved in wood or stone, or modeled in metals. Once the symbols have been properly placed in the church, they are of little value, if those who come to worship there are unable to interpret these symbols in terms of their teaching of Christian faith. Sad is the case when a Christian views a Christian symbol with great admiration yet he does not know its meaning.[76]

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[73] Jane Marie Osterholt, "A Proposed Method of Liturgy and Catechesis," in *Catechism and Mystagogy: Infant Baptism* ed. Paul Covino *et al.* (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1996), 27.

[74] Barry, *What Does This Mean?*, 65.

[75] Ibid., 66.

[76] Daniel Haertling, C. ed. *Witnessing Through Symbols* (Long Beach, CA: Economy Printing, 1957), iii.

Although Haertling here refers specifically to Christian symbols, the situation he describes also applies to liturgical actions, gestures, and rituals in public worship. For example, a worshipper may wonder why the minister faces the altar or the congregation at certain points during worship.[77] Or he may wonder why the congregation bursts into "praise to you O Christ," when the Gospel is read.[78] Worship is full of symbolic actions of which the worshippers need to know their meanings, if the worship is to be meaningful to them. Let us take for instance the congregation singing *Kyrie eleison*. It is more meaningful for the worshippers to know what difference there is between calling Jesus *Kurios*, Lord, and, say, a judge or a magistrate addressed as "Lord" while in the courtroom. For apart from pleading for mercy, "the *Kyrie* itself proclaims the glory of God and voices the joy of the believers in his merciful goodness in sending his Son to be the Savior of the world."[79] By *Kyrie*, the Christian worshippers thus affirm the divinity of the Son and confess their faith in the Triune God.[80]

Catechesis thus makes worship more meaningful in different ways. First, it enables the congregants to know whom they worship and what they believe about him. The interpretation of the liturgical actions, rituals, symbols and gestures is informed by what the people are taught in

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[77] The two directions are understood to correspond with the dual-directional nature of Christian worship. The Lutherans, for example, understand worship to consist of both *beneficium*, sacramental aspects which convey God's gifts and blessings to the congregation, and the *sacrificium*, which is the assembly's response to the gifts in prayer, praise and thanksgiving.

[78] The phrase "Praise to you O Christ" is sung "in recognition of the real presence of Christ" in the midst of the assembly and He is therefore addressed "as one who is actually present." It also signifies the acknowledgment of "the fact that Christ of the Gospels and the Christ of the Sacrament are one and the same." See Luther Reed, *The Lutheran Liturgy* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1947), 229.

[79] Luther Reed, *The Lutheran Liturgy*, 273.

[80] In the ordinary usage the word *kurios* could simply mean something like "sir." But the early church's usage followed the Old Testament where the word is used synonymously or interchangeably with Yahweh. See Brauer, *Meaningful Worship*, 30.

accordance with the narrative of the worshipping community. In this respect, it can be said that catechesis rescues worship from being another tower of Babel. It helps minimize what may be called hermeneutical anarchy, a situation in which individual worshippers in the same assembly would appropriate radically different meanings in the same worship setting. It mitigates against the existence of a discrepancy between the public horizon of meaning held by the assembly and the official teaching of the church, as Kelleher and others have discussed.[81] Second, liturgy and catechesis check each other to ensure that both are within the narrative of the community. Westerhoff points out that "the educational ministry of the Church needs to provide a way for the community to examine, judge, and reform its rituals in light of the faith, and that such educational ministry provides "the means for persons to prepare for meaningful participation in the community's rituals."[82]

In view of all this, it becomes apparent that the mutual relationship between liturgy and catechesis has far reaching implications in the church's life. Ecclesiology can be taken as an example in this regard, especially on matters pertaining to church relations and partnerships. If liturgy serves a catechetical function on the basis of its doctrinal nature and, if catechesis sheds more light on the meaning of liturgical actions, then it follows that fellowship at the levels of primary and secondary theology would call for cohesiveness and unity in the narrative. As a "collective subject," a community with a shared meaning,[83] the assembly is to have a common way of articulating her narrative. The shared meaning is expected to come out in both the

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[81] Kelleher, "Liturgical Theology," 6.

[82] Neville and Westerhoff, *Learning Through Liturgy*, 102.

[83] Kelleher, "Liturgy: An Ecclesial Act of Meaning," 486.

assembly's liturgy and her doctrinal articulation. This is because the meaning generated and appropriated in the context of worship is to mesh with the meaning fostered by theology through catechesis to avoid contradictions and discrepancies between the worship life and the community's articulation of the narrative.

Another implication of the mutual relationship between liturgy and catechesis, and which touches on the major theme of this dissertation, is that the complementary relationship between liturgy and catechesis helps in binding together the experiential and conceptual aspects of meaning in Christian life. At the moment that the liturgical context is neglected, catechesis often assumes a purely academic or intellectual dimension with little bearing on the life of Christians. And in the same manner, when theological catechesis is neglected worship is easily subdued by subjectivism with little appreciation of the objective truth or knowledge of the faith. But in keeping with the observation already made above, both aspects of meaning, experiential and conceptual, play out in different degrees in both liturgy and catechesis. It would therefore be a false polarity to claim that liturgy only concerns itself with experiential meaning while catechesis is all about rational knowledge. Affirming the indissoluble marriage between liturgy and catechesis, Neville and Westerhoff write:

> Liturgy and learning have been linked since the birth of the Christian era, but of late they have become estranged. Regretfully, religious educators and liturgists have gone their separate ways and attempts to reunite their various concerns have tended to confuse the issue and distort important distinctions between them. . . . Perhaps the best way to differentiate between them is this: Liturgy is the actions and catechesis the reflections of the community of faith. Together they form the praxis (reflective action) by which the community is made aware of who and whose it is; learns that for which and by which it is called to live and die; and comes to understand why life is as it is, as well as, more importantly what it is to become. Liturgy nurtures the community of faith through celebrative symbolic acts of faith. Catechesis nurtures the community of faith through mindful attempts to communicate and reflect upon the story (myth) which underlies and informs these acts of faith. One is not the other.

> But the life of faith and the community of faith cannot exist without both. And faithful life implies their integration.[84]

In a sense, Westerhoff's sentiment here is a case of complementarity and mutual dependency between liturgy and catechesis in achieving the purpose of infusing meaning into Christian worship. This close connection between liturgy and catechesis is also seen in the practice of mystagogy, a kind of catechesis, to which we now turn.

Mystagogical Catechesis

Craig Satterlee in his book *Ambrose of Milan's Method of Mystagogical Preaching*, introduces his discussion of Ambrose' mystagogy with the following words:

> Mystagogy (*mystagogia*) is a sustained reflection on the Church's rites of initiation, preaching on the "mysteries" of the Christian faith. Mystagogy is spiritually based, takes place within a liturgical setting, is addressed exclusively to the Christian community, and has as its goal the formation *of* Christians rather than providing religious information *to* Christians. Mystagogy draws the hearers into the mysteries, moving them into the rites in which they have previously participated but may have understood only in terms of sense-perception.[85]

This introductory remark is so permeated with information that it probably provides more than can be unpacked within the purview of this discussion. But a few things mentioned here will be helpful for the purpose of this chapter, namely, the definition of mystagogy and the description of what it is not, the kind of people involved in mystagogy can be discovered, and the definition points toward the need for and the purpose and goal of mystagogy.

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[84] Neville and Westerhoff, *Learning Through Liturgy*, 91.

[85] Satterlee, *Ambrose of Milan's Method*, xxiii.

What is Mystagogy?

Satterlee gives this briefer definition of mystagogy as "a sustained reflection on the church's rite of initiation, preaching on the 'mysteries' of the Christian faith."[86] From the experience of the early church, mystagogy can be said to be the process of giving instruction to the newly baptized or the neophytes on the mysteries of their initiation rites. Enrico Mazza, in *Mystagogy: A Theology of Liturgy in the Patristic Age*, says, that "the term mystagogy signifies catechetical instruction in the sacraments, with special reference to the sacraments of Christian initiation and to the deeper spiritual meaning of the liturgical rites."[87] In this regard, mystagogy has been called "postbaptismal catechesis."[88] It is that phenomenon in the church of explaining to the neophytes, or newly baptized, the meaning and nature of the liturgical actions in which they have participated, namely, baptism, chrismation and the Eucharist.[89] Because it was customary in the early church to conduct the rite of initiation on Easter eve,[90] Catherine Dooley has defined mytagogy as the "postbaptismal interpretation of the mysteries celebrated on Holy Saturday night."[91] Mystagogy became a popular practice in the Patristic period. Ambrose of Milan, Cyril of Jerusalem, Theodore of Mopsuestia, and John Chrysostom have been regarded as the chief

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[86] Ibid.

[87] Enrico Mazza, *Mystagogy: A Theology of Liturgy in the Patristic Age* (New York: Pueblo Publishing Company, 1989), 1.

[88] Archdiocese of Chicago, *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, Study Edition (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications), 151.

[89] Mazza, *Mystagogy*, x.

[90] The Easter Vigil was the a primary date of the initiation rite, but there were other dates

[91] Catherine Dooley, "Mystagogy: Ministry to Parents," in *Catechesis and Mystagogy*, ed. Paul Covino *et al.* (Chicago: Liturgical Training Press, 1996), 99.

mystagogues of their time[92] and their works are instrumental in giving a glimpse of the nature and the purpose of the practice, although there may have been other written examples which have not survived. These Fathers employed different methods in their approach to mystagogy. But generally, as Mazza and Satterlee depict the practice, mystagogy in the early church involved both theological reflection on the sacraments and homiletics or preaching. This means that it was a form of teaching to the neophytes which had both conceptual and experiential aspects of meaning.

The Need and Purpose of Mystagogy

The need for and purpose of mystagogy can be seen in the phrase attributed to Ambrose of Milan in his homiletical address to the neophytes found in *De Mysteriis*: "You saw what is seen, but not what is done."[93] That is, the neophytes had seen the externals in the sacraments; they had seen the water of baptism and the bread and wine of the Eucharist, but they did not understand what such externals really meant and what they did. There was therefore the need to help them explore the rites in which they had participated but whose meaning they did not comprehend fully.[94] In this regard, the purpose of mystagogy was thus to draw "the hearers into the mysteries, moving them to enter spiritually into the rites in which they have previously participated."[95] To demonstrate this, Satterlee quotes Ambrose's address to the neophytes in *De Saramentis*:

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[92] Satterlee, *Ambrose of Milan's Method*, 2.

[93] Ibid., 1.

[94] Ibid., 2.

[95] Ibid., xxiii.

> Now is the time to speak of the mysteries and to reflect systematically on the sacred rituals. We would not have considered it helpful to those not yet initiated, but rather a betrayal of them, if we had decided to give such a detailed explanation before baptism. Indeed it is better for the light of mysteries themselves to have inundated you as a surprise than it would have been for us to have an explanation beforehand.[96]

A similar remark is found in *De Mysteriis* where "Ambrose says that he intends to explain the mysteries and *rationem* of the sacrament."[97] But what was the mystery into which the mystagogues were drawing the neophytes? Mazza asserts that "the *mysterium* is salvation, that is, the deeper content of history so far as history is a series of events," and that this content is now made available to human beings through *Sacramentum* or liturgical celebration."[98] He further says that the *ratio Sacramentorum* is the meaning of the *Sacramentum* or liturgical rite, namely, the connection of the Sacrament with the *mysterium*. But if *mystery* is the content of history, and hence the history of salvation, as Mazza puts it, then Mystagogy becomes an attempt to help the newly baptized Christians to *make sense* of the liturgical acts in light of the Christian narrative. This is in line with the claim that was made in the previous chapters about meaning as "making sense" out of an action or ritual in light of the story of the community. Mystagogy is therefore the process of shedding light on the rites, drawing from the *mysterium*, the story or narrative. It was therefore meant to help the neophytes to "discover the meaning of the unique rites of initiation in which they have participated"[99] in light of the Christian narrative.

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[96] Ibid., 187.

[97] Mazza, *Mystagogy*, 23.

[98] Ibid.

[99] Satterlee, *Ambrose of Milan's Method*, 31.

In the same understanding of the purpose of mystagogy, Mazza also looks at Theodore of Mopsuestia's mystagogical homilies and contends that the homilies were meant "to convey an understanding of the mysteries being celebrated," that is, an "understanding of the sacrament and its value."[100] He quotes Theodore addressing the neophytes in one of the homilies: "It is right that from now on you receive teaching on what happens in the Sacrament itself, for if you learn the reason why it exists, you will have an excellent grasp of a doctrine that is of no little importance."[101] From this, Mazza concludes:

> The purpose of mystagogy for Theodore is to instill an understanding of the power and purpose of the mystery, whether this be taken globally or in the individual units of ritual that make it up. By its nature, the mystery tends to lead the participating faithful to salvation. It follows that knowledge of the mystery at its deepest level must lead the faithful to so intense and lively participation that the mystery is enabled to achieve its purpose: the communication of salvation. In this way, mystagogy becomes part of the dynamic movement of the mystery itself.[102]

The examples of mystagogical address that have been cited from both Ambrose and Theodore indicate that the purpose of mystagogy entails both conceptual and existential dimensions of meaning in the liturgical acts, particularly the sacraments. For instance, Ambrose's description of mystagogy as "a systematic reflection" and "a detailed explanation"[103] puts the exercise squarely within the domain of second-order theology, which definitely engages the intellect. This means that mystagogy takes care of the conceptual aspect of meaning in the liturgical acts. But as we have seen, such exercise of reflection and explanation is not an end in

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[100] Mazza, *Mystagogy*, 51.

[101] Ibid.

[102] Ibid., 55.

[103] Satterlee, *Ambrose of Milan's Method*, 187.

itself; it leads the neophytes, and all Christians, to the meaning of the rituals in their own lives and in the life of the community at large, which in our language is experiential meaning. In this respect, mystagogy, as a mode of catechesis, becomes complementary to the liturgy in the function of making worship a meaningful event. It connects the liturgical rituals with the narrative of the community, and thus gives sense to the rituals in light of and within the narrative. Christians are thus led into seeing not just what is observable but, even more importantly, the sense of what is done in and by those rituals. It is therefore in light of this connection between conceptual meaning and experiential meaning in mystagogy that we can understand Ambrose's message to the neophytes that they had seen what is seen, but not what is done.[104] In mystagogy, Christians are invited "into a deeper understanding, experience, and appreciation of the specific rites"[105] of the corporate worship.

With regard to its scope, it can also be said that mystagogy has a wider range that goes beyond the catechumenate not only in respect to its target audience but also to the level of its application. For instance, James J. Bacik draws from Karl Rahner to show that mystagogy has a place in Christian apologetics. In his book *Apologetics and the Eclipse of Mystery: Mystagogy According to Karl Rahner*, Bacik discusses the relevance of mystagogy to apologetics and argues that the task of mystagogy is to connect or relate experience and doctrine.[106] He distinguishes here between what he calls "categorical mystagogy" and "transcendental mystagogy." About the

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[104] Ibid., 1.

