COMMUNION IN HOPE: LITURGY AND ETHICS IN THE KEY OF VIRTUE

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This dissertation offers a constructive contribution to the field of liturgy and ethics by proposing a fundamental eucharistic ethics, articulated in the key of virtue. It envisions a new theological approach to examining the relationship between worship and morality, which proceeds on the basis of Eucharistic theology, eschatology, and theories of virtue. The project begins with a critical reading of modern sacramental theology and the field of liturgy and ethics. It draws attention to the problematic prioritization of universal sacramentality over the ecclesial sacraments themselves, and on this basis, it calls for renewed attention to the Eucharist. In addition, it offers a methodological assessment of the field in terms of two models for linking liturgy and ethics: the correlational and pedagogical models. The dissertation attempts, on that basis, to stress the eschatological setting of the relationship between liturgy and ethics. It argues that virtue ethics provides the appropriate theoretical resources for understanding the connection between liturgy and ethics on an eschatological horizon, and it gives an account of liturgical virtue. The limits of this approach are discussed relative to the partial and fragmentary nature of virtue in light of eternal life and in terms of liturgical vice. The project ends with a study and defense of the virtue of hope as the first virtue of a fundamental eucharistic ethics.

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Writing this dissertation has been more than an academic project. It has taken me into the heart of my faith and identity as a Catholic, a theologian, and a human being. At some moments, I was surprised by my own mind and spirit, and even a bit confused about where I stood. At other times, I saw matters with complete clarity, and it felt like meeting myself for the first time. I am not the same person I was when I began. This project has made me a better writer and a sharper thinker. It has overseen my transition from student to teacher. And at no point in this journey have I ever been alone. I see now more than ever that work like this is the product of a community of grace and kindness. My work is my own, but it has been held up all along by the goodness of others.

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but even so I will always recognize in myself a descendent of his intellectual legacy. I could not have chosen a better doctor-father.

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because I believed her, and because I heard that gospel first from her, that I am still a Catholic today and a theologian. If God had given me the opportunity to choose my own mother, I would have chosen her. She is what grace looks like in my life, and it is to her that I dedicate this dissertation.

INTRODUCTION

Studies that trace the development of the field of liturgy and ethics generally point to three areas of theological innovation. First, there was the emergence of a new, modern theological agenda at Vatican II and the shifts in academic theology that accompanied it. The late twentieth century was a period of massive change in Roman Catholic theological reflection. New perspectives on the relationship between nature and grace, ecclesiology, Christology, and sacramental theology contributed to the emergence of new questions in regard to Christian identity and the relationship of Christian religious practices to life in the world. The documents of the Council called for renewed attention to the meaning and practice of liturgy and the sacraments, with a special emphasis on their connection to the life of Christian vocation. In *Sacrosanctum concilium*, this link is most explicit:

> The purpose of the sacraments is to sanctify men [*sic*], to build up the body of Christ, and, finally, to give worship to God; because they are signs they also instruct. […] They do indeed impart grace, but, in addition, the very act of celebrating them most effectively disposes the faithful to receive this grace in a fruitful manner, to worship God duly, and to practice charity.

According to Timothy Brunk, this view of a close relationship between liturgical practice and the moral life of individual believers is a recurring theme in the conciliar documents.[1] It is not, however, a principal theme. The field of liturgy and ethics may have emerged in tandem with the Council and in the atmosphere of conciliar reform, but its clearest formal theological expression is in the thought of the great thinkers of this period, including Karl

[1] Timothy M. Brunk, *Liturgy and Life: The Unity of the Sacraments and Ethics in the Theology of Louis-Marie Chauvet* (New York: Peter Lang, 2007), 19.

Rahner, Edward Schillebeeckx, Hans Urs von Balthasar, Bernard Häring, and later Louis-Marie Chauvet. Moreover, there was the indispensable contribution of Latin American liberation theologians, including Gustavo Gutierrez and Juan Luis Segundo, for whom the question of liturgy and ethics was not merely academic but rooted in the plight of the poor and in the importance of practicing the sacraments with integrity.

Second, there was the Liturgical Movement, beginning in Europe and evolving in the context of the United States. During the nineteenth century, notes Benjamin Durheim, anti-modernism in the Catholic Church made theological innovation in most doctrinal areas impossible.[2]As a result, the creative energies of European Catholics were channeled into the study of liturgy and the work of liturgical reform. Their emphasis on the church as the Mystical Body of Christ was imported into the United States, where Virgil Michel and others, reacting to the social and economic upheaval of the 1920s and 30s, began to stress the integral link between liturgy and social justice. Durheim identifies Dorothy Day and her reflections on liturgy and justice in *The Catholic Worker* as a key expression of the spirit of the Liturgical Movement in the life of the American Catholic Church.

Third, there was the appearance of scholarship on liturgy and ethics among non-Catholic Christians and the widening of the field into ecumenical spaces. Donald Saliers was one of the foremost Protestant thinkers on this subject. Vigen Guroian has also made enormous strides as an Orthodox theologian in linking the profound theological meaning of liturgy to Christian social action. One could also mention here ecumenical interactions among thinkers in political theology. The Catholic writer Bruce Morill is well-known for

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[2] Benjamin Durheim, *Christ's Gift, Our Response: Martin Luther and Louis-Marie Chauvet on the Connection between Sacraments and Ethics* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2015), 17.

his comparative study of the political theologian Johann Baptist Metz alongside the great Orthodox liturgist Alexander Schmemann. Finally, the plenary session featuring papers by Paul Ramsey and Donald Saliers, with a response from Margaret Farley, at the 1979 meeting of the Society of Christian Ethics was the beginning of a sustained ecumenical interest in liturgy and ethics among theological ethicists. The field had been founded much earlier by liturgical theologians, but ethicists who were particularly interested in the notion of moral formation would now enter into the conversation.

This dissertation is not a historical study of liturgy and ethics but rather an attempt to contribute to that field constructively. In the course of this effort, I will make reference to many of the figures discussed above, but my focus will be less on where the discourse has been and more on where it must go. My sense is that the agenda of liturgy and ethics remains incomplete. The field has arrived at a general consensus – that liturgy and the moral life are deeply connected in certain theological ways – but it does not yet possess a clear vision of what is next. This is due, in part, to the fact that ethicists are still working to bring their insights and methods to the table. It is due also to a certain theological framing of liturgy under the idea of sacramentality, which has limited the influence of Christology and ecclesiology in this discussion. In the pages that follow, I will unpack these claims in detail, and I will offer the beginning of a way forward. The future of the field of liturgy and ethics, I contend, lies in the exploration of a fundamental eucharistic ethics, articulated in the key of virtue. The chapters ahead develop the rudiments of that eucharistic ethics, emphasizing especially the eschatological setting of the link between liturgy and ethics and the importance of a critical attitude that is humble yet hopeful.

Chapter 1 sets the stage for my larger argument by demonstrating the need for a fundamental eucharistic ethics. It discusses what I call "sacramentalism," a consensus in modern sacramental theology and in the field of liturgical ethics that privileges universal sacramentality over a focus on the ecclesial sacraments themselves. I argue for a more nuanced reading of Karl Rahner on the balance between the universality of grace and the priority of the sacraments, and I propose a renewed emphasis on Eucharistic theology as a starting point for liturgy and ethics. This will involve an appreciative critique of the work of Louis-Marie Chauvet, Denis Edwards, and a handful of other figures.

Chapter 2 enters into a methodological study of the field of liturgy and ethics. It proposes two main models into which most attempts at linking worship and morality fall. These are the correlational and pedagogical models. After taking stock of the key insights in each model and registering some preliminary critiques, I call for a wider eschatological approach that can incorporate and build upon the contributions of these two main models. The Eucharist is, at its heart, an eschatological encounter with our destiny in Christ. To bring together liturgy and ethics will require a more explicitly theological framing of the meaning of liturgy on that eschatological horizon.

Chapter 3 takes up the difficult theological question of the relationship between ethics and eschatology and argues that virtue ethics provides the appropriate theoretical resources for understanding the connection. In conversation with Alexander Schmemann, Vigen Guroian, and several contemporary theological ethicists, I push for a turn to virtue and suggest the outlines of what liturgical virtue might look like. Virtues, I contend, are provisional and heuristic concepts that enable us to name the work of embodying God's future in the present. The asymptotic character of virtue – always on the way, never fully

arrived – resonates with a liturgical eschatological sensibility and invites a critical and revisionist element into the heart of our fundamental eucharistic ethics.

Chapter 4 examines the limits of my proposal in two key respects. First, it argues on the basis of Augustine and the writing of Jennifer Herdt that virtues are qualities of this life in which the fullness of the eschatological future really begins but is not perfectly achieved. Only charity persists in eternal life, and charity itself becomes a symbol for the very life of God. The life of virtue we pursue in the here and now is not identical with our final destiny but is rather a means of embodying that destiny in history through pursuit of holiness and the work of social transformation. Second, the chapter examines the problem of liturgical vice. We must guard against liturgical triumphalism and an uncritical attitude toward Christian religious practices. Liturgy holds the transformative presence of God for us, but it is never immune from moral corruption. With Katie Grimes, who has studied baptism and Eucharist as instruments of white supremacy, I point to the ways in which liturgy can both fail to transform us for the better and also actively deform our moral character. I offer the notion of liturgical vice as the central element of a critical ethical hermeneutic of liturgy that is truthful, humble, and hopeful.

Chapter 5 concludes the dissertation by narrowing in on the virtue of hope as the first virtue of the eucharistic ethics I have suggested. It offers a study of the critique of hope from Miguel De La Torre and feminist theologians, and then turns to a close textual study of Augustine's theology of hope. I proceed to a defense of hope and reflect on the work of Jürgen Moltmann, who sees in hope the ground of Christian ethics. I conclude with a practical consideration of what my fundamental eucharistic ethics, rooted in hope,

actually looks like, especially in terms of moral discernment, and I point to the possibility of future work on this basis in applied ethics.

1.0 CHAPTER 1 – ON THE NEED FOR A EUCHARISTIC ETHICS

The central premise of this dissertation is that Christian theological ethics ought to be grounded in the practice of the Eucharist. For Catholics, Orthodox, and other Christians who take the importance of the Eucharist as given, this claim may seem uncontroversial. Even within these communities, however, it has not always been clear that the foundation of ethics might be found outside the customary search for first principles and instead in the sphere of liturgical worship. On what basis can one claim that the Eucharist is foundational for ethics?

For that answer, we must turn to developments in Catholic theology during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that enabled the field of liturgy and ethics to come into being. In moral theology, there was a transition from the manualism of previous centuries, which emphasized the objective moral status of acts, and toward a new ethical personalism. Christian ethics, according to the new paradigm, must be not only a science of action, founded on speculative and practical precepts, but also essentially a discipline for the development of character through the pursuit of virtue. Christian morality is fundamentally about the sanctification of the person in community, the transformation of the social order, and care for the created order.[3]

Analogous to the new personalism in Catholic ethics, the revolutionary insights of the Liturgical Movement helped to shape a renewed sacramental theology: one that moved beyond the traditional preoccupation with the objective efficacy and validity of sacraments and toward a vision of liturgy as requiring personal engagement and

[3] For a concise analytical overview of these developments, see James F. Keenan, S.J. *A History of Catholic Moral Theology in the Twentieth Century: from Confessing Sins to Liberating Consciences* (London: Continuum, 2010).

participation.[4] In the United States, Virgil Michel pushed this agenda even further, arguing for a fundamental and organic link between worship and personal involvement in the work of social justice. The writings of Michel and his interlocutors in the journal *Orate Fratres*, now called *Worship*, laid much of the groundwork for the field of liturgy and ethics today.[5]

To speak of grounding ethics in the Eucharist, as I will do in this dissertation, is to locate this work squarely within the field of liturgy and ethics and to take for granted both of the developments described above. Indeed, I will assume in this project that there is a theologically necessary connection between Christian liturgical worship and the way that Christians conduct their lives and shape society. This entails a distinctly modern vision of ethics that prioritizes the social formation of character and the pursuit of holiness, alongside a modern view of liturgy as personal, participatory, and directly involved with social questions.

Given that outlook, my specific agenda will be to develop the claims of liturgical ethics with greater theological specificity than exists in current approaches. Augmenting the approach found in the mainstream literature on this subject, I will argue that Christians are better situated theologically and ethically if we speak not only in terms of

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[4] A wide-ranging historical account of the liturgical movement is found in Alcuin Reid, O.S.B., *The Organic Development of the Liturgy: The Principles of Liturgical Reform and their Relation to the Twentieth-Century Liturgical Movement Prior to the Second Vatican Council*, 2nd edition (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005).

[5] Keith F. Pecklers, *The Unread Vision: The Liturgical Movement in the United States of America: 1926-1955* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1998). On the legacy of Virgil Michel and *Worship*, see Ruth A. Meyers, "Liturgy and Justice: Ninety Years of Contributions of *Orate Fratres* and *Worship*," *Worship* 90, no. 6 (2016), 492-512. See also, Virgil Michel, "The Liturgy the Basis of Social Regeneration," *Orate Fratres* 5 (1934-35), 536-45.

liturgy but also more specifically in terms of Eucharist. For the Eucharist is the source and fulfillment of holiness for which persons are destined, and which they seek through moral living. In light of this conviction, I will speak of a eucharistic ethics in addition to a liturgical ethics.

It is not my intention, of course, to suggest that a broader theological focus on liturgy is inappropriate. In the decades after Vatican II, a liturgical method has rightly become the norm. "Liturgy" is a capacious and ecumenically generative concept that, when paired with "ethics," permits a theoretical appreciation of the range of religious practices that shape human identity and behavior. Books and articles abound under the heading of "liturgy and ethics," exploring the connection between these terms in numerous and creative ways.[6] Thanks to these writings, it is now impossible to speak of

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[6] A sampling of key works in liturgy and ethics might include the following. On the thought of Karl Rahner, see Karl Rahner, "The Eucharist and Our Daily Lives," *Theological Investigations*, Vol. 7, *Further Theology of the Spiritual Life*, trans. K.H. Kruger (Baltimore, MD: Helicon Press, 1963). For an analysis of Rahner on this subject, see Michael Purcell, "The Ethical Signification of the Sacraments," *Gregorianum* 79.2 (1998): 323-43. Major contributions from the perspective of liberation theology include Juan Luis Segundo, *The Sacraments Today*, trans. John Drury (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1974); and Leonardo Boff, *Sacraments of Life, Life of the Sacraments*, trans. John Drury (Washington: Pastoral, 1987). From feminist theology, see Susan Ross, *Extravagant Affections: A Feminist Sacramental Theology* (New York: Continuum Press, 2001), especially chapter 6. The work of Don E. Saliers is particularly noteworthy. See Don E. Saliers, "Liturgy and Ethics: Some New Beginnings," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 7.2 (1979), 173-89. Some interesting explorations in applied ethics include Monika Hellwig, *The Eucharist and the Hunger of the World* (New York: Paulist Press, 1976); William T. Cavanaugh, *Torture and the Eucharist* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1998); and Amy Levad, *Redeeming a Prison Society: A Liturgical and Sacramental Response to Mass Incarceration* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014). From an Orthodox standpoint, Vigen Guroian has been a significant contributor. See Vigen Guroian, "Seeing Worship as Ethics: An Orthodox Perspective," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 13 (195): 332-359, and ibid., *Ethics after Christendom: Toward an Ecclesial Christian Ethic* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1994). Other contemporary sources include, Mark Searle, ed., *Liturgy and Social Justice* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1980); Geoffrey Wainwright, "Eucharist And/As Ethics," *Worship* 62 (1988): 123-138; Mark Searle,

the Eucharist in isolation from the textures of religious life broadly conceived – from the aesthetics of worship, the rhythms of the liturgical year, and the habits of the worshipping community, and so on. In fact, the point of the whole liturgical endeavor is to undermine the artificial separation between the eucharistic mystery and the shape of Christian life as a whole, both within the community of faith and beyond it.[7] In the end, for building an ethics of Christian worship, the broad range of the term liturgy is helpful.

My intention, as such, is not to rewrite the field of liturgy and ethics but to build upon it. From a critical standpoint, I hope to soften what I interpret as well-meaning apprehension among theological scholars about the privileged status of the Eucharist and to deepen liturgical ethics both theologically and ethically by turning attention to the sacrament of communion at its center. To put it another way, I will speak in this present work about the Eucharist specifically in order to see what more there is to learn generally about the relationship between liturgy and ethics. As I wish to demonstrate in this opening chapter, what is needed for the field of liturgy and ethics to move forward is a more clearly articulated fundamental eucharistic ethics.

With that goal in mind, the core argument of this chapter is a historical and theological one. I believe that in the endeavor to imagine how liturgy and ethics might be related, Christian writers have arrived at a theological consensus that is imbalanced and somewhat limiting. I will call this "sacramentalism," a pattern of thought that privileges a

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"Liturgy and Social Ethics: An Annotated Bibliography," *Studia Liturgica* 21 (1991): 220-335; Nicholas Wolterstorff, "Justice as a Condition of Authentic Liturgy," Theology Today 48 (1991): 6-21; Theresa F. Koernke, "Toward an Ethics of Liturgical Behavior," *Worship* 66 (1992): 25-38.

[7] For a popular work on the broader sacramental setting of liturgy see Andrew M. Greely, *The Catholic Imagination* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000).

sense for sacramentality, broadly conceived, and loses the appropriate theological balance between the sacramentality of the world and the centrality of the sacraments themselves. As we will see, there are Christological and ecclesiological issues at stake in this balance. Moreover, I worry that sacramentalism, by losing sight of this balance, inadvertently under-appreciates the significance of the Eucharist. As a result, my argument in this chapter is that while the universal principle of sacramentality is a valuable and necessary element in postconciliar sacramental theology, eucharistic theology is the more fundamental and more appropriate point of departure for a liturgically rooted ethics.

This chapter will proceed in three stages. First, I will look briefly at the history of twentieth century sacramental theology, describing the consensus that was endorsed to remedy the excesses of classical sacramental theology. Through a brief consideration of Karl Rahner's writings, I identify the roots of the turn to sacramentalism, which has determined mainstream sacramental theology since the middle of the twentieth century. Second, I will track the influence of this consensus and the importation of sacramentalism into the field of liturgy and ethics. The centerpiece of that section will be a consideration of the writings of Louie-Marie Chauvet and Denis Edwards, but I will offer some examples in reference to other figures. Finally, having underscored some of the theological limitations of the prevailing framework, I will argue for an alternative approach that privileges the Eucharist as the theological basis of sacramentality and the foundation of Christian ethics.

1.1 THE MOVE TO SACRAMENTALISM IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

In order to appreciate the changes in sacramental theology that took place in the decades leading up to and following Vatican II, it is necessary to understand the traditional framework against which modern theologians sought to offer a corrective. Standard sacramental theology was objectivist, instrumentalist, and dogmatic. It was essentially the study of the seven ecclesial sacraments and how these formal religious actions mediated the transmission of grace for the salvation of the individual. Though based in the creative metaphysical solutions of Scholastic thought, most eminently articulated by Thomas Aquinas, sacramental theology of the twentieth century preconciliar church was extraordinarily rigid. Even through the 1960s, Catholics in the United States continued to memorize the definition given in the Baltimore Catechism, which was based on the Tridentine formulation: "a Sacrament is an outward sign instituted by Christ to give grace."[8] The emphasis was on the objective efficacy of sacramental signs as means of personal salvation, and the main theological problem to contend with was whether and how a person might place an obstacle to the production of grace in his or her soul.

The renewal of sacramental theology that took place in the twentieth century moved beyond the constraints of the established framework and toward a richer view of the sacraments situated within the life of the church and the individual believer. The Tridentine doctrine of the sacraments as efficacious signs and instruments of grace was not abandoned but augmented by an appreciation of these rites as actions of the people of

[8] Third Council of Baltimore, *Baltimore Catechism* (Gastonia, NC: Tan Books, 1985), no. 304.

God. In terms of Louis-Marie Chauvet's methodological framework, the Vatican II model of the sacraments retrieved the *subjectivist* pole of sacramental experience in order to balance the *objectivism* of the classical model.[9] By placing the sacraments within the context of the church's identity as sacrament of the reign of God, modern theologians could speak of them both as objective means of God's saving action and also as acts of the faithful in response to grace already experienced. Such a balance would overcome (1) the usual tendency toward reification of the sacraments, as though they were self-explanatory and independent of the wider context of worship; (2) excessive objectivism, which ignored lived experience; and (3) preoccupation with the moment at which a sacrament was realized.[10]

Theological attention to the subjective element of the sacraments would lead to two widely influential conclusions. First, that the proper point of departure for sacramental theology was not the sacramental rites themselves but the human person for whom the sacraments are given as a medium of communion with God. As a result, modern sacramental theology is defined by the turn to the human subject, and by a sustained interest in interdisciplinary engagement that is required by its new anthropological method.[11] Second, that to limit sacramentality to the seven ecclesial sacraments is misguided. The sacraments are means of grace, but they are also human expressions of grace already at work in the life of individuals and the church. To

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[9] Louis-Marie Chauvet, *The Sacraments: The Word of God at the Mercy of the Body* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2001), xxi-xxv.
[10] Ibid., xxii.
[11] This turn to the subject is discussed and situated within larger movements in sacramental theology in Regis A. Duffy, David N. Power, Kevin W. Irwin, "Sacramental Theology: A Review of Literature," *Theological Studies* 55, no. 4 (December 1994): 657–705.

acknowledge the human dimension of the sacraments is therefore to situate them on the broader landscape of sacramentality where God meets us. This expansive vision fits well with the classical notion of God's sovereignty. God acts freely, imparts his grace by whatever means he chooses, and thus cannot be constrained by sacramental rites. "The Spirit blows where it chooses" (Jn. 3:8), and the reign of God must be broader than the boundaries and practices of the visible church.

In some form or other, every major figure in postconciliar sacramental theology endorsed this turn to a broader sacramentality. Although all of the most influential writers – including Karl Rahner, Hans Urs von Balthasar, and Edward Schillebeeckx – also adopted a view of the church and Jesus Christ as fundamental sacramental realities, their writings placed enough stress on the idea of universal sacramentality to make it their lasting legacy. Rightly devoted to the expansive and ecumenical spirit of the council, the new approach gave theological attention to a previously neglected sacramental imagination, less concerned with the value of the ecclesial sacraments as instrumental causes of grace and more attentive to the sacramental texture of Christian life as a whole. Focus shifted from the efficacy of the seven sacraments to an acknowledgement of the sacramentality of all creation and human life as the field on which the grace of God operates.

This widening of sacramentality is theologically valuable in itself. As commentators have observed, renewed attention to the sacramental world is rooted in the retrieval of premodern and biblical understandings of God and how God relates to creation. It opens possibilities not only for interpreting the cosmos and human life more truthfully in theological perspective, but also for understanding the ecclesial sacraments

more deeply. David Brown has explored this very arena, linking the experience of God in the body and in artistic and cultural experience to the mystery of divine presence in the sacraments.[12] It is no accident, writes Brown, that the central sacrament of Christianity is a sacrament of the body – of Christ's body in its scandalously ordinary and at the same time world-transforming presence.[13] God meets humanity in the ordinary, and grace is not restricted to isolated and occasional religious practices, as though these were superimposed on the structure of ordinary experience. God's activity for the life of the world is always already a world-affirming, world-pervading presence.

I uphold this view as a necessary development in modern sacramental theology, and I do not intend at all to revoke God's presence from the world at large. Nevertheless, I believe that the reception of this sacramental insight has resulted in a pervasive overcompensation that goes beyond the original attempts of the major thinkers to balance and connect the meaning of the sacraments with the sacramentality of the world. What now prevails, I contend, is an unbalanced consensus that views universal sacramentality – that is, the sacramental principle applied to all of creation and human experience – as theologically prior to the church and its sacraments. The sacramentality of the world is treated as antecedent to the sacramentality of the church, which should in fact be rooted in the sacraments and ultimately in Jesus Christ as primordial sacrament. There are serious issues of Christology and ecclesiology at stake here, and so I believe it is worth examining the problem more closely in the hope of finding a theological balance. To that end, I will now offer a loose genealogy of the unbalanced approach that I am describing.

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[12] David Brown, *God and Grace of the Body: Sacrament in Ordinary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).
[13] Ibid., 4.

1.1.1 Karl Rahner: The Liturgy of the World and the Origins of Sacramentalism

One of the best examples of an appropriately widened sacramental sensibility appears in the writings of Karl Rahner. I argue, however, that the general reception of his thought has lost Rahner's nuance and generally given rise to sacramentalism. Beginning from his doctrine of the liturgy of the world, we can easily identify the roots of sacramentalism, but a consideration of his theology of the sacraments as symbols points to a more nuanced view in Rahner that carefully balances the universality of grace with advent of grace in the concrete historical event of Jesus Christ, mediated through the sacramental practices of the church.

Rahner's sacramental theology, including his own effort to integrate liturgy and ethics, takes as given the modern theological view that grace is not restricted to the seven sacraments of the church.[14] The universality of the transcendental experience, Rahner writes, means that grace exists even in the mere possibility of the salutary existential decision.[15] Therefore, even beyond the visible frontiers of the church, life in the world is replete with "grace-giving events."[16] This is because every moment of human transcendence possesses what he calls a quasi-sacramental structure. Rahner would eventually refer to these extra-liturgical structures of grace as the liturgy of the world.[17]

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[14] For two helpful sources on Rahner's approach, see Timothy M. Brunk, *Liturgy and Life: The Unity of the Sacraments and Ethics in the Theology of Louis-Marie Chauvet* (New York: Peter Lang, 2007), chapter 1; and also Purcell, "The Ethical Signification of the Sacraments," cited above.

[15] Karl Rahner, "Nature and Grace," in *Theological Investigations*, vol. 4, *More Recent Writings*, trans. Kevin Smyth (New York: Crossroad, 1982), 179-80.

[16] Brunk, 20.

[17] See especially, Karl Rahner, "Considerations on the Active Role of the Person in the Sacramental Event," in *Theological Investigations*, vol. 14, *Ecclesiology, Questions in the Church, the Church in the World* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1976). For a more particular investigation of the Rahnerian idea of the 'liturgy of the world', see

All of human life in the world, because it is oriented to transcendence, possesses the character of a sacrament: a capacity to give grace. Indeed, grace is the universal condition in which human beings always already find themselves. God has already taken the initiative of inviting human beings into relationship, and as a result, the possibility of encounter with God is built into the very structure of human life in the world.

It is important for Rahner that the universality of grace, contained under the notion of the transcendental, does not render the sacraments of the church any less essential in the economy of grace. To say that grace is given through the transcendental self-offering of God does not bring the divine-human encounter to completion. Grace must be received and responded to in freedom. It must be actualized in the positive human decision for God. The experience of grace through the liturgy of the world thus requires a human response. According to Rahner, the sacraments are an indispensable component of that response: a visible and particular means for proclaiming and celebrating the gracious presence of God throughout the world. In this regard, they are a primary expression of the Christian duty to bear witness to God's saving work, which is encountered both inside and outside the church. In addition to sacramental liturgy, this work of bearing witness also takes the form of moral living. The sacraments, therefore, are a kind of re-commissioning for the Christian way of life undertaken at baptism: a ritual anticipation of Christian morality. For this reason, as Timothy Brunk concludes, Rahner believes that Christian ethical duties flow from participation in the sacramental life of the church.[18]

Michael Skelley, *The Liturgy of the World: Karl Rahner's Theology of Worship* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1991).
[18] Brunk, 20-21.

Liturgy and ethics are bonded in Rahner's imagination because sacraments and moral behavior are mutually necessary Christian responses to the experience of a liturgical world, a world pervaded with grace. Each of these responses evokes the other, so much the case that there exists a theological continuity between them. The sacraments call forth an ethical way of living, and in turn, every ethical action – every salutary transcendental decision – holds sacramental meaning and draws us toward the explicit acknowledgement of grace in the sacraments.

The misreading of Rahner that I wish to identify in this section concerns his larger view of the dynamic between the liturgy of the world and the human response. There is a theological paradox at work in Rahner's thought. In essence, the liturgy of the world is *both* theologically prior to its sacramental/moral responses, *and also* subsequent to them. The universality of grace (liturgy of the world) precedes and evokes human participation through sacramental worship and human moral living. However, the universality of grace is potential and requires actualization in an affirmative transcendental decision. In that sense, grace in the world is not intelligible unless it has *already been realized* through the sacraments and moral living. The sacraments and moral living are not only responses to grace; they are the means of accepting grace in the first place. Theologically, this paradox is unproblematic: grace always presupposes grace.

The problem I wish to identify is that the customary interpretation of Rahner's view and others like it adopts Rahner's paradox inconsistently. Most sacramental theologians today make some form of the claim that a sacramental world anticipates or

precedes our participation in the sacraments and our moral living.[19] However, if we follow Rahner's logic, it should also be the case that the sacraments and morality are the foundation of universal sacramentality. The liturgy of the world is not intelligible except in light of sacramental worship and ethical living, whereby humanity accepts God's grace.[20] While contemporary theologians readily assign such priority to moral actions – every moment of human goodness is a primordially sacramental moment – they stop short of doing the same for the ecclesial sacraments. There is a great deal of apprehension, I believe, around the claim that the universality of grace in the world depends upon the sacraments of the church, just as it might depend upon the human acceptance of grace in living a life of holiness. The fear, it would seem, is that to describe the sacraments as necessary and antecedent to the sacramentality of the world smacks of an old-fashioned sacramental theology: too rigid and anti-ecumenical to be credible any longer.

However, an accurate reading of Rahner and his doctrine of the liturgy of the world requires the notion that the ecclesial sacraments possess a certain theological

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[19] This point is attested in the Duffy, et al., literature review cited above, which considers especially the influence of Rahner, Boff, and the turn to sacramentality in general in feminist, African, and Asian theologies. I am also reminded of the work of Matthew T. Eggemeier, who interprets the theology of Hans Urs Von Balthasar to argue for conversion to the sacramental-prophetic imagination of Christianity, as an answer to the moral catastrophes of the modern era. Matthew T. Eggemeier, *A Sacramental-Prophetic Vision: Christian Spirituality in a Suffering World* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2014.)

[20] I am conscious here of the objection, made most credibly from an ecological perspective, that the sacramentality of the world is not and should not be dependent on human experience, let alone human ritual actions or human moral decisions. Creation does indeed have its own sacramental meaning and integrity before God, irrespective of human mediation. But the present discussion concerns Rahner, a Heideggerian, for whom the notion of grace or sacramentality isolated from human being-in-the-world is philosophically unintelligible.

priority. Like his contemporaries, Schillebeeckx and Von Balthasar, Rahner's sacramental theology is thoroughly Christological and ecclesiological in orientation.[21] The universality of grace (the transcendental) does not exist without the concrete historical event of Jesus Christ (the categorial), which is mediated in a privileged way through the sacramental practices of the church. For Rahner, the ecclesial sacraments are meaningful not only because they respond to the universality of grace or because they reactivate our moral response to that grace, but also because, in the eyes of faith, they draw us into the very life of Christ. It is because we belong, through the sacraments, to the Body of Christ, that we possess certain ethical duties. The sacraments induct us into the heart of the divine life in Jesus, complete with its joys and sufferings, making us subject thereby to the law of that life, which is love of neighbor.[22] The sacraments are the means of our participation in the sacrificial priesthood of Christ, which is the source and archetype of the moral life.[23] To interpret Rahner as though the meaning of the sacraments is derivative on the prior sacramentality of the world is therefore to miss a fundamental point. The sacraments do not just answer or specify what is experienced in the liturgy of the world. They precede and anticipate the liturgy of the world, because they are actions of the church that extend the historical presence and action of Christ.

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[21] For an overview of von Balthasar's sacramental theology, see Mark Miller, "The Sacramental Theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar," *Worship* 64 (1990), 48-66. The relevant primary texts include Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics*, vol. 1, *Seeing the Form* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989); and *Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory*, vol. III, Dramatis Personae: *Persons in Christ*, trans. Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1992). See also Edward Schillebeeckx, *Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God*, translated by N.D. Smith (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1963).
[22] Rahner, "The Eucharist and Our Daily Lives," 219-20.
[23] Ibid.

They are the privileged means through which human beings are brought into communion with Christ and, in him, fully accept the grace of God.

Rahner's most fully developed treatment of the sacraments, in which he employs the notion of *Realsymbol*, demonstrates the priority of ecclesial sacraments most clearly. Though it would serve as the methodological basis for all of his theology, Rahner's theory of symbol was especially relevant for his thinking in sacramental theology.[24] His basic insight was that symbolic actions are an essential means of revealing and actualizing human nature: the means whereby we express and become what we are as beings situated in relation to others and to the transcendent. Because human existence is fundamentally shaped by symbolic activity, even our encounter with God draws on the symbolic possibilities of reality.[25] The sacraments, from this perspective, are symbolic actions of the church that prolong the presence of Christ to us as the definitive symbol of God's loving action, whereby we are invited into the freedom of eternal life with God and embrace that goal as our final destiny.

Rahner enunciates this vision beautifully in the language of sign, equivalent to what I have just been calling symbol:

> In Christ Jesus, the Crucified and Risen One, it has become manifest in an historically perceptible way that what has always and everywhere been brought about by grace […] can no longer fall short of its goal. […] That is why Jesus Christ is called the primordial sacrament of salvation. […] The Church, as the socially constituted presence of Christ in every age up to the end, can therefore

[24] Karl Rahner, "The Theology of Symbol," in *Theological Investigations*, vol. 4, *More Recent Writings*, trans. Kevin Smith (Baltimore: Helicon, 1966), 221-52.
[25] Duffy, et al., 663.

> rightly be called the basic sacrament of salvation of mankind [*sic*]. By this we mean that it is the sign which perpetuates Christ's presence in the world, the permanent and unsurpassable sign that the gracious entelechy of the whole of history, which brings this history into God Himself, will really be victorious […] When the Church as the basic sacrament, in situations of human life which are decisive for the individual or for the group, pledges itself to man [*sic*] with an absolute commitment of a being *as* the basic sacrament of salvation, and does so historically and palpably, that is, in word and deed, and when man [*sic*] in turn accepts this the Church's pledge of salvation and acts it out as the manifestation of the acceptance of his interior grace-dynamic, then we have what we mean by the sacraments of the Church.[26]

The sacraments are the means by which the presence of Christ, manifested and extended in the basic sacrament of the church, encounters history and imparts to creation the final guarantee of salvation toward which every movement of grace has already been reaching.[27] It is true that the sacraments in this way respond to the universality of grace, as a final answer to what grace has always sought, but in the order of salvation, they have priority. In them, God's plan of salvation is offered, accepted, and completed. In them is grace totally realized because, through Christ the primordial sacrament, it has been fully accepted. That action of human acceptance, belonging both to God and humankind in

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[26] Karl Rahner, *Meditations on the Sacraments* (New York: Seabury Press, 1977), xv-xvi. The view summarized in this quotation is developed more completely in Karl Rahner, *The Church and the Sacraments*, trans. W.J. O'Hara (Freiburg: Herder, 1963). Emphasis original.

[27] For a more technical discussion of this view, see Rahner, *The Church and the Sacraments*, 34-40.

Christ, is at once complete and incomplete. It is an eschatological reality that can only be received as a gift if it is embraced as a task. It does not terminate in the performance of the liturgical rite but follows the itinerary of grace into all the world, manifesting in a 'quasi-sacramental' fashion in a life of moral goodness that attests to the grace of God. The sacraments are therefore the axis and origin of Christian ethical existence, and indeed they are the foundation of the liturgy of the world.

Sacramentalism is a theological consensus that has shaped most mainstream sacramental theology since the twentieth century. The notion that our understanding of the sacraments ought to attend primarily to the universality of grace, in relation to which the ecclesial sacraments are a kind of response or intensification, has endured as a key assumption of postconciliar sacramental reflection. I argue, however, that this approach is founded on misreading of what major thinkers like Rahner meant. Without a corresponding emphasis on the Christological and ecclesiological roots of sacramentality, the sacramental principle has gained an unbalanced theological priority over liturgy and the sacraments themselves. In my view, the problem is an overcorrection. To avoid the excesses of outmoded sacramental theology, theologians feel they must begin not with the seven sacraments and how they work but rather with the sacramental principle upon which all sacramental signs are based. In principle, this is a sound method. Inattention to the other side of the equation, however, risks reducing the sacraments to a kind of uniquely Christian way of apprehending what is already established and fully available irrespective of Christ's unique and foundational presence in the Eucharist and by extension in the other sacraments.

Correlated to this unbalanced approach is what I view as a backward theological method in which a theology of creation tends to take the place of a theology of the cross. The mystery of creation, transparent to grace, provides the basis of sacramentality upon which the meaning of the sacraments themselves is based. Rather than looking first to the Paschal Mystery – the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, which implicates and transforms the created order – one looks primarily to creation as a primordial sacrament and identifies in the universe felicitous traces of the cosmic Christ and his work. The respected sacramental theologian Kevin Irwin has gone so far as to say that in creation we encounter "paschal processes," and he articulates what might serve as the motto of sacramentalism: that the sacramentality of the world is the "theological substratum" of the sacraments.[28] With due respect for Irwin's admirable ecological agenda, I find this language troubling. The sacraments draw on the symbolic potential of created things, which are means of grace not strictly in themselves but because they have been called into existence through Christ, the divine Word, and elevated by the Paschal Mystery in order to bear divine life. It is not the sacramentality of the world as such that underlies the sacraments. It is Jesus Christ alone who is the theological substratum not only of the sacraments but of creation itself. What is required is a more careful balance between the

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[28] Kevin Irwin, "Model One: Cosmic Mass," in *Models of the Eucharist* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2005): 39-66. Cited here, 44. See also, Ibid., "The Sacramentality of Creation and the Role of Creation in Liturgy and the Sacraments," in *Preserving the Creation: Environmental Theology and Ethics* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1994): 67-111; Ibid., "Sacramentality and the Theology of Creation: A Recovered Paradigm for Sacramental Theology," *Louvain Studies* 23:2 (1998), 159-79; Ibid., "A Sacramental World--Sacramentality as the Primary Language for Sacraments." *Worship* 76, no. 3 (2002): 197-211. I acknowledge the importance of Irwin's agenda for linking Christian faith and practice to ecological responsibility. What I am calling into question is whether prioritizing the sacramental principle over the sacraments themselves and their Christological foundation is the right approach.

universality of grace in creation and the grace of the sacraments as privileged means of encounter with the Paschal Mystery.

My purpose in this chapter is not to argue for a return to an older style of sacramental theology, which ignores the human context of worship and relativizes the role of creation in favor of an exclusive, transactional view of salvation. Nor do I wish to argue that grace can only be obtained through specific religious practices. However, I do wish to restore the necessary balance between the sacramentality of liturgy and the sacramentality of the world. This will require sustained attention toward the Eucharist. Before I pursue that agenda more directly, however, I would like in the next section to consider sacramentalism more specifically in the field of liturgy and ethics. This doubles as an opportunity to preempt any straw-man objection, since it is in liturgy and ethics where I can provide the clearest examples of sacramentalism at work in the thought of contemporary writers.

1.2 SACRAMENTALISM IN LITURGY AND ETHICS

Following the trend of modern sacramental theology, writers in the field of liturgy and ethics have usually adopted the universality of grace as a first principle. Sacramentality broadly conceived, rather than the sacraments themselves, supplies the decisive context for Christian morality in light of liturgy. As evidence for this claim, I present the thought of two significant figures in the field: Louis-Marie Chauvet and Denis Edwards.

1.2.1 Louis-Marie Chauvet: The Sacramentality of the Linguistic Milieu

Louis-Marie Chauvet is one of the most celebrated thinkers in sacramental theology in the twentieth century. His implementation of linguistic philosophy and psychoanalytic theory in order to make sense of Christian identity, the meaning of the church, and the relation between scripture, the sacraments, and ethics continues to define theological scholarship.[29] Rather than providing a comprehensive treatment or exhaustive critique of Chauvet's sacramental theology, this dissertation overall will focus on his proposal for linking the sacraments and ethics. In this chapter, more specifically, I will situate that linkage within his basic theoretical framework: the symbolic analysis of Christian identity. It may seem odd to admirers of Chauvet, who know his emphasis on the Paschal Mystery and the centrality of the worshipping assembly, to argue that he leans toward sacramentalism. However, a brief look at his general philosophical approach in light of this chapter's argument will demonstrate the appropriateness of this critique.

Chauvet's project consists in the appropriation of linguistic theory from Heidegger and psychoanalysis from Lacan as means of theorizing the sacraments in the spirit of Vatican II. It is Chauvet's view that pure objectivism and pure subjectivism in sacramental theology are equally misguided, and that the vision of the council provides a middle way forward, which he intends to develop theoretically. For Chauvet, this requires a reinterpretation of the sacramental principle that avoids, on the one hand, the idea that religious practices cause grace in a purely instrumental fashion (objectivism) and, on the

[29] Louis-Marie Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1995). See also, Ibid., *The Sacraments: the Word of God at the Mercy of the Body*, cited above.

other hand, the notion that religious practices merely express or respond to grace already received (subjectivism, or as known historically, occasionalism).

The subtitle of Chauvet's smaller book, "the Word of God at the Mercy of the Body," is an obvious affirmation of the sacramental principle. As Chauvet writes, "what is most spiritual always takes place through the corporeal."[30] In his work, Chauvet intends to develop that insight through an analysis of language or symbolic activity as the embodied medium of the human experience of reality. The linguistic milieu is the symbolic space in which the human subject comes to be. Chauvet therefore invites his readers to conceive of sacramentality not in the usual aesthetic sense – God reveals himself to us through the materiality of creation and the sacraments are privileged instances of this – but instead in a symbolic sense. God communicates himself to us through language, or embodied acts of signification, and the sacraments are a part of this symbolic process, saturated with divine self-disclosure, that is the language of the church.

More specifically, Chauvet wishes to describe the elements of the linguistic milieu that mediate God's presence for Christians. He examines the symbolic order that defines Christian activity and gives rise to Christian identity. Chauvet proposes a structure composed of scripture, sacrament, and ethics: the three nodes of symbolic activity that generate the world of Christian consciousness. He writes of their interrelation:

> It remains that Christian identity is structured by the symbolic articulation of the three elements mentioned. Would not the *Scriptures* be a dead letter if they were not attested as the Word of God for us today, preeminently in the Church's

[30] Chauvet, *The Sacraments*, xii.

> liturgical proclamation, and if they did not urge the subjects who receive them to a certain kind of ethical practice? Of what value would the liturgical and *sacramental* celebrations be if they were not the living memory of the person whom the Scriptures attest as the crucified God and if they did not enjoin their participants to become concretely, by the practice of *agape*, what they have celebrated and received? Who would think of describing ethics as "Christian" […] if it were not lived out as a response to the love first directed to us by God […], which the Scriptures reveal to us, and if it did not return to the theological vitality of its source in the reception of this first gift in the sacraments?[31]

These three nodes of symbolic activity implicate and imply one another, and together they comprise the language of the church, the linguistic milieu through which God encounters us.

The last of these symbolic elements, *sacrament*, is at the center of Chauvet's next stage of analysis. What is the theological structure of the sacraments themselves? How do the sacraments as symbolic activities actually function? Two elements of sacramental activity are of interest to Chauvet: its symbolic and ritual aspects. First, the sacraments are language-acts that operate at the level of the *symbolic*. This mode of operation is to be distinguished from the *technical*, where efficacy denotes production, and also from the sphere of *signification*, where the efficacy denotes transmission or expression of information.[32] Sacraments as symbolic acts do not simply produce effects or inform us about a reality apart from themselves. Again, Chauvet is offering his theory as an

[31] Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 177.
[32] Ibid., 112-28.

alternative to pure objectivism (the technical approach) and subjectivism (the expressivist approach). What then does it mean to say that sacramental acts function symbolically?

Chauvet answers this question by means of a distinction between signs and symbols as two modes of human expression, which belong to the orders of knowledge and communication, respectively. The function of *signs* is to represent a reality other than themselves: to inform and therefore to impart knowledge. The function of *symbols* is different inasmuch as they draw us into participation with a reality of which they are themselves a part and therefore communicate meaning. Symbolic acts are thus uniquely effective, they function, inasmuch as they implicate us in a world of meaning, inscribing us as subjects and giving us a place and identity in a network of relations. It is at this level that the sacraments are meant to function: they "effect" divine grace neither as an object produced nor as the content of a message but rather as the free gift of a new identity, a new standing-in-relationship. In sacramental symbols, therefore, we receive ourselves as children of God. For the capacity of symbols to reveal our place in a world of meaning is simultaneously their capacity to make us subjects in that world.[33] The sacraments, by revealing Christian identity, cause it to become a reality in and among us. Using this approach, Chauvet wishes to overcome the limits of a scholastic account of sacramental efficacy. As theologians have often observed, Aquinas failed to explain how precisely by signifying grace, the sacraments actually effect grace.[34] The causal relation between symbolic activity and human subjectivity is Chauvet's answer to that puzzle.

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[33] Ibid., 425-44.

[34] See, for example, J.A. Appleyard, "How does a sacrament 'cause by signifying'," *Science Et Esprit* 23, no. 2 (May 1971): 167-200.

The second aspect of the sacraments that Chauvet investigates is their *ritual* dimension. As rituals, the symbolic function of the sacraments takes place in and through the body, not in spite of the body. The sacraments are material actions in space and time. They are performances of human bodies engaging physical realities. These performances take place within the stream of culture and tradition. Their effectiveness as symbols is measured by the laws of ritual encoded in that context.[35] For Chauvet, then, the principal consequence of acknowledging bodily mediation in the sacraments is that we receive our faith and live it out not *in spite* "of desire, of tradition, of culture, of universe," but precisely *within* these historical and social contexts. It is for this reason that liturgy, while remaining stable and repeatable and to some extent discontinuous with life, must be responsive to the evolving cultural order.[36]

Chauvet's theory of Christian identity and the sacraments is a major achievement in Catholic theology, and I will show in the next chapter that it is an important contribution to the field of liturgy and ethics. If we press Chauvet on his philosophical method, however, I believe there is room for critique. I argue that his analysis of the sacraments as belonging to a uniquely Christian symbolic system or language, while theoretically fruitful, risks reducing the mystery of grace simply to the discovery of a certain world of meaning. This has two consequences. First, it makes Christian identity and the Christian world of meaning interchangeable with any of the other worlds of meaning and networks of relation that human beings inhabit. Second, it fails to

[35] Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 321-54.
[36] Chauvet, *Sacraments*, 114.

acknowledge the extent to which Christian identity is rooted in a theological reality that lies beyond the world of language and symbol.

What makes Christian identity special? What differentiates Christian being from any of the other identities that we obtain in our symbolic interaction with reality? What makes Christian identity or the sacraments uniquely salvific? One answer to these questions would be to claim, as Chauvet does, that it is through this particular symbolic matrix that God encounters Christians and offers redemption. This is why Chauvet intentionally places scripture first in the symbolic order. It is from *this* proclamation, *this* attestation of Jesus Christ as the symbol of God's grace, that Christian faith and identity emerges in its particularity. The fact that Christian subjectivity is grounded here does not, in principle, preclude the possibility that God's saving work takes place through other means. Like Rahner, Chauvet envisions a universe of human experience saturated with grace, and to claim that God works in some particular way for Christians in the mediation of the church does not exclude the presence of grace in other symbolic orders. Chauvet's revision of sacramental theology is clearly ecumenical and in line with the spirit of Vatican II.

I do not take issue with his view in principle. In modern sacramental theology, the fact that grace operates outside of the church is and should be a given. The point is not to return to an exclusivist paradigm of salvation. Still, I worry that in making Christian identity a matter of language or symbolic activity, he loses sight of its uniqueness. The issue is not that this makes grace too readily available but that it renders grace an altogether cultural and anthropological reality. In other words, Chauvet's analysis places such confidence in the symbolic possibilities of Christian identity as to forget precisely

the inexpressibility of what is realized by grace in the life of the church. For all of his emphasis on the renunciation of immediacy, Chauvet offers a rather definite account of how the sacraments as cultural forms express God's reality and make us a part of that reality. He does not give us a vision of the sacraments as the realization of something that is precisely inexpressible, beyond the reach of symbolization but still offered to humanity as a world that is already coming to be but not yet fully embodied.

Of course, we cannot dismiss Chauvet any more than we can dismiss the anthropological dimension of the sacraments. The sacraments are indeed cultural forms, or symbolic practices that implicate us in relationship with God. My point is merely to point out the theological limits of this kind of analysis. Chauvet's expressly anthropological approach, rooted in linguistic and psychoanalytic theory, can only describe part of the meaning of the sacraments and Christian identity. Symbolic communication is not the same as sacramental communion, even if it is the means through which communion begins in this life.

It is true, as Chauvet himself says, that the theological "takes place" in anthropological, a claim that is rooted ultimately in the reality of the incarnation.[37] Still, I argue that theologians must also acknowledge that every anthropological account of divine action must finally fall short of capturing its subject. Insofar as the workings of grace are for us – human beings who live and breathe in a symbolic atmosphere – a linguistic paradigm has significant explanatory use. However, insofar as the workings of grace are of God, grafting onto human beings a new identity and giving them a share in the life of Trinity, the explanatory ability of linguistic theory is limited. When it comes to

[37] Chauvet, *The Sacraments*, 126.

God and the actuality of grace, language is manifestly illuminative, but it also breaks down. For the relationship that language mediates in this life is fulfilled and perfected beyond the reach of sign and symbol, where living in Christ, we see God face to face.

To acknowledge the limits of language, in this way, allows us to step back and question the very first step of Chauvet's project. For Chauvet, the sacramental principle can only be understood correctly inasmuch as it is applied to language, broadly conceived. The landscape of sacramentality is coextensive with human symbolic activity. The sacraments themselves are one form of this activity, which function within one particular symbolic world, but sacramentality as such is a property of language in general. It is through language and symbol that God encounters people, no matter which languages or symbols they may possess.

This view is not problematic as such, but without a corresponding emphasis on the limits of language, it functions as a covert form of sacramentalism. Where the inexpressibility of God's gift to humanity is not stressed, language becomes the primary locus of God's presence and activity, and the sacraments are reduced to specific iterations of language – that is, to linguistic and cultural forms. I believe, however, that the priority of the sacraments, and particularly the Eucharist, as events charged with eschatological reality must remain in view, even as we develop an anthropological account of the sacraments through linguistic philosophy. The sacramentality of Christian symbolic activity is not due to an inherent property of language but is instead a consequence of Christ, the primordial sacrament, who has emptied himself and taken the form of symbol. This is the Christ whom we meet in many and various ways throughout our life but most fundamentally in the mystery of the Eucharist, which joins us to his identity and gives us

a share in his life. To cede that role over to the linguistic milieu – a sort of stand in for the sacramentality of the world that precedes even the sacraments – leans in the direction of sacramentalism.

The critique of Chauvet that he reduces sacramentality to the linguistic is a somewhat common complaint. Kimberly Belcher, for instance, argues that by equating the communication of grace with the symbolic efficacy of language, Chauvet problematically privileges language acts (and therefore the formal element of sacramental rites) over the embodied ritual dimension of religious practices. It might be possible, she says, to maintain his Heideggerian emphasis on the broader field of embodied symbolic action, but in the end, "language" is an insufficiently capacious model for theorizing the embodied and often sub-linguistic dynamics of human identity and the experience of grace.[38] I offer a similar critique of Chauvet, but on slightly different grounds. I argue that language is an inadequate model not only for anthropological reasons, since human experience is not coextensive with the field of linguistic action, but more precisely on theological grounds. The mystery of Christ mediated for Christians through the web of language is precisely beyond language. To be fair, Chauvet knows this, and it is precisely why he makes so much of the mediation of the church. To assent to faith is to renounce the illusion of immediacy, the notion that we can possess the object of our faith directly. Grace is by definition a reality that is mediated, and the presence of Christ in the experience of the community of faith is always at the same time an absence. It is for this reason that Chauvet speaks of mourning as a facet of Christian experience: between the

[38] Kimberly Belcher, *Efficacious Engagement: Sacramental Participation in the Trinitarian Mystery* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2011), 36-44.

ascension and the eschaton, we apprehend God only through the medium of linguistic activity.

This last point is where my concern most truly lies. Granted that Chauvet is aware of the theological limits of language, he nevertheless makes language into the primordial medium of divine communication. As I have said, this is not a problem in principle. But Chauvet's view is that language or symbolic activity *as such* is the bearer of grace, not the language of the church. The church possesses certain unique ways of embodying grace, certain key elements of its own language, but on the larger field of grace, which is linguistically mediated, these elements are interchangeable. True enough, they are the particular means through which grace is experienced *for Christians*, and this is his main point. However, as indicated above, Chauvet can give no account for why *these* particular linguistic acts should matter at all in comparison to other expressions of grace both inside and outside the church. The symbolic potency of language in general is prior to its more particular instantiation in religious practices and in the sacraments particularly. The meaning and power of the sacraments is derivative upon the sacramentality the broader linguistic world.

Regarding Chauvet's view on liturgy and ethics, which I will examine more directly in the next chapter, the critique stands. Chauvet has argued that the sacramental principle upon which the meaning of the sacraments is based is the symbolic potency of language. Christian subjects receive their identity and find their way in the world through a symbolic structure composed of scripture, sacrament, and ethics. The sacraments embody in a uniquely ritual fashion the encounter with grace that is mediated through the linguistic milieu. Sacraments and ethics, in this view, are corresponding moments in a

sacramentally charged web of language that forms Christian existence. They are linked as two poles of symbolic action within a broader symbolic grammar that is itself the real substance of sacramentality. To say that liturgy and ethics are related is to require their mutual participation in a theologically prior sacramental linguistic milieu.

1.2.2 Denis Edwards: Sacramental Consciousness as the Basis of Ecological Ethics

The work of Denis Edwards, in contrast to that of Chauvet, delivers an account of liturgy and ethics that is less conceptual and more practical. He offers an applied ethics of liturgy that shows, rather than theorizes, what sacramental liturgy can tell us about how we ought to live. Hence, his work begins not from an analysis of the human subject or how it comes to acquire a world, but rather with an analysis of the act of liturgy itself. Edwards is driven by the following question: what can the ritual practice of the Eucharist tell us about our relationship to the natural world and our moral responsibilities to the planet? How can what we do in eucharistic liturgy inform our understanding of Christian ecological responsibility?

In an innovative article on this subject, Edwards proposes an interpretation of Eucharist in terms of three main aspects: the symbolic nature of the eucharistic elements, the anamnetic character of the eucharistic prayer, and the priestly role of the Christian people.[39] These aspects correspond creatively to the classical requirements for the validity

[39] Denis Edwards, "Eucharist and Ecology: Keeping Memorial of Creation," *Worship* 82, no. 3 (2008): 194-213. Edwards developed these arguments in the context of a larger ecological theology in his book, *Ecology at the Heart of the Faith* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2006).

of a sacrament: matter, form, and minister.[40] I will present each of these elements of Edwards' analysis briefly and then situate his thought within my broader critique.

The symbolic nature of the elements. The fundamental sign of the Eucharist, Edwards writes, is "the giving and receiving of the fruits of the earth at a shared table."[41] What does it mean that God in Christ has chosen to give himself to us through the common partaking of bread and wine? How does this symbolic mediation express our relationship to the earth? Following Xavier Léon-Dufour, Edwards notes that in scripture, bread is a sign of the daily nourishment that we require and represents the promise of God, while wine is a sign of the abundance of life and represents the blessings of God.[42] As a result, the eucharistic bread and cup, shared among human beings at table, are witness to the fact that Christ's self-giving is always grounded in the earth. Sanctifying grace meets us in our relationship with the rest of creation, which itself is made present in the bread and wine on the altar.

Therefore, reasons Edwards, creation is implicated at the heart of the human encounter with God, which is the mystery of the Eucharist. In this sacrament, creation is revealed as the new earth, and we along with it are revealed to ourselves as the new humanity.[43] This means that when we partake of the eucharistic meal, Christians are

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[40] For the sake of space, I am omitting a report on Edwards's brief treatment of the epiclesis, which though it establishes a pneumatological aspect to his thesis, is largely repetitive.

[41] Edwards, "Eucharist and Ecology," 195. The citation mentioned is Xavier Léon-Dufour, *Sharing the Eucharistic Bread: The Witness of the New Testament* (New York: Paulist Press, 1987).

[42] Edwards, *Eucharist and Ecology*, 197.

[43] The idea of liturgy as an act that draws on the presence of creation is famously and poetically expressed by Teilhard de Chardin, "The Mass on the World," in *Hymn of the Universe* (London: Collins, 1965).

reminded of "our grounding in the whole interconnected pattern of fleshly life, of hunger and thirst, nourishment and refreshment."[44] In addition, the liturgy challenges us to grapple with the ecological, economic, and political realities that this food represents and calls us to be mindful of those who are crushed by ecological and economic exploitation. The signs of bread and wine are an invitation to ecological conversion.

The anamnetic quality of the eucharistic prayer. Edwards observes that the eucharistic prayer is a memorial not only of God's act of redemption but also of God's act of creation. This seemingly modest observation is filled with ecological implications. In the eucharistic prayer, we remember all that God has done for us, and ours is a God who both creates and saves. A review of historical sources including the Jewish *birkat ha-mazon*, the *Didache*, the *Liturgy of Addai and Mari*, the *Apostolic Tradition*, and the later writings of Irenaeus, reinforces this insight for Edwards.[45] Indeed, the tradition confirms that at the heart of the eucharistic act is an anamnetic act of praise and thanksgiving for creation. If we keep memorial of creation in the Eucharist, says Edwards, then we must sustain an honest remembrance of the earth not only in liturgy but also beyond it. With thanksgiving, we remember the cosmic history of God's creation, and in repentance, we remember the disastrous effects of human violence against a deeply suffering planet. The eucharistic prayer, for Edwards, is in this way a prayer for the created world that we bring with us to the liturgy, without which we could not experience the grace of Christ's presence. The Eucharist is a prayer of memorial that should mark the beginning of our commitment to the wellbeing of the earth.[46]

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[44] Edwards, "Eucharist and Ecology," 198.
[45] Ibid., 200-05.
[46] Ibid., 206.

The priestly role of the Christian people. Woven throughout Edwards's discussion of the symbolic meaning of bread and wine and the remembrance of creation in the eucharistic prayer is a final idea that encapsulates his entire ecological interpretation of the liturgy: in the Eucharist, the Christian people lift up the whole of creation to God. Edwards develops this claim somewhat in reference to Schmemann's theological analysis of memory, but the more illustrative source for this understanding of liturgy is the Orthodox theologian John Zizioulas, who underscores the role of the people as "priests of creation."

According to Zizioulas, all of us who are baptized are called to share in the priesthood of Christ, and this entails commitment to the fullness of relationality intrinsic to our personhood in Christ. When we lift up the gifts of the altar in the Eucharist, we are raising before God not only ourselves but also the universe of which we are a part, so that by this offering of thanksgiving God might make the whole of creation new. Zizioulas describes the liturgical act of offering:

> […] we form a community which in a symbolic way takes from creation certain elements – bread and wine – which we offer to God with the solemn declaration 'Thine own do we offer Thee', thus recognizing that creation does not belong to us but to God, who is its only 'owner'. By so doing we believe that creation is brought into relation with God and not only is it treated with the reverence which befits what belongs to God, but it is also liberated from its natural limitations and transformed into a bearer of life. We believe that in doing this 'in Christ', we act as priests of creation. When we receive these elements back after having referred them to God we believe that because of this reference to God we can take them

> back and consume them no longer as death but as life. In this way, creation acquires for us a sacredness which is not inherent in its nature but 'acquired' in and through our free exercise of our *imago Dei*, that is, our personhood. This distinguishes our attitude from all forms of paganism, and attaches to human being an awesome responsibility for the survival of God's creation.[47]

From this perspective, Christian ecological responsibility is a result of our very personhood, our relatedness to the entirety of the created sphere, which is fulfilled in the priestly vocation that we enact through Christ. The Eucharist is nothing less than offering to God all that we are as members and representatives of creation, so that we may receive creation back as spiritual food and receive ourselves thereby as partakers of eternal life. Human responsibility for the earth is rooted at the heart of this sacred exchange. The liturgy can and must serve as the foundation of an ecologically responsible Christian morality.

Edwards summarizes his liturgical approach to ecological ethics by saying, "Christian eucharistic practice, when understood and lived in all its depth, is capable of sustaining an ongoing conversion to a personal and loving stance before the rest of creation."[48] This ethically changed stance is possible because eucharistic liturgy awakens us to the sacramentality of all creation as the means through which God's grace operates:

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[47] John Zizioulas, "Priests of Creation," in *Environmental Stewardship: Critical Perspectives – Past and Present*, ed. R.J. Berry (London: T&T Clark, 2006), 289. This is an article taken from three lectures given at King's College London, which Edwards himself cites as John Zizioulas, "Preserving God's Creation: Three Lectures on Ecology and Theology," King's Theological Review 12 (1989), 1-5, 41-45 and 13 (1990), 1-5. See also Zizioulas, John D., "The Eucharistic Vision of the World," in *The Eucharistic Communion and the World* (London: T&T Clark International, 2011).

[48] Edwards, "Eucharist and Ecology," 210.

bread and wine place creation at the heart of the salvific human encounter with God, remembrance implicates the whole created order, and our priestly role makes us stewards of the earth. In each of its aspects, the Eucharist invites us to understand that all creation is sacramental, for without creation we have no relationship to God. This forms the basis of a commitment to the wellbeing of the earth.[49]

As a moral claim, the argument that Edwards makes is sound. Pope Francis expresses a similar intuition when he writes in *Laudato Si'* that the Eucharist is "a source of light and motivation for our concerns for the environment, directing us to be stewards of all creation."[50] Many theologians in recent years have posited a liturgical awakening of ecological conversion, in order to draw a connection between Christian worship and care for the earth.[51] To me, what is most striking is the further claim that liturgy not only gives birth to ecological conversion, but that it does so by awaking a specifically sacramental awareness of creation. It is not, in other words, that the liturgy simply reminds us that creation has a role to play in our salvation and that it is therefore part of Christian moral responsibility to care for creation. More than this, liturgy incites in us a transformation of vision, an augmentation of consciousness, as a result of which we see what has been there all along: the sacramental dimension of the cosmos. It is this new consciousness, this new way of *seeing* creation, that generates a new way of *being* in relation to the earth and its ecosystems.

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[49] Ibid., 194-213.
[50] *Laudato Si'* 236.
[51] For example, John Hart, Leonardo Boff, and Thomas Berry, eds. *Sacramental Commons: Christian Ecological Ethics* (Ranham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2006). See also Michael J. Himes and Kenneth R. Himes. "The Sacrament of Creation: Toward an Environmental Theology." In *Readings in Ecology and Feminist Theology* (Kansas City, MO: Sheed & Ward, 1995), 270-283.

That is the central conceit of what I call a phenomenological approach to connecting liturgy and ecological ethics. One can see this approach even more clearly in the work of theologian Timothy O'Malley:

> […] a Catholic, ecological consciousness, inspired by the Eucharist, requires a very specific transformation of perception. Like ecology in general, Catholic ecological perception would include gratitude for the wonders of the created order […] The sheer grandeur of the universe, its size so massive that one's imagination is stretched to the limit in considering it, may become an image, a similitude, of the Triune life of God. The eucharistic liturgy teaches us this capacity for this type of perception (if we are attentive to it), by that constant transformation of each created sign into a means of offering praise to God.[52]

Through the performance of the Eucharist, Christians learn to perceive all of creation in its sacramental modality, transparent to the glory and grace of God, and their place within this creation as beings sustained in life by the gifts of nature. The attitude of wonder, praise, and thanksgiving that flows from this sacramental perception is the beginning of a renewed posture toward the earth and a responsible way of living on our planet.[53]

For O'Malley, there are two ethical consequences of this new way of seeing. First, the Christian commits herself to a life of praise and thanksgiving to God from whom salvation and the wonders of creation flow. Second, she comes to value created things as

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[52] Timothy P. O'Malley, "Catholic Ecology and Eucharist: A Practice Approach," *Liturgical Ministry* 20, no. 2 (2011): 68-78. Cited here, 77.
[53] See, for examples, John Hart, Leonardo Boff, and Thomas Berry, eds. *Sacramental Commons: Christian Ecological Ethics* (Ranham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2006). Also, Michael J. Himes and Kenneth R. Himes. "The Sacrament of Creation: Toward an Environmental Theology." In *Readings in Ecology and Feminist Theology* (Kansas City, MO: Sheed & Ward, 1995), 270-283.

divine gifts, and especially as media of encounter with the gift of God's self. This implies a totally different kind of relationship with the earth, one that rejects needless human acts of violence against creation. O'Malley notes the intrinsic connection between praise of God and the preservation of his sacramental creation:

> Such a life of praise is not possible without a renewal of perception, taught through liturgical worship, whereby one begins to see the particularities of the created world as signs of God. And when human beings destroy creation through false desires, they both refuse to praise God through their deeds and wipe out part of the created order that reflects the glory of God […] By harming the beauty of creation, we take away the evangelical capacity of nature.[54]

There is therefore a prophetic element to ecological morality as it emerges from the Eucharist. If through the liturgy we are brought to a sacramental perception of the cosmos, then not only must we inhabit it rightly, but we must also call on our siblings to do so. As a people who receive God through the gifts of the earth in the Eucharist, we call upon the entire human community to care for creation, the place in which God meets us. By making room for a God who gives himself in the beauty of the natural world, we engage in an essentially evangelical mission.

Once again, this point is theologically sound and necessary. The created world is surely sacramentally charged, and this should in fact animate a Christian ecological vocation. However, I return to the question of balance. My concern is that invoking the sacramentality of creation as the link between the Eucharist and ecological morality risks not doing justice to the full meaning and power of the Eucharist itself. The "cosmic"

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[54] O'Malley, 74.

dimension of eucharistic liturgy, conceived in terms of the genesis of a sacramental worldview, does not in fact anchor our ecological morality in the Eucharist but rather in the universal principle of sacramentality and thus in the antecedent manifestation of grace in the world of which the Eucharist is a kind of reminder.

The result is a view of the Eucharist as a mere intensification or reinforcement of the sacramental principle already present throughout life in creation. Kevin Irwin has called it an especially "strong moment" of God's self-disclosure. He pictures liturgy, therefore, as a kind of integration of a prior reality:

> The unfathomable depth and profound meaning of liturgy as understood here is that it draws on our experiences of God in all of life and puts these experiences together in an integrated way. Liturgy ritualizes a particular and privileged experience of God, so that through these ritual actions we can evaluate life's flaws and problems, put them into perspective, and in joy and hope transcend them.[55]

One problematic consequence of this view of the Eucharist, or any sacrament, as an expression or intensification of the experience of God in daily life is that it reduces the liturgical act to a kind of subjective confirmation of what is already established or achieved. The Eucharist itself diminishes in importance as a privileged site of encounter with the power of God breaking into the world, since the sacramentality of creation is sufficient. Ironically, this is precisely the sort of imbalance that Rahner and others attempted to avoid. Even Chauvet's attempt to integrate the objective and subjective elements of sacramental theology reflects this desire to balance the universality of grace carefully with the privileged nature of the sacraments.

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[55] Kevin, Irwin, "Model One: Cosmic Mass," 48.

If we lose sight of the Eucharist as a central mystery, we neglect to appreciate the eschatological horizon that is manifested in it. When ecological ethics and even sanctification are rooted in the already-realized *presence* of grace in the world, without corresponding emphasis on the eschatological promise embodied in the Eucharist, which alone can reconcile the apparent *absence* of grace in a world of suffering that is still destined for perfection, we fall into the trap of sacramentalism. We lose the right balance, and salvation appears to begin in creation rather than in the Eucharist, our principal sacrament of encounter with Jesus Christ and the means through which we participate in his life, death, and resurrection. I simply wish to emphasize that the Paschal Mystery infuses creation with meaning, not the other way around. I do not want to degrade the sacramentality of creation, without which we cannot in fact celebrate the liturgy, but still I argue that the liturgical approach to ecological ethics must keep sight of the centrality and priority of the Eucharist.

Pope Francis himself, while acknowledging that liturgy ought to awaken us to ecological responsibility, appreciates the absolute theological preeminence of the Eucharist and invites us to something deeper than the usual phenomenological approach to liturgy and ecology:

> In the Eucharist, fullness is already achieved; it is the living centre of the universe, the overflowing core of love and of inexhaustible life. Joined to the incarnate Son, present in the Eucharist, the whole cosmos gives thanks to God. […] The Eucharist joins heaven and earth; it embraces and penetrates all creation. The world which came forth from God's hands returns to him in blessed and undivided adoration: in the bread of the Eucharist, "creation is projected towards

> divinization, towards the holy wedding feast, towards unification with the Creator himself".[56]

What is lost, then, in an approach to Christian ecology that starts from universal sacramentality is an appreciation for the privileged nature of the Eucharist as the "overflowing core" of divine grace, the embodiment of the incarnate God, and the fulfillment of the Paschal Mystery. The Eucharist may draw on the sacramental potential of creation, but more importantly it is the foundation of this potential because it draws creation into itself. Therefore, without discarding the general principle of sacramentality, we must give the Eucharist priority.

Of course, it is true that the Eucharist is a sacrament, and as a sacrament, it is as a visible sign of an invisible reality, a material means of encounter with the mystery of grace breaking into the present world. As such, I do affirm that the Eucharist draws on the sacramentality of creation – on God's grace and glory manifested in the material beauty of the universe and in the daily experiences of life. However, as the great Orthodox liturgist Alexander Schmemann has written, the Eucharist reveals creation not merely in its present transparency to God but *more truthfully* as destined for future fullness in God:

> […] in Orthodox experience a sacrament is primarily the revelation of the *sacramentality* of creation itself, for the world was created and given to man for conversion of creaturely life into participation in divine life […] if, to put it briefly, everything in the world can be identified, manifested and understood as a

[56] *Laudato Si'* 236. Francis here quotes from Benedict XVI, "Homily for the Mass of Corpus Domini," 513.

> gift of God and participation in the new life, it is because all of creation was originally summoned and destined for the fulfillment of the divine economy – 'then God will be all in all.'[57]

At its heart, the Eucharist is an encounter with that which is yet missing from creation: that for which the world is destined but has not yet fully achieved. It draws on the sacramentality of the created world, to be sure, but it does this most essentially in the mode of promise. If Eucharist makes us aware of the sacramentality of creation, and if this produces some kind of ecological ethics, it is because in the light of liturgy we see the whole world caught up in dynamism of the eucharistic promise. I will return in subsequent chapters to this eschatological theme, but in order to conclude the present argument, I will look more deeply at the idea of encounter.

1.3 CALLING FOR A EUCHARISTIC ETHICS: NOT METAPHOR BUT ENCOUNTER

At this point, the critical aspect of my argument for a eucharistic ethics should be clear. I believe that an approach to liturgy and ethics that begins from the general idea of sacramentality limits liturgy to a merely human practice that enlivens sacramental awareness. This kind of view provides an important piece of the puzzle – one key way of linking liturgy and ethics. However, it also tends to lose sight of the Eucharist in its deeper theological dimensions. If we identify the function of liturgy only as promoting human awareness of a prior sacramental reality, then we have failed to appreciate the

[57] Alexander Schmemann, *The Eucharist: Sacrament of the Kingdom* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1988), 33-34. Emphasis original.

uniqueness of the Eucharist itself as the source and fulfillment of grace, and we risk neglecting the Christological and eschatological aspects of ethics.

In the eucharistic celebration, Christians encounter in a tangible way the incarnate God and experience proleptically the fulfillment of all things in his glory. To say that the sacramental nature of the Eucharist is derivative upon the sacramentality of creation misses this reality. Most certainly, there is a theological continuity between the Eucharist and the sacramentality of the world, but this is not because the Eucharist derives its sacramental character from creation. It is rather because the sacramentality of creation is an extension and expression of the primordially eucharistic reality in which it is implicated: that God has become human and given himself to us in the Paschal Mystery, which we encounter in the form of bread and wine, so that through partaking of this meal, as the church, we may share his life.

What I am seeking in this dissertation, therefore, is an antidote to a typical liturgical ethics that makes Eucharist and the sacraments function as reminders or intensifications of a theologically prior sacramental principle. While that kind of approach, which I have named sacramentalism, gives due attention to the universality of grace (God meets us everywhere), the priority of divine agency (God is not constrained by the sacraments), and the doctrines of creation and incarnation (God reaches us through tangible things), it places too little emphasis on the Paschal Mystery itself and on the eschatological promise of creation uniquely realized in the sacrament of communion. In the next chapter, I will enter into specifics by discussing and analyzing what I identify as the two prevalent models of liturgy and ethics: the correlational and pedagogical models. For now, I wish to make a brief constructive case for eucharistic ethics. Taking care to

avoid the pitfalls of sacramentalism, how does one imagine the Eucharist as the source and foundation of Christian ethics?

It seems to me that in applying eucharistic theology to theological ethics, there are two methods available. Either our theological understanding of the Eucharist will be called on to provide a morally valuable *metaphor*, transferable between the domains of eucharistic theology and ethics, or it will invite attention to the theological mystery of *encounter* in the Eucharist, which serves as the basis of moral living. The metaphorical method, which tends strongly in the direction of sacramentalism, is rooted in the kind of sacramental theology typified by Bernard Cooke's book, *Sacraments & Sacramentality*.[58] This is an introductory volume, well written and accessible, that proposes a modern hermeneutics of the sacraments rooted in a phenomenology of human experience. In short, Cooke argues that sacraments are religious rituals whose power and meaning derive from the sacramentality of human life itself. These rites may be said to sharpen or intensify the experience of Christ's saving action, yet the primordial domain of grace is not liturgy but life in the world.

The liturgist John Baldovin, in his review of Cooke's book, offers a critique of this approach. Noting the total absence of any reference to the actual texts of Christian liturgy, Baldovin worries that the abstraction of sacramentality has been prioritized at the expense of theological attention to the sacraments themselves. This is not a new concern in postconciliar theology, and in fact, it reflects a divergence between the fields of

[58] Bernard Cooke, *Sacraments & Sacramentality*. Revised Edition. (Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publication, 1994).

sacramental and liturgical theology, precipitated by the anthropological turn in sacramental theology. Baldovin writes:

> Until sacramental theology begins to take the celebration of the sacraments seriously as a starting point, it will be guilty of the accusation leveled by Louis Bouyer against eucharistic theology twenty years ago: here we have theologies about the sacraments, not theologies of the sacraments.[59]

The debate that Baldovin points to here, concerning the method of sacramentalism, has naturally spilled over into the terrain of liturgy and ethics. To place a theology *about* the sacraments and sacramentality into conversation with Christian ethics, without due attention to the sacraments themselves, results in a purely metaphorical approach. "Sacramentality" becomes a kind of key word or stand-in for the saving presence of God in the world, a *metaphor* that can be used to shuttle back and forth between liturgy and ethics. The sacramentality of the Eucharist reminds us of the sacramentality of the world, which produces moral conversion, and the sacramentality of the world is the condition for the possibility of the sacramentality of the Eucharist. In this way, the principle of sacramentality, functioning as hardly more than synonym for grace, is used to establish the continuity between sacraments and life: to forge a link between liturgy and ethics.

What is lost, of course, in the metaphorical approach is an appreciation for the supremely intimate *encounter* with Jesus Christ that is made real in the Eucharist and in the sacraments that draw us toward the Eucharist. If we begin from the sacraments themselves, and the Eucharist especially, rather than from the world, the connection

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[59] John F. Baldovin, review of *Sacraments & Sacramentality*, by Bernard Cooke, and *Introduction to the Sacraments*, by John P. Shanz, Worship 58:6 (1984): 549–51.

between liturgy and ethics looks much different. It allows us to behold sacramentality in its supreme manifestation, in our encounter with the person of Jesus Christ crucified and risen, rather than using sacramentality for certain metaphorical purposes. Of course, I do not wish to reverse the turn to the subject, also called the anthropological turn, in modern sacramental theology. Neither do I wish to deny the importance of a contemporary emphasis on the sacramental imagination of Catholicism. What I am arguing is simply that good sacramental theology locates the human subject in the sacramental wellspring of the liturgy, rather than in some already established sacramental world. The sacramental nature of reality unfolds from the Eucharist, from the essential encounter with Jesus Christ who meets us under the form of shared bread and wine. It is in this encounter where Christ is revealed as the truth that moves beneath creation and human life, and it is in the Eucharist where the fulfillment of all things in him begins. When a turn to the subject is performed within the context of that encounter, we have a more compelling sacramental theology and a better liturgical ethics.

The story of the disciples on the road to Emmaus and their subsequent realization of Jesus's presence at their table reminds us of the power of eucharistic encounter. Having failed to recognize their teacher as they travelled together, the two disciples complained of their disappointment. They had thought Jesus would be the one to restore the kingdom of Israel, to inaugurate the reign of their God in history, but instead he had suffered and died in humiliation. What they expected to see and to happen had not come to pass. Nor did the disciples believe the testimony of the women that Jesus was now alive again. For they were blinded, we might say, precisely by what they expected to see

and to happen. Even as Jesus interpreted the scriptures to them, the disciples could not understand.

When they arrived at Emmaus, the disciples urged their companion to stay with them, to eat and to rest. Without understanding, they welcomed their master into their midst. It was then, in the embrace of their hospitality, that Jesus would make himself known:

> When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. They said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?" That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. They were saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!" Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.[60]

It is not that Jesus had been absent on their journey. All along, he had been there, speaking the truth of God's salvation through scripture and kindling fire in their hearts. But it was at the table, through the intimacy of a shared meal, that the disciples recognized him as the one who had broken bread for them before, whose body had been broken for them also, and who was now alive in God. At last, they saw him, not as what they expected him to be, but as he was. In that moment, he vanished from their sight, for now he was with them in the breaking of the bread.

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[60] Luke 24:30-35.

The structure of Jesus's action in the Emmaus story mimics the Last Supper narrative, and it continues to serve as a central element of the eucharistic prayer. In every one of the anaphoras of the Roman Missal, the institution narrative retains the fourfold account of Jesus's performance: he took the bread, blessed it, broke it, and gave it. In and through this action, the faith of the church attests, Jesus not only meets us, as the true minister of the Eucharist, but also gives himself to us, so that we might give ourselves to him. This transformative encounter is the beginning of faith, not merely as a conceptual apprehension of that which we believe but as a response of acceptance to revelation of God in Christ, the one whom we have met.[61]

There is not, in the end, any kind of competition between the meaning of the Eucharist and the sacramentality of the world. When I insist that liturgy and ethics, and even sacramental theology, ought to preserve a sense for the theological priority of the Eucharist, I am not trying to remove grace from creation or out of the ordinary moments of human life. In the Emmaus story, Jesus was there all along. But the deepest truth of his person, the truth of the Resurrection, is known and realized in the breaking of bread. It is from a simple table, from the ordinariness of a meal, that the transformation of ourselves and our world begins. It is there where we encounter Jesus as the Christ, as the crucified and risen one, who gives us a share in his life, which is nothing less than the life of God. The Eucharist, by revealing Christ as the Risen Lord, also reveals creation for what it is and will one day perfectly be: a bearer of earthly life lifted up and made into a bearer of eternal life.

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[61] For an analysis of the Emmaus story along these lines see Shane MacKinlay, "Eyes Wide Shut: A Response to Jean-Luc Marion's Account of the Journey to Emmaus," *Modern Theology* 20, no. 3 (July 2004): 447-456.

Of course, the fullness that is realized in the Eucharist is no more complete in us than in creation. The Eucharist is the embodiment of an eschatological promise, already given but not yet fulfilled. In the sacrament of bread and wine, we behold the resurrection of Christ, which is our own resurrection, and anticipate the coming to completion of that glory in us. The ancient liturgy of the *Didache*, our earliest extant example of formal Christian worship, expresses this anticipation:

> May grace come, and may this world pass away.
>
> Hosanna to the God of David.
>
> If anyone is holy, let him come;
>
> > if anyone is not, let him do penance.
>
> Maranatha.[62]

"Lord come quickly!" This is the final word of the Eucharist and of the church, which waits on the word of God. It is a plea and also an affirmation: a word of expectation charged with such certainty, and filled with so much reality, that already we see it changing us and changing the world. Having encountered Jesus Christ in the sacrament of the Eucharist, we wait to encounter him face to face. That encounter and that expectation is the core of Christian life, the substance of conversion, and the foundation of Christian ethics. With that Christological and eucharistic framing in mind, I turn next to the field of liturgy and ethics itself, and I offer a methodological reading of existing approaches. By organizing the existing literature in the field, I will be in a position to develop in greater detail the fundamental eucharistic ethics that I have called for.

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[62] Taken from Johnson, Lawrence J., *An Anthology of Historical Sources*, Volume One (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2009), 38. Originally printed in Rordorf, W., and A. Tuiler, SCHr, eds. and trans., *La doctrine des douze apôtres. Didaché*. (Paris, 1978), 248.

2.0 CHAPTER 2 – MODELS OF LITURGY AND ETHICS

In Christian understanding, there must exist a profound connection between the liturgy of the church and the ethics to which the church aspires. The rituals and sacraments at the heart of the worship of God evoke and imply a way of life before God. This bond has existed since the earliest moments of the Christian story. Conversion to faith in Jesus Christ, if it was to be genuine, required not only liturgical expression but also moral expression. To be baptized into the life, death, and resurrection of Christ was to take upon oneself a new mode of existence, a new identity, which was confirmed and nourished in the Lord's Supper. For this reason, Paul wrote to the Corinthians of the essentially prophetic nature of eucharistic observance and the danger of distorting it through failure to live the Christian vocation:

> For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. Whoever, therefore, eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be answerable for the body and blood of the Lord. Examine yourselves, and only then eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For all who eat and drink without discerning the body, eat and drink judgment against themselves.[63]

To bring to the communal embodiment of faith a heart that is faithless is to do violence to the very meaning of the liturgical observance, and ultimately to do violence to oneself. Such faithlessness is evidenced, above all, in a form of life inconsistent with the Christian anticipation of Christ's return that is the center of the liturgical proclamation. Worship

[63] 1 Corinthians 11:26-19.

and morals, both indispensable elements of new life in Christ, must exist together in the fabric of Christian existence.

The binding element between liturgy and ethics, then, is the person of Jesus Christ. It is he who Christians encounter in the sacramental life of the church, the Risen Lord who is seen with the eyes of faith and received in Eucharist. It is also he who calls us daily to take up our cross and follow him, to live newly in this age between his ascension and his return. Jesus himself is the primordial sacrament *and* the source of Christian ethics. My argument in the previous chapter – that the reality of encounter is more appropriate than the metaphor of sacramentality for making sense of the bond between liturgy and ethics – is founded on this centering of Jesus Christ. It is not a broad notion of sacramentality, generalized in order to cover both liturgy and life, that ultimately connects the two. Instead, it is Christ himself, the sacrament of salvation, in whom the liturgical life and ethical life of the people of God are united.

A Christological framing of the field of liturgy and ethics does not, however, complete the theological task of thinking through their connection. It remains to be seen precisely how liturgy and ethics are related in Christian thought and practice, and this requires above all a careful look at the methodological assumptions that are made in bringing these elements together. Although a great deal of theological literature exists on the subject of liturgy and ethics, much of which I reference in this chapter, there is effectively none that examines the state of the field methodologically. My goal in this chapter will be to correct that deficiency by offering a framework or typology for making sense of the field. What methods are called upon to interpret the bond between liturgy and ethics? How are various kinds of proposals related to one another? By asking these

questions, and answering them with a typology, I wish to enable the field of liturgy and ethics to perform the kind of methodological self-reflection that fosters new insights.

In this chapter, then, I will identify and discuss what I see as the two prevalent models of liturgy and ethics in theology today: the correlational and pedagogical models. Most if not all of the proposals in the field fall into one or both these categories. Though specific claims may differ, these two models serve as the operative framework in nearly every case. I will therefore give careful consideration to each model by presenting major examples, stating its central insight, and offering a concise critique. The purpose of this dissertation is not to deconstruct current methods but to observe and build upon them. The Eucharistic ethics that I called for in the previous chapter is not meant to replace existing models of liturgical ethics. My goal, rather, is to deepen current approaches and to open space for new insights by rooting the conversation in eucharistic theology and placing current approaches in an eschatological context.

I take it as given that the correlational and the pedagogical models are indispensable to the theological task of making sense of the relation between liturgy and ethics. But in order to avoid reducing these models to a purely anthropological method, which loses theological perspective and diminishes liturgy to only a human practice, it is necessary to incorporate them into a theological structure informed by the eschatological impulse of eucharistic theology. As in the previous chapter, the proposal that I am offering seeks to restore a balance between current approaches and the insights that emerge when the Eucharist is front and center. Given the balance between eucharistic priority and the principle of sacramentality that I have attempted to strike already, the

question now is how the centrality and priority of the Eucharist can inform and enhance our best ways of imagining the intimate relationship between liturgy and ethics.

2.1 MODELS IN THEOLOGY: A REMINDER OF LIMITATIONS

Before presenting my framework, however, I would like to comment briefly on the idea of "models" in theology. Sallie McFague famously situates the use of models in theology within the inescapably metaphorical texture of religious speech. The language of Christian theology, which allows individuals and communities to reflect upon, develop, and transmit the meaning of the life-affirming reality that claims them, operates always at the level of metaphor. It proposes to faithful readers and listeners certain images, imbued with the power to elicit some sense of the inexhaustible mystery to which they refer. It asks for elaboration and interpretation. In that way, theological language trades in fundamental but always negotiable metaphors. It proposes models that are at once disclosive of something true but also subject to critical revision.[64]

Following McFague, it is clear to me that the use of metaphor is intrinsic to theology, and I do not wish to disparage any theological proposal for being too "metaphorical." My comments at the end of the last chapter, where I made a distinction between the metaphorical tendency of sacramentalism and the centering of encounter in eucharistic theology, should therefore not be interpreted as an attempt to escape the unstable territory of figurative language in favor of the supposedly objective reality of encounter. My argument does suggest, however, that encounter with Jesus the Christ, the

[64] Sallie McFague, *Metaphorical Theology: Models of God in Religious Language* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982). See also, ibid., *Models of God: Theology for an Ecological, Nuclear Age* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987).

Risen Lord who fully embodies the eschatological promise of God in the Eucharist, is the ultimate context for any other model that helps us to understand how God works upon us, whether in liturgy or in ordinary life. As I said above, the person of Jesus Christ is the bond between liturgy and ethics, and for Christians the most intimate encounter we have with Christ occurs in the Eucharist.

Granted that eucharistic encounter may itself be a model, inscribed as it is in theological speech, I believe it also names the saving reality of being-in-relationship with Christ, which renders every other frame intelligible. Models themselves, as McFague points out, are open-ended and subject to revision and transformation. Eucharistic encounter, which we might call my foundational model, places the other models on an eschatological itinerary that not only permits but even requires this open-endedness. It is a model that constantly reminds us of its own status as a model, whose ultimate meaning is always just beyond the horizon of interpretation.

This leads to two important conclusions, which define the argument of this chapter. First, as I have indicated, it is not the case that this new eucharistic ethics ought to replace previous notions of liturgical ethics, or that an eschatological model ought to replace the correlational and pedagogical models discussed here. Instead, I am proposing to transplant the whole conversation about liturgy and ethics into the most foundational context imaginable: the context of eucharistic encounter with our destiny in Christ. The purpose of this chapter is simply to show how precisely the correlational and pedagogical models work, and then how they fit into this theological frame.

Second, precisely as models, and all the more because they are theological models, each of the approaches that I will discuss are limited in their descriptive power.

They are ideal-types, which rarely if ever occur in a pure form. To call a certain writer's work on liturgy and ethics correlational will tell us something about their basic methodological assumptions, but it does not preclude the presence of a pedagogical element in their thinking. Nor does the association of any writer with one of these models preclude the presence of an eschatological sensibility. Still, the typology I offer is valid. I believe it is also necessary for illuminating the kinds of arguments that writers are making, so that in the course of this work I can propose a way forward, rooted in the eucharistic encounter with the person of Jesus Christ and in the eschatological expectation of his coming, which Paul described so forcefully as the heart of the Christian attitude.

2.2 THE CORRELATIONAL MODEL: LITURGY AS ETHICAL TEXT

The correlational model of liturgy and ethics takes its name from the movement in twentieth century theological methodology that is most frequently associated with the work of Paul Tillich and David Tracy.[65] Although I do not claim to have discovered any direct influence by correlationists on writers in liturgy and ethics, there is sufficient conceptual similarity to justify the appropriation of the label. Correlational approaches to liturgy and ethics proceed on the basic assumption that there is or ought to be a *meaningful correlation* between the practice of liturgy and the shape of human life. There

[65] For background on the method of correlation, see Werner G. Jeanrond, "Correlational theology and the Chicago School," in *Introduction to Christian Theology: Contemporary North American Perspectives*, (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 137-153. See also Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology: Volume One* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951). For a helpful synthesis of that text, see Bernard M. Loomer, "Tillich's Theology of Correlation," *The Journal Of Religion* 36, no. 1 (January 1956): 150-156.

is, in other words, a transferability of meanings between the realm of liturgical action and the realm of moral action. As a result, liturgy may be read for Christian principles or values to be applied to daily conduct and to the shaping of community. Alternatively, or at the same time, liturgy may be envisioned as a kind of summons to which the moral life is an answer.

The structure of call and response, which is central to correlational theology, functions here as the basis of the linkage between liturgy and ethics. Like the correlationists, writers who belong to this category envision their theological task as facilitating an ongoing encounter between the content of human experience (the call or the question) and the truth of the Christian message (the response or the answer). That dialogical dynamic is applied to the relationship between liturgy and ethics. Lived human experience poses questions, questions of ultimate meaning and questions of morals, which are answered in the Christian message of salvation, embodied and realized through liturgy. Liturgy therefore tells the Christian individual and the community something that bears upon personal conduct and social arrangements. It imparts an ethical message that demands to be heard and put into action in a way of life. In that regard, ethics comes about as a kind of answer in itself, a response to the liturgical summons or act of commission.[66] But the relationship is not unidirectional. Just as liturgy informs the shape of life, so the experience of life should inform our understanding of the meanings enacted

[66] I am conscious here of the resonances that exist with two other sibling traditions: revisionist moral theology and responsibility ethics. See, for example, Bernard Häring, *The Law of Christ: Moral Theology for Priests and Laity*, *Volume 1*, trans. by Edwin G. Kaiser, C.PP.S. (Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1964); and H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Responsible Self: An Essay in Christian Moral Philosophy* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999).

in liturgy. The human subject stands at the center of a hermeneutical circle in which the "text" of liturgy and the horizon of lived experience continually interact. The result is a view of liturgy as a source of moral wisdom and of morality as an extension of the liturgical.

This fits well with a sacramentalist theology, which envisions the sacraments as the ritual embodiment of extra-liturgical grace: a ceremonial expression of the broader sacramental principle. From a correlationist perspective, the sacramental or liturgical act is indeed the ritual specification of the Christian experience of grace that permeates daily existence. It is the formalized answer to what daily life is all about, a decisive concretization of the human experience of grace. Likewise, daily life appears to comprise an extension of grace that is experienced in the sacraments; liturgical grace demands to be embodied in moral living. Thus, a broad notion of sacramentality could well serve as the umbrella under which liturgy and ethics are understood to work in correlational continuity.

The essence of the correlational method, however, is not to be found in the principle of sacramentality but in its dialogical structure, which I have described. The content of the models that I am developing in this chapter is not substantively theological but rather methodological. Sacramentalism is not a necessary theological backdrop to the correlational model, and in fact it can be found also among pedagogical approaches. Hence my critical comments in relation to the correlational method, which I will put forward shortly, will not merely restate my critique of sacramentalism but voice instead certain concerns at the level of method.

For now, I will reference several examples of the correlational method at work, in order to provide the clearest sense of what this model consists in. A large number of Christian writers and traditions of thought belong to this methodological family. I can mention only a few, to give a sense of the ubiquity of the correlational approach, and then substantiate this framework more strongly by returning to the work of Louis-Marie Chauvet.

2.2.1 Major Examples of the Correlational Method

It is intriguing that, when it comes to liturgy and ethics, correlational thinkers tend usually to be Catholic. An outstanding example is found in the work of Latin American liberation theologians.[67] Gustavo Gutierrez writes of the Eucharist, in the context of the struggle for liberation, that to share in the Lord's Supper is the first task of the church: the celebration of God's saving action in Jesus Christ through memorial and thanksgiving. In this meal, he writes, is the sign of human fellowship to which human action must aspire, a fellowship rooted ultimately in the fellowship of God's people with their God:

> The basis for fellowship is full communion with the persons of the Trinity. The bond which unites God and humanity is celebrated – that is, effectively recalled and proclaimed – in the Eucharist. Without a real commitment against exploitation and alienation and for a society of solidarity and justice, the

[67] See, for additional examples, Juan Luis Segundo, *The Sacraments Today*, trans. John Drury (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1974); and Leonardo Boff, *Sacraments of Life, Life of the Sacraments*, trans. John Drury (Washington: Pastoral, 1987).

> Eucharistic celebration is an empty action, lacking any genuine endorsement by those who participate in it.[68]

Eucharistic liturgy implies an ethic of liberation because it presupposes the joyful acceptance of the meaning of Jesus Christ: the giving of self and the restoration of human fellowship. Indeed, human fellowship itself is encoded in the form of the liturgy itself as a meal. To partake of the eucharistic banquet without a corresponding commitment to the kind of community it implies is to miss its core meaning and introduce a wrongful duality into Christian life.

Victor Codina, a Bolivian Jesuit and liberation theologian, confirms this basic connection in his chapter on the sacraments in *Mysterium Liberationis*, the compendium of key ideas from liberation theology edited by Ignacio Ellacuría and Jon Sobrino.[69] At the start of the chapter, Codina attributes the hesitancy among liberation theologians to develop a sustained theology of the sacraments to the historical alienation of the people from liturgy, a result of clerical elitism and the preoccupation of classical liturgical theology with sacramental efficacy. For a liberation theology of the sacraments to go forward, he says, there must exist a corresponding liberating sacramental praxis.[70] That praxis and the theology that emerges from it will be founded in an understanding of the sacraments within the mission of the church as the sacrament of the Kingdom of God. The sacraments are the symbolic, celebratory expression of the Kingdom, which

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[68] Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2000), 148-150.
[69] Victor Codina, "Sacraments," in Ignacio Ellacuría and Jon Sobrino, eds., *Mysterium Liberationis: Fundamental Concepts of Liberation Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993), 653-676.
[70] Ibid., 660.

anticipate the fullness of God's liberation and orient the church and its members to their fundamentally liberatory mission. The seven sacraments come into focus in a way entirely distinct from existing theological approaches:

> If classical theology tried to justify them by linking them to the institutional acts of the historical Jesus, and modern sacramentality has considered them as the constitutive moments of the church as proto-sacrament, the theology of liberation places them in the context of the Kingdom: they are privileged steps on the way from death to life, and they orient our life to the service of the Kingdom in the key moments of our existence. They are prophetic symbols of the Kingdom with respect to liberation from all that oppresses the person and society. Rather than drawing a priori deductions, the theology of liberation tries to show that the sacraments of the church are oriented to the Kingdom and reveal the great contents of the Kingdom: mercy, life, justice, liberation, gratuitousness, solidarity, hope, community.[71]

The vision of the sacraments in liberation theology is intrinsically ethical. The sacraments orient the Christian to the praxis of liberation, and they are authenticated by this praxis. Liturgy and ethics, or the sacraments and the work of liberation, are correlated as parallel moments in the mission of the church as the sacrament of the Kingdom of God.

This kind of theological analysis, which reads the liturgy for what it has to say about human conduct and the social order, is quintessentially correlational. The liturgy embodies or enacts a moral message, a call that is presupposed by its innermost theological content and demands a response in one's way of life. This inaugurates a

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[71] Ibid., 669-670.

symbolic continuity between liturgy and ethics, a transferability of meanings that unfolds dialogically.

Mark Searle, one of the foremost writers on the subject in North America, articulated over the course of his career a similar understanding of the bond between liturgy and ethics. The liturgy, he believed, was in essence a "communications event" in which the actions of those participating expressed a fundamental meaning.[72] Putting aside the Thomistic distinction between the essential components of the sacraments and their ceremonial trappings, Searle envisions the whole liturgical act as a living metaphor, a practice that speaks and that therefore demands interpretation.[73] Above all, however, he invites Christians to ask how the meanings encoded in liturgy inform the way we live. This question leads Searle to investigate the pedagogical dimension of liturgy, but in light of his primary hermeneutics of liturgy, his focus remains on the meanings or values enacted through the liturgical celebration.[74] As Searle himself phrases it, "The liturgy provides a model or ideal in the light of which all human justice is judged and all mere lip service to God is itself denounced as injustice." Just as, for Codina, the liturgy unfolds the values of the Kingdom, so for Searle does it unfold the principle of social justice, which serves as the rule and standard of Christian living.

In Catholic moral theology, the celebrated writer Bernard Häring also put the

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[72] A helpful overview of Searle's career and major essays is available in Koester, Anna Y., and Barbara Searle, eds. *Visions: The Scholarly Contributions of Mark Searle to Liturgical Renewal* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2004).
[73] Mark Searle, "Liturgy as Metaphor" (1981), in *Visions: The Scholarly Contributions of Mark Searle to Liturgical Renewal* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2004), 27-48.
[74] Mark Searle, "The Pedagogical Function of the Liturgy, in *Visions: The Scholarly Contributions of Mark Searle to Liturgical Renewal* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2004), 52-77.

correlational method to work. In her excellent book on Häring's approach to sacraments and ethics, Kathleen Cahalan credits him as the first to integrate the tenets of the liturgical movement into moral theology.[75] Indeed, as part of his major work, *The Law of Christ*, Häring takes up precisely the question of a connection between the sacraments and ethics, looking also to the virtue of religion in Aquinas. Placing that virtue at the center of moral theology, he concludes that in religious activity and especially in the seven sacraments, human beings encounter the gracious self-communication of God and enact a response. That response begins in formal acts of worship, but the call of God in Christ demands for it to extend to every area of our lives.[76]

Häring develops this idea more fully in *The Sacraments in a Secular Age*, where the dialogical structure of the sacraments grounds his moral theology. The presence of God's call and our response in the sacraments is mirrored throughout life, where every event and opportunity is received as a gift from God, requiring a worshipful response. [77] In that respect, the sacraments as means of worship might be said to anticipate and inaugurate the moral life, directing human beings to what Häring calls the "social worship" of Christianity:

> The sacraments ordain us to a *social worship* because we have become "a kingdom of priests, a holy nation" (Ex 19:6; cf. 1 Pt 2:9). Through the grace and

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[75] Kathleen A. Cahalan, *Formed in the Image of Christ: The Sacramental-Moral Theology of Bernard Häring* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2004), 13.
[76] Bernard Häring, *The Law of Christ*, vol. 2, trans. Edwin G. Kaiser (Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1963), 125-127.
[77] Bernard Häring, *The Sacraments in a Secular Age: A Vision in Depth on Sacramentality and its Impact on Moral Life* (Slough: St. Paul Publications, 1976), 106. See also, ibid., *The Sacraments and Your Everyday Life* (Liguori, MO: Liguori Publications, 1976).

> mandate of the sacraments, we are instructed in and enabled to carry out the mission of ordaining our whole social life in a way that gives praise to the grace and glory of God.[78]

The link between liturgy and ethics for Häring consists in the correlation of God's call, encountered in a special way through the sacraments, and the human response that mirrors, extends, and authenticates the call in the sphere of social action.

With Häring, then, we find a clear vision of the structure of call and response, which I have said is the defining mark of the correlational method. A more theoretically developed version of the structure is found in the work of the celebrated sacramental theologian Louis-Marie Chauvet, whose work achieves arguably the best and most nuanced correlational interpretation of the relation between liturgy and ethics. Indeed, I take Chauvet's work as the most compelling demonstration of what the correlational method is able to achieve.

There are several ways in which Chauvet describes the connection between the sacraments and ethics.[79] In his general theoretical discussion of Christian identity and the symbolic structure, he associates "ethics" with the anthropological category of action and defines it specifically as a form of *testimony* to the gospel. Chauvet ties "sacrament," in

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[78] Häring, *The Sacraments in a Secular Age*, 163-164. Emphasis original.

[79] Louis-Marie Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1995)**.** See also, Ibid., *The Sacraments: the Word of God at the Mercy of the Body*, trans. Madeleine Beaumont (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2001). I am guided in my reading of Chauvet on this subject by Timothy M. Brunk, *Liturgy and Life: The Unity of the Sacraments and Ethics in the Theology of Louis-Marie Chauvet* (New York: Peter Lang, 2007). See also, Benjamin Durheim, *Christ's Gift, Our Response: Martin Luther and Louis-Marie Chauvet on the Connection between Sacraments and Ethics* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2015).

turn, to the anthropological category of gratitude and defines it as a form of ritual *remembrance*.[80] However, when he correlates these two elements of the Christian symbolic order, their meaning acquires greater nuance.

The sacramental expression of gratitude actually gives rise to ethics, not just in its proper mode of testimony but also specifically as *thanksgiving*. In fact, the Christian life of faith and love is a spiritual offering made in thanksgiving that extends the sacramental offering. The goodness of daily life is the realization of the liturgical act.[81] For this reason, Chauvet wishes to speak of ethics as a *response* to the grace that is offered in the sacraments and hence as the 'veri-fication' or confirmation of what is enacted and experienced in the liturgy. For Chauvet, this idea is linked, on the one hand, to the religious logic of Judaism, according to which the grateful remembrance of God's liberating action in history translates into an ethical responsibility to embody the generosity of God in history. It is also linked, on the other hand, to the Christian experience of the resurrection as the revelation of God's immense generosity, which can only authentically be accepted when it is allowed to sanctify daily life and to transform our way of living into that which is in Christ.[82]

When Chauvet develops his thesis under the theoretical frame of symbolic exchange, the correlation just described is rendered in the language of gift and return-gift. Sacramental action is the reception of the divine self-gift, proclaimed through the scriptures as God's initiative in history and received in the mode of the present as the eucharistic body of Christ. But in order for the reception of that gift to be 'veri-fied,' to

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[80] Louis-Marie Chauvet, *The Sacraments*, 29-31.
[81] Ibid., 65.
[82] Ibid, 62-63.

be received as pure gift and not as a kind of object or commodity, it must paradoxically be relinquished. The sacraments, as the ritual embodiment of grace received, are precisely to that extent an act of offering, a letting-go so that we might inherit the gift of the other: "those who lose their life for my sake will find it."[83] The sign of genuine reception, moreover, exceeds the boundaries of the liturgical act itself. It is finally the return-gift of living in grace, acting with mercy and justice in communion with brothers and sisters in Christ, which is the ultimate goal and verification of the entire sacramental economy.[84]

2.2.2 Central Insights and Initial Critiques of the Correlational Method

It is important not to oversimplify Chauvet's joining of sacraments and ethics under the framework of gift and return-gift. Within the sacraments, he identifies both the gift of a grace and the human response, giving them an ethical quality even before that response is extended into the practice of everyday life. Likewise, within the practice of everyday life, Chauvet identifies both the human response to grace and the basic experience of grace, giving it a sacramental character even beyond the formal context of liturgy. The correlation then is not between two isolated spheres of action but between two always already interrelated elements of Christian experience and identity.

This enables us to appreciate the central insight of the correlational model. God's sanctifying grace, mediated in liturgy, exists in *essential continuity* with ordinary experience. Liturgy and ethics are connected from the beginning: they evoke, imply, and

[83] Matthew 16: 25.
[84] Chauvet, *The Sacraments*, 144-145.

inform one another. For this reason, Christian worship can serve as a summons to holiness, which defines the whole of life, and as a reminder of what we must value most. Sacramental liturgy embodies the whole truth of the Christian witness. It is an ethical text, with something to teach us, that invites us to make it new again and again. Liturgy is a ceaseless invitation to grow in holiness.

But the correlational model has limitations as well. First, taken on its own, correlation risks reducing the liturgy to a placeholder for the Christian message. It makes the liturgy into a kind of Christian moral primer or ethical summons but gives limited attention to the special priority of liturgy within Christian life. The meaning of liturgy, for the correlationist, need not go beyond the role of liturgy as the ceremonial expression of Christian ethical values or theological understandings. We have only an iteration of an otherwise accessible message, leaving liturgy or worship without any intrinsic rationale. Second, the values encoded in liturgy, according to the correlationist approach, do not deal substantively with the complexities of the moral life they are supposed to inform. To say that Christian liturgy requires a corresponding commitment to human fellowship or social justice does not prepare the individual Christian or the Christian community for the actual work of personal and social change. Liturgy is informative but not transformative. In my view, the worship of God in liturgy ought in some way to shape and animate the ethical life, not just describe or summon it.

How does liturgy actually give rise to the moral life and prepare Christians to navigate its complex terrain? As we have seen, the correlational model produces a formal account, reducible to something like the following claim: the liturgy calls forth or implies morality. The pedagogical model takes for granted this kind of correlation between

liturgy and life, but it offers in addition an account of how liturgy itself changes the Christian subject in community. Liturgy is a training ground for the life of discipleship. It shapes its participants to live responsively before the grace of God.

2.3 THE PEDAGOGICAL MODEL: LITURGY AS ETHICAL PRACTICE

The central argument of the pedagogical model is that the connection between liturgy and ethics is rooted in moral formation through worship. Like any human practice, liturgical worship shapes our moral subjectivity. It imparts or habituates the virtues, skills, attitudes, or dispositions that define the community to which the practice belongs. We are trained by liturgy into a Christian way of seeing and way of being. There is, therefore, not just symbolic or semantic continuity between liturgy and ethics but also substantive, material continuity.

At the level of ethical theory, the pedagogical model has roots in the work of Alasdair MacIntyre, whose famous book *After Virtue* and subsequent writings propose a return to virtue ethics as the basis of moral discourse and an analysis of practices as constitutive of community and its norms. The adoption of "practice" as its governing anthropological lens is the defining feature of the pedagogical approach. According to MacIntyre,

> [A practice is] any coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity through which goods internal to that form of activity are realised in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to, and partially definitive of that form of activity, with the result that human powers to achieve excellence, and human conceptions to the ends and

goods involved, are systematically extended.[85]

To speak of liturgy as a practice, then, is to draw attention to the values embedded in this special kind of activity – values that define the meaning of excellence for the community to whom liturgy belongs – and to acknowledge the ways in which liturgical practice itself empowers participants to achieve excellence so defined.

Like correlationists, writers who subscribe to the pedagogical approach find in liturgy a source of Christian moral values. However, the idea of practice enables one to ask whether liturgy is not just ethically informative but also transformative. In a certain sense, this is a natural extension of the liturgical hermeneutics at work in the correlational model. The liturgy is an ethical text, a source of moral wisdom that interacts ongoingly with the horizon of Christian experience, so that worship and morality clarify and inform one another. Interpretation of the ethical text is not, however, a purely conceptual exercise. Especially in the case of liturgy, interpretation is an embodied practice in which the identity of the interpreter and her community are always already implicated. The ethical text is simultaneously an ethical practice. And it is not only ethical discourse shaped by this practice but also the character of the practicing community and its members.

Among Christian thinkers, and especially Protestant writers on the subject, there has been a surge of interest not only in liturgy but also in the whole range of practices that shape moral identity. Although my present focus is on liturgy specifically, and ultimately on the Eucharist, it is impossible to isolate this element within the complex, continuous fabric of Christian practice. In the following section, I examine three trends

[85] MacIntyre, 187.

within the pedagogical approach. The question of interest is *how* liturgical practice forms Christian moral subjectivity.

2.3.1 Major Examples of the Pedagogical Method

I will begin with the practical theological approach spearheaded by Craig Dykstra and Dorothy Bass. According to their definition, Christian practices are "things Christian people do together over time in response to and in light of God's active presence for the life of the world in Christ Jesus."[86] They are the constitutive elements of a distinctively Christian way of life abundant, attuned to the grace of God and responsive to its demands. Importantly, that responsivity is realized not only in a posture of thanksgiving for the redemptive work of God in creation but also in ways of acting that address fundamental human needs and conditions. The theological dimension of Christian practices entails immediately the normative dimension. In our Christian practices, we not only recognize but also "cooperate with God in addressing the needs of one another and creation."[87]

Along with several colleagues, Dykstra and Bass explore twelve practices, directed at basic human needs, in which Christians engage in response to what God is doing in the world: honoring the body, hospitality, household economics, saying yes and

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[86] Craig Dykstra and Dorothy C. Bass, "Times of Yearning, Practices of Faith," in *Practicing Our Faith: A Way of Life for a Searching People* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2010), 1-12. Cited here, 5.

[87] Craig Dykstra and Dorothy C. Bass, "A Theological Understanding of Christian Practices," in *Practicing Theology: Beliefs and Practices in Christian Life*, ed. Miroslav Wolf and Dorothy C. Bass (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2002), 13-32. Cited here, 22.

no, keeping the Sabbath, testimony, discernment, shaping communities, forgiveness, healing, dying well, and singing our lives.[88]

Within this web of embodied activities, liturgy features in two ways. First, liturgy is a special expression of the Christian practices listed above.[89] It is the communal embodiment through ritual means of those larger practices that texture "Christian life abundant," and indeed it expresses the understandings and commitments embedded within the Christian way of life as a whole. Second, liturgy belongs within the "master practice" of worship. Worship is what we do together in church, but it is also the purpose of the entire Christian life.[90] From that point of view, liturgy is really the summation of all Christian practices, crystallizing the whole of Christian activity and "sketching the contours of a whole new life."[91]

The pedagogical dimension of Christian practices resides, for Dykstra and Bass, in their guiding us more deeply into knowledge of God and creation. Repeated engagement in the practices of our tradition enables us to understand ourselves and our world as given by God, subject to his saving work, and destined to flourish in him. This practically acquired knowledge entails both a deeper understanding of the Triune God and a deeper understanding of humanity, its needs, and how we can best respond:

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[88] Dykstra and Bass, "Times of Yearning," 6. See also the table of contents. The trend that I am describing is carried forward by many of the contributors to this volume, notably Amy Plantinga Pauw and L. Gregory Jones.
[89] Dykstra and Bass, "A Theological Understanding of Christian Practices," 19.
[90] Dorothy C. Bass, "What is Christian Practice?," from the website *Practicing Our Faith*, March 2004, http://practicingourfaith.org/what-christian-practice.
[91] Dykstra and Bass, "Practicing Theology," 30-1. The authors use this language here specifically with reference to the sacrament of Baptism.

> The content of each practice challenges, lures, and sometimes drags its practitioners into new ways of being and knowing that are commensurate with that practice – and thus, if it is rightly attuned, commensurate with the well-being of creation. Living within such a practice gives men and women certain capacities that enable them to read the world differently – even, we would argue, more truly.[92]

Liturgy, as constitutive of the "master practice" of worship, functions in this view as a privileged center of our learning to see the world as God's gift and our acquiring the dispositions and capacities to cooperate with God in making it new.

A second major trend within the pedagogical approach is typified by the work of Stanley Hauerwas, who espouses a method that has come to be known as narrative ethics.[93] Drawing not only on MacIntyre's definition of practice but also on his association of practices with the formative influence of narrative, Hauerwas was among the earliest Christian ethicists to systematically examine the relationship between liturgy and moral identity.[94] His work has led him to propose, along with other virtue ethicists, a rejection of "quandary ethics" and a return to an ethics of character.

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[92] Ibid., 25.

[93] I should mention the indebtedness of narrative ethics to the larger field of narrative theology, sometimes called postliberal theology, which was based mainly on the works of George Lindbeck and Hans Frei in the Yale School. For a sampling of essays in this field, see Stanley Hauerwas and L. Gregory Jones, eds., *Why Narrative? Readings in Narrative Theology* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1997).

[94] See especially Stanley Hauerwas, *A Community of Character: Toward a Constructive Christian Social Ethic* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981); *The Peaceable Kingdom: A Primer in Christian Ethics* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983); and *Character and Christian Life: A Study in Theological Ethics*, 3rd edition (Trinity University Press, 1985).

The essence of Hauerwas's influential contribution lies in his integration of the philosophical categories of narrative and virtue with Christian doctrines about the shape and meaning of human life, including justification and sanctification. He does this specifically within the context of worship, where the moral formation of individuals and communities are co-implicated in the performance of the Christian story. By participation in the liturgical enactment of salvation history, Christian persons and communities integrate their own story, in all its historical specificity and with all its ambiguities, into the biblical story of faith. This forces a choice among the variety of conflicting values and roles that characterize one's individual life, and through faithful repetition, it facilitates the formation of virtues that enable a person to achieve a unity of self.[95]

For Hauerwas, liturgy shapes character through the embodiment of the Christian narrative. In the negotiation between that story and the story of one's own life and circumstances, a new and unified self begins to emerge. To speak of the virtues, from this standpoint, is to point to those qualities of character, including skills, habits, and dispositions, that are narrative-dependent. The virtues that we acquire in the context of liturgy enable self-possession and genuine participation in the story of God's saving work. Many thinkers from diverse backgrounds have followed Hauerwas in theorizing liturgical formation, and even when not directly indebted to his work, have proposed similar accounts. I can name only a few examples to provide a sense of the field.

William Spohn argues for a link between liturgy, character, and everyday life through the idea of the analogical imagination.[96] Samuel Wells adopts a dramaturgical

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[95] Hauerwas, *Community of Character*, 123.
[96] Spohn, especially chapters 2 and 3.

lens and suggests that liturgy trains us in a certain skill for moral improvisation.[97] The liturgist Gordon Lathrop imagines the eucharistic liturgy as a sort of map that allows Christians to orient themselves in the world, and in fact it reconstitutes the world for us, determining our way of seeing and providing a moral sense of location.[98] The Catholic theologian Paul Wadell draws on the notion of story and underscores the centrality of liturgical remembrance. He further sees the formative influence of worship in terms of an analogy to learning a new language.[99] Drawing on an Augustinian anthropology, refracted through Heidegger, the Christian philosopher James K.A. Smith develops an impressive account of liturgy as a practice that shapes human desires. Human beings are teleological animals, and in the various kinds of "liturgies" that compose human life, we acquire a noncognitive and prereflective attunement to the world. This consists of an implicit vision of the good life, and it is apprehended affectively as a pattern of desire. Christian liturgy, argues Smith, enables us to desire the kingdom of God.[100] Finally, Don Saliers, one of the most celebrated thinkers on the connection between liturgy and ethics, augments Hauerwas's approach with a greater emphasis on human affectivity. He states his central thesis:

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[97] Samuel Wells, *Improvisation: The Drama of Christian Ethics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2004).
[98] Gordon W. Lathrop, *Holy Ground: A Liturgical Cosmology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003).
[99] Paul Wadell, "Worshipping Dangerously: The Risky Business of Becoming Friends with God," in *Becoming Friends: Worship, Justice, and the Practice of Christian Friendship* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2002).
[100] James K.A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 2009), see especially chapters 1 and 4.

> The relations between liturgy and ethics are most adequately formulated by specifying how certain affections and virtues are formed and expressed in the modalities of communal prayer and ritual action. These modalities of prayer enter into the formation of the self in community.[101]

This argument leads Saliers to perform an analysis of specific Christian ritual practices. His attention to the embodied particularity of liturgical behaviors rings a note of hope for the future of the field. It parallels, in my opinion, the latest moves in Catholic circles to apply serious theological thinking beyond the limits of "general sacramental theology," and to attend more carefully the sacraments themselves.[102]

The third and final major trend that I wish to identify endorses the turn to the affections, which I have just mentioned, and moves to theorize liturgical pedagogy more deliberately in light of human embodiment. Patricia B. Jung's critique of Hauerwas regarding his view of sanctification lays bare some important distinctions at stake in this conversation.[103] How exactly does liturgy shape us, or what precisely does it shape?

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[101] Don E. Saliers, "Liturgy and Ethics: Some New Beginnings," in *Liturgy and the Moral Self: Humanity at Full Stretch Before God: Essays in Honor of Don Saliers* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1998), 15-35. Cited here, 17.

[102] See, for example, William Bergin, "From Breaking Jars to Breaking Bread: Eucharist as Prophetic Act," *Worship* 89 (2015): 331-350. Also, William Bergin, O Propheticum Lavacrum: *Baptism as Symbolic Act of Eschatological Salvation* (Rome: Gregorian University, 1999). Another helpful discussion of Baptism in relation to moral formation is Jaime Vidaurrazaga, "Baptism and Christian Morality: Ritual Initiation into the Christian Community and Initiation into the Community's Morality," in *Ahme nach, was du vollziehst: Positionsbestimmungen zum Verhältnis von Liturgie und Ethik*, ed. Martin Stuflesser and Stephan Winter (Regensburg: Verlag Friedrich Pustet, 2009), 121-36. Mark Godin focuses on the Eucharist as a practice for cultivating moral attention in Mark Godin, "That the Sacrament is Always There: Towards a Eucharistic Ethic," *Theology & Sexuality: The Journal Of The Institute For the Study Of Christianity & Sexuality* 14, no. 1 (September 2007): 53-62.

[103] Patricia B. Jung, "Sanctification: An Interpretation in Light of Embodiment," *The Journal of Religious Ethics* 11, no. 1 (1983): 75-95.

Implicit in a variety of pedagogical approaches, including some of those we have just mentioned, is frequently an assumption that liturgy or the sacraments determine moral subjectivity principally by transforming perception. Liturgy fosters in its participants a distinctively Christian worldview, rather than transforming desires or emotions.

Jung and others insist that such an assumption neglects embodiment.[104] For her part, Jung proposes an account of sanctification that transforms human beings at the level of their embodied affections, which clarify involuntary organic needs and embodied competencies, culminating in graced consent to the limits of human finitude. M. Therese Lysaught reasons similarly that the body itself is the place at which liturgy and ethics intersect. The Eucharist, she says, inscribes its meanings on the body and produces through a program of repeated action bodies capable of distinctive actions and resistance to cultural disciplines that oppose God's vision for humanity.[105] Drawing us back to the language of virtue, psychologists Warren Brown and Brad Strawn go so far as to suggest that the formation of virtuous character through liturgical practice can be traced to specific neurological and psychological mechanisms that are in essence embodied processes.[106]

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[104] I would argue, in addition, that this emphasis on worldview or perception, which I refer to as the phenomenological mode, runs the risk of intellectualism. It is also arguably related to the excesses of an "ocular" devotion to the Eucharist, which contemporary sacramental theology cautions against.

[105] M. Therese Lysaught, "Eucharist as Basic Training: The Body as Nexus of Liturgy and Ethics," in *Theology and Lived Christianity*, ed. David M. Hammond (Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications/ Bayard, 2000), 257-86. Lysaught's argument about the Eucharist in terms of exercise recalls another classic text in this field, in which William Cavanaugh describes a eucharistic discipline that forms the church and produces bodies capable of resisting the extremes of Pinochet's regime in Chile. William T. Cavanaugh, *Torture and Eucharist: Theology, Politics, and the Body of Christ* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1998).

[106] Brad D. Strawn and Warren S. Brown, "Liturgical Animals: What Psychology and

The pedagogical dimension of Christian practices turns out to be a complex notion, and it is the subject of a still growing field. Christian liturgy, like any human social practice, shapes our beliefs, our perceptions, our desires and emotions, our dispositions, and even our skills and competencies. All of this may take place either at the level of explicit awareness or implicitly in the body. However it may be theorized, the process of moral formation is an essential element of the connection between liturgy and ethics.

2.3.2 Central Insights and Initial Critiques of the Pedagogical Method

The most basic insight of the pedagogical approach is that liturgy does not only tell us what is good or invite us to become better: it can also make us better. In this regard, the pedagogical model augments the correlational model. Besides a formal connection between liturgy and ethics there is also a material relationship. Liturgy is both an ethical text and a formative ethical practice. Such a view is helpful for at least two reasons. First, it advances the agenda of modern, postconciliar sacramental theology, which follows the turn to the subject and calls for greater attention to the human aspect of

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Neuroscience Tell Us about Formation and Worship" *Liturgy* 28, no. 4 (2013): 3-14. See also, Warren Brown and Brad Strawn, *The Physical Nature of Christian Life: Neuroscience, Psychology, and the Church* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Warren S. Brown, Michael L. Spezio, Kevin S. Reimer, James van Slyke, and Gregory Peterson, eds., *Theology of the Science of Moral Action: Virtue Ethics, Exemplarity, and Cognitive Neuroscience* (New York: Routledge, 2012); and Warren S. Brown and Kevin S. Reimer, "Religion and Embodied Cognition: Embodied Cognition, Character Formation, and Virtue," *Zygon* 48, no. 3 (2013): 843-45. For a related approach involving neuroscience, see Charlene P. E. Burns, "Hardwired for Drama? Theological Speculations on Cognitive Science, Empathy, and Moral Exemplarity," in *Theology and the Science of Moral Action: Virtue Ethics, Exemplarity, and Cognitive Neuroscience*, ed. James van Slyke et al. (New York: Routledge, 2012), 149-63.

the sacraments. To interpret liturgy as a social practice makes it possible for theologians to bring a still much-needed anthropological analysis to bear on this most central element of Christian life and practice. Second, the theoretical foregrounding of practice enables a critical posture toward liturgy, subjecting it to a moral analysis that is based not simply on the internal consistency of the liturgical rites but on the outcome of the practice for Christian character. By seeing in liturgy not merely a reiteration of Christian values but a practice that shapes moral character, we can rightly ask whether it forms character *well*. It may certainly be the case that liturgy forms Christians badly, relative even to Christian norms. In addition to liturgical virtue, it is necessary to talk about liturgical vice, as I will later in this dissertation. The pedagogical model places theologians in a strong position to engage in that important critical work.

The assets of this approach, however, also reveal its limitations. Taken on its own, the pedagogical method risks reducing liturgy to a *merely* human practice for shaping moral character. If moral pedagogy is the primary key in which the bond between liturgy and ethics is expressed, then little is needed beyond an anthropological analysis of the practice. One can simply identify the relevant Christian norms and virtues and observe how they are inculcated, successfully or not, through liturgical activity. Liturgy in that regard is analytically indistinguishable from any other morally educative practice. The only difference would seem to be its normative content, which one can assess apart from its liturgical articulation. This limits liturgy to its formational value with no attention to its theological meaning. Hardly any room exists for a robust account of sacramental grace, apart from the general notion that grace infuses virtues, and questions of Christology and ecclesiology are somewhat superfluous.

2.4 LITURGY AND ETHICS ON AN ESCHATALOGICAL HORIZON

The insights that I have pointed to in the correlational and pedagogical models are valuable, and they provide an essential set of tools. However, their limitations should lead us to ask for something more: a deeper and more explicitly theological framing of the relationship between liturgy and ethics that can incorporate existing methods. I contend that this larger theological framing will require us to ground the conversation about liturgy and ethics in eucharistic theology, and specifically in the eucharistic encounter with Jesus Christ. My purpose in proposing this return to the Eucharist is not to call for a retreat toward sacramental conservatism or to reverse the turn to the subject as the starting point of post-Vatican II sacramental theology. I take it as given that sacraments are for people: they are intelligible only in light of their reception in the world of the human. As such, any sacramental theology worthy of consideration must start from human experience, for this is where the God of our incarnational Christian faith chooses to meet us. What is most sacred takes place in what is most ordinary.

Turning our attention to eucharistic encounter does not, therefore, remove the human subject from view. Instead, it places the human subject within the most essential theological context imaginable: the context of relationship with Jesus Christ, which is the heart of salvation. In the Eucharist, that relationship is healed, nourished, and fulfilled. Indeed, to encounter Jesus Christ in the form of a shared meal of bread and wine is to experience, in a most human way, the fullness of relationship with God in him, which is our final destiny.

At its heart, then, the eucharistic experience is eschatological. Christ encounters us in the Eucharist as a promise, the Lord who is to come. He is the one whose reign is

already beginning to be realized among us, but it is not yet fully experienced. He is the one who carries within himself the fullness of human life in God, although the life of the present is still marked by sin and suffering. For those who gather around the Risen Lord, the eucharistic banquet where we meet him allows us even now to taste the heavenly banquet that is coming.

How does this eucharistic eschatological perspective inform the connection between liturgy and ethics? With that question in mind, I turn to the work of Orthodox theologian Vigen Guroian. In his essay, "Liturgy and the Lost Eschatological Vision of Christian Ethics," Guroian argues, in dialogue with Alexander Schmemann, that Christian ethics has lost the eschatological perspective that energizes Christian life and mission, and that we can retrieve it only by turning to the liturgy.[107] For Christian ethics to be Christian, and not simply a pious iteration of some other secular morality, it needs to declare the Kingdom of God and eschatological participation in the goodness of God as the end and goal of every human desire and action, the *telos* of the whole of human life. From that standpoint, Christian ethics will refuse to conflate the spiritual trajectory of human existence with moral growth or social progress. Christian identity and justice are related, but they are not identical. The transformation at which Christian life is directed and which it anticipates in hope is not an earthly perfection or a temporal peace, whether conceived privately or socially, but the newness of eternal life in God.[108]

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[107] Vigen Guroian, "Liturgy and the Lost Eschatological Vision of Christian Ethics," *Annual of the Society of Christian Ethics* 20 (2000): 227-38.
[108] Ibid., 228.

Therefore, when we approach liturgy and behold the eschaton, "the ethical is transfigured into the holiness of God."[109] This is because we ourselves are transfigured into the holiness of God by the power of the Holy Spirit. Although we may fruitfully attempt to understand that mystery and its effect on human life and society in terms of virtue and moral growth, Christian ethics in the final analysis must be about more than the production of morally good persons or a more just society. It must be about an ongoing conversion, empowered by the grace of God, that draws us through the sacraments and by the mystery of the Incarnation ever closer to fullness of our participation in the resurrected and glorified body of Christ. "God calls Christians through morality and ethics beyond morality and ethics," writes Guroian.[110] As a result, the meaning of Christian ethics is fulfilled not in the achievement of its ambitions for justice or liberation but rather in the transmutation of human goodness into the holiness of God in Christ. Christian ethics is grounded and aimed at realization of human destiny, and importantly that realization begins in the eucharistic liturgy.

This is an argument rooted in the notion of *theosis*, and to that extent it is a distinctively Orthodox contribution. Indeed, if my previous section on the pedagogical effects of the sacraments is indebted in large part to Protestant scholars, the eschatological perspective that I am calling for emerges from Orthodox thought and especially from the close association between liturgy and eschatology that defines the work of a thinkers like Schmemann. For him, liturgy realizes the purpose of human existence, bringing us sacramentally to share in the life of God. Every moment of the

[109] Ibid., 229.
[110] Ibid., 233.

eucharistic liturgy, from the little entrance to the final benediction, is replete with the symbolic enactment of this fact: that the church as the sacrament of the Risen Christ not only experiences the descent of God's grace but ascends to its final destiny in the total realization of God's Kingdom, where all share together in the inexhaustible abundance of the eschatological banquet.[111] Guroian quotes a passage in which Schmemann makes the point most strongly: "It is not 'grace' that comes down; it is the church that enters into 'grace' and grace means the new being the Kingdom, the world to come."[112]

From a Catholic standpoint, Bruce Morill has made the largest contribution toward linking the liturgy and ethics in view of this eschatological emphasis. He differs markedly from Guroian, however, insofar as he endorses rather than avoids the connection between the eschatological horizon of liturgy and a liberatory political praxis. I will return to a critical analysis of Guroian's ecclesial and liturgical ethics in the next chapter. At this stage, it will be helpful to offer a brief account of Morrill's theological project, which centers precisely on the social ramifications of liturgical worship, unfolding in a symbolic key and in light of an eschatological orientation.

Morrill's celebrated book *Anamnesis as Dangerous Memory* takes up Alexander Schmemann's work in dialogue with the writings of Johann Baptist Metz, endeavoring to build a bridge between these very different thinkers on the basis of their common interest

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[111] Alexander Schmemann, *The Eucharist: Sacrament of the Kingdom* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1988), 36.

[112] Alexander Schmemann, *For the Life of the World* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1973), 31. It may be of interest that Thomas Aquinas, in the Western tradition, conveys the same eschatological sense by distinguishing the "order of grace," which concerns sanctification or the perfection of humanity in virtue, from "the order of glory," which is the state of human beings at the beatific vision. Grace, he says, is the beginning of glory in us. *ST* II-II, Q. 24, Art. 3.

in *anamnesis*, or liturgical remembrance.[113] The alliance between Schmemann and Metz, one should note, is an unlikely one. Toward the end of his career, Schmemann was firmly opposed to most attempts to link liturgy with political or social engagement. He stressed the unity of liturgy and theology, rooted in his interpretation of Christian piety in patristic sources. Nonetheless, Morill perceives in their common emphasis on *anamnesis* a hermeneutical key to the relationship between liturgy and ethics. He performs a critical excavation of each thinker in order to achieve that synthesis.

Two key features stand out from Morrill's analysis of Metz: first, the *role of memory* as a practice that grounds social critique and social action, and second, the *eschatological point of reference* for Christian faith that is engaged in remembrance. In order to unleash an authentic Christian moral imagination as the ground of effective political praxis, the Christian subject must engage in practice of memory: a remembrance of suffering centered on the mystery of Christ and his passion, which empowers us to recall the history of suffering as the history of freedom. For Metz, this "dangerous memory" of Jesus Christ confronts us with the scandalous reality of his cross and the good news of his resurrection. As such, it provides grounds for a negative critique of those narratives and power structures that cause human suffering and for a positive hope that sustains our struggle against the forces of oppression.[114] In laying claim to each of our lives, the *memoria Iesu Christi* thrusts Christians toward freedom. This is not a purely individual freedom. It is a socially transformative reality:

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[113] Bruce T. Morill, S.J., *Anamnesis as Dangerous Memory: Political and Liturgical Theology in Dialogue* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2000).
[114] Ibid., 30.

> […] a promise in which believers understand their freedom as related to the future freedom for all, which requires first, that they consider the promise of salvation not in terms of their individual personal histories but in terms of all of human history, that their belief in that promise fashion a life of solidarity with those now threatened by deadly oppression.[115]

Like the memory that motivates and shapes it, Christian political praxis is thus eschatologically oriented: it is directed at the divine promise of freedom that is remembered in the passion and resurrection of Christ and extended to embrace all of history and humanity. The liberatory praxis that emerges from this remembrance is deeply apocalyptic. It consists in a posture of imminent expectation of the freedom that God has promised and a desire to realize it in history.

On the basis of this reasoning, Morrill asks a pointed question of Metz: how precisely do the eschatological-apocalyptic narratives that are recalled in the Christian imagination motivate such social solidarity? How does memory bring about social action? While acknowledging the importance of prayer, Morrill turns to liturgy. Extrapolating from a few references in Metz, he gestures toward an understanding of Christian liturgical worship, in all its symbolic and ritual depth, as the medium that activates the narratives that constitute dangerous memory. Liturgy is essentially the remembrance of suffering and hope that provides the foundation for Christian moral imagination and political praxis.

In order to develop a deeper understanding of this liturgical remembrance, Morill turns to Schmemann. There are two elements of Schmemann's thought that Morrill

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[115] Ibid., 33.

considers especially useful: his theological understanding of the eucharistic liturgy as a *commemorative practice* that by recalling God's salvific acts in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus *also anticipates final deliverance of the world*, and his interpretation of Christian liturgical experience in the terms of *evangelical joy and gratitude*. In relation to the first element, Morrill references Schmemann's illustrative language of ascension wherein the people gathered at table are raised to participate in the heavenly banquet. The liturgy as consisting in a practice of remembrance becomes the site for the manifestation of a realized eschatology, the fundamental experience of faith in which a definitive apprehension of our life in Christ changes our life in the world.[116] The second element relates to sacrificial love. The supernatural joy and gratitude that emerge from the experience of liturgy as a feast of sharing in the life of God come to be expressed in an attitude of self-sacrificing love amidst the adversities of the present world.[117] Does either of these options for articulating the ethical impact of liturgy succeed? Morrill appears to believe that they move in the right direction, but missing from Schmemann's theology is a substantive account of what the ethical life lived in light of the liturgical reality actually looks like and an account of the ways in which ritual memory actually shapes ethical dispositions.

Morrill is unwilling to let Schmemann off the hook. Schmemann's largely ahistorical and abstract symbolic assurances will not do. For Morill, Christians require a stronger account of "how the communal experience in the eucharistic liturgy, the 'realized anticipation' of the kingdom, can indeed convert its participants not just to

[116] Ibid., 113.
[117] Ibid., 121.

(individual) self-responsibility but to forms of praxis in (social-political) solidarity with others."[118]

The final step, therefore, is to place the idea of memory front and center and to determine if *anamnesis* can really do the work of linking liturgy and ethics. Both Metz and Schmemann locate the essence of faith in the remembrance of Christ's death and resurrection, and both argue that this remembrance must be the controlling factor not only for Christian theology but also for Christian praxis. Still needed, however, is an analysis of memory that shows its relationship to moral subjectivity. Diving into a series of biblical and historical analyses, Morrill surfaces a variety of characteristics belonging to eucharistic *anamnesis*: its noetic quality, its relation to other forms of ritual remembrance, its Jewish symbolic heritage and covenantal context, its interruptive character in time, and its personal element. Morill concludes: "A vision for praxis in the world comes from the joy and confidence experienced in the liturgical remembrance of Jesus, who proclaimed and enacted a kingdom of God, which in this world and its history is ever a seed awaiting the full yield of its eschatological harvest."[119]

Liturgy changes us morally – it gives new meaning to our lives and a new shape to our behavior – because as a practice of remembrance it activates the living presence of Jesus, his life and his passion, which propels us forward in an anticipatory experience of the kingdom of God, the transformative reality which orients and renews every facet of human existence. In his other works, Morill explores this transformative power of liturgy in theoretical detail. He especially stresses the role of the body, the theological

[118] Ibid., 131.
[119] Ibid., 186.

importance of pneumatology, and the covenantal context of liturgy and ethics, which points to the work of holiness and social transformation as belonging to the divine-human transaction typified in liturgy.[120]

In the following chapters, I take for granted the eschatological backdrop of liturgy and ethics, which overcomes the tendency of the correlational and pedagogical approaches to limit liturgy to its anthropological functions. Attention to eucharistic theology and to eschatology enables us to appreciate the ever-receding and ever-inviting goal of Christian ethics, which is nothing less than human participation in the holiness of God. But like Morill, I do not believe that this unapologetically theological framing absolves Christian thinkers from engaging in the ethical task. What does this kind of ethics actually look like? Does it eschew programs for social change in light of an inscrutable *telos* beyond historical time? Or does it enable us to live more truthfully within time, to turn our efforts to the work of love and justice and liberation? These questions point to the central issue of the next chapter: how eschatology might inform ethics. This is the question to which I now turn, in the hope that the language of virtue can help us to theorize this eucharistic ethics.

[120] Bruce T. Morill, S.J., "The Many Bodies of Worship: Locating the Spirit's Work," in *Bodies of Worship: Explorations in Theory and Practice* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2000), 19-50.

3.0 CHAPTER 3 – ESCHATOLOGY AND ETHICS: PROPOSING A TURN TO VIRTUE

In January 1982, the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches, while meeting in Lima, adopted the significant ecumenical document, "Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry," which outlined a remarkable convergence in theological understanding among Catholics, Anglicans, Orthodox, and Protestants. Regarding the Eucharist in particular, the document states:

> The eucharist is essentially the sacrament of the gift which God makes to us in Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. Every Christian receives this gift of salvation through communion in the body and blood of Christ. In the eucharistic meal, in the eating and drinking of the bread and wine, Christ grants communion with himself. God himself acts, giving life to the body of Christ and renewing each member. In accordance with Christ's promise, each baptized member of the body of Christ receives in the eucharist the assurance of the forgiveness of sins (Matt. 26:28) and the pledge of eternal life (Jn. 6:51-58).[121]

On the basis of this vision of the Eucharist as the salvation of God offered in communion with the body and blood of Christ, the document goes on to specify its five essential aspects. The Eucharist, in ecumenical perspective, consists in: (1) Thanksgiving to the Father, (2) Memorial of the Son, (3) Invocation of the Holy Spirit, (4) Communion of the Faithful, and (5) Meal of the Kingdom.

Besides a formal account of the elements present in eucharistic praying, these five aspects provide a framework for eucharistic theology. Each of the headings is

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[121] Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches, "Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry" (Lima, 1982), 8.

interconnected with the others. To celebrate the Eucharist is fundamentally an act of thanksgiving to the Father, born out of the basic human response to the divine initiative. Eucharist thanksgiving emerges from the original human posture of gratitude before the unspeakable generosity of grace. Such gratitude, however, is necessarily expressed in the key of remembrance: the remembrance of what God has done for creation and for God's people in history, culminating in the saving work of Jesus Christ. The heart of eucharistic remembrance is therefore memorial of the Son. Moreover, our confidence in God's grace and fidelity, rooted in the communal remembering of a God who keeps his promises, empowers us to ask again and again for his blessings. Always already in need of grace, and confident that God will continue to act as God has acted, we invoke the Spirit of God to bless us and to bless what we offer in thanks to God. In that act of invocation and blessing, we discover that we are sanctified not as isolated individuals but as one body, a communion of the faithful. We are gathered together as one in Christ, and we encounter ourselves now not only as a people giving thanks but as the gift itself, received and returned to God. Therefore, we are destined for God: brought through grace to glory, where we will share in the abundance of the divine life, the meal of the kingdom.

The trajectory of eucharistic theology, as I argued at the end of the last chapter, is therefore essentially eschatological. The presence of the Trinitarian mystery in the Eucharist – the presence of the gracious God whom we encounter in thanksgiving, memorial, and invocation – gathers us into communion in Christ so that we may partake of the inexhaustible banquet of the divine life itself. It is for this very reason, as Vigen Guroian has said, that any account of ethics rooted in liturgy must acknowledge that the goal of human striving is nothing less than human participation in the holiness of God.

Where does that leave us in the constructive project of connecting liturgy and ethics through attention to eucharistic theology? The first challenge of this project, it seems to me, is to examine precisely *how* eschatology might inform ethics. For if the correlational and pedagogical models require expansion through eucharistic theological reflection, and eschatology is at the heart of what Eucharist means, then eschatological claims have some heavy lifting to do. What does Christian eschatology have to do with Christian ethics? In this chapter, I will attempt to answer that question first by examining more closely the views of Schmemann and Guroian, and subsequently by proposing a turn to virtue ethics. If my instincts are correct, virtue theory provides a set of tools uniquely suited to linking the concrete questions of moral existence to eucharistic theology. As such, I intend to spend some time reviewing the essential claims of virtue ethics, stressing heuristic dimensions of virtue theory that I think have been underemphasized, and finally I will propose the rudiments of an account of what "liturgical virtue" might looks like, grounded in eucharistic theology and contemporary theological ethics.

3.1 ALEXANDER SCHMEMANN: LITURGY AND CHRISTIAN IDENTITY

Often it is liturgical theologians, rather than theological ethicists, who grapple most directly with the question of the relationship between eschatology and ethics. Alexander Schmemann, whose work I have referenced previously, is a key example. A Russian immigrant, priest, and theologian of the Orthodox Church in America, Schmemann spent the better part of his career as a professor and dean at St. Vladimir's Orthodox Seminary in New York. Although he is sometimes remembered as a

conservative, his writings disclose the mind of a theological reformer, struggling against clericalism and critical of so-called "traditionalist" obsession with the superficialities of liturgical observance.[122]

The greatest contribution that Schmemann made to theological discourse in the twentieth century consisted in his vision of liturgy as the primary source of the church's life and identity, and therefore its mission. Liturgy, he believed, is the birthplace of the church and its native tongue. It cannot be reduced simply to an activity of the church, alongside many others, or seen merely as the "ritual" expression of some prior reality. To use the memorable phrase of Aidan Kavanagh, it is fair to say that for Schmemann, liturgy is *theologia prima*.[123] It is the primary articulation of the church's faith, and precisely as such, it is the unique mode of God's presence for his people and the means whereby God lifts us to participate in the glory of the divine life.[124]

Along with a distinctively eucharistic ecclesiology, this prioritization of liturgy in the life of the church resulted for Schmemann in a fundamental orientation to action. The church receives and embodies its identity in liturgical celebration: in the eucharistic mystery, the people of God ascend to the heavenly banquet and become, in history, the church, which is the sacrament of the Kingdom of God. In that regard, the church is the fullness of God experienced in history. But this identity is perpetually deferred toward the

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[122] Michael Plekon, "The Liturgy of Life: Alexander Schmemann," *Religions* 7, 127 (2016).
[123] Aidan Kavanagh, *On Liturgical Theology* (New York: Pueblo, 1984). See also, David W. Fagerburg, *Theologia Prima: What is Liturgical Theology?*, 2nd edition (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 2006).
[124] Alexander Schmemann, *For the Life of the World* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1963). See also, ibid., "Liturgical Theology: Its Task and Method," *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 1 (1957): 16-27.

eschaton. Sacrament is *pascha* or passage: through the mysteries of baptism and Eucharist, human beings are *on their way* to fullness of relationship in God through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, growing in faith and love. As a consequence, the liturgical or sacramental identity of the church can be neither triumphal nor complacent. It is an identity that is received as a call to action, an urgent responsibility to bear witness to new life that is coming to be in the church and in all creation.

For Schmemann, this means that liturgy implies mission. When the church beholds itself as sacrament in liturgy, it finds at its own heart the gifts of wider creation: bread, wine, oil, water, and the words and gestures of the human body. Directed to God, restored to what they were meant to be, these created realities become bearers of salvation. Therefore, the church sees and celebrates not only itself but also the whole cosmos as sacrament: as eschatological icon of the world to come. It is the deepest responsibility of the church to proclaim this reality, this gospel, that God is already at work, reclaiming the whole of creation and making it an icon of salvation. This missionary rationale is what distinguishes the church from the world. Gathered in liturgy, the church *knows itself* as the people of God, gathered by the Holy Spirit and journeying into the Kingdom, and it can do nothing else but proclaim the good news of what is already here and yet on its way. Its whole life, rooted in liturgy, must now be defined by evangelical action, by embodying through word and deed the newness of life that is transforming the world.

In Schmemann's vision, therefore, Eucharist is not only the organizational center of ecclesial life; it is the purpose and rationale of its very existence. The church *is nothing other* than what it has encountered in Eucharist: the mystery of salvation, breaking into

history, for the life of the world. In this sense, writes Michael Plekon, Schmemann called for the "churching" of life, a reintegration of liturgy and ordinary life that endeavors to embody through transformative action the transformative mystery that claims us in Eucharist.[125] Importantly, this program of action is not merely pastoral or "religious" in nature. The mission of the church is embodied in a whole way of life, both at the corporate level and at the personal level. Schmemann captured the personal dimension through the language of *martyria*. He writes,

> For if one takes Christianity seriously, be it only for one minute, one knows with certitude that *martyria*, or what the Gospel describes as the narrow way is an absolutely essential and inescapable part of Christian life. And it is a narrow way precisely because it is always a conflict with the "ways of life" of "this world."[126]

The way of being and doing that emerges from the personal and communal encounter with Christ in the Eucharist is inescapably a struggle. To find oneself among the people of God, striving to live in accord with the truth of one's destiny experienced in the eschatological banquet, is to find oneself at odds with the ways of the world. It takes hard effort, both internal and external, to walk in newness of life and to proclaim through one's character and actions the Kingdom of God that is coming.

This then is how Schmemann binds together eschatology and ethics. Of course, he is by no means alone in referencing the Kingdom of God as the horizon that ought to shape Christian life in the world. In twentieth century theology, the biblical symbol of *basileia tou theo* has been rediscovered as the animating principle of the ministry of Jesus

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[125] Plekon, 7.
[126] Alexander Schmemann, "Problems of Orthodoxy in America: The Spiritual Problem," *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 9 (1965): 171-93.

and as the ultimate standard of Christian living. One thinks especially of the insights that have emerged in modern biblical criticism and in liberationist theologies, as well as interventions made by contextual and critical thinkers.[127] Where the thought of Alexander Schmemann does stand out, however, is in his strong view of the Kingdom of God as something that is experienced *liturgically* and received in that context as an *identity* disposed to action. Not simply a hypothetical goal or ideal, the fullness of life with God to which the eucharistic community aspires and in which it has already begun to participate is the essence of who Christian people are and hence what they do.

For Schmemann, the connection between eschatology and ethics is not a matter of shaping one's life or the world in view of an ideal horizon established by eschatological expectation. It is rather a matter of being embodied in doing. The liturgy reveals the human person in community implicated in the eucharistic mystery, lifted already to a share in the banquet of eternity but living still in the midst of history. Each person discovers himself or herself as a living icon of the world to come – a member of Christ's own body and a citizen of the Kingdom of God. This is a sacramental identity, a

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[127] For an early review of renewed interest in apocalypticism among biblical scholars and historians in the twentieth century, see Frank E Tupper, "Revival of Apocalyptic in Biblical and Theological Studies," *Review & Expositor* 72, no. 3 (Sum 1975): 279–303. Social ethical and liberationist applications include, for example, Walter Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1922); Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988); Gerard Loughlin, "Introduction" in *Queer Theology: Rethinking the Western Body* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2007); and Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk: Toward a Feminist Theology* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993). In political theology, see discussion of the "eschatological proviso." A short but helpful discussion of the "eschatological proviso," specifically related to the differences between political theology and liberation theology, can be found in James C. Livingston and Francis Schüssler Fiorenza, eds., *Modern Christian Thought*, vol. 2, *The Twentieth Century* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2006), 291-93.

sacramental way of being, caught between the "already" and the "not yet." Rooted in the eschatological future, it strives for that future. Structured toward the present, it transforms the present. At the intersection of eternity and history, Christian being unfolds through a process of transformational becoming, expressed in concrete ethical action. As I observed in the previous chapter, Schmemann was nevertheless resistant to an association between liturgy and social action. Christian ethics as rooted in liturgy is an ethics of the church, conceived as a distinctive society. Schmemann's failure to consider how the church interacts with the larger society in which it is embedded, and how Christian moral responsibility relates to larger social and political questions is, in my opinion, a serious limitation of his work.

3.2 VIGEN GUROIAN: AN ECCLESIAL ETHICS ROOTED IN LITURGY

Like Schmemann, Vigen Guroian is an Orthodox theologian, nourished by the iconic and liturgical sensibilities of that tradition. He likewise places at the center of his theological agenda an emphasis on prayer and worship as the basis of Christian identity and theological reflection. Guroian goes further than Schmemann, however, by proposing an explicit account of the foundations of a contemporary Christian ethics on the basis of liturgical praxis. What is needed, Guroian believes, is for Christian thinkers to develop a distinctively ecclesial ethics rooted in liturgy.

Guroian begins this project in his book *Incarnate Love: Essays in Orthodox Ethics*, where he draws attention to the overall lack of attention given by religious

scholars to liturgical worship as the foundation of Christian morality.[128] Most Catholic and Protestant ethicists, he contends, have reduced the work of Christian ethics to the objective evaluation of acts in light of established religious and philosophical categories. This has collapsed Christian moral reflection into the study of human agency and the principled establishment of an agenda for social progress, without any appreciation for mutually influencing and constitutive relationship between religious practices and ethical conduct. I would point out, however, that from the standpoint of contemporary moral theology, Guroian's critique is somewhat imprecise. Renewed interest in the ethics of character among theological ethicists easily demonstrates that the problem has been not so much the reduction of ethics to the study of agency but the reduction of agency to acts. Moral agency, understood holistically and in light of virtue, can indeed help theologians to unpack the relationship between religious practices and ethical behavior.

Nonetheless, Guroian's central point about the need for deeper attention to religious practices is extraordinarily important. A liturgically grounded vision of ethics can restore to Christian moral existence its properly theological foundation:

> For liturgy is that primal activity by which the Church becomes a holy ministry to the world and bears testimony to Christ and his Kingdom. When ethicists ignore this fact they risk surrender of their reflection – which rightly ought to express and interpret the Church's journey toward the Kingdom – to an academic agenda of questions and problems more often than not unrelated to the primary Christian life of prayer and worship.[129]

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[128] Vigen Guroian, *Incarnate Love: Essays in Orthodox Ethics*, 2nd edition (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002).
[129] Ibid., 77.

For a liturgically informed ethics, good Christian living is grounded not primarily in ethical principles or social and political goals but in the eschatological mystery of salvation realized in the worship of the church. Christian ethics is intelligible, therefore, only on a Christological and ecclesiological horizon. To speak of Christian morality is possible because a new people has come into being in and through the saving work of Christ, a community which knows itself to be on the way to fullness in Christ through its ongoing embodiment of this reality in prayer and worship.

Guroian, like Schmemann, ties together eschatology and ethics at the level of identity. When done with an eye to liturgy, Christian ethics becomes an expression of the particular vocation of the church to witness to the kingdom of God, not as a reality imposed from the outside but as a reality coming to life within itself and within the world. To be a "good Christian" is to root one's being in this very reality – to receive and embody it as one's deepest identity – and to act accordingly. In this way, the eschatological mystery of God's kingdom, identical with Christ himself, becomes the horizon of Christian conduct, giving every virtue, principle, and value its basic meaning.

In light of this understanding, Guroian offers specific reflections on the baptismal and eucharistic basis of Christian identity and ethics. He also expands his critique of contemporary ethics, most notably in the essay that I referenced in chapter one, which appears in the second edition of *Incarnate Love*. However, the most developed form of his argument appears in his book *Ethics After Christendom: Toward an Ecclesial Christian Ethic*.[130] Here Guroian indicates that the liturgically grounded ethics that he has

[130] Vigen Guroian, *Ethics After Christendom: Toward an Ecclesial Christian Ethic* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2004).

called for is a specifically *ecclesial* ethics: an ethics of the church or the community of faith gathered in worship, one that is rooted in this community's eschatological identity as an icon of the Kingdom of God. The question which he now poses is how to establish this ecclesial ethic, this *modus vivendi* for the church, in a cultural and political environment that no longer takes religious claims for granted. What does Christian ethics look like in a post-Constantinian era?

Along with other scholars, Guroian observes that the cultural establishment of Christianity has ended, and that the alliance of the church with the state and secular order has collapsed. In the United States in particular, only traces of Christendom remain. This is not to say that the cultural and political influence of biblical religion has disappeared in America but rather that the synthesis of Protestant piety and Enlightenment liberalism, which was once the foundation of American cultural self-understanding, has yielded to the tide of secularism. American Christianity must therefore work to redefine its relationship to society. For Guroian, neither sectarianism nor accomodationism is an acceptable way forward.[131] The gospel of Jesus Christ and the mission of the church to proclaim and embody that gospel in the world forbid Christians to withdraw completely from secular culture. But it is also wrong for the church to yield uncritically to the forces of secular liberalism and its deeply privatized and functionalist view of religion. Here is where "liberal" and "conservative" Christian movements have equally gone wrong. The influence of tradition has been interrupted and Christians have equated their own values and priorities with those of the surrounding culture.

[131] Ibid., 13-14.

The question then, for Guroian, is what course the church should take, and in particular, on what grounds it might establish an authentically Christian ethic. While there are surely biblical and theological warrants for seeking and affirming a common morality between Christians and non-Christians, historical appeals to such a common ground have led the church to confuse biblical faith with civil religion. The natural law tradition, in particular, has been deeply associated with defense of Christendom and the maintenance of secular liberalism. According to Guroian, a certain recovery of natural law may be possible, rooted in a Christological and trinitarian ontology, but the foundations of a robust ecclesial ethic, rooted in the gospel and in tradition, must be found elsewhere.[132] The new *modus vivendi* of the Christian church must be built not on some patch of ethical common ground with the culture at large but rather on what Christians do together in community. Christian ethics must be ecclesial and therefore liturgical in its origins – not in order for Christians to withdraw from the world but in order for them to live in the world according to the truth of the gospel and to show others the way to the kingdom of God.

Guroian acknowledges that there are a variety of "theological and ecclesial loci" that might provide the foundation for the sort of ethics he calls for – an ethics grounded in tradition and in the unique responsibilities of Christian identity.[133] Scripture, doctrine, creeds, and the writings of the great theologians are all significant sources of Christian reflection. He maintains, however, that the core of the tradition resides not in the *lex credendi* of the faithful but in the *lex orandi*. It is not mainly what Christians believe that

[132] Ibid., 24.
[133] Ibid., 33.

defines Christian identity but rather how they worship. Tradition itself is primarily transmitted and rendered meaningful not through an encounter with the revealed content of faith but through the reception and embodiment of faith in liturgy.

Moreover, with liturgy as the primary ecclesial locus of ethics, the character of Christian morality comes into focus not as a set of conceptual principles but as a *praxis* in direct continuity with worship, which bears and enacts the tradition as a response to the grace of God is Jesus Christ. "In liturgy," Guroian writes, "and in baptism especially, the content of the tradition and the manner in which it is handed down are virtually continuous with moral *praxis*."[134] Ethics in this view is not second-order reflection on right Christian conduct but is rather the living embodiment of an identity and vocation that has been received and first enacted in worship. There is after all no "link" to be established between liturgy and ethics but only a primordial continuity to be acknowledged between the mysteries of faith embodied in the liturgical life of the church and the verification of these mysteries in the holy lives of Christian people.

Of course, the ultimate criterion of truth and the final measure of human holiness is Jesus Christ, whom Christians encounter in liturgy itself. Guroian is careful to point out, however, that to remember Jesus Christ and to bring his meaning to life in the present is not a matter of historical retrieval, as though we could somehow find our way back to an "original" figure whose singular religious message might solve every moral question. To say that Christ is the ultimate criterion for Christians is not to reconstruct his character as a measurable standard for human conduct but to experience and encounter him within the community of faith as the person in whom the truth of salvation has been

[134] Ibid., 34.

revealed and the destiny of humanity achieved. It is to remember him through the anamnetic and epicletic work of liturgy and in this way to enter into communion with him for the life of the world. As Guroian writes, "This Christian truth, this ultimate criterion of Christian discernment, which originates in the enduring eucharistic experience of Christ and his kingdom that the Holy Spirit provides is the source and *raison d'etre* of Christian tradition and Christian ethics."[135]

The ecclesial ethic that is called for by the present historical moment is therefore essentially sacramental and eschatological. But how then does eschatology actually inform ethics? It is clear enough, from Guroian's standpoint, that he desires an approach to ethics that draws upon the tradition as it is embodied in liturgy, rather than taking its stand in some kind of universalizable moral idiom. But it remains unclear how the resulting eschatological vision of ethics might actually shape moral reflection and interact with key ideas in moral theology.

It seems to me that Guroian embraces three options. First, he endorses what I have called the pedagogical model for viewing the relationship between liturgy and ethics. He stresses that, in the absence of liturgical practices, Christians lose an appropriate awareness of the eschatological reality of the kingdom of God, an awareness that is required for authentic Christian living. He relies on liturgical practices, therefore, as a means of Christian of moral formation. He invites Christian people to become through worship "learners in the kingdom of heaven." Second, Guroian employs a version of what I have called the correlational model. Liturgy is the principal locus of Christian identity. As such, it invites human beings to a distinctively eschatological vocation. It

[135] Ibid., 47-48.

calls people to holiness and invites a response in their way of life. This key correlation of divine call and human response is confirmed in the continuity of liturgy and life. Third, Guroian describes what he sees as an "iconic ethics." Liturgy is the place in which communion with Christ is achieved and the fullness of kingdom experienced proleptically. It transforms what might have been an ordinary society of human beings, joined by common religious convictions, into an icon of the mystery of salvation and a sacrament of the world to come. It gives the church and its members their ultimate identity. To be Christian, therefore, is to live in the world as a sign and a witness – as a historical embodiment of a transhistorical reality that is breaking into the world. In this iconic role, the purpose of Christian life is not simply to become aware of the kingdom or to respond rightly to God but to embody for others the reality of God and attract them toward that same reality of which each Christian person and the whole of the community are an image.

This kind of approach to eschatology and ethics, typified in Schmemann's missiology and in Guroian's ecclesial ethic, places sacramental identity at the heart of Christian life. Christian people are a sacramental people. Their lives are given over to the abundance of God's future. They have been drawn into the eucharistic mystery. In their character and conduct, Christians are called to embody the inbreaking of that reality in the present. With that perspective in hand, I would like to examine further the shape and implications of this vital liturgical ethics. The task is to bring the key insights of Schmemann and Guroian into conversation with the resources of contemporary moral theology, in order to discern whether their shared vision might have a tangible impact on the doing of ethics.

3.3 TURNING TO VIRTUE: A WAY FORWARD FOR LITURGY AND ETHICS

What does Christian life actually look like from the standpoint of liturgical ethics? What are the key features of Christian morality according to a sacramental and eschatological imagining? My contention is that the study of virtue ethics provides the best tools for answering these questions and theorizing the link between liturgy and ethics along the lines that Schmemann and Guroian have drawn. I believe this approach is warranted for two main reasons.

First, virtue ethics has become the dominant idiom of contemporary theological ethics in the last several decades. Although attention to virtue in general has influenced scholarship well beyond the limits of theology, its impact on Christian ethical reflection has been especially significant. In accord with the spirit of Vatican II and the turn to the person in twentieth century moral theology, virtue ethics gives expression to what is sometimes called an "ethics of being" as the counterpart to an "ethics of doing." It provides a language for ethical reflection that is sensitive to importance of character, attuned to historical consciousness, and unafraid of the complexity of the moral life in the particular. Virtue ethics has enabled Catholic thinkers specifically to push the tradition beyond the legalistic, sin-centered, and quandary-based ethics of the past few centuries. More broadly, the turn to virtue provides to theologians a uniquely productive set of tools for examining the "ought" that emerges from human experience in response to the grace of God in Christ, and to do this in a way that is sensitive to the progressive, relational, and theological dimensions of the moral life. Virtue ethics is an indispensable framework for telling the story of the human person's journey toward holiness in community and with the help of grace.

In spite of his explicit engagement with Alasdair MacIntyre and Stanley Hauerwas – two key figures in the philosophical and theological retrieval of virtue – Guroian himself does not provide a sustained theological engagement with virtue ethics.[136] Perhaps this is a result of his critical posture toward what he sees as the sectarian tendencies of the communitarian and postliberal theological traditions with which these scholars are associated. For instance, Guroian is eager to adopt from Hauerwas his emphasis on the liturgical setting of Christian narratives and the socialization of individuals through ritual into the Christian way of life. Like Hauerwas, he offers a strong critique of Christian accomodationism, and in particular of the modern alliance between Christian theology and secular liberalism. But Guroian stops short of accepting Hauerwas's thoroughgoing cynicism toward Constantinian Christianity, and he eschews the sectarian notion that the primary ethical task of the church is to build up an "alternative polis," destined to exist at odds with the ways of the world.

The result of Guroian's interaction with Hauerwas and thinkers like him is thus a somewhat limited view of virtue as that which sets moral communities apart and functions pedagogically, irrespective of any specific theological "content." Guroian does endorse virtue for his theological ethic, but he goes no further than this postliberal conception. Perhaps he is hesitant to adopt a more thoroughgoing virtue ethics because he sees it as another "theory of agency" with which Christian ethics has become overly

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[136] He does, however, discuss virtue in his other works as an element of moral imagination, focusing on stories and their capacity to form the character, especially for children. My point here is simply that Guroian does not develop a connection between his liturgically grounded ecclesial ethic and virtue theory. See Vigen Guroian, *Tending the Heart of Virtue: How Classic Stories Awaken a Child's Moral Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

preoccupied at the expense of attention to liturgical practices. Inasmuch as Guroian avoids an affirmation of the natural law tradition – because it has tended to neglect its theological foundations in favor of seeking common ground with secular culture – he may likewise avoid a deeper theological engagement with virtue ethics, which has been retrieved in the recent decades as a counterpart to natural law in Catholic moral theology.

Contemporary virtue ethics, however, is much bigger than its early expressions in the seminal writings of MacIntyre or in the provocative work of Hauerwas. If Guroian were to engage this tradition in its latest expressions, I think he would find that virtue can, in fact, provide a strong bridge between the essential theological priorities at stake in his ecclesial ethic and the language of contemporary moral theology. As Joseph Woodill attests in his study of virtue ethics and Orthodox Christianity, Guroian himself has already contributed to the building of this bridge.[137] James Keenan, in his collaborative study of New Testament ethics with Daniel Harrington, likewise acknowledges the work of Guroian and calls for continued efforts at building the bridge between liturgical and moral theology.[138] In that spirit, my intention is simply to build upon work that has already begun by facilitating an ongoing theological engagement between liturgy and virtue.

Second, virtue ethics is uniquely adaptable to theological interpretation. Any number of scholars have demonstrated this point. Mennonite theologian Joseph Kotva makes perhaps the best case for the implementation of virtue theory in Christian moral

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[137] Joseph Woodill, *The Fellowship of Life: Virtue Ethics and Orthodox Christianity* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1998).
[138] Daniel Harrington, S.J. and James Keenan, S.J., *Jesus and Virtue Ethics: Building Bridges Between New Testament Studies and Moral Theology* (Lanham, MD: Sheed &Ward), 27-28.

theological reflection.[139] Others, like Catholic theologian William Spohn, have clearly shown the aptitude of virtue language for the interpretation of scripture and the life of Christian discipleship.[140] The rapid growth of virtue ethics in the field of theology itself attests to its usefulness as a theological framework.

Moreover, it is well established that virtue ethics provides the theoretical tools for excavating the deep anthropological and sociological dimensions of Christian morality. It provides an account of moral agency that is psychologically intelligent and attuned to the role of community, narrative, tradition, and interpretation in the formation of moral character and in the unfolding of the moral life. And virtue ethics is not only theoretically useful. It is experientially rooted, and it is practical. Virtue ethics ultimately resonates with ordinary moral experience, and it seeks to provide a strategic way forward from who we are to who we might be. This is not an emotivist justification of a pre-established ethical method. It indicates the extent to which virtue ethics names and interprets everyday moral reasoning, with deep roots in lived experience.[141] This and other qualities account for the enormous theological impact of virtues ethics in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Inspired by Schmemann, Guroian, and by the richness of liturgical theology, my own interest lies specifically in the capacity of virtue ethics to carry the eschatological thrust of Christian ethics. I believe that virtue ethics provides the bridge that is needed to

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[139] Joseph Kotva, Jr. *The Christian Case for Virtue Ethics* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1996).
[140] William Spohn, *Go and Do Likewise: Jesus and Ethics* (New York: Continuum, 2007).
[141] Julia Annas, "Applying Virtue to Ethics," *Journal of Applied Philo* 32 no.1 (2015): 1-14.

connect the theological foundations of liturgical-sacramental reflection to the latest developments in theological ethics. This is because the virtues are by definition heuristic. They are not self-interpreting precepts, and their normative content is never fully established outside of particular circumstances and the experience of specific persons. Rather, they are what we might call "placeholders" that carry the moral wisdom of the community and the narratives to which they belong but that must be filled in through prudential judgment. As such, the virtues are always "on the way." As both the content of the human *telos* and as its means, they are embodied in the present but deferred to the future. They form the basis of an asymptotic moral horizon that is forever receding but also forever energizing moral growth.

Schmemann and Guroian would call this horizon the kingdom of God: the abundance of divine life in Jesus Christ which is the source and goal of Christian moral living. This is the reality that Guroian says must define an authentically Christian ecclesial ethic. This is the ultimate destiny of creation that all Christians, clothed in Christ at baptism and nourished by his body and blood in the Eucharist, must embody as icons of the world to come. It is a theological vision, I argue, that can be effectively enunciated in the key of virtue.

Guroian and others like him have already made great strides toward the development of an Orthodox ethics, rooted in liturgy, that envisions virtue as a key element in the process of *theosis*. In my view, this scholarship owes a great deal to Alexander Schmemann, but it goes well beyond his missiology and clearly into the territory of ethics by lifting up virtue specifically as a key element of the Orthodox view of the human situation before God. Perry Hamalis and Aristotle Papanikolaou have

contributed significantly to this development by organizing an edited volume on the subject of *theosis* and virtue.[142] Write the editors,

> From the apostolic age to the Eastern Orthodox Church of today, liturgy, *theosis*, and the virtues have been organically interconnected. Worship and sacraments aim at *theosis*; *theosis* entails the acquisition of the virtues; and the virtues are cultivated within the lives of the faithful by their repeated activity together as a sacramental community.[143]

Each of the contributors to the volume writes, therefore, on a key figure or aspect of the Eastern Christian tradition which offers insight into the role of virtue as expressive of the "godly mode of being" toward which human beings are transformed in Christ. Complex aretaic anthropologies, far from being purely speculative or ascetical systems, contribute to an understanding of virtue praxis as a necessary correlate of the Orthodox vision of human destiny in God.

Joseph Woodill's book, *The Fellowship of Life: Virtue Ethics and Orthodox Christianity*, is an earlier work that explicitly traces the Orthodox use of virtue language from the patristic period through the contemporary retrieval of virtue. He concludes that virtue ethics is an effective hermeneutic for understanding the process of Christian transformation from "where we are" to "what ought to be," which when rooted in the Orthodox tradition represents the movement from creation marked by the Fall to the possibility of salvation.[144] According to Woodill, therefore, an Orthodox virtue ethics

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[142] Aristotle Papanikolaou and Perry Hamalis, eds., *Modes of Godly Being: Reflections on the Virtues in Eastern Orthodox Christianity*, Studies in Christian Ethics 26:3 (August 2013).
[143] Ibid., 278.
[144] Woodill, 11.

must be unabashedly distinctive. The *telos* to which an Orthodox virtue ethics aspires is not a natural conception of human goodness but the abundance of life in community that is possible through communion with Jesus Christ, the paradigm of redeemed humanity. Virtue ethics narrates theologically the passage from death to life in God. Thus, writes Woodill, "The world will be made new, but death will be destroyed. Virtue is the pursuit of life and, thus, the putting to death of all that is not of God. It is the recreation of life and, so, of the world as a sacrament."[145]

It is in this light that Woodill reads Guroian, as well as two other contemporary Orthodox ethicists, Stanley Harakas and Christos Yannaras. He identifies in their work a constructive application of virtue theory, with its emphasis on community and practice, to the Orthodox vision of deification, or the fulfillment of human life in God. Each figure identifies *theosis* as the *telos* of human life, and each provides a particular conception of virtue on that theological horizon. For Harakas, the virtues signify those modes of being that are discerned and cultivated for the transformation of human character toward divine likeness. They have their meaning in light of that authentically "Christian being" that is defined by the paradigmatic humanity of Christ.[146] Guroian, in Woodill's view, extends this theoretical insight by specifying that the godlike mode of being to which the virtues aspire is defined, along Trinitarian theological lines, as being in communion for love. The virtues, then, are the defining features of that community, the church, that is formed in the image of Trinitarian love and that functions in the world as a sign and witness of that love. As we have seen, what is called for by Guroian's ecclesial ethic is an iconic or

[145] Ibid., 121.
[146] Ibid., 62.

sacramental way of being, rooted in the liturgical life of the community, which threatens and judges the ways of the world and invites creation to the promise of redemption. Yannaras displays a similar instinct, though he is convinced that the divine life to which Christians are called must lead them to reject any standard of human "excellence" that is captive to nature, including the idea of virtue. Indeed, Yannaras suspects that virtue language itself may function as a bourgeois substitute for salvation.[147]

Granting the need for a certain critical awareness, I do not agree with Yannaras that the strictly theological horizon of Christian morality requires us to abandon the language of virtue. To the contrary, I argue that virtue is an especially useful vehicle for carrying the theological insights just described. Christian virtue, as Guroian sees, is the embodiment of that sacramental life to which baptized persons are called, which stands for the world as a sign of the divine life to which all things are invited. I believe it is necessary, however, to build further upon this aesthetic approach, where Christian persons and communities serve as icons that attract others to the mystery which they represent, and to employ the language of virtue for a liturgical ethics that is oriented to action and social transformation.

Yannaras is right in thinking that the eschatological horizon of Christian morality must always hold our current standards of human excellence to account. But the language of virtue itself, when rendered theologically, is entirely capable of sustaining this dynamic. Because the virtues are, by definition, unfinished, they energize the ceaseless moral momentum that Christian eschatological identity requires. They demand that Christian individuals and the church itself continue to engage the ongoing work of

[147] Ibid., 71.

conversion that our baptismal and eucharistic life requires. Because virtues are, also by definition, oriented to action, they render conversion meaningful not only for the life of the church but for the life of the world. A liturgically grounded Christian ethics, in this perspective, connects sacramental identity to personal and social transformation. The church, as a sacrament of the kingdom of God, is not just a witness of God's desire for the world but also its instrument. It does not simply embody the destiny of creation, as though that were something already complete within itself, but works to change the world in the direction of that reality, which is already real but not yet fully arrived.

The emphasis in Catholic theology on the efficacy of sacraments, and on the change that happens in liturgy is instructive here. For Catholic thinkers, sacraments effect change because they signify, and they signify because they effect change. This view can support the Orthodox emphasis on the iconic mission of the church, rooted also in liturgy, in order to help envision a liturgical ethics wherein sacramental witness and sacramental action are inseparable. This ethics finds expression in the key of virtue, and in this view, virtue functions not just pedagogically and correlationally (though these are important dynamics) but eschatologically as a means of imagining the promise of human fulfillment in Christ and how that promise must live and function in history.

3.4 BUILDING A BRIDGE: THE SHAPE OF LITURGICAL VIRTUE

There is, then, a profound theological connection to be explored between liturgy and virtue: between the eschatological reality that is realized in Christian worship and the ethical modes of being that embody and enact that reality in history. To build a bridge between liturgy and ethics, however, will require more than just a conceptual theological

connection. If we are to have a liturgical ethics that is in fact ethical, we must ask not only how virtue emerges from the eschatological mystery of eucharistic liturgy but furthermore what we mean by "virtue" in this theological context. The critical question remains: what does liturgical virtue look like?

Contemporary theological ethics has moved away from older notions of virtue as perfecting human action in order to avoid sin and toward a more critical and relational view of virtue as that which forms persons and communities in pursuit of holiness. Naturally, we must start there. Although writers in liturgy and ethics have begun to incorporate this understanding of virtue at a theoretical level, they have not yet pursued the ethical and practical questions that emerge here. What are the liturgical virtues? How do we hold our conception of such virtues accountable to experience? How do we cultivate the liturgical virtues with intention? How do they translate into meaningful action? What about liturgical vice? I believe that a certain lack of collaboration between scholars of these two competencies, between liturgists and ethicists, has resulted in a liturgical ethics that has missed these questions – one that has been theologically robust in the ways discussed above and yet ethically superficial.

A similar situation recently existed in the field of biblical ethics. The Jesuit ethicist Lúcás Chan leveled a three-part critique at scholars who had tried to develop a biblical ethics without seriously engaging the field of ethics itself. Their ethical claims, he said, are lacking in normative content and critical analysis, their writings make almost no reference to the work of ethicists, and their claims bear no substantive reference to

established ethical theories.[148] I would propose a similar critique in the context of liturgical ethics. Such figures as Louis-Marie Chauvet, Denis Edwards, and Don Saliers, for instance, offer insightful theological expositions of liturgy, but their views of ethics as it emerges from liturgy amount to little more than general proposals in favor of the good. To say that ethics is a return-gift in the sacramental economy, that it involves sacramental ecological awareness, or that it is composed of virtues and affections trained in liturgy does not yet specify, in a critical and theoretically robust way, the content of the good. And rarely does one find references to the work of ethicists or to ethical theories. Analogously, the Orthodox thinkers referenced in this chapter offer a much-needed eschatological grounding for liturgical ethics, reminding us that the horizon of Christian morality is not goodness as such but holiness in God. However, they stop short of providing a substantive ethical account of what holiness ought to look like in the life of Christian individuals and the church. Neither do they engage with established ethical theories beyond the orbit of postliberal theology.

I have argued that Christian ethics must take eschatology seriously, and I have proposed to do so by connecting the eschatological foundations of liturgy to the asymptotic nature of the human *telos* and the heuristic character of the virtues. I wish to acknowledge, however, that one of the dangers of engaging eschatology in this fashion is that the virtues might easily become theoretical and free from content or accountability. This is why it is important, as I have said above, that the virtues function not only aesthetically but effectively. To say that Christian people must witness to the kingdom of

[148] Lúcás Chan, *Biblical Ethics in the 21st Century: Developments, Emerging Consensus, and Future Directions* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2013), 28-29.

God that is coming to life within and among them requires me also to say that they must work for that kingdom. The virtues are iconic and also sacramental. They should effect what they signify. By acknowledging this, it is possible to build on the *theoria* of the writers I have referenced and connect it to *praxis*. To that end, I turn now to the critical and practical task of asking what liturgical virtue actually looks like among human persons in community.

The work of ethicists Joseph Kotva and James Keenan is particularly instructive at this juncture. In *The Christian Case for Virtue Ethics*, which I referenced above, Kotva establishes quite clearly the appropriateness of virtue ethics as a means of examining the life of Christian discipleship. Virtue ethics deals with the ongoing transition from who we are to who we ought to be. Its core rationale is teleological. Therefore, argues Kotva, it provides a moral language with which Christians can engage the ongoing work of being conformed to the paradigmatic humanity of Christ. This claim is based for Kotva on a key correlation between virtue ethics and basic Christian theological convictions about sanctification, Christology, and Christian anthropology.[149] According to a Christian understanding, he argues, the moral life consists in the progressive embodiment of the destiny to which all are called by God: conformity to Christ. This is the life of sanctification with the help of divine grace. Although secular virtue ethics does not entertain the eschatological notion that the goal of human existence is fulfilled beyond the limits of ordinary life, its teleological orientation can provide strong support for the journey toward human fulfillment in the person and character of Jesus Christ.

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[149] Joseph J. Kotva, *The Christian Case for Virtue Ethics* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 1996), chapter 4.

In my view, it is not necessary to bracket the eschatological element of the Christian moral imagination in order to perform this correlation. The asymptotic and even hypothetical nature of the human *telos* in virtue ethics is at least somewhat capable of standing in for the perpetually unfinished character of Christian morality on an eschatological horizon. Thus, when we speak of conformity to Christ as the *telos* of human existence, we need not limit that notion to a purely "ethical" conception, as though the destiny of human beings were simply to imitate Christ's character. Rather, we can appreciate how, grounded in a liturgical and eucharistic view, the purpose of human life is to *be one with Christ*, to "have the mind of Christ" as Saint Paul says, not simply as students who imitate the master but as members of his body and partakers of his life.[150] This is the goal whose fullness lies always beyond the limits of human experience and yet it is realized provisionally in the life of virtue.

In a later essay on prayer, Kotva himself looks to liturgical practice and concludes that what emerges here is an awareness of human limitations.[151] Human persons stand before God in a position of total dependence, finding that they inevitably fall short of that to which they are called. To acknowledge this is not to resign oneself to hopelessness but to press forward with the virtues of humility, patience, and solidarity. These are, I would suggest, distinctly liturgical virtues for Kotva, born of prayer and informed by an understanding in faith that human persons and communities are always on the way to fulfillment. Humility acknowledges this truth in oneself. Patience acknowledges it in

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[150] 1 Corinthians 2:16.

[151] Joseph J. Kotva, "Transformed in Prayer," in James Keenan and Joseph Kotva, eds., *Practice What You Preach: Virtue, Ethics, and Power in the Lives of Pastoral Ministers and their Congregations* (Franklin, WI: Sheed and Ward, 1999).

others. Solidarity binds the self to the other in a common journey forward toward the horizon of God's promise.

James Keenan has written on the relationship between liturgy and ethics and concludes along similar lines that, from a liturgical perspective, the Christian moral life is marked by a dynamic teleology.[152] The journey toward holiness is not, in other words, a straight line but a self-corrective and progressive journey toward the kingdom of God in response to Christ's invitation. He shares with Kotva, therefore, a sense that liturgical virtue is dynamic, open, and unsettled. Its normative content emerges through an ongoing process of practice and discernment, sensitive both to the limits of human moral effort on the horizon of grace and also to the seriousness of the Christian responsibility to embody holiness in the world.

A liturgical ethics therefore imagines virtue not as a static goal to be achieved but as a dynamic gift to be received: a promise that must be accepted as a task. What is added by rendering this view in terms of a *eucharistic* ethics, as I wish to do, is a particular theological framing of the *telos* of Christian life. What Christians are *for* is membership in the eschatological body of Christ, a seat at the banquet of God's kingdom where all partake in a share of the divine life. To live a life of virtue is to extend this reality, of which we have a foretaste in the Eucharist, into the space of human life in the world – with all its ambiguities and contingencies. It is to make oneself, one's relationships, and one's communities the place where God is present. It is to make the world Eucharist. Yet

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[152] James F. Keenan, "Dialectically Dynamic Teleologies: Liturgy and Ethics in the Key of Virtue," in *Ahme nach, was du vollziehst: Positionsbestimmungen zum Verhältnis von Liturgie und Ethik*, ed. Martin Stuflesser and Stephan Winter (Regensburg: Verlag Friedrich Pustet, 2009), 23-36.

because virtues are always on the way, because the promise of God is already but not yet, this is not and cannot be a triumphalist ethics. What is begun in the Eucharist is not completed there, nor in the life of the present world. It is carried into the world as a promise that demands action. This is an ethics of profound responsibility.

Moreover, it is an ethics of community. When grounded in the Eucharist, I think we see clearly that the virtues are not purely personal qualities, owned by individuals independent of the complex network of relationships in which they come to be. Of course, this is a key element of classic virtue theory: to acquire virtue requires the presence of others, not only because it is from others that we learn virtue but because it is for and with others that we practice virtue. The *telos* for Aristotle was the *polis*, and the meaning of virtue was to be discerned in the context of community. This relational emphasis can be correlated to a eucharistic understanding of virtue as oriented to communion in Christ. Christian theological anthropology holds that we are built for relationship and furthermore that we are destined for relationship with one another in God. This is an intimacy that surpasses understanding, but it is embodied in the world in ongoing pursuit of peace and justice. For a eucharistic ethics in the key of virtue to present communion in Christ as the horizon of the moral life is thus to orient the moral life toward the improvement of human relationships and the reformation of social structures in the direction of the common good.

The movement in contemporary theological ethics toward a more thoroughly relational understanding of the virtues coincides with this eucharistically grounded approach. Keenan himself is known for his reformulation of the cardinal virtues in light

of a more relational anthropology.[153] He proposes to move away from a Thomistic view of the virtues as perfecting human powers or capabilities and toward a view of the virtues as perfecting human relationality. Human beings, he argues, are relational in three ways: generally, specifically, and uniquely. We find ourselves related to the human family in general, to specific persons with whom we form and cultivate relationships, and to ourselves. For each of these levels of relationality we find appropriate cardinal virtues. These are justice, fidelity, and self-care. Ordering the whole and enabling us to find the mean as we grow is the virtue of prudence. Following this general approach, I would argue that the purpose of virtue from a eucharistic ethical perspective is not to perfect human powers to act "eucharistically"– to behave, for instance, in a self-sacrificing manner – but rather to transform our relationships toward the fullness of relationship with one another in Jesus Christ that is realized in the Eucharist.

Daniel Daly's work on structures of vice and virtue can likewise expand this social ethical element of eucharistic ethics by reminding us that virtues belong not only to individual persons but to whole communities, institutions, and even social processes.[154] We must remain attentive to the character of the whole as well as to the character of individual persons. We do not go to God alone, and neither do we grow in virtue alone. We are formed, in virtue and in vice, by the communities we make and inhabit. In my view, there is perhaps no better symbol of our moral interdependence than the Eucharist. The eschatological reality that we encounter in the Eucharist draws the whole of the

[153] James F Keenan, "Proposing Cardinal Virtues," Theological Studies 56, no. 4 (1995): 709–729.
[154] Daniel Daly, *Structures of Virtue and Vice* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2021).

community, its relations and institutions, into a shared life where all participate in the virtue of Christ. Yet as a eucharistic community we are nonetheless vulnerable to moral corruption. Christian communities and institutions can fail in their eucharistic vocation. They can grow in structural vice and cultivate personal vice among their members. This is an especially urgent danger in the space of liturgical practice itself, where the vices of arrogance, primitivism, and clericalism find root. In the next chapter, I will examine more thoroughly this negative dimension of liturgical ethics.

The connection that I have presented between virtue ethics and social transformation has been well established by any number of theological ethicists.[155] My purpose is simply to affirm this relational, communitarian, and social ethical dimension of contemporary virtue ethics in connection to the Eucharist and the eschatological horizon of Christian ethics which I have emphasized in this chapter. By placing eucharistic ethics in the key of virtue, we can begin to build a bridge between the deepest convictions of Christian faith as they relate to liturgy and as they relate to morality. The communion to which we are called in the Eucharist is the very reality that we strive to embody in our world, our relationships, and our communities. In the following chapter, I will briefly consider some of the limits that linger at the intersection of moral teleology and Christian eschatology. From there, I move toward the conclusion that the communion to which Christians aspire in liturgy and life is rooted most deeply in the virtue of hope.

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[155] See, for example: Kevin J. Ahern, "Virtue, Vulnerability, and Social Transformation," in *Violence, Transformation, and the Sacred: "They Shall be Called Children of God,"* ed. Margaret Pfeil and Tobias Winright (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2011), 117-29; Michael Jaycox, "The Civic Virtues of Social Anger: A Critically Reconstructed Normative Ethic for Public Life," *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 36.1 (2016): 123-143; Brian Stiltner, *Toward Thriving Communities: Virtue Ethics as Social Ethics* (Winona, MN: Anselm Academic, 2016).

4.0 CHAPTER 4 – THE LIMITS OF LITURGICAL VIRTUE

In the previous chapter, I proposed a way forward for liturgy and ethics that stresses the eucharistic and eschatological foundations of Christian identity. The question was whether and how this liturgically grounded emphasis on eschatology can inform ethics. My argument was that it can, and that virtue ethics provides a strong theoretical framework for linking the two. The life of virtue in this world, reaching forward toward a horizon of moral becoming, embodies in history the abundance of eternal life, which though it has not yet fully arrived is experienced in a provisional and anticipatory way through concrete acts of holiness and through the struggle for social transformation.

The moral life, from this perspective, emerges as eucharistic in character. This is not only because certain moral behaviors correlate to the norms of eucharistic practice, or because eucharistic practice itself forms moral character. These connections are certainly important. But I am further suggesting that the moral life is eucharistic because it is the tangible enfleshment of the central mystery at the heart of Christian worship: the total self-gift of God in Christ for the life of the world and the transfiguration of the world into a new creation through participation in the divine life.

To strive for virtue, then, is not simply to endeavor to be good in response to a divine mandate. It is to reach for the holiness of God itself and to participate in that holiness which is already transforming the created order. To push forward toward the ever-receding limit of moral becoming is to strain toward the heavenly banquet that is promised and realized proleptically in the Eucharist. Indeed, it is to be the Eucharist, in communion with the whole church, which prays in gratitude for the gift of the world and offers the same world back to God. Put another way, to live a life of Christian

discipleship in pursuit of virtue for the sake of social change is to belong to the Eucharist mystery itself, which is the inbreaking of God's reign in history.

This is a strong claim and a high theological interpretation of Christian morality. Does the continuity that I am describing between eucharistic eschatology and human morality have limits? Indeed, I believe that it must, and the aim of this chapter is to observe those limits. To that end, I would like in the following sections to explore two key questions.

First, is teleology, the basis of virtue ethics, an adequate frame of interpretation for Christian eschatology? By now it is commonplace to assume that virtue ethics makes for good theological ethics, and I certainly believe that it does. However, there is a limit to virtue language, theorized teleologically, as a frame for Christian understanding. From the standpoint of biblical faith, we must affirm a clear distinction between eschatological expectation (waiting upon the reign of God), on the one hand, and the personal and social pursuit of moral fulfillment (seeking *eudaimonia*, i.e. the life of virtue or human flourishing), on the other hand. However, Christian virtue ethicists often assume that to speak of progress toward the human *telos*, growth in virtue, is to speak of progress toward the achievement of fullness in God. As I see it, this risks conflating two distinct "teleologies," which are certainly complexly and dynamically interrelated but fundamentally different in character. I will attempt to show that human perfection in virtue is not precisely the same as eschatological perfection. Teleology and Christian eschatology are analogues, not synonyms. I do believe that teleology is a useful framework for interpreting eschatological meaning, but with the qualification that the life of virtue toward which moral progress aspires is not *identical* with life with God in the

eschaton. The *telos* of virtue is rather an analogue for human destiny in union with God, and the virtues themselves are models or provisional expressions of how union with God begins to change earthly life. In order to work out where this limit of virtue leaves my approach to liturgy and ethics, I will briefly consider the insights of Augustine and engage in conversation with Jennifer Herdt's theological and historical analysis of the acquired virtues.

Second, how does the reality of moral and ethical failure impact the bond between liturgy and ethics that I am proposing? To affirm a strong theological continuity between the Eucharist and the moral life runs the risk of idealizing both. We baptized Christians regularly fall short of living in accord with our eucharistic vocation. We sin as a matter of habit, and the virtues elude our possession. Moreover, the Eucharist itself never appears beyond the orbit of human failure. It is never immune from corruption. Liturgy is in every instance a human practice, even though the eyes of faith perceive simultaneously the presence of divine action. Liturgical practice does not automatically make us good or holy, and in fact, it can go deeply wrong. In conversation with Katie Grimes' critique of what she calls "sacramental optimism," I will push for a much-needed critical awareness in the field of liturgy and ethics and offer the beginnings of a reflection on the problem of what I propose to call "liturgical vice."

Taken together, I believe these two lines of inquiry introduce into the field of liturgy and ethics a level of realism and honesty about the human condition that is altogether necessary but not yet common enough. The range of authors whom I have surveyed in the previous chapters each provide a rich account of how liturgy informs ethics, but rarely does one find a theologian who wrestles directly with the limits of a

Christian ethical framework or indeed with the limits of liturgy itself. The realism of this chapter is the outcome of bringing ethics, as a discipline, to the table of liturgy and ethics in an explicit fashion.

As I have previously observed, it will not be enough to build a purely conceptual bridge between liturgy and ethics – to collapse morality essentially into liturgical theology – without looking seriously at the meaning of virtue, its limits, and finally at the specter of vice. This is not a cynical exercise, but a constructive one. My purpose in this chapter is not to hedge my larger argument but to render it more credible by eschewing a problematic idealism, triumphalism, and optimism in favor of an approach to liturgy and ethics that is truthful, humble, and hopeful. As a result, I will be in a position to ask necessary critical questions of Christian morality and liturgy on the horizon of a larger world. If liturgical virtue is rooted in God's eschatological promise but not identical with its final fulfillment, how does it relate to "secular" virtue? Is there room for the church to learn from the world in its praxis of virtue? How does one identify sources of moral authority at the intersection of faith and the broader culture? What resources exist, inside or outside the church, for a prophetic critique of ecclesial life and liturgy when it has gone wrong? These are large questions, which I cannot answer fully within the parameters of this project. But they are questions urgently needed if the field of liturgy and ethics is to move forward, and I hope that by posing them, I can push conversation into a new stage.

4.1 THE LIMIT OF VIRTUE: INTEGRATING TELEOLOGY AND CHRISTIAN ESCHATOLOGY

The retrieval of virtue in contemporary moral philosophy and theological ethics began in earnest during the second half of the twentieth century. In a specifically Catholic context, this movement was driven in large part by renewed interest in the moral thought of Thomas Aquinas, whose robust understanding of virtue as counterpart to the natural law had been neglected for centuries in moral theology.[156] Alongside Catholic thinkers, a host of Protestant proponents of virtue ethics also emerged, fusing insights that had surfaced in moral philosophy, concerning the structure of moral development and the socially embedded character of virtue, with Christian convictions concerning moral agency, community, and the operation of grace. The result has been a revolution in twentieth and twenty-first century theological ethics, rich with opportunities for ecumenical exchange and fueling ethical insight in a variety of sectors.

Although specific proposals and areas of concern differ, there exists among theologians who engage virtue a general consensus regarding the warrants of the field itself. Virtue ethics, though rooted in a secular philosophical tradition, provides an exceptionally effective framework for interpreting the meaning of Christian of life before God. Of course, neither virtue ethics specifically nor moral theology generally claims to embrace and interpret every dimension of the Christian mystery. However, inasmuch as human living and therefore moral identity stand at the heart of a Christian understanding

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[156] Jean Porter, "Virtue Ethics," in *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Ethics*, ed. Robin Gill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 96-111; ibid., "Virtue," in *The Oxford Handbook of Theological Ethics*, ed. Gilbert Meilaender and William Werpehowski (London: Oxford University Press, 2005), 205-219; William C. Spohn, "The Return of Virtue Ethics," *Theological Studies* 53:1 (1992), 60-75.

of God, ethical theories are called upon to mediate significant theological meaning. And virtue ethics is the idiom of choice for many Christian thinkers today.

Joseph Kotva, whom I have cited previously, offers perhaps the best systematic defense of virtue ethics in this role. I would like to explore his argument further in order to establish a backdrop for my present discussion. As I indicated before, Kotva identifies three fundamental points of connection that enable a virtue framework to carry and interpret Christian theological meaning: sanctification, Christology, and Christian anthropology.[157] Briefly stated, Kotva argues that virtue theory works as a theoretical paradigm in Christian ethics because it renders explicit the teleological nature of human sanctification, makes room for Christ as the embodiment and ultimate exemplar of our true nature and *telos*, and agrees with a Christian view of human agency as falling somewhere between voluntarism and determinism.

My interest lies especially in the first two of Kotva's claims. Sanctification, he says, is essentially a teleological concept. It is a "process that involves the transformation of the self and the development of character traits or virtues" toward a determinate vision of the human good, which he names "conformity to Christ."[158] Kotva is careful to note that Christian belief adds to this general picture of moral development the principle of our utter dependence on grace. At every moment in the journey of sanctification, the human person relies on God's prior initiative and assistance. This does not render the person passive but rather requires a dual emphasis on human and divine effort. For Kotva, then,

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[157] Joseph Kotva, Jr., *The Christian Case for Virtue Ethics* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1996), see especially chapter 4.
[158] Ibid., 72-73.

virtue theory can simply be amended to endorse the Christian conviction of the priority of divine grace.

According to Kotva, virtue theory can likewise be amended to include the Christian belief that the consummation of the human journey lies beyond this life. Although neo-Aristotelian accounts of virtue do not entertain the notion of personal eschatology as such, Kotva maintains that the placement of the human *telos* beyond this world is fully able to be reconciled with virtue theory in general. He suggests, furthermore, that virtue theory actually shares with Christian faith the conviction that, indeed, moral progress is always partial and fragmentary. I have spoken of this already in terms of the "asymptotic" nature of human moral development, which does not in principle require a religious association of the goal of moral growth with fulfillment in God after death. For Christians, however, the *telos* is never fully achieved in this world not only because it is heuristic in nature and approached asymptotically (a view that I believe contemporary theories of virtue require) but also because it is, by definition, a gift of God fully realized only beyond the horizon of temporal life. The human moral journey traverses the boundary of death.

At the level of Christology, Kotva finds even more reason to affirm that virtue theory and Christian belief can be fruitfully reconciled. While Christians may use symbols like "heaven," "glorification," or "new creation" to describe the goal of human fulfillment in God, this *telos* receives its most concrete expression in the person of Christ himself. Writes Kotva, "Jesus of Nazareth embodies the true human good or end. Jesus Christ is not just another human being, but the paradigmatic human being."[159] The self-

[159] Ibid., 78.

disclosure of God in Christ is at the same time the normative disclosure of what it means to be fully and truly human. Jesus is therefore not simply a giver of moral rules or teachings but the concrete historical person in whose life we can discern clues of what human existence ought to look like. Jesus is the goal of our humanity, and to speak of Christian life or sanctification is to speak of the process of becoming like him. This faith conviction coincides usefully, for Kotva, with the role of exemplars in virtue theory.

Taken together, Kotva's account of sanctification and Christology provides a strong case for the alliance between Christian belief and virtue ethics, and it is a case that I find compelling. But I also believe that there is a limit to virtue language in a theological context, which Kotva has not adequately acknowledged. To speak of sanctification, without qualification, as an essentially teleological concept risks collapsing a theologically robust vision of eschatology into moral philosophy, albeit a version with theistic provisions. Sanctification – a symbol for the mystery of human life growing into the fullness of the mystery of God – may come to represent little more than a Christianized iteration of a secular teleological ethics. Relatedly, Christology may become little more than a theory of Christ as moral exemplar. This need not be the case, and I do not believe Kotva would object to the sort of concern that I am raising. My purpose is simply to add to his robust account of the connections between Christian faith and virtue ethics a boundary that seems essential. The question that lies at that boundary is this: is teleology, the basis of virtue ethics, an adequate framework for holding and interpreting Christian eschatology?

One might anticipate that the answer to this question is simply negative. Christian living is about the human aspiration to share in the mystery of God's own life and about

our conviction that this destiny will ultimately come to be realized in us and in all of creation. This is a destiny that lies beyond human understanding and beyond any hypothetical "perfection" that teleology can conceive. But I do not believe the matter is that simple. Sanctification has moral content. To be conformed to Christ, at least in this life, has moral content. If the authors whom I engaged in the last chapter are right, even the reality that is signified by the concept of deification has moral content. The mystery of God transforming humanity always meet us in the space of human life, in the space of the ordinary. And this is the territory of virtue ethics. We have, therefore, a key paradox. Christian living has moral content but an eschatological structure. There is continuity between our moral striving, which virtue ethics interprets teleologically, and our striving for the kingdom of God. That continuity is bounded, however, by the nature of the object toward which our striving as Christians is directed: a mystery that is not, in fact, an object at all, nor even the hypothetical fullness of virtue. It is mystery that touches morality but finally transcends it.

The paradox that I am describing testifies to the limit of virtue in a theological context. It is, in a definite sense, the moral theological expression of the paradox that drove the nature-grace debates of the twentieth century. A study of those debates is beyond the scope of this project, but the basic challenge is clear. Christian faith affirms that human beings, by virtue of the salvific work of Jesus Christ, possess a destiny in God that is fully continuous with human nature and human experience of the ordinary but which, at least in principle, is utterly distinct from what is inherent in the structure of the human. How then do we conceive of the interaction between the human and the divine? How does grace "perfect" nature in such a way as respects the integrity of each and the

distinction between them without interrupting the message of salvation itself? These are large questions. Although they are theoretical in character and perhaps abstruse, they touch the heart of Christian incarnational faith. At stake is the very possibility that God can be with us in the ordinary and transform but not eradicate creation in sharing the divine life.

Of course, the classic resolution of the paradox comes from Thomas Aquinas in his doctrine of the twofold beatitude of humanity.[160] This provides the architecture for much of his theological system, and it funds the distinctions that Thomas develops between natural law and divine law, faith and reason, and the natural and supernatural. Human beings, observes Thomas, naturally desire happiness, or the fulfillment of their good. Their acts are directed to a final end which is constitutive of their own nature. Human creatures are unique, however, inasmuch as they possess a twofold end or beatitude. One is a good which is proportioned to human nature, and which can be obtained, at least hypothetically, through the correct exercise of one's natural faculties. The other is a good which surpasses human nature and which human beings can obtain only through the power of God, i.e. with the help of grace, since it consists in participation in the divine nature itself. For Thomas, therefore, human beings exist at the intersection of two distinct teleologies. However, the natural and supernatural ends of human existence are also inextricably interrelated. Thomas speaks not of separate teleologies intersecting but of a single teleology with a twofold (*duplex*) character.

Given this twofold teleological architecture, Thomas can speak clearly of the distinction between the cardinal virtues, which are ordered to natural beatitude, and the

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[160] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* I-II, q. 1, art. 8; also q. 2, art. 7.

theological virtues, which are ordered to supernatural beatitude.[161] Yet because the natural and supernatural ends of human life belong to a single trajectory, he must further posit the existence of the infused virtues. These are habits, corresponding to the theological virtues, which perfect human action in regard to earthly matters yet by directing us to God, our final end.[162] It is not sufficient, for Thomas, to rely on the acquired virtues, formed through repeated action and ordered to natural perfection, nor even on the theological virtues, present through grace and ordered to supernatural perfection. There must exist an intermediate principle that integrates these two ends into a single human endeavor before God: a way of speaking of human transformation through grace that is not simply superimposed upon our natural capacities but woven into earthly existence. This is the purpose of the infused virtues.

Of course, the general notion that the acquired virtues, those habits which advance us toward our natural end, are insufficient in themselves to account for true human perfection is rooted in Augustine. His view is even stronger than that of Aquinas. For Augustine, the natural virtues are not simply imperfect; they are not true virtues at all. There is in fact only one genuine human trajectory – a single teleology, a single horizon of human fulfillment – and its aim is eternal life with God. To rely on moral habits that are directed to earthly purposes rather than this supreme goal is to mistake for true virtues what Augustine is alleged to have named "splendid vices." Jennifer Herdt's book, *Putting on Virtue: The Legacy of the Splendid Vices*, traces the history of interpretation around

[161] *Summa theologiae* I-II, q. 62, a. 1-2.
[162] *Summa theologiae* I-II, q. 63, a. 3.

Augustine on this matter. I would like to highlight some of her key arguments, in order to broaden my present reflection on the limit of virtue language in a theological context.

Herdt's overall project is a historical one, and her argument is genealogical. She wishes to trace a path from the premodern suspicion of acquired virtue, which attempts to guard against a false assertion of human moral agency, to the modern suspicion of acquired virtue, which has emphasized instead the value of authenticity and independence from external moral influence.[163] However, my present interest in Herdt's work lies more narrowly in her treatment of Augustine as the progenitor of these misgivings about virtue and habituation, whose influence endures but who is not himself strictly to be credited (or blamed) for later incarnations of these anxieties. I focus, therefore, on Herdt's reading of Augustine himself and more specifically on her view of Augustine's critique of pagan virtue.[164]

Augustine himself never called pagan virtues "splendid vices." He certainly did argue, however, that pagan virtues could be nothing more than a mere semblance of true virtues. Herdt points out that this argument operated at two levels. First, pagans fall short of true virtue because they fail to direct their actions to their true final end, which is God. "No one without true piety – that is, true worship of the true God – can have true virtue."[165] Inasmuch as pagans could subject their passions to the rule of reason and order their behavior to the common good, it is possible for Augustine to speak of partial progress toward virtue, and he even raises up the example of virtuous Romans for Christians to admire. Pagans for Augustine may therefore be virtuous, says Herdt, at a

[163] Ibid., 1.
[164] Ibid., ch. 2.
[165] Augustine, *City of God* V, 19.

first-order level, insofar as they attempt to pursue virtue for its own sake. But genuine, second-order virtue remains impossible without directing all things to God. Thus, to speak of pagan "virtue" is only to speak by means of analogy. Second, Augustine presses the charge further by arguing that every pagan attempt at virtue is contaminated by pride (*superbia*). This is a much stronger claim than the first. In the absence of an orientation to the highest good, pagan virtue, even at its best, is directed only to the enjoyment of honor and glory. Even if honor is sought from the virtuous, which in some sense approaches the ideal of virtue for its own sake, nevertheless the virtues become self-regarding and by definition corrupted.

Herdt points out that what is really at stake for Augustine in this second level of his argument is not simply that pagan virtue "misfires" by directing action toward the self but more crucially that in prizing the achievement of honor, one overestimates one's moral worth and finally one's moral capacity. Pagan virtue is prideful because it causes happiness to depend on the self. It comprises an ultimate aspiration to self-sufficiency – to winning honor through moral exertion – instead of a radical dependence on divine grace. The question then, for Herdt, is how and to what extent Augustine can really adopt the eudaimonism of pagan ethics. For the classical philosophers, human happiness consists precisely in a form of human activity. Virtuous activity is not simply a means to happiness but constitutive of happiness itself. Aristotle indulged in some speculation about moral luck – about the possibility that, apart from virtuous living, certain external conditions might be needed for human happiness to obtain fully. The Stoics, however, went even further in their contention that virtue in itself is sufficient to happiness, for in

order for happiness to be regarded as such, it must be secure and immune from external contingencies.

Augustine, notes Herdt, concurs with the Stoics that true happiness must be secure, but he cannot follow them in their insistence that virtue alone suffices. Virtue names a form of human activity, and in Augustine's worldview, human beings cannot by themselves or by their own acts achieve supreme happiness. Hence, while final beatitude requires virtue, it cannot consist only in virtue. Moreover, says Augustine, human life on earth is inescapably beset with woes that make it absurd to claim happiness, even if one possesses demonstrably virtuous qualities. Happiness must indeed be secure and enduring, but to suppose that virtuous activity alone can achieve such a state of peace is untenable. Virtue as the basis of human action must have some limits.

There are, of course, different types of virtue, both for Augustine and later for Aquinas. Their views are not identical. Augustine states the limits of natural virtue much more strongly than Aquinas, claiming that in the absence of faith, hope, and charity to orient them to the supreme good, natural virtues are not genuine virtues at all. Aquinas prefers to think of purely natural virtues as imperfect, awaiting the advent of the theological virtues and the infusion of grace to elevate our natural capacities. Yet both thinkers agree that virtues as such – and this includes the theological virtues, which are true virtues for Augustine – cannot on their own account for our final beatitude. There must always be something reserved for divine initiative, consummated eschatologically. Eternal life cannot be a matter of human doing alone. Even if it is made virtuous through grace, human activity still does not add up to final beatitude. A possible exception to this claim is the virtue of charity, which for both Augustine and Aquinas is – in its *fullness* –

synonymous with eternal life.[166] Yet even charity does not, in this life, ever achieve fullness. This is not only because we are sinful but also because we are finite. We depend on God not only to overcome our moral limits, signified in Augustine by the failure of the natural virtues to apprehend our supreme good, but also to overcome the natural limits of life that stand in the way of perfect beatitude. These limits include the vagrancies of moral luck and also the fact that human activity, even when virtuous and therefore shaped by charity, is insufficient. Only when human activity is taken up into the activity of God, the essence of God's own life, in the *perfection* of charity, can we speak of final human happiness.

I will return momentarily to the unique character of charity. At this stage it should be clear, however, that virtue is limited for Augustine in at least two ways. First, virtue cannot on its own make human life on earth happy. Even if virtue is genuine, even if it directs human action to God, happiness is always circumscribed by the contingencies of natural existence. This is the problem of moral luck and the problem of suffering. "So long, therefore, as we are beset by this weakness, this plague, this disease, how shall we dare to say that we are safe? And if not safe, then how can we be already enjoying our final beatitude?"[167] Second, though virtue is certainly necessary for true happiness – that is, for the realization of eternal life with God – it cannot alone account for the supreme good. Eternal life is a divine gift, and so it must originate with divine action, even if in some regard it entails human action. To suppose otherwise would be to include in the orbit of virtue that which is in fact hubris: false virtue that aspires to self-sufficiency.

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[166] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* I-II, q. 67, a. 6.
[167] Augustine, *City of God* XIX, 4.

This second point would seem to leave Augustine in trouble. If it is not the practice of virtue itself which constitutes the supreme good, then the goal of eternal life itself appears to be an external good. Human activity is not constitutive of that good but at best a means to it. There would, in this case, be no such thing as virtue pursued for its own sake – only virtue pursued for the sake of that external good, a divine reward that Augustine calls "eternal life." Moreover, if this is the case, then to pursue virtue is once again purely self-referential practice. One seeks to grow in virtue for one's own sake, that is, so that one can merit a heavenly reward.

Herdt wishes to defend Augustine against this caricature, and she does so by drawing attention to the essence of his notion of "eternal life" and to the evolution of his thought. For Augustine, eternal life or final beatitude consists substantively in the fruition or enjoyment of God, i.e. the love of God for God's own sake. His early distinction, in *On Christian Doctrine*, between the use of things (*uti*) and their enjoyment (*frui*) seems, at first, to produce troubling consequences. If we are to love earthly things (including virtue, our neighbor, etc.) only on account of God, who alone should be loved for God's own sake, then our love of things in this life has only an instrumental value. However, Herdt observes, Augustine seems hesitant to claim that we should "use" things in this way, least of all other people. It is a tension that Augustine later resolves under the idea of "properly ordered love." It is not that we must treat virtue or other human beings as a means to God but rather that we ought to love them in light of God. They can be loved for their own sake, as long as this love is rightly ordered to God. Of course, human beings do not achieve that proper ordering of love with much consistency. Sin abounds in this

life, and this is the case even in our most sacred, God-oriented practices, a serious problem that I will discuss in the second movement of this chapter.

For now, however, the central point from Herdt is that that virtue for Augustine is not a means to eternal life, conceived as some kind of heavenly state of affairs obtained as a reward for good behavior. Virtue does not have a purely instrumental value. Instead, virtue is an expression of the perfection of the love of God, which is the enjoyment of God. Thus, virtue is at least partially constitutive of our final end. Far from being self-interested or self-referential, it enables human beings to love themselves *properly*. Far from using or exploiting others, it enables human beings to love their neighbor *properly*, for in fact there is, according to Augustine, no genuine love or enjoyment of the Triune God except as shared in relationship with others.

If according to Herdt Augustine's account of our supreme good necessarily entails human activity, then the problem of reconciling human and divine agency emerges. How can the life of virtue be partially constitutive of final beatitude? How does one account for the remainder? For Herdt, the solution to these questions lies in view of Christian moral agency as "responsive" in character. It is only on God's initiative – as a result of God's prior action – that we enjoy the ultimate good, but to truly enjoy that end requires an intentional human response: the life lived in virtue. Importantly, the life of virtue is itself a divine gift, rather than a product of pure moral exertion, and it is here, says Herdt, where Augustine stresses the virtue of humility.

Having dwelled closely with Herdt's interpretation of Augustine, I think we can see much more clearly where the limits of virtue lie. Virtue is a necessary but not sufficient element of human happiness. It cannot stand alone. It requires, on the one hand,

divine initiative met with an adequate human response and, on the other hand, a state of life that is adequately free from disturbances for something like "true happiness" to be achieved. In what remains of her analysis, Herdt discusses the problem of Christian hypocrisy, Augustine's critique of theater, and imitation of Christ as a core element in the process of conversion. This enables her, in conversation with Augustine, to consider positively what human beings are able to achieve in partnership with God, in spite of these explicit limits on virtue.

It is worth emphasizing, perhaps more strongly than Herdt does, that the positive features of human moral development nonetheless remain circumscribed. In human life, *neither* of the conditions mentioned above actually obtains: human beings never respond in a fully adequate way to the prompting of grace, and they are never free from the perils and disturbances of earthly existence. The process of conversion is precisely that, a process – one whose end is approached but never achieved. The goal itself is perceived but only dimly. For human beings are dependent on God not just at the beginning – not only because they rely on prior divine initiative – but also at the end – because the achievement of true happiness and true perfection is by definition a gift that is hoped for. The end of human existence remains, for Augustine, an eschatological promise, which from the standpoint of earthly life is a purely hypothetical (even if confidently expected) reality. It is true, of course, that Augustine imagines us to enjoy beatitude "in some measure" during this life through the exercise of genuine virtue. But *final* beatitude, the perfection of the love of God and enjoyment of God in Godself, is deferred beyond the limits of this ordinary life. As a result, the fullness of virtue, which is partially constitutive of our final end, must wait for the arrival of the world to come.

According to my own reading of Augustine, however, his view of the limit of virtue is even stronger than this. Virtues are qualities that belong, strictly speaking, only to this life. It is here where human moral effort fails and where human beings are subject to contingency, and so it is here where the virtues are needed and where the goal of perfect virtue must be strived for. The life to come, however, is that state in which human beings by grace have achieved perfection and where no adversity affects them. In that final beatitude, the virtues are not needed. Reflecting on the cardinal virtues in his exposition on the Psalms, Augustine makes the point clearly:

> These virtues are granted to us now in the valley of weeping, but from them we progress to a single virtue. And what will that be? The virtue of contemplating God alone. Our prudence will not be necessary there, because we shall encounter no evils we need to avoid. And what of the rest, my brothers and sisters? There will be no need for justice, where no one will be in poverty and in need of our assistance. Nor will there be any occasion for temperance, because no unruly passions will be there to require control. Fortitude will have no place either, where no distress exists to be endured.[168]

Each of the cardinal virtues, says Augustine, will pass away in the world to come. Free from the burden of human weakness and contingency, life with God has no need for them. This is precisely the goal of human life: to move beyond our present state in which moral virtues, on account of our limited nature, must step in to govern and guide us.

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[168] Augustine, *Exposition of the Psalms*, Maria Boulding O.S.B., trans. (New York: New City Press, 2002), 199. This volume labels the text of Augustine incorrectly as *Exposition of Psalm 83*. The quotation is from *Exposition of Psalm 84*, no. 11.

Stated in this way, Augustine's position seems to contradict Herdt's interpretation. Recall that, for Herdt, the inclusion of the virtues in Augustine's vision of final beatitude is necessary to defend him against the charge that he sees the virtues as means to an external good. Virtuous human activity must be partially constitutive of our supreme good, or there can be no such thing as virtue pursued for its own sake. How can this be so if Augustine says that in the achievement of our final end they pass away? Do the virtues have a place in the world to come, or not? If they do not, does Augustine's eudaimonistic framework come entirely undone?

In *City of God*, Augustine offers a slightly different image of the virtues as they relate to final human beatitude. He describes the virtues not as having passed away but rather at rest:

> There the virtues shall no longer be struggling against any vice or evil, but shall enjoy the reward of victory, the eternal peace which no adversary shall disturb. This is the final blessedness, this the ultimate consummation, the unending end. Here, indeed, we are said to be blessed when we have such peace as can be enjoyed in a good life; but such blessedness is mere misery compared to that final felicity.[169]

Perhaps, then, moral virtues do not pass away in eternal life but enter into a state of repose. They are present but not active, because true peace does not require their activity. Again, however, this interpretation runs into trouble. Virtues for Augustine and for the classical philosophers are *by definition* active: they name a form of human activity which is constitutive of happiness. When Augustine speaks of the virtues at peace in the life to

[169] Augustine, City of God XIX.10.

come, he cannot therefore mean that they are inactive. Instead, he means that they are *free from struggle*. This is what distinguishes eternal life from the life of virtue led on earth.[170]

This does not, however, resolve the paradox at hand. Augustine quite clearly states that in the world to come the cardinal virtues will pass away, and yet he envisions that final beatitude as consisting (at least in part) in the perfection of virtue. We might appeal here to the difference between moral virtues and theological virtues. Perhaps it is sensible for Augustine to say that the cardinal virtues (which are moral virtues) pass away in eternal life, for these involve a temporal orientation which is no longer present in the world to come. Augustine is already suspicious of moral virtues like these in the absence of faith, hope, and charity to order them rightly. So it is unsurprising that he does not see moral virtues themselves as constitutive of eternal life. It is not moral virtue but theological virtue that accounts for final beatitude. However, Augustine actually repeats his claim relative to the theological virtues. Not only the cardinal virtues but also two of the theological virtues will pass away. In *On Christian Doctrine*, Augustine discusses the primacy of charity in 1 Corinthians and concludes that "when man shall have reached the eternal world, while the other two graces [faith and hope] will fail, love will remain greater and more assured."[171] Both faith and hope are virtues of *this world*, which are not needed in the world to come. For in that final state of blessedness, what is seen now in faith will be seen directly and what is hoped for will be possessed. This seems to contradict the teaching of authorities no less formidable than Irenaeus and Gregory of

[170] Augustine, City of God XIX.27.
[171] Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine* I.43.

Nyssa, who expected faith and hope to be radically transformed but not eradicated in the vision of God.

What we have in Augustine then is a clear view that all of the virtues will pass away in the world to come, including the theological virtues, with the notable exception of charity. This is because charity is identical with Godself, and final beatitude is nothing less than the direct enjoyment of God in Godself through union with him in Christ. Charity – the love of God and the love of the neighbor in God – is not just any virtue. It is the perfection of virtue itself under which every other virtue is subsumed and into which every other virtue is resolved. The other virtues will not "pass away" in the sense of having been eradicated. Instead, they will "pass over" into the fullness of charity which is union with God: summed up and incorporated in the enjoyment of divine love. Virtue, in that sense, *does* persist in eternal life, though in a qualified fashion. Virtue persists in the form of perfect charity. However, charity here stands not for the provisional, rightful ordering of human desires in our earthly life but for perfect human love of God, which is made possible only in eschatological union with God. To the extent that it names a distinctively human activity, human beings loving God in eternal life, charity is still a virtue. But that human activity is united so closely with divine activity – with God's own being and life *as love* – that charity stands in for a mystery much deeper than simply rightly ordered loving. In my view, the virtue of charity becomes for Augustine a symbol of that which is beyond virtue itself: the mystery of human participation in the Trinitarian life. Charity begins historically, as a virtue for loving God and the neighbor rightly and ends eschatologically as a symbol of divine union.

This brings us finally back to the central question of this section: is teleology, the basis of virtue ethics, an adequate framework for holding and interpreting Christian eschatology? The language of virtue, we have seen, does have certain limits in a theological context. The life of perfect virtue toward which human existence is supposed to aspire – the *telos* of human moral formation – is analogous but not identical to the eschatological consummation of all things in God. I believe this is why Augustine relativizes the virtues in eschatological perspective, arguing that even though they make partial human goodness possible in this life, the virtues will finally be transcended. He sees that virtues are a helpful way of naming and achieving goodness in *this life*, but also that the fullness they point toward is that which lies beyond this life in the fullness of charity, the abundance of God's own being. I concede that it is still possible to speak of virtue persisting in eternal life under the form of charity, so long as one acknowledges charity itself is a symbol for the mystery of life with God, which is not strictly identical to the hypothetical life of perfect virtue that serves as the end of teleological ethics.

I argue, in short, that virtue theory offers a specifically temporal model or heuristic for naming toward an eternal and eschatological reality. This is not to minimize the importance of the virtues, for as I have said before, the eternal does not meet us anywhere except in the space of ordinary existence. Christian life has moral content within an eschatological structure. As a result, the role of the virtues is precisely to describe how an eschatological reality expresses itself through human ways of being in this present world. The virtues may not in themselves provide the substance of our final human destiny, but they do provide a way of naming what human life looks like when drawn into the promises of God. They provide a language for describing the good that

flows from human participation in the holy for which we are destined, and they serve to help us deepen that participation, to discern what embodying God's future in the present must look like for ourselves, our families, and our communities.

This participation in the holiness of God, I have argued, is rooted in liturgy. Liturgy and ethics are linked together because in the Eucharist we encounter Christ in us and ourselves in Christ. We emerge from the Lord's Supper as a people rooted in God's eschatological future and sent into the world to embody that future, which is already breaking through in history. This is our sacramental identity and mission, and it is the basis of Christian ethics. Within this kind of ethics, the virtues are marks of our sacramental enjoyment of God's life through God's Son in a mode of anticipation, which underlies our moral conduct in the present. The virtues, in us, are a means of glimpsing the world to come, but more importantly, of pouring that future into the present, through the work of holiness and the pursuit of justice.

This does not mean that we always succeed. For virtues, like sacraments and like liturgy itself, are a means of experiencing what is already here but not yet fully realized. Christian living habitually falls short of its goal. Although holiness may break through in moments of grace, it is always still on the way, not yet arrived. The present is marked by moral failure and our common life is marked by injustice. Liturgy too lives within the space of human failure. In the Eucharist, the very source of our call to holiness, sin and vice are already to be found. In light of that fact, I turn now to what I will call the problem of liturgical vice.

4.2 THE LIMIT OF LITURGY: ON THE PROBLEM OF LITURGICAL VICE

What makes liturgy good? By what measure can Christian persons and communities say that liturgy has been done well? Evaluative criteria relative to liturgical worship will, of course, emerge from an understanding of its purpose. We know whether liturgy is good, whether liturgy has been done well, in light of what liturgy is for. There exists, however, no universal Christian consensus on the meaning and purpose of liturgy. My present proposal tries to be ecumenical in scope, rooted in an eschatological sensibility that can speak to Christians of many branches, but in the final analysis it offers a perspective on liturgy and ethics from the standpoint of a Catholic Christian. My stress on the eucharistic foundation of the question is also ecumenical in origin, but I believe it is to be expected that this line of thinking will appeal more directly to those who belong to "liturgical churches" with a fairly high theology of worship and the sacraments.

To provide an account of what makes liturgy good will thus require an appreciation for a wide variety of Christian views in relation to its purpose. South African Reformed theologian Dirkie Smit considers four possibilities.[172] First, we might consider worship good insofar as it is pleasant. Does it draw people in? Is it moving, inspiring, attractive? These may seem at first glance to be purely aesthetic or external criteria, but they are not to be taken lightly. In order for worship to be meaningful it must fulfill fundamental human needs and desires. It must speak to the human heart, brought into relationship with God, in order to matter. Second, we might inquire whether worship serves any useful ethical purpose. Does it transform hearts and minds in the direction of

[172] Dirkie Smit, "What Makes Worship Good?" in *Liturgy and Ethics: New Contributions from Reformed Perspectives*, Studies in Reformed Theology, vol. 33 (Leidein, Netherlands: Brill, 2017), 19-48.

gospel values? Does it contribute to individual and collective moral formation? Is it a source of motivation in the work of social and political transformation? Again, these appear to be external criteria. The value of worship is adjudicated on the basis of its efficacy in bringing about goods external to the practice itself. However, the abundant literature on liturgy and ethics calls this assumption into question. The link between worship and the good life is rooted in the nature of liturgical worship itself. Third, we might consider whether worship fulfills its own internal purposes. Worship is good in and of itself, and it is done well precisely to the extent that its inherent purpose is intentionally pursued and achieved. Here we find a staggering variety of Christian opinions across history and across the branches of the Christian family tree. Is the intrinsic purpose of worship to praise God? To hear the Word of God? To find nourishment in the Eucharist? Fourth, we might ask whether worship performs well what it ought to bring about. Does it effectively perform remembrance of Jesus Christ? Does it perform *koinonia*? Does it perform an awareness of the work of the Spirit?

These four approaches to assessing the value of liturgical worship obviously overlap in significant ways. Each line of questioning is important, and each one invites robust engagement with the diversity of Christian views on the meaning of liturgy. For my present agenda, however, I believe that Smit's next question is most helpful. Perhaps, he contends, we must ask not only what makes worship good but also what makes it *not* good. For it is not often – if ever – the case that our worship is adequately inspiring, ethically valuable, internally coherent, or effectively performed. The bible itself, Smit notes, speaks far more often of worship that is not good, not done well – of worship that corrupts and betrays, of worship that indicts and scandalizes, of worship that is

displeasing to God. One thinks of Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 11, scolding the community for dividing themselves into factions and failing to share the sacred meal equally. There is only one extant attestation to the institution narrative in Pauline literature, and here it is bookended by a solemn condemnation of abuses at the Lord's Supper: "Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be answerable for the body and blood of the Lord."[173] This sense of warning, argues Smit, is carried in different ways throughout much of the New Testament.[174] In the Hebrew scriptures, the prophetic books are especially charged with this spirit. Isaiah laments the wickedness of Judah and enunciates God's displeasure with its worship: "bringing offerings is futile; incense is an abomination to me […] I cannot endure solemn assemblies with iniquity."[175] Malachi strikes a similar note: "Oh, that someone among you would shut the temple doors, so that you would not kindle fire on my altar in vain! […] You bring what has been taken by violence or is lame or sick, and this you bring as your offering!"[176] Smit concludes, quite persuasively, that "it actually seems as if the whole Bible, from beginning to end, is one long tradition of warning against ways of worship that are not good and not pleasing to God."[177]

In light of that witness, what is called for is a posture in Christian liturgical worship that is deeply self-critical, aware of the extent to which human beings can and do go wrong in our religious practices, no matter how sacred or how charged with divine encounter these practices may be. Liturgy is in every instance a human practice, and we

[173] 1 Corinthians 11:27.
[174] Smit, 39.
[175] Isaiah 1:13.
[176] Malachi 1:10, 13.
[177] Smit, 39.

must expect it to be marked by human failure. This is the sort of reality which the field of liturgy and ethics must face, because it is precisely at the intersection of religious observance and the moral life where this vital problem emerges. Human life does not simply end where worship begins. We bring to worship all of the gifts and liabilities that mark our daily existence, and this includes our personal and corporate moral deformities. How then do we deal with the serious challenge of biblical faith, which sees peace, justice, and rectitude of will as *preconditions* for authentic worship? What might a sufficiently critical ethical hermeneutic of liturgy look like?

For Smit, the answer lies in an augmented version of the classic liturgical adage: *lex orandi, lex credendi*. To these should be added the ethical component, *lex vivendi*. Each of these serves as a criterion for critiquing and informing the others. The way we worship should throw light upon what we believe, and this in turn must inform the way we live. But this should also work in reverse. Writes Smit, "sometimes the way we think and/or the way we live can critically engage the way we worship, in order to remind us that there are *contradictions and betrayals*."[178] This reflexive critical awareness seems obviously necessary, but it has not been so in much of the modern Christian period. The Liturgical Movement has restored to Catholic worship, at least, a much needed sense of justice as a necessary *outcome* of our religious observances. Yet the influence still seems to flow mostly in one direction. Liturgy is a source of ethics not its subject matter. Liturgy is a sacred space, set apart, and insulated in many ways from the scrutiny of external ethical criteria. Too infrequently does one find serious critical engagements with liturgical worship itself, willing to ask: what makes liturgy *not* good? There are some

[178] Smit, 40. Emphasis mine.

notable exceptions among contemporary theologians, which I reference in the remainder of this chapter. Nonetheless, Catholic culture in general and even most Catholic theology seems exceedingly optimistic about the moral outcomes of liturgy. We live in a Catholic religious environment where the phrase "liturgical abuse" turns up more discussion about priests who diverge from the words of the Mass than about the clerical abuse of children, social-economic segregation in churches, or the exclusion of women from ministry.

What is actually obvious, then, is that we Christians need a much more explicit and much more ardently developed set of tools for speaking about liturgy critically *and* faithfully. It is not a contradiction to believe that in our worship as the people of God we are touched by grace but also still mired in our shortcomings. It is exactly the meaning of a sacrament – and the Eucharist is the primordial sacrament – that God's amazing grace meets us in the messiness and ambiguity of ordinary life. Therefore, to worship faithfully positively requires critical awareness toward that worship. This critical sensibility should not undermine our appreciation for the utter gratuity of God's grace given in liturgy but instead should intensify it. God meets us precisely where we live and as we are. Grace inhabits the same world as sin. Liturgy is not only the foundation of Christian ethics; it is one of the key areas in which Christian ethics must do its work. To strike this balance between a critical approach to liturgy and our genuine confidence in the gifts of God experienced liturgically is a difficult but necessary task for Christian theology.

Any critical hermeneutic of liturgy must begin from a clear-sighted recognition of how and where liturgy has gone wrong and continues to go wrong. It must begin from an assessment of those "contradictions and betrayals" – betrayals of those very values that liturgy is supposed to inscribe in us – that call forth lament and demand to be redressed.

Scripture surely contains references to the positive moral consequences of liturgy and worship. In Galatians, Paul writes that baptism calls for an acknowledgement of our basic human unity and equality, realized in union with Christ.[179] He offers the liturgical hymn in Philippians as the basis of his exhortation to practice unity and humility, shunning selfishness and ambition.[180] In the gospel of Luke, it is in the breaking of the bread that the eyes of Jesus's companions at Emmaus are opened.[181] But it is a basic feature of human life and human practices that we fall short. Our religious practices in particular contradict themselves. They not only come up short of the goodness they are meant to embody, but they may even lead us into harmful moral territory. To be willing to look at liturgy truthfully, to see not only its promise but also its shortcomings, is a key step in the direction of a developed liturgical ethics.

I find the best and clearest example of this critical endeavor in the scholarship of theological ethicist Katie Grimes. She provides not only an incisive analysis of the dark alliance between white supremacy and the Catholic practices of Baptism and Eucharist, but also a helpful theoretical framing of this critique under the notion of vice.[182] In conversation with her work, I would like to develop the concept of "liturgical vice," to deploy it as a key feature of the critical ethical hermeneutic of liturgy that is required, and finally to integrate it with my previous reflections on eschatology.

To speak of white supremacy in terms of vice, says Grimes, is to make us aware of the ways in which bodies are formed and deformed as a consequence of the cultural

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[179] Galatians 3:28.
[180] Philippians 2:1-11.
[181] Luke 24:30-33.
[182] Katie M. Grimes, "Breaking the Body of Christ: The Sacraments of Initiation in a Habit of White Supremacy," *Political Theology* 18:1 (February 2017), 22-43.

habitat in which they live and the practices that infuse these bodies with meaning. White supremacy, from this analytical perspective, is both the habitat in which bodies are shaped and the habit these bodies acquire. Both as individual and collective bodies, we are inducted into this vice which "enables and disposes moral agents to engage in the structurally and interpersonally violent sins of white supremacy."[183] Grimes wishes to emphasize that the church is not immune from this process, nor can we credit the church with resisting the reign of white supremacy. The church is a corporate body that lives and moves within the habitat of white supremacy and as such it carries the habit of white supremacy in its history and in its heart. What is needed, therefore, is a radical shift in the way we imagine the church, its practices, and its ethics:

> This corporately vicious operation of white supremacy within the corporate body of Christ requires theologians to change the way they conceive of liturgy, ethics, and the relation between the two. In pervading the church's corporate body, I contend, the vice of white supremacy permeates all of its practices, no matter how sacred. While scholars increasingly describe the sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist as partial solutions to the scourge of white supremacy, my research unveils their alliance with it. The sacraments of baptism and Eucharist as practiced historically have lacked the power to disrupt the church's idolatrous attachment to white supremacy. At times, these sacraments have even acted as rites of initiation into white supremacy. Rather than proposing these sacraments as

[183] Ibid., 22.

even partial antidotes to the vices of a presumed external culture, this paper chronicles the way in which these very practices have been corrupted by it.[184]

The analytical language of vice provides for Grimes a twofold critique. The church's liturgical practices have not only (1) failed to form individual and collective Christian bodies in a way that might resist the rule of white supremacy, but have also (2) actively contributed to the formation of these bodies in a habit of white supremacy and hence to the perpetuation of this vice in the culture at large.

Unmasking this reality is in large part a historical project. Grimes offers an account of how baptism and the Eucharist in particular have served the agenda of white supremacy in the era of chattel slavery and later in the context of Jim Crowe. In baptism, she sees an especially insidious pattern. Contrary to idealistic assumptions, baptism was never the enemy of chattel slavery. It never attested to a fundamental equality among Christians which might serve the dignity of black slaves crushed under the power of their white masters. To the contrary, the practice of baptism played a key role in the symbolic system of slavery. Having been stolen from their homeland and separated physically from their kin, black men and women were baptized in order to render them spiritually alienated from their previous lives and from those native ties that would provide a social identity apart from the rule of their white masters. Baptism stripped black persons of their individuality and transformed them into a mass of "blacks," subsumed under the identity of their owners.[185] The waters of baptism were, in this sense, a sacrament of initiation into inhumanity and into the system of slavery itself. This coincided, argues Grimes, with the

[184] Ibid., 23.
[185] Ibid., 25.

systematic infantilization of black folks, who now with no kin to inherit property from were like permanent children – incapable of ownership, dependent on their masters, and with no claim to freedom. Grimes documents the ways in which the Catholic Church, in particular, deployed the sacrament of baptism as an instrument of social control over black bodies. In spite of faithful resistance by black Christians – who saw in scripture a God of liberation and in baptism the possibility of crossing dangerous waters into the promised land – the sacrament remained in the hands of white Christians a ritual for maintaining the racial hierarchy.

The Eucharist, in turn, served this system of white supremacy by setting apart the space of salvation and spiritual nourishment as a space of white control. Black slaves could only be admitted to the Eucharist with the permission of their masters. Grimes connects this system of sacramental exclusion to horror stories, invented by white masters and circulated among blacks, that rebel slaves would be dismembered and eaten. Says Grimes, "These fears carry Eucharistic undertones. Black slaves were incorporated into the body of Christ not by consuming the flesh and blood of Jesus, but by being consumed, digested, and excreted."[186] Along with baptism, the Eucharist continued to serve the maintenance of white social control after slavery, into the era of Jim Crow. The racial segregation of parishes and neighborhoods was ritualized liturgically in order to counteract any notion that baptism or the sharing of the eucharistic meal might imply spiritual or social equality.

According to Grimes, historical realism about the sacraments and the role they have played in the maintenance of white supremacy requires a corresponding theological

[186] Ibid., 31.

realism. She offers a critique of what she calls the "sacramental optimism" of two significant figures in liturgy and ethics, Stanley Hauerwas and William Cavanaugh. In truth, this is a pointed critique of the theological method of postliberal theology and radical orthodoxy, specifically as it comes to be expressed in sacramental theology and ecclesiology.

However, by selecting one Protestant and one Catholic theologian, Grimes effectively draws attention to a *widespread* theological problem. We contemporary Christian thinkers, faced with a tide of social and moral crises – from racism and white supremacy, to climate change, poverty, violence against women, and even a global pandemic – flee very quickly to liturgy and the sacraments as a panacea. Perhaps nostalgic for moral clarity and the simple sacramental piety of a previous era, we see in our religious practices an obvious solution, and we interpret them idealistically. It is this impulse that Grimes wishes to interrupt.

According to Grimes, Hauerwas and Cavanaugh in particular ground their method in an Augustinian cosmology of two cities. Christians find themselves living at the intersection of two distinct but overlapping societies: one worldly and one sacred. It is the role of the church, and its practices, to live toward the sacred and to build a countercultural community that can witness to salvation and proclaim redemption to a world unredeemed. It is the sole responsibility of the church to *be itself* and therefore to engage as effectively as possible the practices that form it as a community of witness in light of the foundational narrative of Jesus Christ. Thus, Hauerwas and Cavanaugh meet with suspicion any Christian view of politics or Christian aspiration to social transformation that compromises this mission. These efforts are, at best, beside the point

and, at worst, an endangerment of the church's clarity of purpose and integrity of identity.

I will leave aside an extended consideration of whether this general picture is fair to the theologians in question or to postliberal theology and radical orthodoxy in general. It is worth noting that Hauerwas has defended himself, somewhat convincingly, against the charge that he and thinkers like him – often called communitarians or narrativists – espouse a sectarian ethics.[187] A number of writers, including Lisa Cahill and Terrence P. Reynolds, have argued for a more nuanced view than commentators on the debate between "communitarians" and "universalists" usually hold, a middle ground which was lost in the debate between the two camps during the last few decades.[188] It is arguably quite possible to affirm both the decisive particularity of Christian witness and also that human experience in general should yield some kind of ethical criteria or common ground for the work of justice. Narrative theology and an emphasis on the importance of the biblical and liturgical grounds of Christian identity does not necessarily imply sectarianism or a total unwillingness to engage in a pluralistic world for the sake of social change. In any case, Grimes is right that the theology of Hauerwas contains, as she calls it, an "ecclesiology of battened down hatches" and a corresponding "sacramental

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[187] See Stanley Hauerwas, *Christian Existence Today* (Durham, NC: The Labyrinth Press, 1988). For Hauerwas's response within the context of the debate with James Gustafson, see Stanley Hauerwas and L. Gregory Jones, "Introduction," in *Why Narrative?*, 1-18 (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1989). For Gustafson's initial critique, see James M. Gustafson, "The Sectarian Temptation: Reflections on Theology, the Church, and the University," *Proceedings of the Catholic Theological Society* 40 (1985), 83-94.
[188] Lisa Cahill, "Community versus Universals: A Misplaced Debate in Christian Ethics," *The Annual of the Society of Christian Ethics* 18 (1998), 3-12. Terrence P. Reynolds, "A Conversation Worth Having: Hauerwas and Gustafson on Substance in Theological Ethics," *The Journal of Religious Ethics* 28:3 (2000), 395-421.

optimism" that interrupts any serious critique of liturgy and the sacraments.[189] The boundaries of the church, for Cavanaugh also, are sharply drawn and ethical wisdom moves only in one direction: from the church and its practices to the world in need of redemption.[190]

As Grimes defines it, sacramental optimism is "the belief that the church's practices can, if enacted and understood properly, possess a demonstrable capacity to resist the atomizing individualism of the modern world and thereby enable the church to performatively receive its identity as the body of Christ."[191] There are, in my view, two problems with this belief. First, it assumes that religious practices work, as it were, automatically. If only we would perform these rituals well – and "well" here refers to their formal and semantic correspondence with biblical and liturgical tradition – then the sacraments would generate in us and in the community of faith the kind of character that can bear witness to distortions of the outside world and embody for that world an alternative possibility. If our practices fail to do this, it is assumed that they have not been performed well, and perhaps more specifically that the individuals who participate in them were not sufficiently or correctly engaged. In a Catholic context, this view is sometimes tethered to a basic principle of sacramental theology: namely, that the power of the sacraments to effect what they signify works *ex opere operato* – on the basis of

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[189] Grimes focuses her critique of Hauerwas on *A Community of Character: Toward a Constructive Christian Social Ethic* , first edition (Collegeville, Liturgical Press, 1991); *The Hauerwas Reader* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001); and Stanley Hauerwas and William H. Willimon, *Resident Aliens: Life in the Christian Colony* (Abingdon Press, 1989).
[190] Grimes focuses her critique of Cavanaugh on *Torture and Eucharist: Theology, Politics, and the Body of Christ* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 1998).
[191] Grimes, 34.

Christ already having completed his salvific work and the ritual itself having been done correctly. This norm of sacramental efficacy is bounded only by the readiness of the individual and the community to receive grace fruitfully, *ex opere operantis*. Second, sacramental optimism, as Grime describes it, fails to consider that religious practices in themselves – whether they work automatically or not – can and do go morally wrong. It is entirely to be expected that liturgy and the sacraments, because they are human practices, will encode and install in us the perverse values and evil habits that exist in our social and cultural environment. Postliberal theologians like Cavanaugh and James K.A. Smith readily apply the notion of "liturgy" to all the practices that shape us, whether inside the church or beyond it, and yet they seem to assume that when liturgies are practiced fruitfully within the church their effects are morally positive.[192]

The counterpoint to sacramental optimism, of course, is sacramental realism.[193] Grimes roots this realism in an "ecclesiology of the porous body of Christ," which acknowledges the enmeshment of the church within the world: the church is not fundamentally distinct or superior from secular reality but always already involved in the larger cultural environment. Augustine certainly considered the church to be the only true political society, the only society capable of instilling true virtue in its members. But he

[192] For a study of these two thinkers together, see Fredrik Portin, "Liturgies in a Plural Age: The Concept of Liturgy in the Works of William T. Cavanaugh and James K.A. Smith," *Studia Liturgica* 49:1 (2019), 122-137.
[193] Grimes, 24. "Sacramental realism" is the term that Grimes choses. It is worth noting, however, that this term is also used by certain conservative Catholic thinkers in reference to the objective efficacy of the sacraments and, by extension, to the objective grounds of eucharistic discipline and moral norms. See, for example, Colman E. O'Neill, *Sacramental Realism: A General Theory of the Sacraments* (Princeton, NJ: Scepter Publishers, 1998). Also, R.R. Reno, "Sacramental Realism," *First Things*, August 2018, https://www.firstthings.com/article/2018/08/sacramental-realism.

also, I would observe, was intensely aware of the problem of Christian hypocrisy. The church was not, strictly speaking, synonymous with the heavenly city, for the church is very much on earth. In any case, Grimes suggests the city or society is not the only appropriate ecclesial metaphor, and she draws attention to a metaphor that is equally if not more appropriate to the tradition and to a discussion of liturgy. The church is fundamentally a body, and "bodies necessarily possess boundaries as well as pores."[194]

This means that, as a porous social body, the church remains open and interactive with the social and cultural world around it. There is no clean border between the church, as a certain kind of society with a certain culture, and society or culture at large. Says Grimes, "It exists within the world metabolically, changing its environment while also being changed by it."[195] Hauerwas and Cavanaugh overlook this fact in favor of a view of the church as self-enclosed. When they find the church contaminated by the atomizing individualism of the modern, liberal nation-state, they assume therefore that the church has failed to take a strong stand in its own narrative and identity, mingling too closely with outside influence. The truth, in fact, is that the church was always already influenced by narratives and values outside itself, for good and for ill. Its practices do not therefore reiterate the Christian message uncontaminated: "Like all bodies, the church's corporate body is shaped by its habitat. And, in the United States, the Catholic church has performed its body-shaping practices in a habitat of white supremacy."[196]

I do not believe that Grimes envisions the porosity of the ecclesial body as a shortcoming, nor even strictly as an asset. It is simply a reality. Bodies are porous. This is

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[194] Ibid, 38.
[195] Ibid.
[196] Ibid., 39.

their fundamental reality, which is both a source of danger, as we have seen, and also a precondition for life. The church does not and cannot exist in a state of isolation from the world, not even hypothetically. It is not as if the church, if only it could plug every one of its pores, would finally achieve freedom from the corrupting influence of culture. There is no church that is not in the world and of the world. Just like a physical body, the corporate body of the church is made of the world around it. Isolation is an illusion. The only alternative to the porous life of the body is death.

Grimes is not arguing, therefore, that the sacraments, which are otherwise pure and blameless, have been tragically contaminated by outside influence. The sacraments are always already involved in the sin of white supremacy, and in many other sins as well, because they are the practices of community that is inescapably sinful. Hence, the church cannot overcome its vices by clinging to itself or its practices more tightly: it cannot reform itself from within. In my view, this serves as an important corrective to a Pelagian undercurrent of sacramental optimism. To believe that the sacraments save us mechanistically, that they are not caught up in the tragedy of sin, and that the church possesses by itself the resources required for genuine redemption is to rob us of an awareness that no community and no individual can save itself. We are always and at all times dependent on God for redemption, and that grace comes not only through the church, its stories, and its practices, but also sometimes through stories and practices we find in the outside world. This is not to say that liturgy is not special – that the Eucharist is not a privileged site of encounter with the grace of God in Christ – but only to remind us that no sacrament appears outside of the world or beyond the orbit of sin. If it did, it would not be a sacrament.

To be clear, I do not deny that the church has much to teach the world, and I do not believe that the church is just one society among others and its practices just one more set of cultural practices among many. In the church and in the Eucharist, God's future breaks into history and flows into every dark corner of human existence. However, precisely because the whole world is touched by grace, the church always has something to learn from the world. It is not the only source of grace or wisdom, and it is not immune to sin. The church must hold itself and its practices ethically accountable not only to the formal, internal criteria of its own identity but also to the moral wisdom it finds beyond itself, which it may hold in common after all with certain aspects of secular culture.

If that is the ecclesiological outcome of Grimes' analysis, what are the consequences of her critique for moral theology? I propose to augment Grimes' call for sacramental realism with the term "liturgical vice," which I offer as a substantive moral theological tool for unearthing the ways in which Christian practices go wrong. This can serve, I believe, as the centerpiece of the critical ethical hermeneutic of liturgy that is needed in the field of liturgy and ethics today.

Of course, this is not the only possible point of entry into a critical assessment of liturgy and the sacraments. Grimes does not reference, in her essay, the important work of contemporary sacramental theologians, who have begun to explore the complex interaction between liturgy and the larger ethical issues that Christians confront. Bruce Morill, whom I have cited previously, has placed liturgy front and center in the context of political theology.[197] Timothy Brunk has offered a compelling interpretation of the seven

[197] A number of representative essays are compiled in his recent volume, Bruce T. Morill, *Practical Sacramental Theology: At the Intersection of Liturgy and Ethics* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2021).

sacraments in relation to consumerism.[198] He is uniquely attentive to the ways in which sacraments are distorted by consumerist ideology and also to the ways in which they can help us to resist it. Nevertheless, I believe that a hermeneutic of liturgical vice is needed to augment existing approaches. I stand by Grimes' observation that there is still a tendency in sacramental theology to favor the view that if only we get the sacraments right, then their outcome will be morally positive. Ethicists like Grimes are not opposed to the idea that we should strive to get the sacraments right or that we should attend critically to the ways in which the meaning of the sacraments is twisted by ideological influences. What she and I wish to draw attention to is simply the fact that liturgy still goes wrong. It is not only a question of freeing liturgy from distortions but also of recognizing that liturgy as a human practice is always already implicated in structures of sin. The idea of liturgical vice is an instrument for identifying and analyzing that reality, in order to hold liturgy itself ethically accountable.

To that end, I offer the following definition: liturgical vice refers to those qualities of individuals and communities of faith, formed through liturgical practice, that undermine their ability to embody in thought and action the promise of God's eschatological future, which is the flourishing of all things in God and the universal enjoyment of love and justice. At the level of the individual, liturgical vice expresses itself as a character problem: it is the deformation of our attitudes, worldviews, habits, and skills and therefore a distortion of the thoughts and actions that flow from these qualities of the person. White supremacy, clericalism, misogyny – these are vices

[198] Timothy Brunk, *The Sacraments and Consumer Culture* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press Academic, 2020).

embodied by Christians in their ordinary lives and interactions, and they are acquired to a certain extent through liturgical practice. These vices shape what we value, what we hold to be true, the choices we make or do not make, and the possibilities that we perceive. Individual character flaws are not, however, self-generating and the evil they produce is not isolated to the thoughts or actions in question. Vicious character in persons generates vicious social structures. Vice is generalized, externalized beyond the level of personal culpability, and woven into the fabric of social institutions and their practices. At the level of the community or the collective, liturgical vice refers therefore to the "habit" of social entities, practices, and even impersonal processes for impeding the embodiment of God's vision for the world, either directly or in the ongoing deformation of individual character and the corruption of social relationships.

This last point is essential in order to avoid misunderstanding. The frame of liturgical vice that I propose does not imply an analysis solely at the level of the individual. M. Francis Mannion and Mark Searle have both warned against reducing liturgy to its private psychological effects.[199] Mannion in particular laments a modern attitude that would assess liturgy in terms of its subjectively experienced meaningfulness, its ability to generate a sense of social and religious intimacy, and its power to generate political activism. According to Mannion, the association of liturgy with these individualistic norms has resulted in a "cumulative liturgical dysfunction" that has undermined the ability of liturgical worship to embody a vision of social

[199] See M. Francis Mannion, "Liturgy and the Present Crisis of Culture," in Eleanor Bernstein, ed., *Liturgy and Spirituality in Context* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1990), 1-26; and Mark Searle, "Private Liturgy, Individualistic Society, and Common Worship," in Eleanor Bernstein, ed., *Liturgy and Spirituality in Context* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1990), 27-46.

transformation.[200] In essence, liturgy has retreated into the role of providing subjective meaning and value, and this deadens our attention to the public dimension of Christian identity in which genuine social and political engagement should be rooted. I take this point seriously, and I stress that the language of liturgical vice is precisely social and political in character. It frees the individual from being conceived in isolation and analyzes the ways in which individual and corporate moral agency interact. It does not simply ask how persons are shaped by liturgy: whether, for instance, liturgy motivates a person to political activism on behalf of the oppressed or on behalf of racist public policy. In addition to this, an analysis of liturgical vice asks whether the way that we practice liturgy actually corresponds to the ethical norms that claim us, whether these norms are religious or secular in their articulation. It does this in full awareness that liturgy both expresses and determines our moral identity as individuals and as a community.

The recent controversy over Pope Francis's apostolic letter *Traditionis custodes* is evidence of how deeply the way we practice liturgy shapes our moral and ecclesial identity. The letter, issued *moto proprio* by Francis in July 2021, strongly restricts the celebration of the Latin Mass in the global church, essentially reversing the policy of Benedict XVI, which had permitted individual priests to celebrate the "Extraordinary Form" without the permission of their bishops or the Holy See.[201] Francis himself and sympathetic commentators describe the change in policy as a necessary step in implementing and preserving the legacy of Vatican II. The Tridentine Mass had become a

[200] Mannion, 4.
[201] Pope Francis, *Traditionis custodes*, https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/motu_proprio/documents/20210716-motu-proprio-traditionis-custodes.html.

proxy for the "traditionalist" rejection not only of the Council's liturgical reforms but also of its perceived loosening of moral and theological boundaries in the face of modernity. To restrict the Latin Mass sends a clear signal, on the part of Francis, that accepting the reforms of Vatican II is not optional for Catholics, and that no celebration of liturgy that undermines church unity is acceptable. This is a strong example of what an honest awareness of liturgical vice might look like. To Francis, the Eucharist had become in its older expression a source of schism. The sacrament of unity does not, by reason of its performance, automatically create unity. Awareness of this particular liturgical vice – the vice of schism – and perhaps other vices that accompany it calls for a practical response: a reorientation of liturgical practice.

There are, of course, many more heartbreaking examples of liturgical vice. In 1857, the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa made segregated worship official policy, canonizing the general practice among several Christian denominations during apartheid. References to cultural and linguistic differences and residential separation provided a thinly veiled rationale for a policy whose purpose was to assuage the discomfort felt by whites at seeing black faces in their worship assemblies.[202] This pattern continues to be repeated in American Christian worship, which is still deeply segregated along social, economic, and racial lines.[203]

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[202] Rodney Davenport, "Settlement, Conquest, and Theological Controversy," in Richard Elphick and Rodney Davenport, eds., *Christianity in South Africa: A Political, Social, and Cultural History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 51-67.

[203] I leave aside the question as to whether racial homogeneity in churches is, in fact, a "bad thing" or simply an expression of genuine cultural differences and the close-knit nature of communities. The point stands that the racial make-up of worship spaces in the United States has direct roots in our racist history and in the era of Jim Crow specifically. For recent data on segregation in American worship, see

In the context of the Catholic sexual abuse crisis, liturgy and worship have played a key role. The abuse of children by priests has surely occurred in church buildings, in proximity to the altar, and in the presence of the various material markers of clerical authority and liturgical solemnity: vestments, candles, tabernacles, missals, and the objects used in the celebration of the Eucharist. A theology of the priesthood that emphasizes the role of clerics acting *in persona Christi* at the Eucharist and in confession directly contributes to personal and collective vice of clericalism, a vice that has made it harder for children to speak out, for parents to believe them and seek redress, and for priests to be held criminally accountable.[204] This is a liturgical vice that has also sustained the exclusion of women and girls from ministry.

Discrimination against LGBTQ people likewise has liturgical roots. Poor liturgical and sacramental theology colludes with poor moral theology, and together they influence religious practice for the worse. In March 2021, the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith issued a *responsum* on the question of whether priests could licitly bless the unions of same-sex couples.[205] The response was negative. In the explanatory note, the Congregation explains that to give such blessings is an impossibility for two reasons. First, the church cannot offer blessings upon same-sex

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https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/12/08/many-u-s-congregations-are-still-racially-segregated-but-things-are-changing-2/.

[204] Robert Orsi, "What Is Catholic about the Clergy Sexual Abuse Crisis?" in *The Anthropology of Catholicism: A Reader*, Kristin Norget, Valentina Napolitano, and Maya Mayblin, eds. (Berkeley, CA: University of California, 2017), 282–92; Robert Orsi, *History and Presence* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2016).

[205] Luis F. Ladaria, *Responsum* of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith to a *dubium* regarding the blessing of the unions of persons of the same sex, https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/it/bollettino/pubblico/2021/03/15/0157/00330.html#ing.

unions, because it is in the nature of a blessing (as a species of sacramental) to signify grace – specifically, to signify "spiritual effects," which dispose a person to receive the "chief effects" of the sacraments, which alone are signs *and* causes of grace. Those spiritual effects (i.e. grace) are absent in a homosexual union because it is ordered to an evil end and not part of the Creator's plan. A blessing cannot signify grace that is not there, so it is not appropriate in such cases. Second, the *responsum* argues that since sacramentals are intended to imitate or resemble sacraments, a sacramental blessing cannot be given to a same-sex union, because it would misrepresent sacramental marriage.

The second argument, of course, has little merit, considering the fact that Catholic priests regularly bless objects and animals and life events, a practice for which there is no analogue in the sacraments. We do not worry that blessing dogs with holy water will misrepresent baptism. I believe, in any case, that the first argument is where the real issue lies. The CDF does not believe that same-sex relationships are capable of bearing grace, and therefore it is not appropriate to acknowledge these relationships in formal liturgical acts. Leaving aside the poor theology in such a view – which misrepresents both the nature of grace and also of sin – its consequence is the deliberate exclusion of gay, lesbian, and bisexual people from the liturgical life of the church. This is to say nothing of transgender persons, who do not exist in the view of the magisterium.

It is clear, then, that the exclusion of LGBTQ persons from ecclesial spaces and by extension from any number of social, professional, and family spaces is a liturgical vice. It is a way of being that suppresses the human dignity of others and inhibits the capacity of the church to embody God's vision for the world. It is true that Pope Francis

has opened space for reform in the church's attitude toward LGBTQ people. The documents of the Fourteenth Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, the Synod on the Family, are not as exclusionary toward LGBTQ Catholics as the later CDF *responsum*. Moreover, Francis's post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Amoris laetitia*, offers a shift in ethical method away from condemnation and toward an appreciation of gradual advancement in the moral life and a pastoral emphasis on meeting people where they are. Nevertheless, the official position of the Vatican on same-sex blessings demonstrates that homophobia in the church is not only a moral theological problem but a sacramental and liturgical problem. Once again, liturgy, the sacraments, and our theologies about them do not on their own automatically make us good. Nor are they free from the influence of sin. They occasion vice just as readily as virtue. If we are to build a eucharistic ethics, it must honestly acknowledge this limit.

4.3 HOLDING OURSELVES ACCOUNTABLE IN HONESTY, HUMILITY, AND HOPE

In the first movement of this chapter, I reflected on the relationship between teleology and Christian eschatology. I suggested that, within the twofold teleological structure of human life, the natural and supernatural ends of human beings are related analogically. Strictly speaking, there is only a single trajectory of human existence with an eschatological destination. This is a theological reality that is captured and theorized analogically in teleological language. We speak of our final end, supreme beatitude, and so on. We speak of virtues as those qualities of character that orient us toward that end. To the extent that our final end is realizable in this life, we render it under the notion of human flourishing or the common good, and we posit the virtues as at least partially

constitutive of that end. In order to nuance this view, however, I turned with Jennifer Herdt to the thought of Augustine. Augustine does, in fact, see virtue as at least partially constitutive of our highest good. But he also emphasizes the limit of the virtues. To speak of our highest good, final beatitude, is to speak of the peace of God in which all of the virtues have passed away, with the exception of charity, which is the being of God directly enjoyed. Even in the case of charity, however, I have argued that the virtues are not the content of eternal life but heuristic symbols that enable us to experience and describe in this life what the embodiment of God's future looks like. Virtues, I would suggest, are the moral equivalent of sacraments.[206] They are marks of our participation in the eucharistic mystery, the mystery of God's future transforming the world.

Just like sacraments, of course, the virtues never embody our eschatological destiny fully in this life. The reality in which they participate is already coming to be realized but not yet arrived. Virtues have limits. I have argued that this is so for two reasons. First, as Augustine helped us see, the virtues themselves do not cross over into the eschaton. Or at least they do not function in the eschaton as they function in earthly life: in our final beatitude, the virtues are at rest in the mystery of charity, our union with God. Virtues as the foundation of moral action oriented to a certain *telos* belong properly to the here and now. This does not mean that they are unimportant or "merely" provisional. To seek virtue, to act for justice, and so on is truly to participate in the fulfillment of God's promises in the world to come. But the world to come itself is not simply the perfection of virtue, conceived from a temporal teleological standpoint. It is

[206] It is interesting, therefore, that Thomas Aquinas believes the sacraments, like virtues, will pass away in the world to come, because they are no longer necessary. *Summa theologiae* III, q. 61, art. 4.

the fullness of God's own life, shared totally and irrevocably with creation. Second, as Katie Grimes and my reflection on liturgical vice suggests, the virtues are never found without the presence of sin. Liturgy and sacraments and the virtues that flow from our participation in the Eucharist are not immune from corruption. As Christians and especially as theologians who study the relation between liturgy and ethics, we have a responsibility to unmask and examine the ways in which our religious practices go wrong and to hold these practices accountable.

That work of holding our practices accountable will require engagement with sources of moral wisdom outside the church. Christians do not have a monopoly on ethical discourse, and the virtues are not acquired through liturgy or ecclesial practices only. The Catholic Church, for instance, has a great deal to learn from civil society when it comes to the dignity of women, the dignity of LGBTQ people, and criminal accountability for abusers of children, even while it guards against the errors and excesses of secular culture. To the extent that Christian vices are liturgical vices, acquired and crystallized through liturgy and the sacraments, this self-critical work of dialogue must continue, and it must focus on our worship. How do we identify sources of moral authority inside and outside the church? How do we discern where the church must take a stand and where it must concede that it has room to grow? How do we preserve a sense, held in faith, that our religious practices are privileged sites of encounter with divine grace while also valuing secular practices and traditions in the work of seeking holiness? These are difficult questions, but if the church is to be honest and realistic, they are questions well worth the effort.

This effort is required not only in light of external moral interventions but also in light of the meaning of our religious practices themselves. If liturgy and the sacraments never appear outside of this world or beyond the influence of sin, then they are by definition subject to critique and revision. Liturgy is *always on the way* to the fullness of life with God that it tries to embody. Virtue is *always on the way* to this same destiny. As long as we live and struggle and celebrate on this side of the eschaton, approaching but never reaching the ever-receding horizon of our future in God, then we must remain honest and vigilant. We must allow the promise of our final fulfillment to hold our present life – in its liturgical and moral dimensions – to account. This does not contradict our fundamental mission as Christians, which is to be for the world through our worship and through our virtue sacraments of the world to come. It is a necessary prophetic element of that same mission, which guards against triumphalism and chooses instead a way that is truthful, humble, and hopeful.

In the final analysis, liturgy and the moral life are all about hope. To worship God and participate in the sacraments, knowing full well how badly these practices go, is an act of radical hope. To strive for virtue, though it is partial and limited, is a radical act of hope. In a very real way, every moral act and every honest assessment of ourselves, our communities, and our practices is an act of hope. In the next chapter, I will therefore explore hope as the principal virtue of the eucharistic ethics I have been developing.

5.0 CHAPTER 5 – HOPE: THE FIRST VIRTUE OF EUCHARISTIC ETHICS

To speak of the bond between liturgy and ethics in the key of virtue is to draw attention not only to the positive dimensions of liturgical worship but also, I have argued, to its negative dimensions. Liturgy certainly possesses the capacity to make us good, to form Christian people in virtue and empower them to strive for holiness and social change. However, our practice of liturgy also possesses the capacity to make us bad, to deform our character and to reinscribe patterns of exclusion and injustice in church and society. We must be realistic about liturgy and about the ethical consequences of worship. This is not because liturgy has been contaminated by external, secular forces, but rather because it is human. There is no worship and no sacrament that does not already live in the orbit of human weakness, though our worship also draws us toward the fullness of human life in God. This is the great paradox of Christian practice. In the eyes of faith, liturgy is the territory of transformative divine activity, but as human beings we approach liturgy always only as aspirants to what the activity of God is bringing about. Even as we perceive our sanctification, we remain aware of our limitations. The prayer over the offerings on Holy Thursday in the Roman Missal captures this duality:

> Grant us, O Lord, we pray, that we may participate worthily in these mysteries, for whenever the memorial of this sacrifice is celebrated the work of our redemption is accomplished. Through Christ our Lord.[207]

Moreover, as I have shown, it is the nature of virtue itself to be partial and fragmentary. Like the world to come, which we glimpse and celebrate together in liturgy, virtue in us

[207] Catholic Church, *The Roman Missal* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1970), see Holy Thursday.

is always on the way, never fully arrived. To go on worshipping and to go on living, as best as we can, toward the horizon of our moral becoming is to take our stand in what is not yet present: to anchor ourselves in what is possible and still totally beyond our ability. It is to take our stand in hope.

I would like now, therefore, to turn directly to the virtue of hope and to examine it as the central element of the eucharistic ethics that I have proposed. Virtue ethicists have often been fond of identifying and examining primary virtues. Not all traits of character are equal. There are certain virtues that stand at the foundation of the moral life: key virtues that serve as the gateway and precondition for the other virtues. For instance, we have inherited from classical antiquity a set of four virtues, the cardinal virtues, to govern the vital elements of human moral psychology. To these the Christian tradition has added the three theological virtues, bringing the total quantity of essential virtues to a symbolically appropriate seven. Contemporary ethicists have sought to complicate and reframe this classical set of virtues in light of new insights in moral psychology and theological anthropology. Stressing human relationality, James Keenan has proposed new cardinal virtues: prudence, justice, fidelity, self-care.[208] Lisa Fullam has put forward the virtue of humility as the "metavirtue" that is required for the development of moral wisdom and thus for the acquisition of every other virtue.[209] In principle, at least, the virtues are unified: they imply and evoke one another. Nevertheless, virtue ethics

[208] James F Keenan, "Proposing Cardinal Virtues," *Theological Studies* 56, no. 4 (1995): 709–729.
[209] Lisa A. Fullam, "Humility and Its Moral Epistemological Implications," in *Virtue: Readings in Moral Theology*, ed. Charles E. Curran and Lisa Fullam (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2011), 250-274.

provides a great deal of room for us to imagine, from a variety of different perspectives, how the virtues are ordered in relation to one another and which of the virtues is primary.

My contention, in this chapter, is that the virtue of hope is primary: that it is the hinge of Christian life, considered from a eucharistic and liturgical perspective. This need not run against the traditional consensus around the primacy of charity. Charity is indeed the virtue that makes us who we are as Christian people. To live as Christians is to live toward the possibility of love of God and love of neighbor, the promise of union with God, and the fullness of friendship with God for which human beings are intended. The fullness of charity, however, is just beyond our reach. The practice of charity is aspirational. This is because true love of God is nothing other than to share completely in the life of God, a goal that transforms earthly life in concrete ways but remains a promise to be fulfilled in God's eschatological future. For Christians, therefore, charity is always apprehended as the object of our hope. The virtue of charity cannot be practiced except in a mode of hope. The love on which our identity as Christians is based is not yet fully attained, and so in this life hope is essential. Hope is the precondition of the other virtues, the mode in which every virtue is practiced and in which Christian life is lived.

There are two principal reasons for my turn to hope. First, Christian living involves a fundamental eschatological orientation. In previous chapters, I have emphasized the liturgical basis of this orientation. In liturgy, Christians encounter and celebrate the realization of God's future in Christ. This provides the reference point for our identity in the world. Because we are a liturgical people, a people who worship, we are an eschatological people. To be Christian is to live toward the fulfillment of God's promises beyond history, and this means paradoxically that we participate in the arrival

of that future in the present. Although I have stressed the centrality of liturgy, this view does not require a particularly high liturgical theology. Christians who do not belong to "liturgical churches" may root this eschatological sensibility more directly in the apocalyptic tone of scripture than in worship. Indeed, the primacy of hope is something that all Christians may hold in common. Second, I turn to hope because – in spite of the fact that it is directed to the future – it is a virtue of the present and capable of holding the realism that I have called for. To have hope is not to imagine that we live already in God's future, already in the peace of the reign of God. When properly understood, hope does not confuse our destiny for our present reality. In fact, hope involves an intense awareness of the here and now: an awareness of the present as incomplete even if at the same time the present is suffused with grace and coming to completion. To have hope, then, is to live more truthfully in the present. It is to see the world and ourselves for what we actually are: burdened with sin yet destined for God's own life. In that regard, hope carries conviction without lapsing into triumphalism.

To speak of hope is to speak of an awareness, as Julian of Norwich once wrote, that "all manner of things shall be well" but also of an awareness that, as far as the reality of our present life goes, all is not well. The decisive question for ethics, I believe, is what we as individuals and communities do with that double consciousness. Does hope induce us to a form of escapism? Is it so preoccupied with some state of wellbeing to come that it subordinates wellbeing in the here and now? Does it produce resentment toward the world and toward ourselves? If so, the actions that flow from our hope are likely to disregard and even undermine the flourishing of our present selves. Hope may feed an impulse to mortify the body, to punish ourselves and our neighbors for falling short of

what we cannot readily achieve. Hope may serve as an excuse to stand by in the face of suffering, to accept the oppression of others and perhaps ourselves, in the name of some otherworldly future. These are clearly serious concerns. History itself has shown that Christian eschatological expectation can produce toxic consequences.

For this reason, I will begin this chapter with an examination of the critique of hope. I will focus in particular on the writings of Miguel De La Torre and on the argument of Margaret Farley, who draws attention to feminist theological critiques of hope. It appears that Christian ethicists today are wary of this virtue, and perhaps for good reason. Does a Christian ethics founded on the virtue of hope undercut the efforts of Christian thinkers to focus our attention on the demands of love and justice in history? Does the rhetoric of hope neutralize moral creativity and impair the capacity of marginalized populations to demand what befits their human dignity? I will suggest that these questions point to the importance of critical awareness in the practice of hope, but I will argue nonetheless that hope, properly understood, is still the key element of Christian life from a liturgical ethical perspective.

In this concluding chapter, therefore, I offer the virtue of hope as the foundation of the eucharistic ethics that I have been developing. As we have seen, this is an ethics that can move beyond the "sacramentalism" of certain modern approaches to liturgy and ethics, which view ethics as the spontaneous outcome of seeing the world sacramentally. This is an ethics that can integrate and deepen the best insights of correlational and pedagogical approaches by placing liturgy and ethics in the context of eschatology, a context of sacramental encounter with Jesus Christ. It is an ethics of virtue that can acknowledge the limit of virtue and reality of liturgical vice. This eucharistic ethics, I will

argue, must be an ethics of hope: an ethics of living in the world as part of the eucharistic mystery, caught up as embodied persons in God's work of bringing about greater human holiness and greater justice for all things in history, even as we look forward to the consummation of this struggle beyond history.

In order to make this argument, I will need to reckon not only with the critique of hope but also with the complex theological dimensions of hope. For that purpose, my primary task will be a close textual reading of Augustine's reflections on hope. By reading Augustine on this topic, I believe it is possible to offer a strong defense of hope as a virtue that mediates between eschatological expectation and moral action. Hope is the virtue that transforms "otherworldly" aspiration into a concrete way of life before God and into programs of action for social change. In hope, we receive the promise of the reign of God as a task, as a reality that ought to live in us and in our world. Through hope, we are remade as bearers of God's future, which is realized ongoingly in the Eucharist and draws us into ever more perfect participation. I will conclude by refracting these insights, derived from Augustine, through the contemporary work of Jürgen Moltmann and by offering a suggestive account of the concrete implications of a eucharistic ethics founded in hope.

5.1 THE CRITIQUE OF HOPE: DOES THE PRESENT WORLD MATTER?

The critique of hope in contemporary theology and ethics is an argument about human moral agency in relation to divine agency. The worry is that to counsel hope in another world attributes agency exclusively to God and constrains the field of human moral action in the face of injustice and oppression. Christian hope is a "pie in the sky"

ideal that waits around for God to bring about a better world and neutralizes the possibility for individuals and communities to work for change in the present. From that perspective, I would note, hope is not a virtue at all. By definition, virtues are directed to action and conduce to greater human flourishing. If the present charge stands, hope guarantees inaction and undermines the possibility of achieving greater human wellbeing in the world now. If that is the case, hope is an enemy of virtue and a problem of serious ethical concern.

In my view, this agency-based critique of hope seriously misunderstands the nature of hope from a theological perspective. It replaces an authentic Christian view of hope with a notion of hope that is indeed false. Hope goes seriously wrong when it over-attributes agency to God at the expense of human agency. Genuine hope in God should not constrain human agency and moral responsibility but rather expand it. To orient life to God is the beginning of true freedom, what Augustine called *libertas* as opposed to *liberum arbitrium*. Therefore, any version of hope that induces us to opt out of real social ethical concerns in the present is damaging and false. Indeed, I will argue that genuine Christian hope does not make God the master problem-solver and an otherworldly future the only solution to present suffering and injustice. Instead, it ought to motivate us in the struggle to achieve here and now what God envisions for all of creation: peace and justice and the enjoyment of the common good. Still, the critique of hope reminds us of the importance of a critical approach to interpreting and practicing hope. If and when hope does suppress concern for the present world, and especially concern for those who are least well-off under existing social and economic conditions, our idea of hope will require revision. For that reason, I wish to take a closer look at the critique of hope itself.

A strikingly provocative version of the critique of hope appears in the work of Latino theologian and ethicist Miguel De La Torre. Interestingly, his deeply critical attitude toward the idea of hope emerged only later in his career as a scholar. De La Torre's first book-length treatment of Christian ethics from the standpoint of Latino/a experience speaks warmly of the hope of the marginalized. For those on the periphery of social power, those left out of the dominant culture, hope signifies an "open rebellion" against the "opium" of otherworldliness that would lull them into passivity.[210] Although those in power dismiss their hope as utopian, Latino/a communities claim this hope with a clear-eyed realism. Their hope is rooted not in the fantasy that all is well or all will be well but in the realism of the oppressed, who see their present situation truthfully and reject the status quo in favor of the struggle for justice:

> Hence, the desire for utopia is not a flight from present reality to an illusionary world; it is a struggle to perfect our reality and to prevent the status quo from absolutizing itself. The utopianism called for by those doing ethics on the margins of society is not some naive idealism whereby a future perfect social order is established. Utopianism, as understood here, is a rejection of the present social order grounded in structures designed to perpetrate heterosexism, racism, sexism, and classism. It protests the way things presently are, and it imagines, based on the reality of the oppressed, how society can be restructured to create a more just social order. The function of utopian thought is to guide praxis.[211]

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[210] Miguel A. De La Torre, *Doing Christian Ethics from the Margins* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2014), 43.
[211] Ibid., 44.

Most notable here is De La Torre's endorsement of utopianism as a way of naming the content and consequences of Christian hope for Latino/a communities. It is possible to practice hope, he says, in a manner that avoids the pitfalls of otherworldly concern and transforms the messianic dream of faith into fuel for the resistance. De La Torre, at this moment in his career, is something of an apologist for hope.

Of course, the hope that De La Torre describes at this point must be properly understood. It can easily lapse into otherworldliness or into the wrong kind of utopianism, which gets lost in envisioning a perfect world at the expense of struggling for a better one. This particular form of utopianism, which he endorses, is not about a vision of the future so much as it is about praxis in the present. In fact, it eschews any imagining of the future that undermines the strategic and pragmatic work of taking steps toward justice in the here and now. This qualified utopianism is grounded, for De La Torre, in the work of Latin American liberation theologians like Gustavo Gutiérrez and José Míguez Bonino. It resonates, I would add, with the decidedly worldly vision of *mujerista* thinkers, who critique the sexist presuppositions of mainstream liberation theology while embracing what Ada María Isasi-Díaz called *el proyecto histórico*: the ongoing, strategic work of struggling for a better world, a world in which Hispanic women and their children and communities can flourish in the enjoyment of their full humanity.[212]

De La Torre's view, therefore, consists in a critical realist utopianism: one that refuses to let fanciful visions of the future stand in the way of concrete steps toward change in the present. We might ask, however, whether this praxis, which De La Torre

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[212] Ada María Isasi-Díaz, "Defining Our *Proyecto Histórico*: *Mujerista* Strategies for Liberation," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 9:1 (1993), 17-28.

has embraced, is in fact a form of utopianism at all. In essence, it is a *negative* praxis. It is a rejection of what is not acceptable and not just in favor of new practices and new structures that tend toward justice. This praxis does not correspond to any vision of the future but rather to certain ethical principles, like justice, whose normative foundations lie elsewhere (the gospel, natural law, etc.). In fact, what is utopian about this praxis is simply that it refuses to let its realism become pessimism: it involves the belief that steps toward justice are, in fact, possible. In the absence of a substantive imagining of the future, however, I believe this is better called a form of optimism than utopianism.

In De La Torre's subsequent work, the critical edge of his approach to hope intensifies. Where earlier he envisioned hope, grounded in the realism of Latino/a experience, as a source of energy for the fight against injustice, he now suspects that the rhetoric of hope is an instrument for the maintenance of the status quo that is cherished by Eurocentric ethics but ultimately foreign to the lived experience of the marginalized. To be a Latino/a at the edge of empire is to live in the violence of Good Friday and in the darkness of Holy Saturday, a space where the good news of Easter Sunday is only a distant dream:

> It is a space where hopelessness becomes the companion of used and abused Latina/os. The virtue and/or audacity of hope becomes a class privilege experienced by those protected from the realities of Friday or the opium used by the poor to numb that same reality until Sunday rolls around. […] The semblance

> of hope becomes an obstacle when it serves as a mechanism that maintains rather than challenges the prevailing social structures."[213]

To speak of a Latino/a social ethics, therefore, is to speak of not of an ethics of hope but rather of an ethics of hopelessness. It is an ethics motivated not by an aspiration to some future wellbeing but instead by the rejection of social structures that do violence to our communities now. It is therefore a disruptive ethics, which De La Torre famously calls an ethics *para joder*.

It is no longer good enough, for De La Torre, to speak of a realist utopianism belonging to the marginalized. Such hope is a Eurocentric virtue falsely grafted onto the experience of the oppressed. It is necessary, instead, to develop this ethics of hopelessness, which he does most fully in his 2017 book, *Embracing Hopelessness*. When we attend truthfully to the experience of the world's most desperately poor, to the inevitably of our destruction as species on this earth, and to the absurdity of human suffering, we are left only with hopelessness. Any serious ethics for liberation must begin here. Writes De La Torre,

> *The first step toward liberation requires the crucifixion of hope* – for as long as hope exists, the world's wretched have something to lose, and thus will not risk all to change social structures. The realization that there is nothing to lose becomes a catalyst for praxis. I argue that by embracing hopelessness, a peace

[213] Miguel De La Torre, *Latina/o Social Ethics: Moving Beyond Eurocentric Moral Thinking* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2010), 93.

> surpassing all understanding will equip us to engage in radical praxis that might make our short and brutal days upon this earth a bit more just.[214]

This is a strong statement. According to De La Torre, hope is an illusion and fantasy that breeds inaction. If we are to act for justice, we must have nothing left to lose. We must destroy hope and proceed from hopelessness.

What are we to do with such a full-throated rejection of the virtue of hope? One option is to dismiss the charges as rhetorical and even performative in nature. Perhaps De La Torre has simply overstated the case in order to make a valid point about the *rhetoric* of hope and the harm that it does to marginalized populations and to a praxis of liberation. It is, as I said at the outset, an argument about the way in which religious discourse shapes the boundaries of human agency relative to divine agency, not a robust theological argument against the virtue of hope as such. I do not believe, however, that this approach takes the critique seriously enough. De La Torre is concerned not only with language about hope but with hope itself as a disposition or attitude that undermines human flourishing. To possess this attitude, he believes, is to lean in the direction of a better future at the expense of a better present.

In the context of feminist scholarship, Margaret Farley has noted that the critique of hope parallels the more general critique of religion put forward by modern social theorists like Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud.[215] According to certain feminist thinkers, Christian hope distracts from the urgency of social transformation and makes people

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[214] Miguel De La Torre, *Embracing Hopelessness* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2017), 5-6. Emphasis original.
[215] Margaret Farley, "Feminism and Hope," in *Changing the Questions: Explorations in Christian Ethics* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2015), 115.

passive and patient before the social forces that marginalize them. Hope is a tool for keeping the oppressed in their place. As Farley puts it, "Belief in an ultimate future, in this view, short-circuits commitments to a proximate future."[216]

Moreover, observes Farley, some feminist thinkers have argued that hope goes hand-in-hand with the deeply harmful Christian fixation on suffering and death. The notion that suffering is somehow redemptive relies on a vision of a future state – a reality truer and more meaningful than what is experienced in the here and now – that calls for submission and endurance rather than resistance. This is linked, I would add, to the view of divine and human agency discussed before. Hope would seem to justify and even sanctify suffering as part of a larger divine plan which human beings must passively endure, leaving agency to God. Feminist thinkers point out that this kind of hope for the future has been especially harmful to women, for whom suffering structural and physical violence is either minimized in light of the world to come or justified as a means of reaching the beyond. Mary Daly provides the clearest example of this concern, and for her it resulted in an exodus from Christianity and biblical religion altogether.[217]

According to Farley's analysis, two further extensions of the feminist critique of hope warrant consideration. First, some feminists argue that hope runs against an affirmation of human embodiment and finitude. Especially inasmuch as hope is indexed to personal eschatology – to the possibility of life after death – it encourages us to forget that we are essentially bodies and that we belong to the earth. Hope places the roots of human identity outside the immediacy of the material self, which is deeply and

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[216] Ibid.
[217] Mary Daly, *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1973).

irrevocably connected to our material surroundings. Hope of this nature is a virtue for people who see themselves merely as pilgrims on earth, whose bodies do not matter ultimately.[218] Second, and as a result of the first point, hope deflects our focus away from the wellbeing of the earth.[219] For Christians who hope in the world to come, the earth is not our true home and not worthy of serious concern. The earth is a stage on which the drama of human life unfolds. It may be that we make critical decisions on earth that touch upon our future state, but these decisions prioritize the human. Hope is an individualistic and anthropocentric virtue – a virtue founded in the notion of personal immortality – that stifles awareness of the good of creation as a whole and undercuts any creative ethical response to the perils of climate change, biodiversity loss, and other threats to the wellbeing of the planet and its ecosystems. Again, this notion of hope is rooted in an apprehension of human agency as circumscribed by divine agency. To be human is to do the minimum required for enduring life on earth, this life of embodiment, and to focus one's attention on what God is doing beyond this life. Human action is meaningful only insofar as it refers to an otherworldly divine agenda.

There are some valuable insights in these feminist critiques, but Margaret Farley believes that hope is worth defending. In order to do that, she finds it necessary to understand hope a bit more deeply than the foregoing arguments about hope have done. We must not isolate hope, she says, from its larger theological setting: our revealed understanding of God's own life and God's relationship to us. For feminist Christian

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[218] Farley here cites Carol Christ, *Laughter of Aphrodite: Reflections on a Journey to the Goddess* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987).
[219] Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Gaia and God: An Ecofeminist Theology of Earth Healing* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1992).

scholars, God's life as Trinity is one of radical equality, mutuality, and community.[220] This life is shared with us in Christ and provides a model for human social living. We are given to one another, responsible for one another, and called to a way of being with each other and the earth that is marked by that same equality and mutuality which belongs to God. Therefore, if hope is grounded in God's promise and action toward us, it cannot be about our escape to another world. Our goal does not lie in some region beyond the present. It lies in this world and in the promise that this world is being drawn into the justice of God's life. There is continuity between this world and the next.[221] To hope for our future in God is to turn attention to the present, where God's world is already arriving but not yet fully achieved, and to live in this present in accord with our destiny in God.

The charge against hope that it prioritizes divine agency over human agency is therefore misdirected. It replaces genuine theological hope with optimism: with a naive certainty that all will be well either in time or in eternity. De La Torre's discomfort, I argue, is not with hope but with false hope, with this optimistic attitude that despite profound human suffering and injustice everything will turn out fine in the end. Ironically, even in his rejection of hope, he still retains some level of optimism. When those who have nothing left to lose turn to the work of seeking justice now, De La Torre believes they can indeed achieve some measure of justice in this world. Perhaps that small remainder of optimism is rooted in a small remainder of hope. But this hope is not a vision of an earthly or heavenly utopia. It is an active conviction that the present world

[220] Farley, 119.
[221] Ibid., 123-124.

matters – *must* matter to us – because it matters to God. It is hope that seeks love and justice because the whole world is destined for love and justice in God.

I do take quite seriously the critiques described above. What is called for is a relentless critical awareness in the practice of hope, which refuses to let some vision of future perfection become an enemy of the good we might achieve in the present. This will involve an ongoing interrogation of what we hope for and deep suspicion toward forms of hope that neutralize rather than animate praxis. I do not accept, however, this idea that hope as an attitude or character trait necessarily distracts from the vital work of building a better world. The present world does truly matter, precisely because of Christian hope and not in spite of it. I believe we need to go much deeper into a theology of hope in order to see how it might energize rather than compromise the potential of Christian ethics. To that end, I turn now to a close textual study of Augustine, and I offer an interpretive conceptual anatomy of his view on hope.

5.2 WE HAVE BEEN SAVED IN HOPE: THE CONTRIBUTION OF AUGUSTINE

In order to discover a theology of hope in Augustine, it will be necessary to look at a variety of different sources. Augustine does not offer a treatise on the subject, and he actually pays relatively little attention to the virtue of hope as compared to faith and charity. However, when Augustine does speak of hope, he describes it as a virtue of great theological importance. In the *City of God*, he goes so far as to argue that through hope

we experience in some measure the happiness of the life to come.[222] Here and in several other writings on hope, Augustine quotes Paul's Letter to the Romans: "For we have been saved in hope, but hope that is seen is no longer hope. For why does one hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we await it through patience."[223] But what does it mean to be saved in hope?

My reading of Augustine on this question begins from a conceptual anatomy of the virtue of hope itself. I offer an interpretation of Augustine's diverse writings on hope refracted through Aristotelian and Thomistic categories. Of course, Augustine himself was not directly influenced by Aristotle (he mentions only having read the *Categories*), and he could not have anticipated the interpretations of his work by Thomas Aquinas. Augustine's virtue theory derives from Neo-Platonism and Cicero, and from his teacher Ambrose. As such, Augustine does not employ the conceptual schema that I will now be deploying. Nevertheless, I contend that there is sufficient resonance between Augustine's thought on virtue and the framework I am offering to justify its use as a means of excavating Augustine's theology of hope.

The Object and End of Hope. I begin then with the defining feature of any virtue: its object and end. At what goal is hope directed? What is its purpose? Augustine does not use the term "theological virtues," and he does not explicitly argue that faith, hope, and charity are set apart because they have God for their object. This argument is mainly attributable to Aquinas, who brought to Augustine's thought an Aristotelian method for

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[222] Augustine, *City of God* XIX.4, trans. William Babcock, in *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century*, ed. Boniface Ramsey (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2013).
[223] Romans 8:24-25.

distinguishing species according to their objects. Augustine himself preferred to describe the Pauline virtues as set apart from the other virtues because they alone enable a person to worship God rightly.[224] Without faith, hope, and charity, a person cannot have true piety – that is, they cannot know or act in view of their supreme good – and so in their absence there can be no true virtue at all.[225]

For Augustine, these three virtues are distinctively oriented to eternal matters, and as such they enable the other virtues to subject temporal matters to the supreme good of humanity. They enable human beings to refer all things to God. Faith, hope, and charity possess a special theological referent. For all virtues, in the thought of Augustine, are dispositions with intended goals. To that extent, I believe that we can indeed apply the categories of Aquinas to the present interpretation of Augustine. Aquinas can help us to get Augustine right on this matter of the goal of hope. So, as Thomas indicates, hope must possess an *object* (the matter in relation to which it enables us to act well) and an *end* (the goal or final activity for the sake of which it governs our conduct).[226] Along with the other theological virtues, hope differs from the moral and intellectual virtues because its object and end belong to the eternal realm and not to the temporal. *The object of the theological virtues is God himself, and their end is the enjoyment of eternal life with him,*

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[224] *Enchiridion* 8.
[225] See, for instance, *City of God* XIX.25.
[226] The object of a virtue is the matter about which that virtue is concerned, and it fixes its species. The end of a virtue is the operation or activity for the sake of which the virtue fixes our conduct, or in other words the good at which it aims (*ST* I-II, Q. 55, Art. 4). So, for example, the object of justice is the right (*ius*) of each person to receive what she ought (*ST* I-II, Q. 58, Art. 1), while the end of justice is building up the common good (*ST* I-II, Q. 58, Art. 6). Or for another example, the object of temperance is that which is desired for giving pleasure (*ST* I-II, Q. 141, Art. 3), while the end of temperance is happiness in moderation of life's necessities (*ST* I-II, Q. 141, Art. 6).

which God has promised, and which will be realized beyond the horizon of time. To possess the virtues of faith, hope, and charity is to know and act rightly with regard to God and for the sake of eternal life.

However, none of this has yet told us what makes hope itself distinctive. If it shares with the other theological virtues an eternal object and end, then what sets it apart? Augustine clearly does not wish to collapse the Pauline virtues into a single principle, and so he requires an account of how they differ from one another. I suggest that while the theological virtues share a common object and a common end – God and the enjoyment of eternal life– they are differentiated for Augustine by the *mode according to which the goal is apprehended*. I will try to elucidate this point by examining the structure of the *Enchiridion*, Augustine's manual for Christian living in which he develops a detailed account of the theological virtues.[227]

The *Enchiridion* is divided into three major parts, one for each of these virtues. The first part, which treats faith, describes in detail what Christians ought to believe. Augustine suggests that we should examine faith under the rubric of the creed. The second part, which treats hope, describes what Christians ought to pray for. Accordingly, hope is placed under the rubric of the Lord's Prayer. The third part, which treats charity, is not associated with either rubric, because charity, says Augustine, presupposes and embodies in action what is believed and what is hoped for according to these rubrics: "For one who rightly loves without doubt rightly believes and hopes, and one who does

[227] Augustine, *Enchiridion*, trans. Bruce Harbert, in *On Christian Belief*, vol. I/8 of *The Works of Saint Augustine: a Translation for the 21st Century*, ed. John E. Rotelle (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1997).

not love believes in vain, even if he things he believes are true."[228] Moreover, as I observed in the previous chapter, Augustine believes that charity in its fullness will leave aside the virtues of faith and hope, when in the peace of God what was known without seeing (faith) and longed for without possessing (hope) will be known by sight and possessed in its fullness.[229]

What does this tell us about the difference among the theological virtues? I believe that the key here is to distinguish the modes according to which the object and end of each virtue are apprehended. Explicated in reference to the creed, faith is the virtue that empowers the Christian to believe what he or she ought. It apprehends its object and end in the *mode of belief*. The virtue of faith is ordered to God and to eternal life as the content of the truth, which must be believed without seeing. By contrast, reaching beyond creed and the Lord's Prayer, charity is the virtue that enables the Christian truly to embrace and embody the love of God. It allows him or her to defeat

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[228] *Enchiridion* 117.

[229] See, for instance, *Teaching Christianity* I.43. Augustine clearly believes that not just faith and hope but *all* the virtues except charity, or elsewhere the "virtue of contemplation," will pass away in the world to come. This contradicts the teaching of figures no less formidable than Irenaeus and Gregory of Nyssa, who expected faith and hope to be transformed but not eradicated in the vision of God. Speaking of the cardinal virtues, Augustine writes: "These virtues are granted to us now in the valley of weeping, but from them we progress to a single virtue. And what will that be? The virtue of contemplating God alone. Our prudence will not be necessary there, because we shall encounter no evils we need to avoid. And what of the rest, my brothers and sisters? There will be no need for justice, where no one will be in poverty and in need of our assistance. Nor will there be any occasion for temperance, because no unruly passions will be there to require control. Fortitude will have no place either, where no distress exists to be endured" (*Exposition of Psalm* 83). In the *City of God*, Augustine offers a parallel image of the virtues at rest, no longer struggling against the excesses of the passions (*City of God* XIX.10). In any case, fullness of virtue is *not* to be confused with ultimate human felicity, which consists in charity alone and therefore perfect union with God (*City of God* XIX.27).

cupidity, to love the neighbor, and to love God himself in return.[230] Charity apprehends its object and end in the *mode of possession*. It is ordered to God and to eternal life as that which has begun to be possessed and will yet be possessed by the fullness of sight in the world to come. The difference between faith believing and charity possessing, the one without seeing and the other by seeing, is decisive in the theology of Augustine:

> Because the head and the other members of the body will be lifted up, that's when God will be all in all. That's what we now believe, what we now hope. When we get there, we will possess it; and now it will be vision, not faith. When we get there, we will possess it, and now it will be the thing itself, not hope. What about love? It's surely not the case, is it, that love too has its place now, and won't have it then? If we love while we believe and don't see, how much more will we love when we see and possess! So there will be love there, but it will be perfect.[231]

In this way, we arrive at the distinguishing feature of hope. For Augustine, hope is the middle principle, the virtue that enables the Christian to experience some measure of genuine, divinely given happiness in the midst of life's miseries by clinging confidently to the assurance of eternal happiness. On this point Augustine writes, in the *City of God*:

> Just as it is by hope that we are saved, therefore, so it is by hope that we are made happy; and, just as we do not yet possess salvation in the present but look forward to salvation in the future, so we do not yet possess happiness in the present but look forward to happiness in the future, and we do this *with patience*.[232]

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[230] *Enchiridion* 117.
[231] Augustine, *Sermon 158* 9 in *Sermons (148-183) on the New Testament*, vol. III/V of *The Works of Saint Augustine: a Translation for the 21st Century*, ed. John E. Rotelle (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1992).
[232] *City of God* XIX.4. Translator's emphasis.

The virtue of hope apprehends its object and end in the mode of *expectation*. It is ordered to God and to eternal life, and indeed it grasps these realities, as the substance of a promise that it knows will be fulfilled. Of course, the promises of God are so sure that when hope reaches toward them in total confidence, they are in some sense already made real. In hope, salvation through Christ is at hand, and ultimate happiness arrives into the world. Of course, it is always a provisional and anticipatory happiness, for in the present life the life of the future is by definition deferred. This is the reason, according to Augustine, that Paul can say with equal certainty that in hope we are saved and that in hope we look forward to the coming of salvation with patience.[233]

The Connection of Hope to the Other Virtues. So far I have argued for an understanding of the theological virtues in Augustine as distinguished according to the modes in which they apprehend God and eternal life: faith believes, hope expects, and charity possesses. The next key question concerns how faith, hope, and charity are connected. How is hope related to the other two virtues that provide the foundation of Christian life?

Let us start with the relationship between hope and faith. For Augustine, hope requires faith, for we cannot hope in what we do not believe. