II – Towards a New Mystagogy

Liturgy Intended as Transformative 'Theologia Prima'

The belief that worship should naturally transform participants lies at the heart of the revival of Orthodox liturgical theology first articulated by Alexander Schmemann.[11] Scholastic thought had treated liturgy as little more than "ceremonied adiaphora,"[12] not the ground for theology proper. A return to patristic sources turned this understanding on its head, showing that liturgy *constitutes* theology, that orthodoxy (ὀρθός + δόξα: "right glory" or true worship) is prior to orthodoxy (ὀρθοδοξία: "right doctrine"). To make this point, Schmemann appeals to the famous dictum of Prosper of Aquitaine: *ut legem credendi lex statuat supplicandi*—"that the law of praying establishes the law of believing." Under the tagline *lex orandi lex credendi*, Schmemann emphasises the interdependence of worship and belief, for faith is "source and cause" of liturgy, but it needs the liturgy as "its own self-understanding and self-fulfillment."[13] Inheriting Schmemann's mantle, Aidan Kavanagh is more definitive still, insisting the terms *lex orandi* and *lex credendi* are not interchangeable, for liturgy *founds* belief like a house is

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[11] Schmemann was of course part of a wider movement of patristic revival and *ressourcement* dominated by French Roman Catholic scholars such as Yves Congar, Jean Daniélou and Louis Bouyer who sought to revitalise the church with "a new and deeper sounding of ancient, inexhaustible, and common resources." C Péguy, as quoted by Yves Congar, *Vrai et fausse réforme dans l'église* (Paris: Cerf, 1950), 602.

[12] Aidan Kavanagh, *On Liturgical Theology* (Collegeville, Minnesota: Pueblo Books, 1984), 151.

[13] Alexander Schmemann, *Liturgy and Tradition: Theological Reflections* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1990), 39.

built on a foundation.[14] We do not worship because we believe, but rather we believe because "the One in whose gift faith lies is regularly met in the act of communal worship."[15] Whereas scholastic theology looked *at* liturgy, analysing its words and rituals, liturgical theology looks *through* liturgy, seeing with a liturgical lens, understanding liturgy "as a way of living and a way of thinking, expressed ritually."[16] It sees liturgy as coterminous with the church, for it is the "church's faith in motion" where worshippers transact "the church's faith in God under the condition of God's real presence in both church and world."[17]

Liturgy is not simply a source of information for the theologian but is rather theology's "natural milieu" and "self-evident term of reference"[18] and the "dynamic condition within which theological reflection is done."[19] Liturgy is in effect *theologia prima*, a direct spiritual apprehension of divine truth through relationship with God himself. Building on this understanding, Kavanagh articulates how the body of Christ gathered in worship operates: in the liturgy, the assembly encounters God, who is both object and source of faith, and stands faithfully in his presence; the assembly is changed

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[14] Aidan Kavanagh, "Primary Theology and Liturgical Act: Response," *Worship* 57, no. 4 (July 1983): 323.

[15] Kavanagh, *On Liturgical Theology*, 91.

[16] David Fagerberg, "Liturgical Asceticism: Enlarging Our Grammar of Liturgy," *Pro Ecclesia* 13, no. 2 (2004): 206.

[17] Kavanagh, *On Liturgical Theology*, 8.

[18] Schmemann, *Liturgy and Tradition*, 12.

[19] Kavanagh, *On Liturgical Theology*, 7–8.

as a result of the encounter; and the assembly must then adjust to this change, and this adjustment is "*theologia* itself."[20] This process of adjustment, of *theologia prima*, is neither "placid" nor "genteel" but involves "collision, chaos and a certain violence."[21] The liturgical assembly stands "on the edge of chaos" and only by God's grace can it stand there or "come away whole from such an encounter, and even then it is with wounds which are as deep as they are salutary."[22]

By locating the operation of primary theology in the church constituted by liturgy, Orthodox liturgical theology highlights that *theologia* is the daily work of ordinary people assembled for worship. Kavanagh thus imagines a certain "Mrs Murphy" as the liturgist *par excellence.* Mrs Murphy is not an academic scholar, but a simple woman, formed by lifelong immersion in liturgical worship:

> Mrs Murphy and her pastor are primary theologians whose discourse in faith is carried on not by concepts and propositions nearly so much as in the vastly complex vocabulary of experiences had, prayers said, sights seen, smells smelled, words said and heard and responded to, emotions controlled and released, sins committed and repented, children born and loved ones buried, and in many other ways no one can count or always account for.[23]

This is not an anti-intellectual or egalitarian stance as such; it is simply the recognition that we become primary theologians and members of "that theological corporation Paul

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[20] Ibid., 74–75.

[21] Ibid., 74.

[22] Ibid., 75.

[23] Ibid., 146–147.

calls Christ's body" by our baptism.[24] Moreover, primary theologians like Mrs Murphy are responsible for an awe-inspiring task, throwing "flashes of light upon chasms of rich ambiguity," a much harder task than the work of the secondary theologians with their "words about words."[25] Liturgists are simply those who *do liturgy*: they make up the church, and they are its primary theologians.

This vision of liturgy as transformative *theologia prima* represents a high understanding of liturgy that has not gone unchallenged. Critics question how realistic this theology is in practice, especially as liturgy does not appear to have a single and "readily identified" meaning.[26] Paul Bradshaw makes use of the work of Jewish liturgiologist Lawrence Hoffman to show that rituals can have many different meanings at the same time.[27] He distinguishes and contrasts the official meanings, "the things experts say that a rite means," from private meanings, "whatever idiosyncratic interpretations people find in things," and public meanings, "agreed-upon meanings shared by a number of ritual participants, even though they are not officially preached by the experts."[28] According to Bradshaw, it is the so-called "official meaning" that liturgical

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[24] Kavanagh, "Primary Theology and Liturgical Act," 322.

[25] Ibid., 323,322. "My admiration for her and her colleagues is profound, and it deepens daily," Kavanagh adds. Ibid.

[26] Paul Bradshaw, "Difficulties in Doing Liturgical Theology," *Pacifica: Australasian Theological Studies* 11, no. 2 (June 1, 1998): 189.

[27] Lawrence Hoffman, "How Ritual Means: Ritual Circumcision in Rabbinic Culture and Today," *Studia Liturgica* 23 (1983): 78-97, esp. 79-82.

[28] Ibid., as cited by Bradshaw, "Difficulties in Doing Liturgical Theology," 189.

scholars define as the primary theology emerging from liturgical experience, even though that official meaning may not even be the same in later generations as in the one that framed the liturgical service in the first instance.[29] Despite this focus on the official or true meaning of liturgy, that may not be what attracts people to worship in the first place, and, as Hoffman argues, "as often as not, it is any of the other meanings that carry the day."[30] Indeed, it is in the face of such ambiguity and lack of readily grasped meaning in liturgy, the critics maintain, that worshippers end up imposing their own private meanings on liturgical experience, rather than the case that "God speaks and people adjust."[31] The problem with the conception of liturgy as primary theology is that, according to Paul Marshall, such an encounter is "necessarily mediated through the lenses of a vision of God already formulated by others and by the worshippers themselves."[32]

Yet the liturgical theology model, as pioneered by Schmemann and elaborated by Kavanagh, accounts for such different meanings by conceiving liturgy not as text, but *icon*: there *is* multivalency in the presence of a corporate act or icon,[33] only it is a

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[29] Bradshaw cites the example of a subsequent reading a 'higher' form of Anglican Eucharistic theology into the Book of Common Prayer than Thomas Cranmer intended.

[30] Hoffman, "How Ritual Means," as cited by Bradshaw, "Difficulties in Doing Liturgical Theology," 189.

[31] Paul Marshall, "Reconsidering 'Liturgical Theology': Is There a Lex Orandi for All Christians?," *Studia liturgica* 25 (1995): 135.

[32] Bradshaw, "Difficulties in Doing Liturgical Theology," 192.

[33] Kavanagh, *On Liturgical Theology*, 104.

different kind of multivalency than in the competing meanings of different *texts*.[34] True *liturgia* is not actually found in the creeds, liturgical texts and prayers themselves; these are the by-products of "that dialectical process of change and adjustment to change triggered by the assembly's regular baptismal and eucharistic encounters with the living God."[35] It is rather the "sustained dialectic"[36] of liturgy that transforms the assembly, along with all its preconceived ideas and previous life, into the life of God. This dialectic means that it cannot be said, as Marshall maintains, that our spiritual posture during liturgy is "essentially passive and receptive," nor that forms of liturgical worship cannot adapt as "an adequate expression of what our faith is or becomes as it is lived in a changing environment."[37] Quite the opposite, for the *thesis* brought by the assembly perdures into the *synthesis*: the "liturgy must be rich and varied because the assembly of faith itself is rich and varied in its nature and operation, that is, catholic in the fullest and most basic sense."[38] Kavanagh contends that this dialectic process is often not

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[34] It is not coincidental that most of the critics of the Schmemann-Kavanagh school of liturgical theology are Protestants focusing on texts. For the liturgical theologians, the received text of the liturgy is best thought of as the "representative source of all potential 'performances'" or actual experiences of *liturgia*. Brian Butcher, *Liturgical Theology after Schmemann: An Orthodox Reading of Paul Ricoeur* (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2018), 50.

[35] Kavanagh, *On Liturgical Theology*, 93.

[36] Ibid., 76.

[37] Marshall, "Reconsidering 'Liturgical Theology': Is There a Lex Orandi for All Christians?," 135.

[38] Kavanagh, *On Liturgical Theology*, 172.

understood because we have fallen into the trap of secondary theology which has "imperceptibly rendered us aphasic and inept with regard to it."[39]

The difficulty arises, though, when Mrs Murphy herself falls into such aphasia and ineptitude, when the worshipping community cannot perceive the transformative *theologia prima*. Kavanagh admits that the change precipitated in the assembly can often be "not so much immediately apparent […] as it is long-term, even eschatological, and inexorable."[40] Although that may well work itself out in the long run, the liturgist is presumably left to muddle through with "whatever idiosyncratic interpretations" were brought to worship in the first place. This is what Schmemann so often laments: people do not always bring open hearts and minds to worship; they bring superstition, anti-sacramental worldviews shaped by the modern world's dualism and pietism, and preconceived beliefs alienated from the core teachings of the faith. The liturgy is supposed to manifest the life of the age to come, but instead nominalism "reigns almost unchallenged."[41] With regards to the church's central act of worship, the Divine Liturgy, Schmemann like Zizioulas notes the frequent serious distortions of Orthodox faith, including harmful divisions between clergy and laity and the eucharist reduced to an "individual act of piety, completely disconnected from the liturgy as a corporate act."[42] In

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[39] Ibid., 77.

[40] Ibid., 93.

[41] Alexander Schmemann, *The Eucharist: Sacrament of the Kingdom* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1987), 18.

[42] Alexander Schmemann, "Problems of Orthodoxy in America: II. The Liturgical Problem," *St Vladimir's Seminary Quarterly* VIII, no. 4 (1964): 179.

spite of the eloquent rhetoric of liturgical theology, such realistic appraisals of the actual effects of worship give credence to critics who believe it ascribes "some sort of Platonic ideal existence to 'the liturgy'."[43] As the critics contend, liturgical theology is at best romantic and idealistic;[44] at worst, its implied structuralism amounts to "liturgical imperialism."[45]

Expecting liturgy to be transformative, though, does not mean that it is "utilitarian, or *for* something."[46] The liturgy should not be oriented towards education or training, nor should churches be reduced to centres of social service. Yet, without being didactic as such, worship should "inform, shape and guide the ecclesiastical consciousness as well as the 'worldview' of the Christian community."[47] By drawing the worshipping community into union with God, liturgy should enable the church to manifest the selfless love of the Holy Trinity to the world. The liturgy should naturally result in the assembly "doing the world" *as liturgy*,[48] reflecting as an icon the life of the age to come. Nicholas Denysenko, an Orthodox theologian of liturgical renewal, thus sets

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[43] Paul Marshall, "Reconsidering 'Liturgical Theology': Is There a Lex Orandi for All Christians?," *Studia Liturgica* 25 (1995): 133.

[44] Bradshaw, "Difficulties in Doing Liturgical Theology," 191.

[45] James L Empereur, "What Is Liturgical Theology? A Study in Methodology," *Theological Studies* 54, no. 3 (September 1993): 590.

[46] Kavanagh, *On Liturgical Theology*, 151. Emphasis added.

[47] Schmemann, *Liturgy and Tradition*, 51.

[48] Kavanagh, *On Liturgical Theology*, 173.

out Christian *formation* as the ultimate, if ever elusive, standard for assessing the impact of any efforts at liturgical reform:

> What kind of people is the Church producing, and how is the liturgy shaping their lives? Do Orthodox Christians make significant contributions to society? Does the Church raise global leaders whose vision for the world reflect the teachings of the Gospel and the kingdom of God? Do the people of the Church conduct themselves in ways consistent with the larger aspirations of liturgical reform? So, for example, if we emphasize the Gospel commandment to forgive one another's sins and to exchange the kiss of peace, and make that ritual moment particularly important in liturgical celebration, can we claim that we are becoming people who habitually forgive the sins of others? Can we claim that we seek to end divisions in our homes, neighborhoods, cities, and countries, and commit ourselves to making peace?[49]

For Denysenko, good liturgy is therefore not the perfection of ritual performance, but "the emergence of transformed communities who love God, are thankful for their life in the communion of the Holy Spirit, and who love and attend to their neighbors," adding that "the love for God, thanksgiving, and love for one's brother and sister must be inscribed upon and communicated by the very liturgical rites we engage."[50] That there should be little evidence of such all-encompassing life change emerging from worship and the dialectic of liturgical theology is thus a particularly damning indictment. Schmemann himself frequently laments that many people remain attached to ancient rites but fail to see the liturgy as "an all-embracing vision of life, a power meant to judge, inform and transform the whole of existence, a 'philosophy of life' shaping and

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[49] Nicholas Denysenko, "Is Liturgical Reform Possible in Orthodoxy?" (Lecture at the University of St Sophia, 1 October 2016), 15.

[50] Ibid., 16.

challenging all our ideas, attitudes and actions."[51] Liturgy functions properly each time it "cracks open radical values, invites without coercing people into them, and celebrates their living presence deep within these same values."[52] And yet one may well wonder how often it does function properly in this way, as we continue to see a complete "alienation of liturgy from life."[53] When the critics say that liturgical theologians permit themselves only "slim, very passing, and somewhat sentimental references to care of the poor and ministry in the world,"[54] they may well have a point.

'Homo Capax Dei' – The Need for Liturgical Capacitation and Proficiency

Commenting on those who attend the Divine Liturgy but choose not to commune, despite the entire service being oriented towards that end, Schmemann distinguishes these "'worldly ones' (κοσμικοί)" from the "former *laikós*, members of the people of God (λαός), 'God's own people' (I Peter 2.9)."[55] By falling short of their vocation as *laity*, worshippers effectively immunise themselves against the transforming power and spirit of the liturgy, and the liturgy on its own is impotent to prevent this. Kavanagh notes that while liturgy *precedes* faith, it does not mechanically *create* it, nor does it necessarily *correct* it; rather it prods its emergence, and throws "flashes of light, coherence and

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[51] Schmemann, *Liturgy and Tradition*, 52.

[52] Kavanagh, *On Liturgical Theology*, 116.

[53] Schmemann, *Liturgy and Tradition*, 52.

[54] Marshall, "Reconsidering 'Liturgical Theology': Is There a Lex Orandi for All Christians?," 137.

[55] Schmemann, *The Eucharist: Sacrament of the Kingdom*, 232.

congruence" into the life of worshippers so that they can sense the presence of God, and it gives faith a foundation.[56] When it works, liturgy properly speaking "drastically affects minds and hearts" such that "reality is perceived in new and unforgettable ways."[57] Yet much depends on the response of the worshippers, the response either of God's own people or of "worldly ones."

It is addressing this *capacity to respond* to liturgy that the standard bearer for a new generation of Orthodox liturgical theology, David Fagerberg, has taken up. Mindful of the criticism of Marshall and others that liturgical theologians have failed to take account of worshippers as people needing preparation for, instruction during, and sending out from worship into ministry,[58] Fagerberg turns his attention to discipleship as an essential element of the dialectic of primary theology. In so doing, he elaborates a principle hinted at by Kavanagh, that *asceticism* belongs to liturgical rite[59] and should be taken seriously.[60] If in going back to sources Schmemann and Kavanagh enlarged the vision of liturgy in its theological dimension, Fagerberg draws on the same patristic tradition to widen the *ascetical* dimension of liturgy. Defining liturgy as the "Trinity's perichoresis kenotically extended to invite our synergistic ascent into deification," he argues this definition *begs asceticism*: "if liturgy is heaven on earth, and *theologia* is

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[56] Kavanagh, *On Liturgical Theology*, 99.

[57] Ibid., 170.

[58] Marshall, "Reconsidering 'Liturgical Theology': Is There a Lex Orandi for All Christians?," 137.

[59] Kavanagh, *On Liturgical Theology*, 160.

[60] Ibid., 6.

deified union with God, then asceticism is demanded."[61] By asceticism he means the efforts of training, self-sacrifice and self-discipline—such as prayer, fasting, keeping vigil, repentance, and pilgrimage—that are analogous to the exercise athletes undergo to discipline their bodies for contest. Such ascetical effort "is requisite to being a liturgist, and to becoming a liturgical theologian."[62]

For Kavanagh, there is an implied asceticism in the dialectical encounter of worship, for the adjustment of *theologia prima,* involving theological judgement and self-criticism, can be difficult and costly. The assembly's new life can only be maintained in "openness, totality, sacredness and sent purpose" by remaining in the presence of God and "suffering whatever change that Source chooses to work within it, and of its painful coming to terms with that change."[63] Yet, while this is the common experience of all the baptised, Kavanagh does not expect all to take up the struggle. It is the ascetic who, as "virtuoso," "serves the whole community as an exemplar of its own life."[64] The life of struggle for holiness, to be sure, is what life is created for—and the "ascetic is simply a stunningly normal person who stands in constant witness to the normality of Christian *orthodoxia* in a world flawed into abnormality by human choice"[65]—but the ascetic alone manifests it. In his recension of Kavanagh's thought, Fagerberg goes further, picking up

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[61] David Fagerberg, *On Liturgical Asceticism* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2013), 9.

[62] Fagerberg, "Liturgical Asceticism," 206.

[63] Kavanagh, *On Liturgical Theology*, 95.

[64] Ibid., 161.

[65] Ibid.

on the patristic notion that asceticism is actually intended for all. Given that liturgists "make up the church, and the church is made up of liturgists, and the term is virtually synonymous with *baptized* or with *laity*, to name the members of the mystical body of Christ,"[66] it follows that "liturgical asceticism is for every baptized Christian."[67] This struggle "is incumbent on every Christian" for it is "born in the waters of the font where the liturgist-in-formation is immersed into the blood of a suffering Christ."[68]

Ascetical effort is about discipleship and spiritual growth, and it "capacitates a person for liturgy"[69] for it is "the discipline which increases the measure by which the Christian can participate in the liturgical life."[70] If the liturgy, standing in the presence of God, is experienced as fire and light, it is liturgical asceticism that "makes us combustible."[71] The fruit of asceticism is a complete change in the worldview of the liturgist that enables liturgy to function properly:

> [It] yields a doctrine of creation that asserts matter was made to be sacrament; it yields an eschatology that asserts everything is destined for glory; it yields an anthropology that asserts the image of God can attain the likeness of God (deification); it yields a christology that asserts the reign of God brings with it obligations to the poor, imprisoned, and outcast; and it

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[66] Fagerberg, "Liturgical Asceticism," 202.

[67] Ibid., 214.

[68] Ibid.

[69] David Fagerberg, *Consecrating the World: On Mundane Liturgical Theology* (Angelico Press, 2016), 2.

[70] Fagerberg, "Liturgical Asceticism," 213.

[71] Ibid.

> yields an ecclesiology that asserts the Church manifests the potency of the world.[72]

In other words, so long as we have the requisite liturgical *ascesis*, and our liturgists are capacitated to participate fully in liturgy, the idealised world envisaged by the liturgical theology expounded by Schmemann and Kavanagh should fall naturally into place—the church assembled in worship experiencing and manifesting *theologia prima* arising from the direct encounter with God.

Nonetheless, postulating the necessity of ascetical preparation as the solution to the apparent ineffectiveness of liturgy as primary theology is not ultimately sufficient to address the practical problem. Fagerberg asserts simply, "We should expect Mrs Murphy to know all this. It is required of her as a Christian."[73] That is true, but is it helpful?[74] It is hard to overlook the fact that few of the laity, who are meant to be coterminous with the liturgists, are actively engaged in asceticism, or indeed aware of their "synergistic participation in the economy of God, as the Almighty gathers up history to bring it to eschatological perfection."[75] Have we not therefore simply shifted from an inspiring yet apparently unachievable conception of liturgy as the all-sufficient ground of encounter with God, to an equally eloquent but impractical expectation of the faithful to be capacitated by asceticism for their participation in liturgy as "a deified people, a filial

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[72] David Fagerberg, *Theologia Prima: What Is Liturgical Theology?* 2nd edition. (Chicago: Hillenbrand, 2003), 226.

[73] Ibid.

[74] *Cf.* Empereur, "What Is Liturgical Theology?," 590.

[75] Fagerberg, "Liturgical Asceticism," 206.

race grafted by the paschal mystery into eighth-day existence" setting about their liturgical vocation to create a "new heaven and a new earth"?[76] Can our Mrs Murphy truly be enough of an ascetic to be a full participant in liturgy and thus a primary theologian?

Liturgy as Enacted Social Drama

Moving towards a new mystagogy for our day means therefore addressing the central issue of liturgical participation, the problems of which are essentially what launched the liturgical movement in the first place. In the words of one of the liturgical movement's pioneers, Virgil Michel, while renewal began with leading "the faithful into more intimate participation in the liturgy of the Church," true liturgical renewal demands more: "the further objective must also be that of getting the liturgical spirit to radiate forth from the altar of Christ into every aspect of the daily life of the Christian."[77] These two objectives form one single liturgical movement, according to Mark Searle, and the underlying assumption of this movement is that the liturgy of the church should once again shape "the faithful and the faithful contribute to the shaping of the world."[78] Replacing the debased but common notion of better liturgical participation as merely getting

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[76] Fagerberg, *Theologia Prima*, 222.

[77] Virgil Michel, "The Scope of the Liturgical Movement," *Orate Fratres* 10 (1936) 485. As cited by Searle, *Called to Participate*, 8.

[78] Searle, *Called to Participate*, 12.

congregants to pray and sing along with the service,[79] Searle identifies three ascending levels of participation of the faithful in the worship of the church:

> 1. participating in the *rite* as a whole according to one's assigned role and doing so in such a way that one is
> 2. participating in the *priestly work of Christ* on behalf of the world before the throne of God and thus identifying with Christ dead and risen; and
> 3. participating in the *trinitarian life of God* as human beings.[80]

In this description, the early church vision is recaptured insofar as full, active liturgical participation culminates with *theosis*, in direct communion with the life of God. This trinitarian participation reflects moreover a proper understanding of liturgy as collective and communitarian, not individualistic. Liturgy becomes the "place where the many collectively discover their individual lives to be inextricably part of the one collective life in the Spirit."[81] The worship of the church is the "action of the assembled whole," and it is not necessary—even in reaction to the clericalist theatre of the past—to insist on everyone joining in every word and act.[82]

When the faithful join together in liturgy, meaning is derived not from the understanding and motives of the assembled individuals, but from the collective act itself, from *what the worshippers do*. Liturgy is therefore, according to Searle, "essentially

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[79] As implied by a reductionist reading of the words of *Sacrosanctum Concilium,* 30: "To promote active participation, the people should be encouraged to take part by means of acclamations, responses, psalmody, antiphons, and songs, as well as by actions, gestures, and bodily attitudes. And at the proper times all should observe a reverent silence."

[80] Searle, *Called to Participate*, 44.

[81] Ibid., 12.

[82] Ibid., 20.

a performance into which individuals fit themselves, discovering its meaning and implications as it were from the inside."[83] Liturgy as performance does not mean liturgy as *theatre*. Nevertheless, worship shares characteristics with theatrical drama as an *enacted event,* meaning that its participants employ similar tools to understand and interpret it. Liturgical scholar Richard McCall points out that such a view of liturgy is very ancient indeed, for this toolset comprises the same method of "symbolic expansion used since New Testament times," specifically, the elaborated symbolic world reflected in the early fathers and mystagogical commentators on the liturgy. Though elaborate, this "old semiotic" was nevertheless popular and widely grasped by the faithful, as it is "basically intuitive" and "rooted in the human imagination."[84] This toolset was obscured with the rise of scholasticism and new semiotic categories in the late mediaeval era, which brought about a secularised tradition of drama separated from a church increasingly obsessed with dialectic and systematic theology. From that point, "drama would cease to be an acceptable hermeneutical tool for the exposition of the liturgy because, after all, dramatic performance requires a concrete enactment and a kind of visual symbol unsuited to dialectic."[85]

It is only in the second half of the 20th century, with the advent of a postmodern worldview including a new dramatic tradition capable of radical experimentation, that the boundary between liturgy and drama could once again be transcended. From

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[83] Ibid., 23.

[84] McCall, *Do This*, 22.

[85] Ibid., 40.

creative experiments in dramatic form, evoking in many ways the drama of the premodern era, and from critical reflection upon them, the new discipline of *performance theory* emerges, drawing together insights from "anthropologists, sociologists, semioticians, linguists, and dramatic critics,"[86] all of whom underline the performance quality of social interaction. Prominent among these is Richard Schechner, a professor of performance studies who adapts cultural anthropologist Victor Turner's metaphor of "social drama" for the way societies negotiate transitions. For Turner, such social dramas involve social structures passing through four subsequent stages of *breach*, *crisis* (the *liminal* stage in which an "antistructure" exists called *communitas*)*, redressive action,* and *reintegration*.[87] Schechner reappropriates Turner's metaphor, returning it to its native context of theatrical performance, and frames the four stages of performance within the acts of "gathering" and "dispersing."[88] This framing differentiates that which we can describe as "performance" (of a play or of liturgy) from ongoing social reality. Schechner distinguishes three types of performance: *aesthetic*, where viewing an external performance affects the audience's consciousness; *ritual*, where the subject of the ceremony is transformed by the performer; and *social drama*, properly speaking*,* where all (performer and audience alike) are involved and transformed.[89] Although all three types of performance could be said to be at work on some level within every liturgy,

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[86] Ibid., 42.

[87] Ibid., 51.

[88] Ibid., 52.

[89] Ibid., 54.

McCall argues that the liturgy of the modern era in the grip of scholasticism belongs primarily to the first, the aesthetic performance category, whereas in the premodern era, as well as in postmodern aspiration, liturgy both unfolds and is experienced most fully as a dynamic and transformative social drama.

Searle too recognises the social drama that liturgy represents, insisting that liturgy is a "performance that makes a difference": it is capable of shaping reality and generating new situations, redefining people and their roles, and above all "creating, modifying, or sustaining *relationships.*"[90] Oriented towards others, liturgy "transcends the individuals who participate in it, lifting them up to engage in something far beyond their ability to create or even to imagine."[91] Within this communal process of change and becoming—coming out of the structure of the world, being pushed into an ambiguous and disorienting liminal state that challenges that structure and forms an antistructure (*communitas*), and ultimately not only fosters growth and development but engenders a radical new life—the church is constituted with what Orthodox theologian Dimitrios Passakos describes as an "anti-structural kind of ecclesiology,"[92] belonging no longer to this present age but to the age to come. Therefore, as Zizioulas explains, true causality is derived from the future not the past, and the true nature of all people and things is what

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[90] Searle, *Called to Participate*, 23.

[91] Ibid., 14.

[92] Passakos, "Worship, Rituals and Liturgy in Orthodox Tradition: Insights from Practice and Theology," 26. It also implies that such a church born in the transformative performance of liturgy is and must remain a *marginal* community, radical movement opposed to the structures of this age. It is fundamentally incompatible with worldly power and tyranny.

they will be in the age to come.[93] The key to the transformative potential of the social drama of worship is thus an eschatological awareness: the "more of your eschatological identity you carry with you, the more you will love and come to the aid of whomever needs your help, whatever it costs you."[94] This new participative eschatological ontology heals our distorted relations for we come to know each other, not as *we have been*, as sinful, self-centred individuals, but as *we will be* in the glorious life of communion of the age to come; and it therefore leads to new actions and new witness within the world.[95]

As we edge towards a new and transformative mystagogy for our postmodern world, contemporary performance theory thus helps to explain how the enactment of the social drama of liturgy can involve and shape worshippers for the new life of the kingdom. Nevertheless, we are as yet simply begging the question, pointing simply to participation in the liturgy itself—even if it be a *fuller* participation in a more *broadly-scoped* liturgy as event—as the way to Christian formation. Yet it is not enough just to *declare* it is so. Apart from simply insisting on our iconological participation in the eschaton through the Divine Liturgy, a trenchant critic of contemporary Orthodox liturgical practice like John Zizioulas does not articulate in any practical way how awareness of this eschatological identity is to be acquired, how eschatological ontology works through worship to make us into people who belong in and derive their being

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[93] Zizioulas, *The One and the Many*, 15. He draws this from Maximus the Confessor.

[94] John D. Zizioulas, *Lectures in Christian Dogmatics*, ed. Douglas H. Knight (New York: T & T Clark, 2009), 127.

[95] Zizioulas, *The Eucharistic Communion and the World*, 48.

from the age to come. A pragmatic solution is sorely needed, though: consider just how scathingly Zizioulas decries clergy who, lacking the proper eschatological awareness, have turned the liturgy into "a distortion of the image of the last times."[96]

Liturgy as Narrative Signification

We turn therefore to a New Testament scholar, N.T. Wright, who fully shares Zizioulas's concern for the dearth of awareness among Christians of an experience here and now of the new way of life in the age to come. Wright perceives the real solution will come with the recovery the fuller kingdom *narrative*. Over and again he emphasises that it is in the telling of the *story* that the work of God in Jesus to establish his kingdom becomes the "mandate and pattern" for the church: "The more you tell the story of Jesus and pray for his Spirit, the more you discover what the church should be doing in the present time."[97] What Wright says of the gospels could equally be said of the kingdom worship of the Orthodox Divine Liturgy: the story has a "dense and complex centre" and we need to regularly "be struck anew by the thick, rich, multilayered nature" of this narrative, "so full of vivid human scenes, but so evocative in their resonance of meaning about the world, God, life and death, and pretty much everything else."[98] In the telling of God's story in worship, there is the potential for the transforming encounter and renewal of our minds that we need:

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[96] Ibid., 46.

[97] Wright, *How God Became King*, 119.

[98] Ibid., 157.

> God has to sweep away all our ideas, including all our ideas about God, in order to draw us, unwilling as we are, face to face with the reality, which is both greater and gentler than we can imagine. And if that is true in our praying and thinking—if it is true that we have to be stripped of our own noisy jumble of thoughts in order to hear afresh the word of the triune God—it is just as true in our living.[99]

In liturgy, then, God's story shapes our own, the narrative of the age to come moulding us to be citizens and bringers of the kingdom: in liturgy we come to inhabit God's world and his story.

Wright builds here on one of the main insights of postcritical theory, the emergence of *story* as a governing metaphor for life itself and human thought, words and action within it. Setting out his own postcritical framework of "critical realism,"[100] he explains that stories "are one of the most basic modes of human life." Narratives are not accounts derived from human words and action: rather, what we say and do are "enacted narratives." In other words, "the overall narrative is the more basic category, while the particular moment and person can only be understood within that context."[101] Postcritical philosopher Richard Kearney adds that every "human existence is a life in

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[99] N.T. Wright, *For All God's Worth: True Worship and the Calling of the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 38.

[100] Based in no small part on the work of critical-realist theoretician Michael Polanyi. See especially Michael Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958) and *The Tacit Dimension* (London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1967) and Michael Polanyi and Marjorie Grene, *Knowing and Being: Essays* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969).

[101] N.T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God: Christian Origins and the Question of God, Vol. 1* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993), 38.

search of a narrative"—not simply in the sense of trying to weave a coherent story out of the confusing threads of life, but "because each human life is *always already* an implicit story."[102]

This dynamic element of human life as an enacted narrative connects stories directly to the performative aspects of liturgy as enacted event described above. As story-laden creatures, we all come to worship bearing our own complex of explicit and implicit narratives. We are often not aware of them at all, for we have not stopped to do any *narrative criticism* on our own lives—we have yet to ponder the plot, the structure, the characters of the stories in which we inhabit. Yet, as David Stosur writes, if we are to properly respond to Guardini's challenge and solve the "imaginative shutdown" of the modern world, we must become aware as the "tellers and hearers" of worship of our mutual narrative identities.[103] In the proclamation of readings from the scriptures, the performance of ritual actions, the hymns and prayers, the liturgy presents us with a myriad of sensory-data, ideas and symbols, story-laden events derived from the grand narrative that is God's own story and representing "living stories of our tradition for our appropriation and deepened transformation."[104] These are based not only in the past, but in the "last things," and they represent the *telos*, the fulfilment and truest form of our human existence:

> Between the "once upon a time" of the Gardens of Eden and Gethsemane and the "happily ever after" of the Wedding Feast of the Lamb in the New

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[102] Richard Kearney, *On Stories, Thinking in Action* (London: Routledge, 2002), 129.

[103] Stosur, "Liturgy and (Post) Modernity," 41.

[104] Ibid.

> Jerusalem, we will continue to find in the liturgical here-and-now the Author of our life, if only we have the courage honestly to narrate and implicate ourselves in the Story through which we discover our living and true identity.[105]

The stories and worldview embedded in the liturgy are meant to challenge and subvert all competing stories, for they are in essence revolutionary, proclaiming the dethroning and reversal of all tyrannical powers, the victory of God in Jesus that transforms sorrow into joy, darkness into light, and death into life. As Wright explains, this subversive role of narrative is intentional:

> Stories are, actually, peculiarly good at modifying or subverting other stories and their worldviews. Where head-on attack would certainly fail, the parable hides the wisdom of the serpent behind the innocence of the dove, gaining entrance and favour which can then be used to change assumptions which the hearer would otherwise keep hidden away for safety. […] Tell someone to do something, and you change their life—for a day; tell someone a story and you change their life.[106]

Yet we are almost completely oblivious and immune to this subversive message if there is no point of intersection between our complex of personal stories and the public narrative of the liturgy. Our existing tacit knowledge or matrix of stories prevents us from even seeing the obvious symbol system of the kingdom that pervades the liturgy. As Wright points out, we have cut the narrative "down to size" and have allowed it "only to speak about the few concerns that happened to occupy our minds already," rather than setting it "free to generate an entire world of meaning in all directions, a new world in

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[105] Ibid.

[106] Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*, 40.

which we would discover not only new life, but new vocation."[107] What occupy our minds already are competing narratives[108] that create what Wright calls "bad habits of thought."[109] These result in perception filters that blind us to even the most obvious elements of God's story, in cognitive biases or subjective perceptions of reality that distort our apprehension of the truths revealed in the narrative and experienced in worship. For any new story to be subversive, it must come "close enough to the story already believed by the hearer for a spark to jump between them," and when it does, "nothing will ever be quite the same again."[110]

It is to Paul Ricoeur's phenomenology-based hermeneutics of performative text and human action that Stosur turns for the model by which to analyse the transformative

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[107] Wright, *How God Became King*, 158.

[108] This is the term used by John Milbank who writes about Christians needing to out-narrate "competing narratives," principally through *metanarrative realism*, grasping the performative metanarrative—Jesus's preaching and inauguration of the kingdom—which has been completed by Jesus but needs to be re-enacted and realised in every generation until the eschatological fulfilment. John Milbank, *Theology & Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), 385-390. Historian Antoine Arjakovsky, one of the few Orthodox to engage with Milbank and other thinkers of the 'Radical Orthodoxy' movement, writes that Milbank showed these competing narratives to be "a succession of disguised antitheologies, which unceasingly deform the vision of the Kingdom of Orthodox Christianity." "The Epiclesis of Life, a Radical Orthodox Approach." *Sergius Bulgakov: A Review of Russian Religious Philosophy and Contemporary Integral Thought.* Accessed 1 May 2018. https://sbulgakov.livejournal.com/30625.html

[109] Wright, *How God Became King*, 158.

[110] Ibid.

aspect of narrative within liturgy.[111] The choice of Ricoeur makes profound sense, for one of the guiding threads of the philosopher's work is the notion of the "capable human being" (*l'homme capable*), which provides a neat foil to Guardini's musing whether such a one could still exist. In his own work on Ricoeur, Brian Butcher discovers a path for construing "the liturgical faculty of *l'homme capable*—how to discern in such a one the form of Schmemann's *homo adorans*" as well as a means for seeing "how liturgy, as an instantiation of Ricoeur's axiom that 'the symbol gives rise to thought,' manifests *homo capax* as specifically *homo capax Dei.*"[112] Though he was no theologian, Ricoeur would occasionally refer directly in his works to such liturgical capacitation:

> I am grateful to the liturgy for delivering me out of my subjectivity, for offering me, not my words or gestures, but those of the community. […] I enter into a form that in turn forms me; by taking up in my own way the liturgical text I become text myself, in prayer and song. Indeed, by the liturgy, I am fundamentally divested of preoccupation with myself…. Behold the salutary disorientation that resituates the "I" amidst community, the individual amidst history and the human person amidst creation.[113]

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[111] A turn to *text* and the *interpretation of text* may appear retrograde if we are to escape the clutches of text-oriented modernity and scholastic thought. But as noted, with Ricoeur text is always *performative*. Moreover, "with Ricoeur's shift to narrative comes a concomitant emphasis and re-evaluation of the essential role of human *action* in the articulation of personal and communal identity." David A Stosur, "Narrative Signification and the Paschal Mystery: Liturgy, Participation, and Hermeneutics," *Questions liturgiques* 96, no. 1–2 (2015): 53.

[112] Butcher, *Liturgical Theology after Schmemann*, 60.

[113] Paul Ricoeur, "Postface." *Taizé et l'Église de Demain,* Jean-Marie Paupert (Paris: Fayard, 1967), 102. As translated and cited by Butcher, *Liturgical Theology after Schmemann*, 60.

This liturgical resituating of our identities and lives is thus principally a form of "narrative signification," in which meaning is derived from the context of an overall and coherent story. Stosur notes that, if "at one time Ricoeur could say, 'The symbol gives rise to thought,' later he would say that no symbol can do so without its contextualization in narrative."[114] Indeed, the capacitation *for* and *within* liturgy characteristic of the capable human being represents a kind of narrative reshaping of human life: "we learn to become the *narrator of our own story* without completely becoming the author of our life."[115]

Both Stosur and Butcher trace the path of this narrative signification and reshaping in liturgy along the lines of Ricoeur's "narrative arc," the threefold *mimesis* of prefiguration, configuration and refiguration. Participation in the liturgy of the church, which is at the same time and intersubjectively both personal and communal,[116] passes continually through these three stages, which effectively correspond with the three ascending stages of participation identified by Searle. The liturgy has a context,

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[114] Stosur, "Narrative Signification and the Paschal Mystery," 41.

[115] Paul Ricoeur, "Life: A Story in Search of a Narrator," in *A Ricoeur Reader: Reflection and Imagination,* ed. Mario J.Valdés (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991) 437. As cited by Ibid., 50.

[116] "A narrative approach values the dynamics of intersubjectivity and understands that each individual's story incorporates uniquely personal and various communal histories, including the history and tradition of the actual celebrating assembly. While it is impossible for any two persons to understand their relationship to the community and to the community's liturgical act in precisely the same way, neither should this be the goal. Members of the assembly are not, *literally,* of one mind, but are 'single-mindedly,' together, sharers in the tradition." Stosur, "Liturgy and (Post) Modernity," 36-37.

consisting of both the story-laden life of the community and our own complex of individual narratives, which *prefigures* us and makes us capable (or not) of participating in and appropriating the narrative tradition. In the next stage, *configuration*, we are "emplotted," drawn into the *mythos*, into what Ricoeur considers the interplay of "acting and suffering, doing and undergoing,"[117] and this constitutes an embodied and performed image of the world rightly ordered to the larger divine narrative. Claiming that narrative as our own, we reshape and arrange the events of our life to conform to the νόμον τοῦ Χριστοῦ (Galatians 6.2), the kenotic pattern of Christ—as we are drawn into what Searle calls our "living participation in Christ's own sacrifice of obedience."[118] By this self-emptying participation in Christ's priesthood, we are *refigured*, transformed in our understanding and action for our return to life and mission, the third stage of participation in the trinitarian life as human beings. Stosur sums this up with reference to the paschal mystery at the heart of the liturgy: "the deepest confirmation and affirmation [of] one's true identity—one's real life—can be found only in living for and with others, 'refiguring' our stories in the power of the Spirit along the lines of narrative

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[117] Ibid., 61. Here we may also draw a direct parallel with the social drama metaphor already evoked in Turner and Schechner. Although "configuration" is primarily a *positive* development, the "emplotment" nevertheless involves a *crisis* giving rise to this interplay of acting and suffering. The threefold narrative arc is therefore analogous to Turner's concepts of *breach* (which comes to a community that has been "prefigured"), *crisis* leading into the *liminal* stage in which an "antistructure" exists called *communitas* (which corresponds with the community's "configuration"), before the *redressive action* and *reintegration* (which constitute "refiguration").

[118] Searle, *Called to Participate*, 37.

transformation 'configured' in the story of Christ's paschal mystery."[119] Echoing Searle, Stosur further describes *refiguration*—a process which is only complete in the fulness of the age to come—as the process by which "the 'rehearsal' of the liturgy of the world in the liturgy of the church gives way to living the liturgy of the world: the life of the assembly and its members becomes grateful life lived for others, always and everywhere."[120]

Experienced according to this three-staged arc of narrative transformation, the liturgy of the church becomes the privileged arena for the recovery of Guardini's "forgotten way of doing things" and "lost attitudes," the place for the vision and enactment of that lost symbolic universe, for the acquisition of those virtues and performance of those actions which participate directly in the larger purposes of God's own story. Liturgy itself then becomes, as Stosur points out, "analogous to the 'second naïveté' that Ricoeur spoke of with respect to symbols,"[121] and we move closer to a new liturgical mystagogy cast specially for our sceptical and fragilised postmodern age, one that permits full participation and enables real formation.

The Formative Power of Enacted Narrative

Significantly and altogether helpfully for our project, this concern for real formation is shared by postcritical virtue ethicists like the philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre and the

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[119] Stosur, "Liturgy and (Post) Modernity," 37.

[120] Stosur, "Narrative Signification and the Paschal Mystery," 63.

[121] Ibid., 60.

theologian Stanley Hauerwas, who likewise have insisted on the need for narrative in the process of formation. For them, "to speak of virtue entails that we tell stories."[122] This is because of the very definition of a *virtue*—both classically since Aristotle and in the postcritical recovery of virtue ethics—as an internal disposition or habit directed towards a *telos,* the end which is the "ought" of human existence. Virtues are thus characteristics needed to sustain communities, traditions and practices; as MacIntyre says, "I can only answer the question 'What am I to do?' if I can answer the prior question 'Of what story or stories do I find myself a part?'"[123] Put another way, virtue is simply "that excellence, skill, or acquired characteristic expected of one who is appropriately formed in the wisdom of a given community that is told in their stories."[124]

The acquisition of such virtues requires two things: community exemplars or models of virtue to emulate, and importantly, practice. A "practice" is formally defined by MacIntyre as "cooperative human activity through which goods internal to that form of activity are realized in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate."[125] And within the church, the liturgy is precisely "paradigmatic

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[122] Wayne A. Meeks, *The Origins of Christian Morality: The First Two Centuries* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 189.

[123] Alasdair C. MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, 3rd ed. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), 216.

[124] Joseph Woodill, *The Fellowship of Life: Virtue Ethics and Orthodox Christianity*, (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1998), 10.

[125] MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 187.

practice."[126] In the liturgy, the church acquires its fundamental story from its participation in God's larger purposes, and our individual and communal life stories receive their *telos* through the ritual re-enactment of the narratives of God and the church. In this way, Hauerwas says, we deepen our understanding of what we are oriented towards by being confronted, challenged and reshaped by the fundamental story that has gripped our life: the "Kingdom is constituted by a story which one never possesses, but rather one which constantly challenges us to be what we are but have not yet become."[127] The liturgy has the potential to restore and reform us because it *re-narrates* our identity, drawing us into the narrative arc that replays and re-enacts the story of God reconciling the world to himself in Christ, which is the true *telos* of the world and the basis of the vision of flourishing (the "good") towards which we are drawn. Participation in the narrative of liturgy also embeds within us—in the terminology of the virtue ethicists resonating with patristic tradition—the *phronesis,* that is, the "narrative intelligence" or practical wisdom, required to exercise virtue and live well.[128] Virtue and its formation within us thus are very much like learning a craft like bricklaying, an image that Hauerwas uses to underscore that being formed as a Christian "involves entering a

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[126] Meeks, *The Origins of Christian Morality*, 91.

[127] Stanley Hauerwas, *Christian Existence Today: Essays on Church, World, and Living in Between* (Durham, N.C: Labyrinth Press, 1988), 108.

[128] Stosur points out how this notion of *phronesis* undergirds the notion of liturgy, as described by Aidan Kavanagh, David Fagerberg and others as *theologia prima.* Stosur, "Liturgy and (Post) Modernity," 40.

tradition of skillfulness in a particular way."[129] This craftlike nature of formation points directly forward to the next essential element of our new mystagogy, the need to attend to the formative aspects of rituals, movement and *embodied* action by which we dwell within the liturgy.

Deep Transformation through Embodied Participation

That formation is more craftlike than didactic, more *caught* than *taught*, means our new mystagogy needs to make sense of the role of the body—both the corporeal individual body and corporate collective body—and specifically, of the story-shaping power of pre-cognitive bodily actions and rituals. Already Hauerwas in his virtue ethics is aware of the fundamental importance of embodied action for formation. Highlighting the importance of gestures which embody all that is significant, he writes:

> [T]he church is but God's gesture on behalf of the world to create a space and time in which we might have a foretaste of the Kingdom. It is through gestures that we learn the nature of the story that is the very content and constitution of the Kingdom. The way we learn a story, after all, is not just by hearing it. Important and significant stories must be acted out. We must be taught the gestures that help position our bodies and our souls to be able to hear rightly and then retell the story.[130]

Hauerwas illustrates his own point with a concrete case, the religious education of people with low cognitive intelligence. He admits they may not understand the meaning of the story, in the conventional sense meant by "understand" and "meaning," or be able

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[129] Woodill, *The Fellowship of Life*, 5.

[130] Hauerwas, *Christian Existence Today*, 106.

to work out its social implications, but they *know* how the story is "embodied through the gestures of the church":

> [T]hey learn the story through its enactment as they feel and are formed by the liturgy that places us as characters in God's grand project of the creation and redemption of the world. They know that they, too, have a role in God's people as they faithfully serve God through being formed by a community that is nothing less than the enactment of that story.[131]

Hauerwas also links this embodied participation to the eschatological nature of the church and worship: because Christians believe they have seen "the end" in the saving work of God in Jesus, they are "able to take the time, time demanded by our bodily character, to acquire habits necessary to sustain a community people who live between the times."[132]

Hauerwas is careful to insist this embodied knowledge is not some kind of bare minimum or low degree of liturgical participation and knowledge: rather, it is the very heart of what liturgical formation is all about. Searle too emphasises the immense importance of liturgical gestures. Taking up Ricoeur's phrase "the symbol gives rise to thought," he insists that it is actually only the *embodied* symbol that does so.[133] In liturgy we do not think of meaning and then express it in gestures; rather meaning emerges and

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[131] Ibid., 109.

[132] Stanley Hauerwas, "Foreword" to Colin Douglas Miller, *The Practice of the Body of Christ: Human Agency in Pauline Theology after MacIntyre* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2014), x.

[133] *Cf.* Theodore Jennings: "The gesture gives rise to thought." "Ritual Studies and Liturgical Theology: An Invitation to Dialogue," *Journal of Ritual Studies* 1, no. 1 (1987): 38.

dawns on those who carry it out.[134] And, just as it is for those incapable of higher level thinking at all, this proves particularly useful for sceptical postmodern human beings:

> To us who have become distrustful of the word, the liturgy offers the opportunity to rediscover its power by submitting to the gesture as well. We kneel to confess, stand to salute and to praise; we bow, we beat the breast, we raise our hands, we genuflect, we make the sign of the cross—and in all this we discover the meaning of the rite by putting ourselves as best we can into what we are doing. In all these ways and more, the liturgy encourages us to try on the metaphor; not just to stand there, but to body it forth.[135]

The kinaesthetic meaning that emerges from such "bodying forth" Susan Wood calls *participatory knowledge* and she gives the example of learning to ride a bicycle. No one can teach us what balance feels like; we can only learn that by doing it. This is because of the way tacit knowledge functions. She notes postcritical philosopher Michael Polanyi's point that we often assume the true conception of something lies in its *particulars* because they are more tangible. Yet the real truth lies in the *whole*, which is a *Gestalt*, an organised comprehensive entity that is greater than the sum of its parts. Just as we cannot *know* the balance involved in riding a bike by focusing on our muscles or our individual movements, so also we cannot really know the meaning of liturgy in any of its constitutive parts. We need rather to *dwell within* the liturgy, within its particular

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[134] Searle, *Called to Participate*, 14.

[135] Mark Searle, "Liturgy as Metaphor," *Worship* 55, no. 2 (March 1981): 115.

movements, symbols and words—and this "indwelling constitutes a type of empathetic knowledge" in which we can perceive the whole picture.[136]

The kinaesthetic and bodily knowledge of enacted narrative that Hauerwas, Searle and Wood refer to has been the focus of intense study under the rubric of *ritual knowledge* by theologian Theodore Jennings. Ritual knowledge, he says, "is primarily corporeal rather than cerebral, primarily active rather than contemplative, primarily transformative rather than speculative."[137] He proposes three ways in which such knowledge is gained in and through the body. First, ritual knowledge is *explorative*, enabling us to enquire and discover new meanings. This corresponds again to an understanding of liturgy as social drama: Jennings notes that Turner locates the transitional or liminal state within ritual itself, showing that liminality "is not accidental to, but is constitutive of, the ritual process." Indeed, the liminal moment is the properly generative aspect of ritual knowledge.[138] In this way, it is by an engaged action that does

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[136] Susan Wood, "Participatory Knowledge of God in the Liturgy," in *Knowing the Triune God: The Work of the Spirit in the Practices of the Church* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans, 2001), 101. Significantly, Wood notes that Polanyi describes religious ritual as "the highest degree of indwelling that is conceivable." Ritual is a sequence of "things to be said and gestures to be made which involve the whole body and alert our whole existence" in such a way that the true participant is completely absorbed in them.

[137] Theodore W Jennings, "On Ritual Knowledge," *The Journal of Religion* 62, no. 2 (April 1982): 115. He actually cautions against the term "embodiment," for it implies meaning exists first and then is performed corporally, whereas the bodily action and the body 'minding' or attending to itself happen at the same time.

[138] Ibid., 114.

not leave things the way they are but alters them in some way (such as lifting a chalice in prayer) that ritual knowledge is gained—in other words, through an embodied configuration and refiguration, through the transforming encounter that is *theologia prima,* noting Kavanagh's point that such change usually involves "collision, chaos and a certain violence."[139] Secondly, ritual knowledge is *pedagogical*, providing not a new "point of view so much as a pattern of doing."[140] This pedagogy itself works on three levels: by imitation, we learn how to repeat the actual ritual (for example, ritually proclaiming the Lord's prayer); by response, in which the ritual action leads to new action that is governed by it (using the Lord's prayer as a framework for other prayers or one's whole prayer life); and then, extending even further, the ritual act may become the epitome of a new way of living (like when St Cyprian remarked, commenting on the Lord's prayer, "If we call God Father we should behave as his children").[141] This last aspect of pedagogy gives rise to the third mode of ritual knowledge, in which it extends beyond the ritual space: in this way, ritual knowing becomes *demonstrative*, presenting itself to "an observer who is invited to see, approve, understand, or recognize the ritual action."[142] In this process of the *re-cognition* of bodily knowledge discovered in liturgy, Jennings finds a basis for determining the authenticity of ritual itself: he posits that liturgical action may actually be "'falsified' to the extent to which it cannot serve as a

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[139] Kavanagh, *On Liturgical Theology*, 74.

[140] Jennings, "On Ritual Knowledge," 117.

[141] Ibid.

[142] Ibid., 112–113.

paradigm for significant action outside the ritual itself" or "validated to the extent to which it does function in this way."[143] In other words, authentic liturgy must be manifested in real transformation—in a liturgy *after* the liturgy.

Embodied ritual knowledge is ultimately a form of *disclosure of truth*. Attending upon the truth that emerges from liturgical action requires, in Searle's words, the suspension of disbelief and cultivation of a "trusting imagination": we need to enter into the enacted narrative of the liturgy with sympathetic expectation until truth is disclosed.[144] That means that the repeated corporeal and corporate bodily gestures of the liturgy ultimately work at a precognitive level of seduction rather than conviction, reforming our imagination, desires and character far more than we are consciously aware. As James K.A. Smith has emphasised,[145] human beings are primarily worshippers and lovers, rather than thinkers, and we will always worship and love *something*, even if it is not what we think or intend. This divide between our hearts and minds emerges because we are most deeply formed at the subconscious, precognitive level of the body, in our hearts and imaginations. Smith draws on French phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty to show that action is not always directly governed by thinking. The imagination shaped within us is not primarily a thing of the mind, but a bodily form of

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[143] Jennings, "On Ritual Knowledge," 119–120. Lest this be misinterpreted, he emphasises that the goal is the transformation of the world—so the paradigmatic applicability is not a function of *mirroring* the world.

[144] Searle, "Liturgy as Metaphor," 114–115.

[145] James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation.* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011).

intelligence (*praktognosia,* "know-how") that surpasses conscious reflection. Great athletes and musicians naturally know this—and even speak of thinking and responding with their bodies without conscious thought—but the same is true of all human beings. Consequently, in all ritual action, we effectively learn to "believe with our bodies."[146]

Smith also adopts French Marxist anthropologist Pierre Bourdieu's concept of *habitus*, "the complex of inclinations and dispositions that make us lean into the world with a habituated momentum,"[147] and shows that the cumulative force of inhabiting an enacted narrative, with its ritual actions, is that we eventually have habits of desire and love formed within us: "liturgies are formative because—and just to the extent that—they tap into our imaginative core."[148] The difficulty is that this habituation process is as true of all enacted narratives as it is of the liturgy of the church, and worse yet, the rival secular liturgies—including those taking places in shopping malls and stadiums—often operate with a better understanding of human desire and formation than the church does. The solution to this *deforming* and imagination-warping influence of cultural liturgies, Smith says, is not *information*—more religious education or theological reflection—but a thoroughgoing *counter-formation,* overcoming these opposing attractions that attempt to divert our desires and love. This is precisely the point of full participation in an embodied and enacted narrative of liturgy: it provides a shared

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[146] James K. A. Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom: How Worship Works*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 92.

[147] Ibid., 79.

[148] Ibid., 137.

habitation that conscripts and reshapes our imaginations and reorients our desires, presenting our bodies with an alternative communal body and *habitus,* in which we are cleansed of rival symbols and loves, and through which we learn to love the vision of God's beauty and to desire what he desires.

Attaining 'Theologia Prima' through Re-cognition and Re-narration

Lest Smith's emphasis on embodied ritual be misconstrued as a denigration of the rational character of worship, of liturgy as λογικὴν λατρείαν ("reasonable worship," Romans 12.1), he ultimately turns, like Jennings does in his model of ritual knowledge, to the need for conscious reflection on the meaning that emerges in ritual. Jennings writes that liturgical actions meaningfully "point beyond themselves in such a way as to provoke reflection,"[149] and this reflection is precisely the re-cognition of ritual knowledge, the transfer of bodily knowledge outside worship into reflective-critical meaning.[150] Smith also argues for reflection and analysis of liturgical practice, specifically identifying the need for reflection by those who preside at or lead worship: they should "take on the responsibility of reflexive evaluation of our practices in order to ensure that the imaginative coherences of worship are consistent with the vision of God's kingdom to which we are being habituated."[151]

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[149] Jennings, "Ritual Studies and Liturgical Theology," 38.

[150] Jennings, "On Ritual Knowledge," 126.

[151] Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom: How Worship Works*, 187.

Critical re-cognition of ritual knowledge enables what Smith calls "re-storying" or "re-narration" to move from a subconscious process within our bodily imagination to an engaged form of *narrative therapy*—a way of bringing out, challenging and reorienting the private discourse that governs people's lives so that it realigns with the authentic kingdom narrative that is God's story for human beings. Narrative therapy is a recent social justice approach to personal and family therapy that asks people to confront the destructive stories they have been living by and author new ones, drawing on their values, skills and knowledge so that they can surmount their obstacles. Increasingly common in counselling, it has been proposed as a form of congregational care by Mary Clark Moschella, who encourages pastors to work with parishioners to co-author the future within their community of faith:

> Two dynamic activities are involved in this kind of "writing": first, constructing one's life story in a new way, using new themes, metaphors, and story lines; and second, actually living into these new themes and plot lines that were not previously imagined or tried. The goal of narrative therapy with individuals is that persons become free to think and act in new ways, departing from old constraining scripts. Pastoral ethnography with congregations or groups similarly has the goal of freeing groups of people to revise their narratives—their ways of thinking about and living out their faith—collectively and corporately.[152]

In this intersection of pastoral care with narrative therapy, we can see the potential for a pragmatic method of harnessing personal and communal narratives as sites of transformation. By enabling people to unpack and rewrite the scripts of their own lives,

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[152] Mary Clark Moschella, *Ethnography as a Pastoral Practice: An Introduction* (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 2008), 237–238.

and allowing God to re-author their stories, the gap between our hearts and heads, between our bodies and minds, may be overcome, and a balanced view of worship may emerge—of the liturgy as a place of dialogue between body and mind, of embodied imagination and values repatterned by ritual practice, and of conscious reflection on the *theologia prima* emerging from our communal encounter with God. We can thus finally return to the dialectic of liturgical theology so eloquently articulated by Schmemann and Kavanagh, with liturgy engaging and transfiguring the real lives of real people, becoming an "ongoing process of experience, memory, reflection, and reappropriation carried out by real people in always changing circumstances."[153]

[153] Kavanagh, *On Liturgical Theology*, 93.