[105] Ibid., 190.

[106] James J. Bacik, *Apologetics and the Eclipse of Mystery: Mystagogy According to Karl Rahner* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1980), 13.

former, which he describes as the bid to relate Christian doctrine and human experience, he writes:

> For those who find the mystery dimension of life obscured, Christian doctrines tend to appear as abstract speculations divorced from any experiential base. Their proper function of pointing to the mysterious depths of the divine-human relationship is lost amidst literalistic interpretations. In this situation the Christian apologist must find a convincing method of relating experience and Christian doctrine.[107]

For Bacik, the "convincing method of relating experience and Christian doctrine"—the categorical mystagogy—is a kind of apologetics in which the apologist becomes a mystagogue and apologetics a kind of mystagogy. Bacik cites Karl Rahner in this regard. He says, "Rahner provides us with some helpful suggestions along this line. A contemporary theology must bring the *fides quae*, or the content of faith, into a close and explicitly recognized unity with the *fides qua*, or the act of faith itself.[108] Bacik expands upon this contention:

> Human experience and Christian doctrines are connected not simply logically and externally but organically and intrinsically. Thus, because our concrete personal existence is graced, there is an intrinsic ontological connection between our self-experience and the content of particular doctrines. It is not a matter of uniting disparate realities by verbal or logical method. Rather, experience must be intrinsically connected because of their common origin. Here is the key to understanding the mystagogical task of relating experience and doctrine. It is not a clever technique of making doctrines intelligible, but an elucidation of common meanings found in our experience and also Christian doctrines which are actually objectifications of graced human experience.[109]

While "categorical mystagogy" is the connection between experience and Christian doctrines, Bacik defines transcendental mystagogy as "the illumination and articulation of the

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[107] Ibid., 12.

[108] We have already seen this relationship between *fides quae* and *fides qua* in chapter two in connection with the question of meaning.

[109] Bacik, *Apologetics and the Eclipse of Mystery*, 13.

religious dimension of human experience," which he says is a more effective form of apologetics than the traditional ones. He says, "The apologist must first become a mystagogue by attempting to initiate atheists into a perception of the mystery dimension of their experience. It is a matter, not of transforming them into totally new persons, but helping them to come to a greater self-awareness, to an explicit consciousness of the religious dimension already present in their concrete lives."[110] Bacik's argument here can be understood better in the larger context of his discussion on apologetics, but the relevance of mystagogy to apologetics here locates mystagogy in the broader terrain of liturgy-theology dynamics. Furthermore, his distinction of categorical and transcendental mystagogy sheds some light on the connection between the experiential and conceptual dimensions of meaning in Christian worship and how the two stand together in a relationship of complementarity.

The Target Audience for Mystagogy

As to the question of who the target audience is for mystagogy, we have seen that in the early church it generally occurred in the context of the initiation of new members into the Christian faith, that is, it targeted the initiates or the newly baptized. So when Satterlee says that mystagogy was "addressed exclusively to the Christian community,"[111] he means that the initiates were already part of the Christian community by virtue of their baptism. But the newly baptized were considered new members of the community who still needed to grow in faith and understanding. Yet, as it has been consistently pointed out in this discussion, growth in faith and

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[110] Ibid., 16.

[111] Satterlee, *Ambrose of Milan's Method*, xxiii.

knowledge is a lifelong reality for the Christian life that is not limited to the initiatory period. This means that the postbaptismal period "is a time for the community and the neophytes together to grow in deepening their grasp of the paschal mystery and making it part of their lives through meditation on the Gospel."[112] In a sense, this points to the need for mystagogy beyond the initial stages of the life of faith. While, as with any other process, it has a beginning which targets the neophytes for "introduction into a fuller and more effective understanding of mysteries through the Gospel message,"[113] mystagogy continues as long as Christians remain disciples, and hence learners of the faith in their entire lives. This is because no one can assume perfect mastery and a complete understanding of the mystery in this life, not even the mystagogues themselves; otherwise paschal mystery would no longer be a mystery, even to those who would be considered faith veterans. In view of this, it can be said that postbaptismal catechesis, or mystagogy, does not end with the Easter season as has been understood in the traditional practice. In keeping with the overall argument of this chapter for a broader concept of catechesis as a lifelong phenomenon, mystagogy is thus understood to continue after the initiatory stage into the whole Christian life. This is because Christians, as sinful saints, always need the experience of God's grace and a deeper understanding and appreciation of the Christian narrative. In other words, the ongoing experience and conception of God's salvation will remain part of the Christian life.

This wider concept and scope of mystagogy implies that it entails the threefold task of catechesis discussed above, namely, instruction, formation, and initiation. For instance, Satterlee

[112] Archdiocese of Chicago, *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, 151.

says that mystagogy "has its goal the formation *of* Christians rather than providing religious information to Christians."[114] This, however, does not mean to undermine the significance of the informational aspect of mystagogy, for information cannot be disregarded in the process of Christian formation and apprehension of meaning. Rather, it emphasizes the fact that information is not the end (*telos*) of the mystagogical catechesis. This is the strength of the theory of complementarity because experience definitely needs a conceptual framework if mystagogy is to be effective in fostering meaning among Christians.

Summary

The discussion throughout this chapter has examined the relevance and role of catechesis in making Christian worship a meaningful event. As has been discovered catechesis may be viewed as a formal program of instruction regarding the basics of the Christian faith. In this view, catechesis is normally regarded as a seasonal exercise, usually targeting the catechumens. While this is an important aspect of catechesis, it is not the whole picture of catechesis. It is in this regard that this discussion has assumed a broader view of catechesis as a daily or regular phenomenon in the church in which Christians are refreshed in their experience and knowledge of the mystery of salvation celebrated in worship through the liturgy. In this regard, catechesis has instructional, formational, and initiatory tasks that target not only the catechumens but the whole body of Christ. It has also become evident that catechesis and liturgy are integrally connected in a relationship of complementarity so that liturgy, in its catechetical dimension,

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[113] Ibid.

[114] Satterlee, Ambrose of Milan's Method, xxiii.

teaches the faith and doctrine of the church, forms the Christian and keeps him/her in an ongoing encounter with God. At the same time, catechesis leads to a more meaningful participation in the liturgy as it sheds more light on the actions and symbols that constitute the liturgy. In this regard, mystagogical catechesis seeks to connect the liturgical experience with the doctrinal content of the faith in light of the Christian narrative in order that worship may be a meaningful event.

CHAPTER FIVE

MEANINGFUL WORSHIP IN CONTEXT

Introduction

In his book *Worship: Progress and Tradition*, Anscar J. Chupungco describes the post-Tridentine liturgical experience in the Roman Catholic Church in this manner:

> The liturgical reform after the Council of Trent succeeded in instilling the ideal of uniformity in worship. It made absolutely no difference whether the liturgical assembly was composed of tribal communities that inhabited the mountains of Asia and Africa or of the august college of cardinals assisting a papal Mass in the splendor of St. Peter's basilica. Everywhere, the liturgy not only spoke the same language, it also sang the same music.[1]

These words sound complimentary, appreciating the monolithic church with liturgical uniformity achieved by the Council of Trent. However, a closer look reveals that the sentiment is more sarcastic than it is complimentary, at least as far as liturgical experience is concerned. Chupungco is not alone in this critique and neither is it a Roman Catholic problem, for there are many voices from across denominational divides that have raised concerns about liturgical practice that is insensitive to the context of the people and have thus called for a more contextualized worship. Gordon Lathrop, from the Lutheran tradition, says in *Holy Things* that "we fool ourselves if we think that nothing changes, that we continue to do exactly what the ancients did"[2] in worship. But what, exactly, is the driving force behind the clamor for both theological and liturgical contextualization or, in the current liturgical parlance, inculturation?

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[1] Anscar J. Chupungco, *Worship: Progress and Tradition* (Beltsville, MD: The Pastoral Press, 1995), 157.

[2] Gordon Lathrop, *Holy Things: A Liturgical Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993), 5.

This chapter argues that the question of meaning in worship is not only a major force behind the need for liturgical adaptation but it is also one of the major factors that influence the course of adaptation, and that a complementary relationship between liturgy and theology is crucial to such a process.

It has been noted in the previous chapters that meaningful worship entails both experiential and conceptual dimensions of meaning; that such meaning is mediated and fostered in the assembly through dynamics of complementarity between liturgy and theology; and that catechesis enhances appropriation of meaning and is thus crucial to meaningful worship both as an aspect of liturgy and as a way of preparing worshippers for a more informed participation in the liturgy. This chapter is going to explore how Christian worship can remain meaningful experientially and conceptually in different contexts. It will examine two dimensions of context: in the historical context it will look at meaning in worship in relation to change in time; in the socio-cultural context it will look at meaning in worship in relation to locality and the social-cultural setting. In that respect, the task of this chapter is to explore the rationale behind—rather than the nature or methodology of—contextualization in relation to the appropriation of meaning in worship. Any value judgments on the integrity of the adaptation process and the authenticity of its products, the contextualized liturgies, is thus not within the scope of this study.

Meaningful Worship and Socio-cultural Context

Liturgy and Context

In *Cultural Adaptation of the Liturgy*, Chupungco says that the question of liturgical adaptation "has been brought to the limelight in modern times because of Vatican II's renewed sense of pluralism within the Church and respect for people's culture."[3] Such a sense of pluralism is evidenced by the following provision of the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* (CSL) in Article 37:

> Even in the liturgy, the Church has no wish to impose a rigid uniformity in matters which do not implicate the faith or good of the whole community; rather does she respect and foster the genius and talents of the various races and peoples. Anything in these people's way of life which is not indissolubly bound up with superstition and error she studies with sympathy and, if possible, preserves intact. Sometimes in fact she admits such things into the liturgy itself, so long as they harmonize with its true and authentic spirit.[4]

On account of this provision, the Second Vatican Council has been hailed for its departure from the strict uniformity that characterized the Tridentine tradition. Chupungco thus says that "the local churches must begin where Vatican II left off" and that "because of the fluidity of cultural expressions and the growing needs of the local churches, adaptation will always be on the agenda of liturgical renewal."[5] But what are these needs? Or, what is the need for contextualization? Patrick Chukwudezie Chibuko, an African theologian, recognizes the need for liturgies to be embedded in the local cultures and notes in *Paschal Mystery of Christ* that "there abound of

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[3] Anscar J. Chupungco, *Cultural Adaptation of the Liturgy* (New York: Paulist Press, 1982), 3.

[4] Second Vatican Council. *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1963), 25.

[5] Anscar J. Chupungco, *Liturgies of the Future: The Process and Method of Inculturation* (New York: Paulist Press, 1989), 7.

course, rationales for seeking these cultural alternatives."[6] He gives a dual-faceted rationale for liturgical inculturation in Africa: First, since "Africans have welcomed the message" of the gospel, "this message of love and peace needs now to become incarnated in the hearts, huts and hovels of the people."[7] Second, that "times even for the church, have changed" and thus "after the Council the experience of local churches in the area of inculturation, especially in the mission, has instilled into consciousness that church unity does not have to be anchored exclusively on the uniform observance of the liturgical rites."[8]

The article from the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* cited above gives the purpose of liturgical contextualization and pluralism as the need to "respect and foster the genius and talents of the various races and peoples." This reasoning is sensible especially to people in the third world countries who have felt that their cultures were being discounted or regarded as primitive and barbaric. As a result, in formerly colonized countries contextualization has sometimes taken a nationalistic dimension as local churches, mostly indigenous, strove to purge their worship of foreign elements that were considered an extension of colonialism. In Africa, for example, some of the so-called African Independent Churches "arose partly as a protest to colonial oppression and missionaries' rigid style of Worship."[9] In that kind of situation, as John Lukwata puts it, inculturation and liberation have complemented each other[10] and inculturation thus has become a

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[6] Patrick Chukwudezie Chibuko, *Paschal Mystery of Christ* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1999), 76.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid.

[9] John Lukwata, *Integrated African Liturgy* (Eldoret, Kenya: AMECEA Gaba Publications, 2003), 61.

[10] Ibid., 68.

means of "stripping Christianity of its foreignness,"[11] which is embedded in the western cultural forms. But resentment against the perceived liturgical imperialism cannot be attributed to the indigenous churches alone. Even in the mainstream churches, there has been a growing concern that the liturgies in use are almost purely western in origin and expression, with little connection to the local cultures. Chupungco therefore says, "Liturgical adaptation does not find its justification in the fact that the traditional Greco-Roman and Franco-Germanic signs are incomprehensible to the third world, but rather on the fact that these signs are alien to the cultural expressions of the third world."[12]

Although respect for people's cultures and ways of life as described in the *Constitution* is desirable and Christian, there seems to be more to the call for contextualization of worship than mere respect for the people's culture. The crux of the matter regarding inculturation, or its chief aim and purpose, can be deduced from Chupungco's critique of the Tridentine liturgical uniformity. He says that such uniformity was not without its ills or price, and the price is that "all too often the liturgy did not nourish fully the spiritual life of the local congregation."[13] However, the question can further be raised why the liturgy could not nourish the local congregations spiritually. To such a question Chupungco would reply: "How could it, when its language had been dead for centuries, its rites and symbols were medieval, and its distinctive music, which was the Gregorian chant, belonged to another time and people?"[14] One can argue that what is at

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[11] Ibid., 61.

[12] Chupungco, *Cultural Adaptation of the Liturgy*, 70.

[13] Chupungco, *Worship: Progress and Tradition*, 158.

[14] Ibid., 157.

stake here is the question of meaning in worship, as Chupungco suggests that the Tridentine liturgy did not mean much to people worshipping in different contexts. This is more vivid in his article "Two Methods of Liturgical Inculturation," where he says:

> Inculturation properly understood and rightly executed should lead the assembly to a more profound appreciation of Christ's mystery made present in the celebration by the dynamic mediation of cultural signs and symbols. Inculturation, in other words, should aim to deepen the spiritual life of the assembly through a fuller experience of Christ who reveals himself in the people's language, rites, and symbols. If inculturation does not do this it remains a futile exercise.[15]

It can be seen here that meaning in worship, both experiential and conceptual, is at the heart of liturgical inculturation and pluralism and this reality has been articulated in many and various ways by different liturgical theologians. For instance, Chupungco observes that "spirituality" and "doctrine"[16] factors were behind Vatican II's favoring of liturgical pluralism as it recognized that "the doctrinal and spiritual riches of the liturgy needed to be shared with every person in the worshipping assembly and with people of every culture and tradition."[17] In other words, inculturation aims at making Christian worship meaningful to people in their context. S. Anita Stauffer, a Lutheran, shares this view and underscores the role of meaning in worship. She says that "it is not enough simply to take elements from a culture and insert them into Christian worship without understanding what those elements mean in their own cultural contexts."[18]

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[15] Anscar Chupungco, "Two Methods of Liturgical Inculturation," in *Christian Worship: Unity in Cultural Diversity*, ed. S. Anita Stauffer (Geneva, Switzerland: Lutheran World Federation, 1996), 77.

[16] The distinction of spirituality and doctrine in this sense could be understood as corresponding to the experiential/conceptual categories.

[17] Chupungco, *Worship: Progress and Tradition*, 158

[18] S. Anita Stauffer, "Worship: Ecumenical Core and Cultural Context," in *Christian Worship: Unity in Cultural Diversity* ed. S. Anita Stauffer (Geneva, Switzerland: Lutheran World Federation, 1996), 13.

Furthermore, she writes, "The meaning of contextualization is obvious: it is the use or echo of local cultural and natural elements in worship and the space in which it occurs. It is making the bridge between worship and local context, so that worship can be meaningful to the people in their everyday lives."[19] In the same vein, Lathrop contends that every local gathering must have some meaning, and that all that is done within the assembly must be meaningful to those who are gathered. He writes:

> What does this gathering mean? Why is it that people assemble, that biblical texts are read, that people are sometimes washed, that the fragment of a meal is held, and that these things are done side by side? How do these patterns of words and actions, of ritual communication carry that meaning? How should one, whether coming new to such an assembly or long a participant, understand what the meaning is about?[20]

Lathrop is here concerned with how Christian worshippers can appropriate meaning from liturgical acts in worship. He points out that "as Christianity finds itself in diverse cultural situations throughout the world, it seeks to find ways to let the historic faith come to expression in the words, music, gestures, and worldview of a particular culture"[21] so that the meaning of the essentials of Christian worship—the preaching, baptism, and the Lord's Supper—can effectively be communicated to the people in and through their cultural expressions. The meaning associated with such essentials, as described by Lathrop, is the gifts and blessings of God appropriated through the participation in the liturgy, which is the *raison d'être* of worship and the liturgy. He writes:

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[19] Ibid., 15.

[20] Lathrop, *Holy Things*, 2.

[21] Gordon W. Lathrop, *What Are the Essentials of Christian Worship?* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1994), 4.

> The *reasons* for these essentials belong to their essential character. Word, table, and bath occur at the heart of a particular community so that all may freely encounter God's mercy in Christ, that they come to faith again and again, that they be formed into a community of faith, that they may be brought to the possibility of love for God's world. When these reasons are not manifest in the existence of the central actions themselves, the deep meaning of the essential things is obscured and destroyed.[22]

This need to have meaning in the essentials of the liturgy communicated to the people in their own context makes meaningful worship a significant factor in the push for liturgical inculturation as Lukwata demonstrates in his book *Integrated African Liturgy*. He gives the aim of the book as "fostering the ongoing search for a meaningful celebration and inculturation of the liturgy."[23] For Lukwata, therefore, liturgical inculturation is the "process by which people of a given culture become able to live, express, celebrate, formulate and communicate their Christian faith and their experience of Paschal Mystery in linguistic and symbolic terms that are meaningful and that best convey life and truth in their social and cultural environment."[24] Lukwata seems to capture both experiential and conceptual dimensions of meaning in worship by noting that the celebration of the liturgy must be done in a way that conveys both life and truth to the participants. The conveyance and experience of the paschal mystery and life therein points to the experiential meaning, whereas the truth conveyed within a proper linguistic framework points to the conceptual aspect of meaning in worship. Patrick Chibuko reflects the experiential dimension in *Keeping the Liturgy Alive* with the view that "liturgy centres on key

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[22] Ibid., 22.

[23] Lukwata, *Integrated African Liturgy*, xx.

[24] Ibid., 22.

moments in salvation history and one's contemporary experience of them."[25] He further says, "It needs to be recalled that liturgy celebrates the mystery of salvation which is climaxed in the resurrection of Jesus. Whatever that facilitates, the effective re-enactment of this mystery should be aggressively pursued for the personal appropriation of the tremendous influence of this great mystery in the life of the church."[26] But in order for the liturgy to effectively communicate such great meaning it must be relevant to the context of the people.

Leslie Wilfrid Brown[27] sheds more light on the experiential meaning in his Zabriskie Lectures of 1964 published as *Relevant Liturgy*. He notes that "significance and spiritual value" of worship and the liturgy must be conveyed to all people wherever they are in the world. For example, he says, "The bare words of the Creed, 'He suffered under Pontius Pilate,' are not enough." The meaning and significance of the intrinsic event recalled by those words must be shown. But Brown seems to be alive to the reality of both experiential and conceptual dimensions of meaning in worship, which are to be achieved in liturgical contextualization. He writes: "Here is the most urgent task of the Church, to find intelligible language to proclaim the biblical revelation, language which will clearly show the acts of God in Christ to be meaningful and relevant not only to the needs of the individual but to the community and to mankind as a whole."[28] Intelligibility here calls for "intellectual" apprehension of what is going on in the

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[25] Patrick C. Chibuko, *Keeping the Liturgy Alive: An Anglophone West African Experience* (Frankfurt: IKO, 2003), 17.

[26] Ibid., 21.

[27] Rev. Brown was a British missionary who became the Archbishop of Uganda and Rwanda Anglican Church in the early twentieth-century.

[28] L. W. Brown, *Relevant Liturgy: Zabriskie Lectures* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), 13.

liturgy. But Brown is critical of any imbalanced understanding of meaningful worship in context. He says:

> Too often our liturgy has been mostly intellectual. In the Luganda language the common word for worship is *okusoma*, which means 'to read,' and the services of the first Christians in Uganda were to a large extent reading demonstrations. We have to be careful that in our desire for intelligibility we do not forget that there are other parts of the human personality than the intellectual. It is because our worship has been expressive of only a part of us that other sects have arisen to meet people's needs.[29]

Brown's sentiment here supports the primary argument of this chapter that liturgy in context must take into account both experiential and conceptual aspects of meaning and that fostering one at the expense of the other has far reaching effects. Reflecting Luther on *beneficium*—the divine acts—and *sacrificium*—the human response to the divine acts in worship,[30] Brown contends that contextualization should take care of meaning in the two directions of Christian worship. He says that "the necessity of finding forms through which God's message is made intelligible is clamant"[31] and that "the same considerations hold good if we turn to the other side of liturgy, man's response to God's initiative and God's grace."[32] Brown notes that "here again, everything that is said and done must be meaningful"[33] and that "our words and our actions must express what we want to express."[34] On this account, he argues that mere "translation from one geographical language into another" is not enough or is even problematic. He writes, "The

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[29] Ibid.

[30] Vajta, *Luther on Worship*, 27.

[31] Brown, *Relevant Liturgy*, 10.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Ibid.

problem of translation from one geographical language into another is also an extremely acute one. The Eskimos can hardly confess that they have strayed like lost sheep with any real sense of conviction if they have never seen a sheep, and doubtless some of them wonder what the palm branches they will wave in heaven will be like."[35] Brown thus concludes that "as with language, so with ceremonies," that "they must be intelligible, or they completely frustrate their purpose,"[36] which, as previously noted, is the conveyance of meaning to the worshippers.

A few more examples can be given from the African context, for instance, to demonstrate how inculturation could enhance the appropriation of meaning both experientially and conceptually and thus lead to meaningful worship. Lukwata says that "the African custom of welcoming a guest and the preparation that brings enthusiasm and expectation can provide the context" for a more meaningful celebration of Advent.[37] This means that African worshippers can understand best the meaning of Advent in light of their cultural concept of arrival of a guest. Whether the traditional African practice of welcoming a guest would reflect the whole meaning of Christ's threefold arrival—"recalling the first coming at the Incarnation (*retrospective dimension*), the present coming in the Sacraments (*aspective dimension*) and the final coming in glory (*prospective dimension*)"[38]—is debatable, but that experience would be a great point of contact that could give African Christian assemblies a picture of Advent from their own culture and thus enhance their appropriation of its meaning within and in light of the Christian narrative.

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[35] Ibid., 11.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Lukwata, *Integrated African Liturgy*, 142.

[38] Ibid.

Also, this can be a contribution to the church catholic in so far as non-Africans can derive meaning from such an experience and grow both experientially and conceptually in their understanding of and participation in Advent.

Lukwata gives another example in regard to the naming rite in Africa. He says, "In Africa, the names of people and places are embodied with meaning. Some people's names are an expression of faith in God or spiritual experience related to the understanding of life as a gift from God or a description of the circumstances in which a person was born."[39] As with Advent, there are points of contact that could be tapped for the better appropriation of meaning by Christian worshippers in Africa. For Africans, and believably for others too, name constitutes an important aspect of one's identity both as an individual human person and as a member of a larger community. By name one is identified as a person who is distinct from any other. But this identity also extends to a larger community such that by name people are identifiable as being members of certain communities. For instance, anyone who is familiar with Kenyan names would easily identify "Omolo" as a member of the "Luo" community, "Waweru" as a member of the Kikuyu community, "Lang'at" as a "Kalenjin," and many others. But there have been complaints that African names have been neglected in favor of Western names during Christian initiation rites. Appreciating the course of inculturation among the "Igbo" people of Nigeria, Cyprian C. U. Anyamwu says that "at baptism, people are now allowed to answer their vernacular names that do not only portray their special theological meaning and direct reference

[39] Ibid., 167.

to God, but also portray their peculiar story of life and circumstances of birth."[40] Lukwata is therefore right that there are values in names for Africans. Such values could be explored for a possible incorporation into the Christian naming rite for a more meaningful celebration.

The African custom of communal eating would also be mentioned as having the potential of making the celebration of the Eucharist meaningful in worship in the African context. Among the "Luos" of Kenya, for example, there was a traditional custom of sharing milk among all people at the table from one calabash, from one person to the next, as a show of love and communal solidarity. Through such sharing of milk, the people conceptually recognize and also experience deeper relational ties with one another in the community. From this experience, communion from a common cup would be more meaningful to them, as one body of Christ, in their conception and experience of the paschal mystery than from individual cups. In the same manner, as Lukwata notes, liturgical colors could also be used in accordance with African concepts to enhance appropriation of meaning, especially the conceptual elements of worship and the liturgy. For instance, he says, "black obviously symbolizes the African skin. The dark clouds in the sky symbolize blessings for the traditional African rainmakers. White symbolizes good future, good luck, purity and blessings. Green stands for the fertility of the land."[41] And about church architecture, Lukwata says, "Church buildings can be constructed in a round, octagonal or conical shapes, similar to the houses found in Central and Eastern African regions. The round shape symbolizes eternity, the universe in miniature, sharing, belonging, and

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[40] Cyprian Chima Uzima Anyamwu, *The Rites of Initiation in Christian Liturgy and in Igbo Traditional Society*. European University Studies (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2004), 17.

[41] Ibid., 169.

security."[42] The same can also be said about the African songs and rhythms. Anyamwu says, "Today the Christian liturgy is celebrated in Igbo and native songs are used. The use of Igbo tunes and rhythms has a deep theological meaning and speaks directly to the soul."[43]

As is apparent, the contention that meaning in worship is a key factor in the clamor for and the task of liturgical adaptation cannot be overstated. The few examples alluded to are a clear indicator that cultural elements like language, symbols and gestures are vital carriers of meaning which can be utilized to make worship meaningful to people in their own cultural contexts. In order for the local assembly to appreciate the liturgy and participate in it meaningfully, they must be able to conceive of the elements therein and how such elements fit together. In this regard, liturgy clad in completely foreign attire might not mean much to the worshippers in the local assembly.[44]

The Role of Theology in Contextualization

Brown has raised the significant question whether the divine acts of the liturgy can remain efficacious in the event that the liturgical language is unintelligible to the worshippers. For instance, Chupungco has criticized the Tridentine liturgical tradition for strict uniformity and insensitivity to intelligibility. This is because many people could not understand Latin, the language of the liturgy. But a question can be posed whether those worshippers could still receive God's gifts and blessings in the liturgy and in worship despite the unintelligibility of the

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[42] Ibid., 165.

[43] Anyamwu, *The Rites of Initiation*, 17.

[44] It is to be noted that in the interest of the catholicity of the church, some elements of the liturgy will always be shared across cultural divides.

language and the liturgical actions. In other words, can worship be experientially meaningful to the worshippers despite their conceptual handicap? Brown would answer in the affirmative as can be seen in his description of liturgical experience in the Middle Ages. He writes:

> Throughout the centuries, then, from the fourth century until to-day, the Christian liturgy has been celebrated in a language no layman knew, with most solemn ceremonies conducted behind a curtain, out of sight of the congregation, with no reading of the Scriptures in vernacular. It can hardly be said that liturgy was relevant, it was certainly not intelligible. Yet God used it to symbolize and express the mystery of our redemption, and a living tradition of Christian faith and morals was maintained and passed on.[45]

In what would sound as a kind of *ex opere operato* theory,[46] Brown here argues for the irony of efficacy of the liturgical celebration despite the apparent unintelligibility of its language.[47] And, if Brown is right, it means that the people worshipping in such a condition still encounter God and thus experience God's blessings and the gift of life in Christ offered in the celebration of the liturgy. While this is subject to debate, the point here is that the essentials of the liturgy carry meaning which must remain intact regardless of the context in which the liturgy is celebrated. It is to be noted, however, that positions on what constitutes the essentials of the

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[45] Brown, *Relevant Liturgy*, 25.

[46] The theory of *ex opere operato* was one of the chief bones of contention between Rome and the Reformers. It was taught in the Roman Catholic theology that the sacraments worked or conferred grace to the celebrants by the mere performance of the sacrament even without faith from the recipient. The main intention of the theory was to defend the in-built efficacy of the sacraments as opposed to the twin theory, *ex opere operantis*, which presupposes a subjective factor or right disposition, like having faith, for the reception of the benefits of the sacraments. See AP XIII 18ff.

[47] This question is mentioned in passing in article XXIV of the Apology of the Augsburg Confession (AP) in an apparent reference to the Roman Mass. It reads: "The opponents include a long harangue about the use of Latin in the Mass, in which they childishly quibble about how it benefits hearers who are ignorant of the church's faith to hear a Mass that they do not understand. Apparently they imagine that the mere act of hearing itself is a useful act of worship even where there is no understanding. . . . No one has ever written or suggested that people benefit from the mere act of hearing lessons that they do not understand or that they benefit from ceremonies not because they teach or admonish by simply *ex opere operato*, that is, by the mere act of doing or observing. Away with such Pharisaic ideas!"

Christian liturgy may vary from one church tradition to another. For instance, pure[48] preaching of the gospel and right administration of the sacraments would be considered basic to the liturgy for Lutherans.[49] But whatever the position, any worship that is worth the name Christian will bear essentials derived from the narrative that binds all Christians together as a single community of faith despite cultural diversity. Chupungco says that "inculturation is a means of transmitting unaltered to the people of today the original intent or meaning of the liturgy" and that "it does not create new liturgies[50] in the sense of producing a content other than the one handed down officially by the church."[51] Anyamwu shares this view and says that "the liturgy has its true and authentic spirit" which "should not be tampered with by any reform efforts."[52] He further points out that "considerations are always to be given to the faith or good of the whole community" and that "this is a fair manner of admitting and respecting the weight of plurality of cultures within the universal fold."[53] This would mean that inculturation, properly understood, aims at enhancing the appropriation of the core liturgical meaning. Although there is a possibility of creating new rituals in different localities with the potential of generating new meanings, such meanings must remain in tandem with the overarching horizon—the world of meanings—of the Christian community embodied in the biblical narrative. This seems to be what Anyamwu means when he says, "So long as the Paschal Mystery remains the same forever, and the plurality of human

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[48] But the question of the degree of purity remains an issue.

[49] AC VIII.

[50] Chupungco's view here reflects the Roman Catholic context in which there is an official and canonical Liturgy.

[51] Chupungco, *Worship: Progress and Tradition*, 169.

[52] Anyamwu, *The Rites of Initiation*, 15

backgrounds is unavoidable, the fact of seeking better ways of communicating more meaningfully and precisely has to be reckoned with. It is a need that has to be satisfied."[54] This means that liturgy in context will seek to make the liturgical celebration and the meaning therein intelligible to the people in their own context. In the same vein of thought, Brown says, "The core of Christian worship is thus something given, unchanging and unchangeable, relevant for all people and all times and in all places. But the manner in which this central directive truth is presented must be relevant and intelligible to men in every age and in every place."[55] Thus there is a core of meaning within the liturgy that has to be inculturated.

This unity of meaning in the liturgical essentials despite cultural diversity is captured in the Nairobi Statement of the Lutheran World Federation of 1996 on "Worship and Culture." The statement describes Christian worship in its relation to culture in four ways: First, worship is said to be "transcultural," which means that "the fundamental shape of the principal Sunday act of Christian worship, the Eucharist or Holy Communion, is shared across cultures."[56] This is because "the great narratives of Christ's birth, death, and resurrection, and sending of the Spirit and our Baptism into him, provide the central meanings of the church's year."[57] The statement thus points out that, "the ways in which the shapes of the Sunday Eucharist and the church year are expressed vary by culture, but their meanings and fundamental structures are shared around

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[53] Ibid.

[54] Ibid.

[55] Brown, *Relevant Liturgy*, 5.

[56] Anita Stauffer, ed. *Worship: Unity in Cultural Diversity*, 24.

[57] Ibid.

the globe," as "there is one Lord, one faith, one Baptism, one Eucharist."[58] It means that what Christian liturgy aims to offer, the gospel celebrated in the paschal mystery and the experience of Christ's gift of life therein, remains the same regardless of the locality or cultural milieu where it is celebrated. Second, worship is said to be "contextual." Here it is noted that "a given culture's values and patterns, insofar as they are consonant with the values of the gospel, as described in point one above, can be used to express the meaning and purpose of Christian worship."[59] A contextualized worship thus "involves understanding the fundamental meaning both of elements of worship and the local culture, and enabling the meanings and actions of worship to be 'encoded' and re-expressed in the language of the culture."[60] But the statement strongly underscores that "in contextualization the fundamental values and meanings of both Christianity and of local cultures must be respected."[61] Third, Christian worship is "counter-cultural." Since some elements of local cultures might not be in tandem with "the values of the Gospel," Christian worship also "involves transformation of cultures."[62] But such transformation would definitely require an overarching meaning against which other meanings generated through local cultural elements would be gauged. Such dynamics point to the role of the biblical narrative and of the tradition of the larger Christian community in evaluating cultural elements. Fourth, Christian worship is "cross-cultural," meaning that Christians can share certain elements of worship, say hymns, across cultural boundaries because such elements bear the essentials and

[58] Ibid., 25.

[59] Ibid.

[60] Ibid.

[61] Ibid., 26.

because all cultures ultimately can be in service to the one language of God, the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Statements such as "universal fold," "central meanings" of the liturgy, "fundamental values and meanings" of Christianity, consonance with "the values of the Gospel," and others, appear to be based on two chief premises. First, there is a larger community than the cultural units in which local assemblies exist. The "one Lord, one Baptism, and one Eucharist"[63] binds those who celebrate the liturgy as one community of faith drawn from all cultures spread all over the globe but with a common fundamental shape of liturgical celebration and shared meaning anchored in the metanarrative as noted in the Nairobi Statement. This community is the church of Christ which is both local and catholic at the same time. It follows, therefore, that the church, in her catholicity, has central meanings attached to the liturgy that are intended for appropriation by Christian worshippers the world over, and which connect the several culturally diverse assemblies. Lathrop reflects this reality in his article "Worship: Local Yet Universal." He says:

> But the catholic Church is not "merely" local. That is, it is not only a reflection of local attitudes and local realities. The communion of this local assembly with the other assemblies around Christ in other places is enabled by certain concrete means, certain "instruments" of communion in Christ. Indeed, these means are needed for this local assembly to be "church" at all, for people to know that this assembly is in communion with all the churches of Christ, in every time and every place, and that what it celebrates is a Gospel which has universal significance, albeit expressed in local terms and ways.[64]

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[62] Ibid., 27.

[63] Ibid., 24.

[64] Ibid., 49.

The understanding of the universal or catholic church as a community brings with it the notion of "myth" or narrative. As was mentioned in the previous chapters, every community is put together by some kind of "myth" or narrative and the tradition of how that narrative has been lived out and how it has shaped the life of the entire community. This further means that the church of Christ in the world, as a community, has a universal myth or narrative which forms and informs its own horizon, a world of meanings, even as it takes shape in connection with local myths or narratives. This universal myth has a universal meaning for all Christians which must be fostered and reflected whenever and wherever the church gathers throughout the world. This means that the process of liturgical inculturation must balance the local and universal nature of Christian liturgy and worship so that the overarching meaning in liturgy is neither lost nor communicated unintelligibly to the people. As Lathrop says, the tension of universality and locality must be kept in Christian worship, if the worship is to be meaningful, that is, authentically Christian and genuinely local. Overemphasis on the local meaning would universalize the liturgy and worship till it is no longer local, and thus less meaningful to the local assembly; overemphasis on the local meaning, on the other hand, would localize the worship till it is no longer catholic and thus not Christian.

Second, theology has a significant role in the whole process of liturgical inculturation. It was already said above that Christian worship may incorporate cultural values, "in so far as such values are consonant with the values of the Gospel."[65] In a sense, this is a way of invoking some standard or standardized authority to gauge the product of inculturation. According to

[65] Ibid., 25.

Chupungco, "the liturgy is not an independent unit of ecclesial life. The faith celebrated in the liturgy is the same faith formulated by theology."[66] This would mean that liturgy in context must remain meaningful both to the local assembly and to the larger Christian community in terms of its liturgical celebration and doctrinal or theological content. The transcultural meaning which makes liturgy universally Christian despite the locality of its celebration is theological in nature. This calls for a relationship of complementarity and mutual critique between liturgy and theology as previously observed in chapter three.

But an argument has been advanced that inculturation does not concern itself with liturgy and worship alone and that the process also involves theology which is done in context. This means that there is a dynamic interplay between theology and liturgy in the process of liturgical inculturation. It is in view of this that today people talk of "theologies," to signify a theological pluralism that arises from the different cultural contexts of the people. For instance today we hear of "black theology," "African theology," "North American theology," "Latin American theology," and many others that are meant to reflect the cultural experience of the people in that particular context. In his article "African Theologies,"[67] Luke Lungile Pato outlines the factors that led to the development of "African Theology" in the middle of the twentieth-century. Among many other factors, African Christians felt the need of expressing the Christian faith in a manner that is more meaningful to them. He writes:

> African Christians found classic Western approaches to theology alien and alienating. They did not, for instance, provide motivation for opposing the evils of

[66] Chupungco, *Cultural Adaptation of Liturgy*, 79.

[67] Sometimes scholars talk of "African Theologies" in recognition of cultural diversity in Africa. It is thus debatable whether there is anything like "African Theology" in singular.

> racism, capitalism, colonialism, or to enter into a creative dialogue with them. Such theology was too statement-oriented and speculative: it did not get involved in the real drama of African people's lives, or speak in the religious and cultural idioms and expressions of the Africans in a meaningful way. It remained academic, elitist and individualistic.[68]

In general, Pato contends that "African theology evolved as an attempt by Africans to give theological articulation to their spiritual, political and economic struggles."[69] Many voices from Africa have thus called for a contextualized theology, a theology that reflects the reality of the African way of life. But as is noticeable from Pato's sentiment, African theology often takes socio-political issues so seriously that it easily loses sight of the overarching Christian narrative and its theological content. For this reason, some African theologians, like Byang Kato, have cast aspersions on the whole agenda of African theology.

In his article "Black Theology and African Theology," Kato expresses his concern that "the sources for African theology are increasingly becoming African traditional religions rather than the Bible as absolute source."[70] He notes that "African Theology seems to be headed for syncretism and universalism" because "many theologians spend time defending African traditional religions and practices that are incompatible with biblical teaching."[71] He thus describes "African Theology" as "a funeral march of Biblical Christianity and a heralding of syncretism and universalism,"[72] and that "it has for its funeral directors the undiscerning

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[68] Luke Lungile Pato, "African Theologies," in *Doing Theology in Context: South African Perspectives*. Theology and Praxis Vol. 1 ed. John De Gruchi and C. Villa-Vicencio (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1994), 152.

[69] Ibid., 156.

[70] Byang H. Kato, "Black Theology and African Theology," *Evangelical Review of Theology* (1977), 46.

[71] Ibid., 45.

[72] Byang H. Kato, *Theological Pitfalls in Africa* (Kisumu, Kenya: Evangel Publishing House, 1975), 55.

theologians who fail to see the spiritual issues at stake because of their unguided enthusiasm for projecting African personality."[73] Kato observes that such theologians "are advocating a return to African traditional religions rather than expressing Christianity more meaningfully to Africans."[74] Elsewhere, in *Biblical Christianity in Africa*, Kato describes contextualization as "an effort to express the never changing Word of God in ever changing modes for relevance."[75] Kato here contends for inculturation under biblical constraints in order to avoid polytheism. But this observation is significant because it shows that as with worship the basic meaning of the gospel of Christ must remain unchanged, whether in contextualized liturgies or in contextualized forms of theology. The essence of Christian doctrinal truth is to remain intact even in view of its theological incarnation into various cultural milieus. A contextualized theology must remain Christian in its outlook and meaning if it is to give the necessary checks and balances to worship. It is only in this way that the meaning communicated in Christian worship in diverse cultures will not become sectarian but remain truly Christian in the catholic sense. This can only happen if contextualization is done under the norming authority of the word of God, within the framework and in light of the overarching Christian story as it is told in the word. As a whole, a properly contextualized worship must express the people's culture in order to be more meaningful to them but at the same time it must remain faithful to the language and the theological heritage or tradition of the larger Christian community. In other words,

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[73] Ibid.

[74] Kato, "Black Theology and African Theology," 46.

[75] Byang H. Kato, *Biblical Christianity* (Achimota, Ghana: Africa Christian Press, 1985), 23.

contextualization properly understood and carried out will be sensitive to both the local cultures and the universal Christian truth and language.[76]

One of the areas in which this principle of balanced contextualization is often neglected or overlooked is hymnody, despite its power of meaning conveyance as was demonstrated in the previous chapter. In Africa, for example, there has been an outcry that hymns used in worship in the mainstream churches are too Western to appeal to the local people. As we saw above, Anyamwu acknowledges the success of liturgical inculturation among the Igbo people of Nigeria saying that "the use of the Igbo tunes and rhythms has a deep theological meaning" and that "it speaks directly to the soul."[77] It is very true that most, if not all Africans have a great penchant for fast rhythms, accompanied with passionate dances. Most of them are also fond of drum-beating as an accompaniment for the songs. Singing in such a manner is quite appealing to people's emotions and makes the moment great and lively.[78] In this regard, Western rhythms and melodies are considered dull and boring, and one could even say less meaningful. But a meaningful worship is much more than emotionally appealing rhythms and melodies. A song will have "a deep theological meaning" that "speaks directly to the soul" if it has sound theological content. That is, a song that combines a great tune or rhythm with a rich theological content would communicate more powerfully and effectively to worshippers. In this respect, one

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[76] Ibid.

[77] Anyamwu, *The Rites of Initiation*, 17.

[78] Western missionaries to Africa have been criticized for discouraging the traditional African way of singing and the use of traditional instruments in the church. Restoration of the African singing is thus one of the objectives of the African theology.

can say that an African tune with a sound doctrinal content surely would be more meaningful to the African people because it would offer the Christian truth in a familiar rhythm. Kato writes:

> Contextualization can take place in liturgy, dress, language, church service, and any other form of expression of the Gospel truth. Musical instruments such as organ and piano can be replaced or supplemented with such indigenous and easily acquired instruments as drums, cymbals, and comstalk instruments. It must be borne in mind, of course, that the sound of music must not drown the message.[79]

In respect of this, there is need for complementarity and mutual critique between worship and theology so that while worship incarnates in the people's culture, the content of such worship remains consistent with the church's theology and the overall Christian narrative. In that way, the African song that "speaks directly to the soul" will do so within the grammar of Christian language. A meaningful worship is one which makes sense and communicates to the people in their own culture but always in light of the Christian narrative, the mystery of salvation as it unfolds in the divine revelation.

Meaningful Worship and Historical Context

So far the discussion in this chapter has shown that the relationship between liturgy and theology is crucial to meaningful worship in different cultural contexts. Yet it is important to note, as has already been indicated, that culture here refers to a way of life both in a particular socio-cultural milieu and in a particular time in history. In this latter sense, a certain culture can spread far and wide as people from different geographical areas and social settings embrace a common way of life at a particular time. It is in this sense, that postmodernism has been

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[79] Kato, *Biblical Christianity in Africa*, 24.

considered as "an array of cultural expressions" spread all over the globe.[80] Since we have mainly looked at meaning in worship with respect to socio-cultural diversity, it is also in order to briefly examine worship in respect of historical development. Why would it be necessary to adapt worship to the contemporary culture? It can be argued that meaning remains a key factor in the adaptation of worship with respect to the context of time. But in an attempt to make worship relevant and meaningful to people in their own time, it often occurs that mutual dialogue and critique between theology and liturgy is neglected. But just as is the case with the adaptation of worship in socio-cultural contexts that liturgy and theology need to dialogue and complement each other in order to make worship meaningful so it is also the case with adaptation in the historical context.

Since both liturgy and theology are done in spatial and temporal contexts, their expressions are adjustable as context demands. In its opening words, the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (CSL) mentions adaptation to the needs of the time as one of the aims of the Second Vatican Council.[81] One would say that one significant component of such needs is that liturgy be made comprehensible and thus meaningful to the worshippers in their time context. Lathrop reflects this in his sentiment on Sunday worship service. He asks:

> Why? What does this meeting mean? How do its traditional words and symbols make any sense or offer any help amidst the flood of modern conditions: huge productions of wealth and decay of city centers; new knowledge. . . . Is the Sunday meeting—the liturgy, the mass, the worship service—simply the survival of a collection of quaint customs from a more secure and simple time? Or do its symbolic

[80] Grenz, *Primer on Postmodernism*, 12.

[81] Second Vatican Council, *The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, 3.

> interactions propose to us a realistic pattern for interpreting our world, for containing our actual experiences, and for enabling action and hope?[82]

In reply to such questions, Lathrop avers that "in liturgy, as in Christian theology, to say an old thing in the old way in a new situation is inevitably to distort meaning."[83] This means that for the old thing, liturgy in this regard, to be relevant and thus meaningful to the contemporary worshippers, it has to be revised and the meaning therein communicated in the contemporary language and idioms. As Chupungco rightly observes, "liturgies will have to be periodically reviewed, revised, and updated in order to respond 'to the needs of our own time,' taking account of 'the modern conditions in which daily life is lived.'"[84] As was previously noted, a liturgy whose language and symbols belong to another time may not properly nourish the spiritual life of the worshippers.[85] This is what Brown implies in his critique on the relevance of the Book of Common Prayer for the twentieth-century: "In spite of the affection and admiration we have for it, is it really relevant liturgy in twentieth-century England or anywhere else? I cannot think so. Much of its language is incomprehensible."[86] Brown further has this to say about old ways of worship, including the worship space, within the Anglican tradition:

> Our own Church is sometimes guilty of equally meaningless antiquarianism in its buildings and furniture. This kind of thing seems to me nonsense, and we are becoming progressively uneasy about many of the things taken for granted for many years. No matter how dear the cult and its language may be to us by a lifetime of

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[82] Lathrop, *Holy Things*, 1.

[83] Ibid., 5.

[84] Chupungco, *Liturgies of the Future*, 7.

[85] Chupungco, *Worship: Progress and Tradition*, 158.

[86] Ibid., 27.

> associations, yet the Church must re-examine it drastically in the light of the evangelistic call.[87]

Brown's concern here is that contemporary worshippers find the old ways of worship less meaningful. He points out that a relevant liturgy "conveys God's word to men in a readily comprehensible way," and in a manner "which makes it easy for men to share in response to that word."[88] It means that "the desire to make liturgy comprehensible and closer to the people"[89] is at the heart of many instances of liturgical reforms. However, in order to achieve such relevance liturgy has to be revised and the meaning therein communicated in contemporary language and idioms.

Since meaning is mediated through language, any change of language with the passage of time would mean a change in meaning, and hence the need for revision. Basil's liturgical adjustments alluded to in the previous chapters would remain a case in point here. In this regard J. R. Stephenson notes Basil's revision of the *Gloria Patri* from its original formula "Glory *to* the Father *through* the Son *in* the Holy Spirit to its current form, "ascribing glory 'to the Father *together with* the Son and the Holy Spirit."[90] This change was not occasioned by any perceived error in the earlier formula, as the earlier form was in itself orthodox. Rather, reform was made in the interest of the appropriation of meaning. Basil and his contemporaries were concerned that, due to the rise of Arianism, a different theological meaning could be appropriated from the

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[87] Ibid., 28.

[88] Ibid., 29.

[89] Lukwata, *Integrated African Liturgy*, 37.

[90] J. R. Stephenson, "Luther's Reform of the Mass and its Application to Liturgical Change today," in *Worship 2000: Congress on the Lutheran Confessions*, ed. John A. Maxfield and Jennifer H. Maxfield, (Saint Louis: Luther Academy, 2000), 20.

original form. The "intrinsically acceptable wording" of the formula "could be misconstrued as attesting an essential—as opposed to relational—subordination of the Son and the Spirit to the Father."[91] Basil's revision of the formula was thus meant "to ward off such misapprehension"[92] of meaning, especially at the conceptual level.

This is one case of a liturgical reform in the interest of inculcating meaning occasioned by a specific situation at a particular point in time. But it also points to the other side of the reality of liturgical adaptation to the historical context: the role of theology in liturgical revisions and the need for complementarity to occasion a balanced adjustment. Due to the indissoluble nexus between liturgy and theology, a change in one necessarily affects the other. Therefore, as Chupungco rightly observes, "liturgical adaptation has to keep pace with adaptation in theology"[93] and this means that such adaptations have to take into account and reflect the grammar of the Christian language derived from the Christian narrative. Such proximity between liturgy and theology further indicates that both need each other, in a complementary relationship, to achieve the purpose of fostering meaning and thus making worship meaningful in different time contexts.

The complementary relationship between liturgy and theology and their mutual critique is also significant for preserving the unchanging meaning of the gospel and Christian faith in those ever changing time contexts. Resistance to liturgical reforms is usually, if not always, occasioned

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[91] Ibid.

[92] Ibid.

[93] Chupungco, *Cultural Adaptation of Liturgy*, 80.

by the fear that "updated style makes dents in substance, whether crassly or subtly."[94] There is the fear that the deposit of the Christian faith and its meaning could be compromised under liturgical reforms. This, of course, is a possibility especially if such reforms fail to recognize the connection between liturgy and theology and if the role of theology is not appreciated in such an exercise. *Re*forms should aim at making both liturgy and theology relevant to that particular time but not *de*forming the essential meaning they seek to make intelligible. In this regard, Chupungco contends that a true worship reform entails both progress and tradition. He writes:

> If the church's worship is to remain contemporary, it must be constantly renewed like the ecclesial life, mission, and theology of which it is the chief expression. Yet we know that liturgical renewal does not come out of the blue, nor does it spring up from the ground with the rapid growth of mushrooms. The Church has been around for twenty centuries and has a long memory of things. This is why true renewal can happen only in the context of tradition. . . . Liturgical renewal is both faithful continuity with the past and courageous thrust into the future.[95]

Progress and tradition in this regard entails faithfulness to the theological heritage while reforming the liturgy for the purpose of making it meaningful to the people as was the case with Luther's worship reforms. "An irony of Luther's reform of the mass is that in his reaction against Medieval Rome the Reformer reclaimed a notable feature of the early Roman rite."[96] Worship reform therefore does not mean starting from scratch nor is it an effort to create totally new meanings. Rather, it seeks to make Christian worship more comprehensible and meaningful at one particular point of time. What Paul Sponheim says about doing theology in context is also applicable to worship reforms due to the theological meaning in worship. He says that "theology

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[94] Stephenson, *Congress on the Lutheran Confessions*, 21.

[95] Chupungco, *Worship: Beyond Inculturation*, v.

[96] Stephenson, *Congress on the Lutheran Confession*, 28.

seeks to fashion a second-order word to serve that first-order declaration of judgment and mercy" and that "to do so the theologian recruits categories of understanding in her or his world."[97] Such categories of understanding are meant to enhance the appropriation of meaning in worship and theology in that particular time context. Sponheim further says, "We would all agree that all our theology is done in a particular time and place, since we human beings tend quite regularly to be spatio-temporal beings. But the bearing of this point is not so easily agreed upon. Would we not want to claim that *what* we seek to say *in* any time is not simply derived *from* that time?"[98] Sponheim here means that doing theology in context does not amount to discarding the past and starting afresh. In the same manner, "what" the liturgy seeks to communicate or mediate in any context or at a particular point of time is not anything new but the very old message of God's saving grace which has been the essence of the church's proclamation ever since her inception. It is this message that any reform should strive to make clearer and in a language intelligible to the people of all times. This principle of "progress in tradition" is significant for liturgical reforms because the Christian church has a rich heritage of meaning expressed in both liturgy and theology and which must be passed on from one generation to another. In this respect, Lathrop is right that "authentic continuity requires responsible change."[99]

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[97] Paul R. Sponheim, "To Claim and to Test: Doing Theology in This Time and Place," in *A Reforming Church. . . Gift and Task: Essays from a Free Conference*, ed. Charles P. Lutz (Minneapolis, MN: Kirk House Publishers, 1995), 75.

[98] Ibid.

[99] Lathrop, *Holy Things*, 5.

Summary

In summary, it can be said that liturgical inculturation is a noble cause inasmuch as it aims at making Christian worship meaningful to the people in their own local and temporal contexts. A meaningful worship is that in which Christ's gift of life and salvation is offered to the sinful man in a clear and intelligible language so that the people experience this gift in an understandable way. This happens when the gospel takes root in different cultures and the liturgy is adapted to the context of the people, both in space and in time. In such adaptation the form of the liturgy would be adjusted to fit every context. In so doing, however, care must be taken so that the liturgy remains Christian in its core and continues to bear the marks of catholicity of the church of Christ. To attain such balance, inculturation must take seriously the complementary dynamics between liturgy and theology so that celebration of the liturgy in different cultures is done within the framework of the Christian language anchored in the biblical narrative.

CHAPTER SIX

APPLICATION AND CONCLUSION

Introduction

In the previous chapters this dissertation has discussed worship in general and the nature of Christian worship in particular. It has considered what meaning in worship entails in its experiential and conceptual dimensions and the significance of both dimensions for meaningful worship. It has explored the relationship between liturgy and theology and how this relationship affects the church's worship with respect to the appropriation of meaning. In that connection, the catechetical aspect of liturgy and the role of catechesis in making worship a meaningful event have been examined, with some focus on how such catechetically-informed worship can remain meaningful in different cultural contexts. This chapter will probe how the principles and hypotheses of these chapters apply to a particular liturgical context. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya (ELCK) will serve as a case study in this regard and its worship experience will provide us with a picture of how a complementary relationship of liturgy and theology makes worship meaningful in different socio-cultural contexts. The ELCK is suited for this purpose especially due to the history of its inception as a mission field of foreign mission societies from which it developed into a church body. The primary contention here is that liturgy and theology have been significant components of the development of the ELCK worship. However, even with a new hymnal in place (*Ibada Takatifu*), ELCK worship has yet to be "fully" contextualized in order to be more meaningful to the people. This chapter will begin with a brief survey of the general historical background of the ELCK before considering its liturgical heritage and

experience. It will then examine some of the texts and rituals of the ELCK's new hymnal, *Ibada Takatifu*,[1] which was launched in the beginning of 2013.

The ELCK Experience

General Historical Background of the ELCK

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya (ELCK) began in 1948[2] as a mission field of the Swedish Lutheran Mission (SLM; also known as "Bibletrue Friends"), a mission organization from the Lutheran Church of Sweden."[3] In 1959 the SLM mission work, which was mainly in the western region of the country, was organized into a church under the name "The Lutheran Church Bibletrue Friends in Kenya," (LCBTFK).[4] The young church, however, remained under the control of the mother mission organization until 1963[5] when it finally became an *independent* church body,[6] the Lutheran Church of Kenya (LCK),[7] with her own

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[1] *Ibada Takatifu* is a Kiswahili translation for the Divine Service.

[2] Rune Imberg, *A Door Opened by the Lord: The History of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya* (Örkelljunga, Sweden: Församlingsförlaget, 2008), 9.

[3] It is to be noted that SLM was not the first Lutheran Mission to work in Kenya. There were earlier missionary attempts in the Coastal region towards the end of the nineteenth-century by Lutheran mission organizations from Germany like Neukirchen Missionary Society (1987), Bavarian Evangelical Lutheran Mission (1891), and Leipzig Mission (1893). But due to the political atmosphere surrounding World War I, the German missionaries handed the work they had started over to non-Lutheran mission organizations when they were leaving the country. Lutheranism thus died until the arrival of the Swedish missionaries in the early twentieth century. See Imberg, *A Door Opened by the Lord*, 47.

[4] Ibid., 96.

[5] Ibid., 115.

[6] It is probably not good ecclesiology to talk of a Christian church body or a congregation as an independent organization in the strict sense of the word "independence." This is because a local church has to have ecumenical connections if it is to remain part of the church catholic. But the word "independence" is used in this respect to signify local leadership as opposed to control from outside. It is to be noted that there are still many foreign missionaries serving in the ELCK under the local leadership.

[7] The name was later changed from the Lutheran Church *of* Kenya (LCK) to Evangelical Lutheran Church *in* Kenya probably to emphasize her evangelical heritage and her independence of the state. That is, it was not a state

structures under local leadership. The Swedish missionaries, who were working in Kenya at the inception of the mission work, had contacts with their counterparts who were working for the Church of Sweden Mission (CSM) in the Bukoba region of Tanzania under the Lutheran Church in Tanzania (ELCT), which was already an established church body. As a result, the young ELCK closely followed the ELCT in structure and ministry.[8] It is also important to note that the SLM was later joined by some other mission organizations from Scandinavia, all of which still have missionaries working in the ELCK today. These other early mission organizations included "the Norwegian Lutheran Mission (NLM), the Lutheran Evangelical Association of Finland (LEAF), and the Swedish Lutheran Evangelical Association of Finland (SLEAF)."[9] These were joined later by the World Mission Prayer League (WMPL) and, later, LCMS World Mission, both from the United States of America. Although the ELCK has undergone some major structural changes since it became a church body, it has basically retained the same theological principles upon which it was founded at its very inception.[10] Its theology and praxis is formed and informed by the authority of the Holy Scriptures as interpreted in the Lutheran confessional writings found in the Book of Concord.[11] Its membership is currently estimated at 100,000 baptized members spread all over the country.[12]

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church.

[8] Imberg, *A Door Opened by the Lord*, 90.

[9] Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya, *Ibada Takatifu* (Chelsea, MI: Sheridan Printing, 2013), 7.

[10] *The Constitution of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya*, Article II

[11] Ibid., Art. II: 1.

[12] Although ELCK congregations are spread all over the Republic of Kenya, the western region of the country (especially the Gusii land) has registered the highest number of members owing to its unique status in the history of the church body, as the area where the first SLM missionaries landed for mission work.

Liturgical Development in the ELCK

When the Lutheran mission officially began in Kenya, there was no formal liturgy or hymnal either in the local languages or in the national language, Kiswahili, by which to conduct the Divine Service.[13] This was because the first missionaries were lay preachers who did not place much emphasis on liturgy.[14] This probably was due to the background of the sending mission organization, the SLM, as a revival movement[15] with little interest in traditional liturgical expression as opposed to an ecclesiastical body.[16] The Rt. Rev. Walter Obare, current Archbishop, is thus right in his prefatory remarks to *Ibada Takatifu*—the new ELCK hymnal—that "most of the mission societies were born out of revival movements that had no understanding of the components that constitute divine worship."[17] Some of the very first missionaries in the mission field were school teachers with little theological erudition. In this respect, as one of the first ELCK pastors Richard Otieno Olak[18] puts it, worship was held with "'a kind of liturgy without the Lutheran liturgy structure.'"[19] The first worship services of the

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[13] Imberg, *A Door Opened by the Lord*, 77.

[14] Ibid., 85.

[15] Ibid., 41.

[16] Interview by Rune Imberg. Imberg, *A Door Opened by the Lord*, 41. Imberg traces the origin of SLM to *Swedish Evangelical Mission* (SEM), a mission organization formed in 1856 by "pastors and laymen active in the evangelical revival within the Lutheran Church of Sweden." That those who were deeply involved in the revival in Scandinavia did not have much interest in the liturgy is attested to by Frank Senn in reference to a section of the 19th-century Scandinavian immigrants to USA who he says "regarded liturgy as a sign of formalism and preferred free-from worship orders which generally left the form and content of worship up to the pastor." See Senn, *Christian Liturgy*, 584.

[17] *Ibada Takatifu*, 7.

[18] Rune Imberg served in Kenya as the principal of Matongo Lutheran Theological College from 1992–6. He is the first church historian to write a comprehensive history of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya.

[19] Richard Otieno Olak, 2007 as cited in Imberg, *A Door Opened by the Lord*, 87.

ELCK comprised basic elements like Bible reading, the sermon or exposition, songs, hymns and prayers,[20] and of course there were baptisms conducted[21] regularly and the Lord's Supper occasionally administered, though without much emphasis.[22] However, there was no formal, intentionally-structured liturgy in use in the service.[23] In his interview with Imberg, Olak says that "the main songbook used at Matongo Bible School was 'Tenzi za Rohoni,' a non-Lutheran songbook."[24] But despite their limited theological knowledge and apparent lack of interest in liturgy, the contribution of the first missionaries to the liturgical development of ELCK cannot be underrated. Those early missionaries established the first theological institution, Matongo Bible School,[25] in 1957 to foster theological education [26] which, to a great extent, helped shape the course of liturgy in the church as the theological studies created liturgical awareness in the students who were to become ministers and hence worship leaders in various congregations.[27]

With more and more workers trained, things did not remain the same as far as worship was concerned. Imberg points out that when the mission work produced the first Kenyan ministers, the office of the ministry began to take a different shape and to move in a direction which the

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[20] Ibid., 104.

[21] Ibid., 81.

[22] Ibid., 88.

[23] Ibid., 104.

[24] Olak as cited in Imberg, *A Door Opened by the Lord*, 104.

[25] Matongo Bible School was established as a theological college in 1978 when it admitted the first pastoral students. Currently known as Neema Lutheran College, Matongo has become a great center of confessional Lutheran theology, receiving students from all over eastern and central Africa. ELCK currently has two more bible schools, Atemo and Kapenguria, but Matongo remains the main theological institution or seminary.

[26] Imberg, *A Door Opened by the Lord*, 85.

[27] Ibid., 109.

mission organization, SLM, "was not familiar with: having a Church structure, relying on full time pastors, using a liturgy" and even wearing "clerical vestments."[28] Minute 39 of the ELCK Annual General Meeting (AGM) of 1961, cited by Imberg, reveals the earliest quest for a structured form of worship as the meeting resolved to petition the SLM headquarters in Sweden for a liturgy.[29] The first Lutheran hymnbook to come into use for worship in the ELCK was *Nyimbo Za Kikristo*, "Christian Hymns," a short Kiswahili hymnbook of the ELCT. This hymnbook had a small collection of hymns, the rite of the Divine Service and a few other rites like baptism, burial, and marriage. The rite of the Divine Service lacked the propers or any variables portions of the liturgy such as the collects, the prefaces, and the introits. But the AGM's request for a liturgy led to the publication of the first Lutheran hymnbook in the vernacular *Ogotera Gwe'Ekilutheri*,[30] "Lutheran songs," in 1962. *Ogotera* was basically modelled after *Nyimbo za Kikristo*[31] but it lacked a national outlook as it was in "Ekigusii," one of the ethnic languages in the western region of Kenya. Discussing the background of the *Ogotera*, Imberg asks: "What is the *origin* of the liturgy section of *Ogotera*? To what extent have they been made locally, and to what extent are they influenced from other countries?"[32] In reply, he indicates that "some elements emanate from the Church of Sweden 1942 liturgy (*Kyrkohandboken*) and others from Tanzania."[33] Imberg contends that these changes tell us

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[28] Ibid., 93.

[29] Ibid., 105.

[30] Second edition of the hymnbook was later printed under the title *Ogotera Kw'Egekristo*, "Christian songs."

[31] Imberg, *A Door Opened by the Lord*, 107.

[32] Ibid., 108.

[33] Ibid., 109

something about "the *liturgical development* and *theological awareness* of the ELCK," and also something about "the identity of the church."[34] Such development entailed aspects of socio-spatial and historical contextualization treated in the previous chapter as liturgies of foreign origin were adopted and adapted to the Kenyan context.

Beyond *Ogotera*, the Divine Service and a few other rites from *Nyimbo za Kikristo* were translated into some other Kenyan languages and were made available for use in the worship service in unpublished stenciled pamphlets. In certain congregations, some of these translations have remained in use to date. In the Luo-speaking congregations of the Lake Diocese in the western part of Kenya, for instance, *Chenro mar Lemo*, "The Order of Worship"[35] translated from *Ogotera,* is still the officially recognized vernacular liturgy even today. *Nyimbo za Kikirsto* continued to be used in Kiswahili-speaking congregations, especially in the urban congregations in Nairobi, Mombasa, Kisumu, and in the educational institutions. However, in some parts of the ELCK, under the influence of charismatic movements and Pentecostalism, worship services have been conducted without any specific structure.[36] In such areas people have been in favor of simple worship outlines, spirituality free from rituals. In these congregations, liturgical rites have often been regarded as an impediment to piety. For instance, in many of those "free services" greater emphasis is laid on personal testimonies which take much of the service.

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[34] Ibid.

[35] The improved version of this has been called "Kitap Lamo," "Prayer Book," and is used alongside the first version in some congregations in Luo-Nyanza.

[36] This kind of worship is rampant mainly in areas which came under the influence of the Norwegian Lutheran Mission (NLM), which does not put much emphasis on the liturgy.

In the face of all this, there has been a long-term quest for a truly Lutheran hymnal, an endeavor which resulted in the production of the first official national hymnal in Kiswahili in 2013. This new hymnal, *Ibada Takatifu*, has several rites including the Divine Service, Baptism, Burial, Confirmation, Marriage, Vespers, Matins, and 175 hymns. Although *Ibada Takatifu* is smaller in size than the current edition of the ELCT's *Mwimbieni Bwana,* which has been in use in Kenya, it is richer in many ways than the latter. For instance, it provides the music for the hymns, the seasonal propers of the collects, introits, and prefaces, and a choice of lectionary between the three year *Revised Common Lectionary* (RCL) and the historic one year lectionary. It also includes Luther's Small Catechism.

Based on the history of its liturgical development as sketched above, the ELCK has considered *Ibada Takatifu* a great blessing to its worship life as the hymnal is expected to bring into the church many positive developments. For instance, besides fostering "unity and spiritual growth,"[37] the new hymnal is expected to enable the ELCK to "be seen to be a church body within the historic line of Christendom—a church seen to be right both theologically and confessionally in her life and worship practice."[38] As a matter of fact, the aspiration for unity and spiritual growth and theological orthodoxy that is to be realized within the context of worship through the use of this hymnal points to the theme of this dissertation explored in the previous chapters, namely, the complementary dynamics of liturgy and theology which fosters the appropriation of meaning experientially and conceptually in worship. It is important, therefore,

[37] *Ibada Takatifu*, 7.

[38] Ibid.

to see how the realities of these dynamics fit in the ELCK in light of the historical liturgical trajectory outlined above.

The Factor of Meaning in the ELCK Worship

The brief history of liturgical development in the ELCK has shown that worship in the early period of its life was quite amorphous, without a clearly defined form of the liturgy. However, it can be argued that the basic elements that constituted Lutheran worship as noted above—Bible reading, sermon, baptism, the Supper, songs, and prayers—already captured the basic Lutheran concept of worship as described in chapters two and three: worship is a divine action (*beneficium*) which elicits human response in praise, prayer, and thanksgiving (*sacrificium*). This reality of worship is reflected in the foreword of the new hymnal, *Ibada Takatifu*:

> The forms of the historic liturgy have varied, yet share a two-part common structure. The Service of the Word centers on *hearing* Holy Scriptures and preaching, and the Service of the Holy Communion on *eating* the Lord's Supper. The Lord is present in the Word and Sacrament and in them He gives out His gift of forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. Where His Word is, there is His Spirit, creating and sustaining faith and moving faith to respond in prayer and thanksgiving. Thus prayer, praise, and thanksgiving constantly express itself throughout both parts of the Divine Service.[39]

Here one can find one of the major premises of this dissertation[40] that the primary purpose of Christian worship is to encounter the Triune God and to receive his blessings, especially the gift of life through the Son in the power of the Holy Spirit as mediated through the means of grace, the word and the sacraments. This encounter we have called the *experiential meaning*

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[39] *Ibada Takatifu*, 3.

whose essence in worship is the reception of God's saving grace and the human response to that grace. This study, however, has shown that meaningful worship entails another aspect of meaning, the *conceptual meaning*, which concerns the noetic truth of the Christian faith as embodied in the biblical narrative and communicated in worship through liturgical rites and texts and outside of the liturgy in discursive theology. But given the lack of a firm liturgical foundation and the amorphous forms of worship evidenced in the ELCK's history, I would contend that meaningful worship has not fully been realized in the ELCK congregations since its founding. This is because the dual ways of appropriating meaning—the combination of both experiential and conceptual aspects—which is necessary for meaningful worship[41] has not fully come to expression. Since the liturgies that have been in use in the congregations have been inadequate, especially in their theological content, and the biblical narrative has not been expressed comprehensively, the conceptual aspect of meaning has been eclipsed to a significant extent.

Liturgy and Theology in the ELCK Worship

In chapter three, this study demonstrated that meaningful worship requires a close relationship between liturgy and theology, a relationship characterized by complementarity and mutual critique. The short history of worship in the ELCK has indicated that congregational worship began in the evangelistic endeavors of the mission societies without a liturgy. Nevertheless, as previously noted, there was worship—and one would rightly say there was also

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[40] This is treated in chapters two and three.

[41] This is indicated in chapter two.

theology in its primary sense—since the word of God was preached, the sacraments administered, and the people responded in praise, prayer and thanksgiving. What was lacking was a formal liturgical structure and clarity of meaning regarding liturgical rituals and ceremonies and the relationship between such rituals and doctrinal instruction in the new church. Yet, the presence of "Bible studies and . . . catechismal classes"[42] in the early days and the establishment of a theological institution indicates that the vital role of theology in the life of the church was recognized quite early in the history of the ELCK. The direct connection of theology to the liturgy might not be apparent in this brief historical summation but the subsequent liturgical developments were related to the theological awareness which was already taking root. A case in point is the change of liturgical direction witnessed quite early. As mentioned above, according to Imberg the theological training of the local leaders resulted in the introduction of *Nyimbo za Kikristo* from Tanzania and the AGM's request for the ELCK's own hymnbook. Through theological training, the local leaders were enabled to recognize the deficiencies in the ELCK worship and the need for a change of direction toward a better and richer way of worship than was the case at that time.

In light of the language of this dissertation[43] even without specific details of influence, one would legitimately argue that there was mutual critique of liturgy and theology The local church leaders wished to have the theology they had learned expressed in and nourished by the way they worshipped. It could be said that this was also a key factor in the production of *Ibada Takatifu* as

[42] Imberg, *A Door Opened by the Lord*, 83.

[43] As expressed particularly in chapter two.

the church aspired "to be right both theologically and confessionally[44] in her life and worship practice"[45] so that it might not be easily swayed by the raging wave of Pentecostalism[46] and the charismatic movements. But this aspiration also expressed the other side of the liturgy-theology dynamics, that the new hymnal was expected to nourish the church's theology and foster spiritual growth in the congregations. This is perfectly in line with the principle that Christian theology can only thrive in the context of worship.

Another aspect of the liturgy-theology dynamics in the ELCK worship experience is the role of catechesis in making worship a meaningful event. As previously mentioned, the early ELCK worship resources were not very rich in their biblical and theological content. In this regard the ELCK worship historically has been characterized by little instruction with regard to either noetic or ontic implications, through the liturgy. This seems to be one of the concerns which precipitated the production of the new hymnal, *Ibada Takatifu*, as its forward reveals:

> Churches make decisions. The exact texts, music, and ceremonies are not prescribed in Holy Scripture. But it does not follow that liturgical matters are unimportant or are to be treated arbitrarily. Proper ceremony fosters reverence. The text of hymns and liturgy will either create and strengthen faith or lead to doubt and unbelief. The way we worship determines what we believe. Lutheran liturgy makes Lutherans and keeps them Lutheran.[47]

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[44] In light of the ELCK constitution written in 1963 and amended in 1973, 1995, 2001, and 2002, to be confessional means to believe, teach and confess that the Holy Scriptures, both the OT and the NT "are inspired Word of God and the only infallible authority in all matters of faith" and to profess the Christian doctrine founded on the Scriptures, expressed in the ecumenical creeds and articulated in the Book of Concord. See the ELCK Constitution Art III: 1 & 2.

[45] *Ibada Takatifu*, 7.

[46] Ibid.

[47] Ibid., 5.

One of the advantages of liturgical catechesis[48] in relation to fostering meaning is its repetitive rhythm. In the ELCK context where there is still a significant number of people who are illiterate and cannot comprehend much meaning from theological reflection or secondary theology, instruction through the repetitive rhythm of the liturgy remains an ideal. But it is to be noted, as was mentioned in chapter four, that catechesis flows from the liturgy so that liturgy catechizes and teaches the Christian faith and, in the reverse, catechesis illuminates the liturgy and makes its celebration more meaningful. This symbiosis has not been taken seriously in the ELCK as few people recognize the connection between liturgy and catechesis. Besides, many members of the ELCK are ignorant of the meaning of the basic elements of the liturgy—the texts, the symbols, the gestures, the ceremonies. Catechesis on the liturgy would therefore be of great significance as it would lead to more meaningful participation in the liturgy, and hence to more meaningful worship. With the dawn of a new era of worship under the new hymnal, more emphasis needs to be laid on catechesis on the liturgy as the expanded content of the liturgy means that there is more to know in the liturgy.

Meaningful Worship and Contextualization in the ELCK

History has shown that the ELCK, as with many other church bodies in Africa, is a product of foreign mission work. The missionaries from Scandinavia brought the gospel to a cultural setting other than their own and they had to contend with the challenges that come with such cross-cultural mission. But one of the chief principles of liturgical inculturation[49] requires that the

[48] See chapter four.

[49] See chapter five.

gospel remain the same, while its liturgical celebration and expression in worship changes in order for the gospel message to be effectively communicated and meaning therein appropriated by people in their own context. This principle was applied to some extent in the ELCK from the very beginning of its worship history. For example, the sermons and Bible readings were translated into the local languages.[50] It was because of the desire to have meaning in worship apprehended by the people that the early missionaries in the ELCK encouraged the translation of worship materials into the vernacular like "Ekigusii." This was contrary to the strict liturgical uniformity of the Tridentine church in which Latin was the only official language of the liturgy. In a sense, this was an aspect of liturgical contextualization which, as has been noted, was crucial to the effort of making worship meaningful to the local assembly. The ELCK thus tried at the very early stage to overcome the problem of the language barrier by translating whatever worship resources they it had with a view to making worship intelligible and thus meaningful. It is as a result of the same principle that Archbishop Obare currently expresses the need and the desire to have the new hymnal translated into the ethnic languages of Kenya, as the preface to the hymnal indicates: "In this new hymnal, *Ibada Takatifu*, the historic hymns of the Lutheran church will be sung by ELCK members in Swahili. Then, as the hymns are translated in the various dialects that make up the ELCK, our people will pray and sing the rich Lutheran heritage in their local languages."[51] Although *Ibada Takatifu* is written in Kiswahili, which is a national language,[52] worship services are still conducted in ethnic languages except in the urban areas and

[50] Imberg, *A Door Opened by the Lord*, 104.

[51] *Ibada Takatifu*, 9.

[52] Kenya has Both English and Kiswahili as the national or official languages. But there are over forty-two

learning institutions. Kenya, as with many other African countries, is a multiethnic society with many languages in use in various parts of the country. And because many people, especially the elderly, are not fluent in Kiswahili, the new hymnal is expected to be translated into the ethnic languages so that the people can meaningfully participate in the liturgy.

The ELCK therefore deserves credit for recognizing the significance of liturgical inculturation by translating the liturgies quite early in its history. However, it would be naïve to assume that liturgical inculturation is all about translation. While it is an important gesture and a step in the right direction, mere "translation from one geographical language into another" is inadequate.[53] Apart from the translations mentioned, worship in the ELCK has not manifested any significant expression in the local cultures. The liturgy has not incorporated any cultural elements in the rites and the rituals, not even in the hymnody, and this remains the case even with the new hymnal, *Ibada Takatifu*. But a liturgy that bears elements of the local culture is more meaningful to the people than one that is completely foreign in its outlook. This means that a lot remains to be done to make the ELCK worship genuinely Kenyan and authentically Christian in its liturgical expression so that the people's culture is utilized while the church body remains "within the historic line of Christendom" as the preface to *Ibada Takatifu* states.[54] This is entails a balance between the local nature of liturgy and the catholicity of worship in a local context.[55]

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ethnic languages and many more dialects spoken in different regions.

[53] Brown, *Relevant Liturgy*, 11.

[54] *Ibada Takatifu*, 7.

[55] See chapter five.

The Rite of the Divine Service

While the ELCK worship has yet to be meaningfully localized, as observed above, it nevertheless reflects some of the basic principles of Christian worship as defined from the Lutheran vantage point. In *Gathered Guests*, Tim Maschke has outlined some of these principles which he says are useful in identifying those "who come to worship with a committed Lutheran outlook."[56] According to Maschke, truly Lutheran worship is Trinitarian, evangelical, Christological, catholic/ecumenical, traditional, and contemporary. A closer look would reveal that some of these principles are closely connected to the major themes explored in the previous chapters of this dissertation. One could say, for instance, that meaning mediated and appropriated in Christian worship[57] is Trinitarian, Christological, evangelical and catholic in outlook; that the liturgy-theology dynamics that guide the generation of such meaning in the liturgical context[58] as discussed in chapter three remains within the traditional framework of the Christian faith—Trinitarian, evangelical, Christological, catholic; and that a contextualized liturgy as discussed in chapter five also bears the same marks. Because they express the import of the theological dynamic and reflect the need for maintaining continuity with the church historically in worship, these principles will be used to assess the ELCK's new hymnal, *Ibada Takatifu*, which has been dedicated for Lutheran worship in the Kenyan context. But because of space, these principles

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[56] *Maschke, Gathered Guests*, 111.

[57] As discussed in chapter two.

[58] As discussed in chapter three.

will be considered only as they relate to the rite of the Divine Service, which is more frequently used in the ELCK than any other rite in *Ibada Takatifu*.[59]

Ibada Takatifu and *Trinitarian* Worship

The rite of the Divine Service in *Ibada Takatifu* contains the two chief parts of Lutheran worship, namely, the Service of the Word and the Service of the Sacrament.[60] The entire rite is permeated with Trinitarian language from the invocation to the benediction. A few examples will suffice here. The preparatory service of confession begins with the invocation, preceded by an opening hymn.

With the congregation standing, the leader[61] says:

KI:[62] Kwa Jina la Baba na + Mwana na Roho Mtakatifu.[63]

Leader: In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Ush: Amin.[64]

The invocation seems to be a later addition to the historic liturgy as it did not exist in any of the early liturgies.[65] But what does it mean that the service begins in the Triune name?

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[59] One would expect Matins and Vespers to have a greater frequency of use, being daily offices. However, Apart from the learning institutions, more especially Neema Lutheran College (former Matongo Lutheran Theological College), Matins and Vespers are seldom used in the ELCK congregations.

[60] These two parts are punctuated with transitional elements like the entrance, offertory, and dismissal rites, among others

[61] By having "leader" rather than "Pastor" or "minister," the hymnal reveals the reality in the ELCK that Sunday worship services are often led by lay leaders because of the scarcity of pastors. The lay leaders, called evangelists, however, have basic theological training—normally two years in the seminary. But the Service of the Sacrament is strictly confined to the "Mchungaji," Pastor, since lay leaders are not authorized to administer sacraments.

[62] "Ki" is a short form for "Kiongozi" (Leader).

[63] *Ibada Takatifu*, 52.

Basically the formula marks Christian worship as distinctively Trinitarian in nature. According to Luther Reed, "this formula sums up all that we know of the divine Being in a brief scriptural phrase which has long been used in devotional and liturgical acts of many kinds throughout the universal church."[66] The theological significance and meaning of the formula in the Divine Service can be seen in two connected ways. It is both an affirmation of faith and an invocation of the divine blessing.[67] As Reed puts it, in the invocation "we confess our faith in the Holy Trinity, for whose worship we are assembled."[68] This Trinitarian faith is declared in other parts of the liturgy such as the *Gloria Patri* (Atukuzwe Baba) and *Gloria in Excelsis* (Utukufu juu Mbinguni),[69] but it is expressed even more vividly and elaborately in the words of both the, Nicene Creed (Imani ya Nikea)[70] and the Apostles' Creed (Imani ya Mitume).[71] Imani ya Nikea reads in part: "Twamwamini Mungu mmoja . . ." (*We believe in one God*); "Twamwamini Bwana mmoja, Yesu Kristo . . ." (*We be believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ*); "Twamwamini Roho Mtakatifu . . ." (*We believe in the Holy Spirit*).

Maschke rightly observes that "the Nicene Creed grew out of a need to clarify the doctrines of the trinity and the deity of Christ."[72] This need remains in the church even today and the Creed

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[64] "Ush" is a short form for "Usharika" (Congregation).

[65] Reed, *The Lutheran Liturgy*, 252.

[66] Ibid.

[67] Ibid.

[68] Ibid.

[69] *Ibada Takatifu*, 55.

[70] Ibid., 50.

[71] Ibid., 59.

[72] Maschke, *Gathered Guests*, 132.

is therefore still relevant especially in the African context where the conception of God has been, and still is in many cases, too generic. Whereas Africans ardently believe in the existence of God and his influence upon human life, such belief is based on natural revelation which is vague and does not convey the truth of God's nature and work. James Henry Owino Kombo seems to capture this reality of pre-Christian African "theology."[73] He says that "it seems that for thousands of years the African people have known God as creator and sustainer of all things."[74] Kombo, however, observes that such general or natural revelation cannot lead to the saving knowledge of God. He further writes:

> Since it is impossible for all people to finally come to a true knowledge of God by themselves, the final outcome of the natural knowledge of God should lead us to the praise of God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ our savior. For the African people to view God as savior of mankind is to present them with an overwhelming truth. This is because the savior such as we see in Christ is nowhere in the African cultural milieu.[75]

Kombo, as many other Christian authors, tells us that the true—and hence the saving—knowledge of God is that which recognizes one God in three distinct persons. Conceptually, the Creed distinguishes Christian worship from other forms of religious worship, like African Tradition Religion (ATR). In the Creed, Christians affirm their belief or the content of their faith, *fides quae*. But even more importantly, they express the very act of belief, *fides qua*, in the three

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[73] Since Africans had their own ways of conceiving and interacting with "God," whoever he was, it can be argued that there was theology in Africa even before the introduction of Christianity. In this regard, some Christian scholars have preferred "African Christian Theology" to "African Theology" as a way of making a distinction between the authentic Christian God-talk from an African perspective and the African traditional concepts and articulation of God and his operations in the universe.

[74] James Henry Owino Kombo, *The Doctrine of God in African Christian Thought: The Holy Trinity, Theological Hermeneutics and the African Intellectual Culture* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 194.

[75] Ibid., 195.

persons of the Godhead. This latter sense has relational value as the worshippers commit themselves to a relationship with the Triune God. As opposed to ATR worship in which Africans worshipped, and some still worship, "the Father"[76] via divinities and ancestral spirits, here in the Creed they relate to the Father through the Son, Jesus Christ, in the Holy Spirit. The Creed thus combines both the *conceptual* and *experiential* aspects of meaning[77] as delineated in chapter two. In this respect, one could also say that in the liturgy, by way of the Creed and other Trinitarian formulas, Christians in the ELCK are *catechized* in the Christian faith.[78] However, a sustained theological catechesis on the doctrine of the Holy Trinity would make participation in the liturgy even more meaningful to people in Kenya as many know very little about the doctrine. In this way, liturgy and theology complement each other[79] and the reciprocal relationship between liturgy and catechesis is manifested.

Ibada Takatifu and *Evangelical* Worship

The term *evangelical* has traditionally been associated with the churches of the Reformation on account of their emphasis on the gospel. Although the term is today mainly used to designate a variety of Protestant denominations in North America,[80] many Lutheran church

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[76] In many ethnic communities in Africa, "god" is depicted as "Father" but mostly on account of creation and providence rather than a relationship with any perceived son. Although "Father" in the Creed also captures creation and providence, it points to the eternal generation of the Son by the Father and is thus substantially different from the ATR concept. But one would agree that this vague concept of "Father" in the ATR provides a great potential for catechesis on the true meaning of the Father in Trinitarian theology.

[77] As delineated in chapter two.

[78] See chapter four.

[79] This is explored in chapter three.

[80] Kombo, *The Doctrine of God*, 112.

bodies around the world still bear the tag, presumably to depict themselves as heirs of the gospel and the biblical faith as proclaimed and articulated by the sixteenth-century reformers. To be evangelical in the traditional sense is thus to stand on the foundation of the gospel. In this respect, an evangelical worship is a gospel-oriented worship. Maschke sheds more light on the essence of such a gospel-oriented worship. He writes:

> Lutheran worship is not only Christ-centered, it also proclaims the Gospel. God has declared sinners acceptable and forgiven because of Jesus' perfect life and death and confirming resurrection and ascension (Romans 4:25). Lutherans desire to share this life-giving Good News of God's love and forgiveness for a dying sinful world. The Sunday sermon has a central place in the worship of Lutherans, particularly because the sermon speaks a word of forgiveness, life, and hope through Christ. Luther said that any assembly in which God's Word is not preached is not worship.[81]

Here we find that a truly Lutheran worship is to be centered on the word of God especially as it declares God's grace[82] for the salvation of man on account of Christ. On this basis, therefore, it can be said that an evangelical or gospel-oriented worship is that worship which proclaims the message of the gospel and effectively mediates and communicates its meaning to the assembly. All the components of the liturgy should thus, in one way or another, contribute to and enhance the communication and appropriation of this meaning in worship. A few examples can be cited from *Ibada Takatifu* in this regard. In preparation for the word and the sacrament, there is confession of sin and absolution.[83] The confession begins with the biblical anthropology

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[81] Maschke, *Gathered Guests*, 131.

[82] Stating that the word of God declares God's saving grace does not amount to gospel reductionism, reducing the word to the gospel alone and edging out the law. Rather, properly understood, the law has a theological function of highlighting the human sinful condition and thus throwing man to God's grace. The Lutherans have called this the second function of the law.

[83] *Ibada Takatifu, 52.*

which reminds the worshippers not only of their wretched condition but also of their dependence upon the abundance of God's grace.

The liturgy here follows the Augsburg Confession (AC) in taking seriously the magnitude of original sin and its fatal consequences for humanity. Article II of the AC teaches that "since the fall of Adam all human beings who are propagated according to nature are born with sin, that is, without fear of God, without trust and with concupiscence," and that "this disease or original fault is truly sin, which even now damns and brings eternal death to those who are not born again through baptism and the Holy Spirit."[84] In the same manner, such acknowledgment of man's sinful condition leads to the declaration of God's grace in the forgiveness pronounced in the absolution. In a sense, this section of the service reflects the Christian theology of salvation, or precisely justification, as articulated in the Lutheran Confessions. The acknowledgment of man's sinful condition and resultant inability to work out one's salvation necessarily calls for God's grace if man is to be justified. This is a replica of article IV of the AC, which reads in part: ". . . human beings cannot be justified before God by their own powers, merits, or works. But they are justified as a gift on account of Christ through faith . . ."[85]

Besides capturing the two parts of confession, the confession of sin and the absolution,[86] this section embodies the central doctrine of the church: justification by grace through faith on account of Christ. In this context of worship, the justifying grace of God on account of Christ is not only comprehended conceptually as a theological concept but is also experienced through the

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[84] Kolb and Wengert, *The Book of Concord*, 38.

[85] Ibid., 41.

[86] Ibid., 360

acknowledgment of sin, as the people stand or kneel before the Lord, and the comfort of the absolution, as the pastor raises his hand to declare the grace. Here we find the experiential and the conceptual aspects of meaning playing out in close connection to each other. And in that connection, the complementary relationship of liturgy and theology comes into play because what theology teaches and articulates intellectually or rationally about the condition of man and the gracious acts of God is here experienced in the context of worship.[87]

The evangelical nature of Lutheran worship is emphasized even more at the highest point of the service, the proclamation of the word of God as it is read and preached to the congregation. *Ibada Takatifu* provides for three Scripture readings: the two lessons, Old Testament and Epistle, and the Gospel.[88] As the Gospel of the day is announced and the people stand,[89] they respond by glorifying Christ "Utukufu kwako Ee Bwana" (*Glory to You O Lord*) and praising him after the reading "Sifa Kwako O Kristo' (*Praise to You O Christ*). These responses are made in "recognition of the real presence of Christ in Worship,"[90] whose presence is also celebrated in the Lord's Supper. The same gospel that is delivered in preaching is also communicated in the sacrament where there is the true body of Christ in bread and his true blood

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[87] It is to be noted that this part of the liturgy was not newly introduced to the ELCK by *Ibada Takatifu* as it was there in the previous liturgies. However, there is more need and necessity for its use in the Kenyan context where there is a growing influence of Pentecostalism and charismatic movements which emphasize human contribution and participation in the drama of salvation.

[88] Kolb and Wengert, *The Book of Concord*, 57.

[89] The ELCK congregations have had a tradition of standing for all the three readings. It was not easy to abandon this tradition during the writing of the *Ibada Takatifu* as many felt that all the three readings come from the same God and elevating the Gospel over the lessons would degrade the status of the lessons. To honor that tradition in the spirit of evangelical freedom on matters indifferent, the rubric in *Ibada Takatifu* provides for either standing or sitting as the lessons are read.

[90] Reed, *Lutheran Liturgy*, 299.

in wine. As the people stand or kneel at the communion rail, they encounter the Lord and receive his gift of forgiveness of sin, and where there is forgiveness there is salvation and life everlasting. This is the good news communicated and experienced in the liturgy.

Ibada Takatifu and the *Catholicity* of Worship

In the discussion on liturgical inculturation in chapter five, Lathrop reminded the church to be sensitive to the catholicity of the church of Christ and its worship. He says that every local Christian assembly "is in communion with all the churches of Christ, in every time and every place, and that what it celebrates is a Gospel which has universal significance, albeit expressed in local terms and ways."[91] It is in view of this that the concern has been expressed that, with the growing awareness of liturgical inculturation and the push for African theology, contextualization could lead to liturgical sectarianism. This has happened in Kenya, especially among the so-called African Independent churches which arose in the wake of African nationalism and which have attempted to give Christianity a purely African expression devoid of any foreign elements. Most of these churches do not practice liturgy in its traditional expression. Instead they have incorporated some of the ATR rituals, some of which are repugnant to Christian teaching. In contrast, *Ibada Takatifu* strived to retain a catholic outlook with a view to capturing the universal meaning of the gospel derived from the story or narrative that binds all Christians in all places at all times as a single community. Since catholicity entails extension beyond any particular local or temporal context, the new hymnal incorporates elements from other cultural contexts as well as from other times in the history of Christian worship. In this

respect, the principle of catholicity subsumes other principles from Maschke's list, such as the *historical* and *traditional* dimensions. *Ibada Takatifu* has thus retained most of the elements in the historic liturgy of the western tradition like the Introit and the Psalmody,[92] the *Kyrie*,[93] the *Gloria in Excelsis*,[94] the Creeds,[95] the Common Preface,[96] and the *Sanctus*,[97] to mention a few. This seems to be one manifestation of being "within the historic line of Christendom" as the preface to the hymnal declares.[98]

While it is desirable and necessary that local congregations remain catholic in their worship and liturgical expression, there is also need to take into account the local culture and express the catholic faith in a local way. Overemphasis on catholicity[99] would universalize the liturgy and worship until it is no longer local, and thus less meaningful to the local assembly. One would rightly say that this has been, and still is, the situation in the ELCK. For instance, besides translation, the rite of the Divine Service in the *Ibada Takatifu* lacks any Kenyan cultural elements. This could also be said about the hymnody. Out of the 175 hymns in the *Ibada Takatifu*, only one, "Neno Lake Mungu," is originally Kenyan in composition.[100] This means that

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[91] Anita Stauffer, ed. *Worship: Unity in Cultural Diversity*, 24.

[92] *Ibada Takatifu*, 53.

[93] Ibid.

[94] Ibid., 55.

[95] Ibid., 58.

[96] Ibid., 64.

[97] Ibid., 65.

[98] Ibid., 7.

[99] As was indicated in chapter five.

[100] Hymn 220 in the *Ibada Takatifu*.

the ELCK has not succeeded in balancing the tension between the universal and local natures of worship as Lathrop has demonstrated.[101] The liturgy would be more meaningful to the local people if it incorporated some rituals of Kenyan origin. For example, the Maasai[102] custom of a young person bowing before the elderly to have his/her head touched for a greeting or a blessing could be considered for the benediction in the liturgy. Another example would be the celebration of the Lord's Supper. Peter Kanyandago[103] rightly observes that the starting point of a meaningful celebration of the Supper in any particular culture is "to identify what a community uses to have a meal."[104] For instance, using a gourd or a calabash for distribution of wine may sound strange but it would be more meaningful among many communities which have used the same for drinking milk. Through the incorporation of cultural elements into worship, it would also be easier to catechize the people in the Christian faith for they would draw meaning from their own cultural experience and thus have a better conception of the Christian teachings and how such teachings relate to real life experience in the Christian context of worship. This means that the ELCK still has more to do to contextualize its worship to make it have a Kenyan outlook and thus enable it to be more meaningful to the people.

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[101] See chapter five.

[102] Maasai is one of the Nilotic tribes in Kenya and Tanzania. There are three major language groupings in East Africa: Bantus, Nilotes and Cushites.

[103] Kanyandago was the Deputy Vice Chancellor at Martyrs University, Nkozi Uganda.

[104] Peter Kanyandago, "Initiation Rites and Celebration of Sacraments," in *Theological Method and Aspects of Worship in African Christianity*, ed. Mary N. Getui (Nairobi, Kenya: Action Publishers, 1998), 87.

Ibada Takatifu and *Contemporary* Worship

The tag "contemporary" with regard to worship has somehow become a negative moniker among some conservative Lutherans. In the preface to the *Ibada Takatifu*, the Rt. Rev. Obare says that "with the advent of Pentecostalism, the mainline churches have been challenged with the so-called contemporary worship styles."[105] Here "contemporary" is referred to pejoratively and, presumably, in juxtaposition with traditional worship. But rightly understood, in Maschke's terms, Christian worship is to be contemporary in that "we worship in the present, though our eyes are also on the past and on the future"[106] and "everything we do is 'contemporary,' that is, 'with times.'"[107] Maschke does not wade into the traditional-versus-contemporary debate but simply observes that "Lutheran worship certainly is for the present."[108] This means that with regard to being "traditional" or "contemporary," worship is not to be an "either or" but a "both and." In other words, traditional and contemporary are not mutually exclusive categories in our description of worship. He says, "It should never be a mere relic of the past or a symbol of some bygone era, nor should it be some cute innovative fad that speaks for a moment in time before being dismissed as passé. What Lutheran worshippers say and do on Sunday has relevance for the rest of the week. Worship affects the daily living of the Gospel. It is a 'now' event for God's gathered guests."[109] By "contemporary," therefore, Maschke shows more interest in the meaning of worship for the assembly than the style of worship. *Ibada Takatifu* is thus expected to be both

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[105] *Ibada Takatifu*, 7.

[106] Maschke, *Gathered Guests*, 113.

[107] Ibid.

[108] Ibid.

traditional and contemporary because it should capture the traditional ways in which the meaning and value of the Christian story has been expressed over the centuries and at the same time have a direct impact on the lives of the worshippers at present. The latter case, making *Ibada Takatifu* contemporary, would be meaningfully achieved by incorporating elements of the local cultures and making the liturgy and worship more relevant to the people in their own cultural context.

In summary, the historical background and the liturgical experience of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya provides us with a good example of how a complementary relationship between liturgy and theology directly enhances the appropriation of meaning experientially and conceptually in worship. It has shown us how both liturgy and theology play a role in making Christian worship meaningful in different contexts through mutual dialogue and critique in light of the Christian metanarrative and its overarching meaning which is common to all regardless of the local context in place or time.

Conclusion

The discussion throughout the chapters of this dissertation have centered on the significant question of the relationship between liturgy and theology and how that relationship affects the appropriation of meaning in worship. From the general consideration of worship, it has been shown that man is inherently a worshiper, with the propensity to relate to the divine powers. This relationship is regarded as having some value to the worshippers, a value that varies from one religious group to another. And because of such value, worship is said to have meaning to the worshipping community. Although Christian worship has its unique characteristics, it shares this

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[109] Ibid.

reality since every local assembly that gathers regularly for worship in the Triune name does so for a purpose, with great value and significance attached to corporate worship. Christian worship thus has meaning and significance to the life of Christians both individually and collectively as the body of Christ.

A close examination of the interplay of Ninian Smart's dimensions of religion has revealed that meaning has two aspects which play out in every assembly's worship, namely, the experiential aspect and the conceptual aspect. The experiential aspect of meaning pertains to the relational value of worship in the life of the assembly, especially the God-man relationship. Such meaning is particularly significant in the contemporary world in which religion seems to be rapidly losing its grip on the masses as many people question its value and relevance in public life. But if, as has been demonstrated in this discussion, the experiential aspect of meaning points to the benefit of worship to the assembly, then Christian worship remains a meaningful event. This is because corporate worship "in the name of Jesus" and its patterned rituals—the liturgy—has here been understood as the context in which sinful man encounters the gracious God who comes with his gift of salvation in the means of grace, the word and the sacraments. To worship in the primary sense is therefore to relate with God the Father on his own terms[110] and to encounter his gift of life offered in the person and work of Christ the Son in the power of the Holy Spirit. Human activities in worship like prayer, praise, and thanksgiving are therefore in response to, rather than the cause of, divine activity in the assembly. Such a God-man encounter in which man experiences God's blessings is founded on and informed by the Christian narrative

[110] In this regard, Christian worship differs from all other forms of worship in which man sets the parameter

as it unfolds in the divine revelation. And as Christians gather for worship, therefore, they also rationally conceptualize the relationship between their experience and the facts pertaining to the unfolding events of the community's narrative. This is the conceptual aspect of meaning which is equally significant in worship because all that is said and done in the corporate worship of the assembly must *make sense* in light of the Christian metanarrative.

As this study has shown, such meaning is mediated in worship through the liturgy, a set of patterned rituals performed on account of what they confer and signify to the assembly in light of the Christian story. The liturgy is therefore not a set of random and meaningless actions performed by the worship leader or the congregation but a set of patterned and integrated rituals full of meaning to the life of the assembly. However, the discussion has also indicated clearly that the meaning as meditated by the liturgy is not always obvious to the worshippers and therefore liturgical actions are subject to interpretation. If it is granted, as has been evidenced, that liturgical actions are subject to interpretation, then it means that certain hermeneutical principles drawn from contemporary linguistics are applicable to the interpretation of the liturgy and thus crucial to the appropriation of meaning therein. For instance, one such principle noted is that it is only in a particular context, like a sentence, a paragraph, or a larger unit, that the meaning of texts can be determined. In the same manner, liturgical actions—words, symbols or gestures—only have meaning in relation to one another in the context of corporate worship.

Context as a principle of interpretation also carries with it the idea of an interpretive community. MacIntyre and other scholars have reminded us that the task of interpretation

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within which he relates with the object of his worship and human service assumes the center stage.

requires an interpretive community with a horizon based on a common narrative. In the context of Christian worship, this is significant for two reasons: First, Christians, as an interpretive community, are to be considered as one community of faith with a common story and shared meaning despite any perceived or apparent diversity. Second, the notion of an interpretive community brings with it the role of tradition which embodies both the language and the actions of the community over the years. This second point reflects the basic theme of this study: the complementary and indissoluble relationship between liturgy and theology which fosters the apprehension of meaning. We have learned from Kilmartin, Prenter, and to an extent from Wainwright, that there is need to uphold the mutual dialogue and critique between the church's liturgy and her theology. This balanced dynamic makes Christian worship meaningful because what the liturgy—the first-order activity—offers to the worshippers, yet may not otherwise be obvious or clear, is elucidated through theological reflection, a second-order activity. In this respect, the worshipping assembly will appreciate both its liturgy and theology in equal measure. It also follows, as Prenter has rightly noted, that liturgy cannot be done apart from theology and neither can theology be done apart from liturgy.

The unity of liturgy and theology will thus guard against any attempt to have Christian worship driven only by human experience that disregard the traditional language of the community, the church's articulation of her beliefs. On the other hand, taking both liturgy and theology seriously will lead to the consideration and appreciation of corporate worship as the context in which true theology is done. This will also guard against any attempt to do theology in the abstract, as disconnected from the real life experience of the mystery of salvation offered in the church's liturgy. This means that theology cannot or should not be viewed as any other

academic discipline studied in the universities just for the sake of information and intellectual comprehension apart from the liturgical experience of the church. It also means that the church's liturgical praxis must be in tandem with her witness to the truth of God's revelation, to use Prenter's definition of theology.[111] This complementary dynamic of liturgy and theology enhances the appropriation of meaning in worship as each of the two contributes uniquely to the conveyance and inculcation of that meaning among the assembly. Furthermore, the mutual dialogue and critique between liturgy and theology points to the limitations of each of the two realities of worship. Such dynamics point to the role and significance of the biblical narrative not only with regard to norming authority but also as the story in light of which both liturgy and theology make sense. This further means that liturgical practice and theological reflection—as well as the meaning they convey— are subject to the authority of the word of God. It is therefore misplaced to expend much energy in trying to establish which of the two is superior or has an upper hand over the other. Neither liturgy nor theology as human witness alone can be trusted as the sole source of faith and knowledge. Both are therefore to be informed and formed by the word of God in order to mediate meaning that reflects the Christian story.

The entwined relationship of liturgy and theology has also painted worship as a school of faith in which the participants are not only nourished in faith but are also instructed or catechized in the content of the same faith. Catechesis has therefore surfaced as an integral part of the church's worship life. This is because apart from the liturgy itself being catechetical on account of its theological content, catechesis as a formal process of instruction leads to an informed and

[111] This holds true in the reverse as Kilmartin's "vice versa" thesis has reminded us.

hence a more meaningful participation in the liturgy. This means that every local assembly or every church body will strive to have a sustained catechesis which is not merely directed at the intellect but which fosters Christian growth in both knowledge of the faith and a life of faith. Catechesis will thus not end with one's confirmation but will continue as a lifelong process of Christian learning and formation. The liturgy-theology dynamic is also crucial to liturgical inculturation which is an attempt to make worship and the liturgy relevant and thus meaningful to the people in their own cultural context.

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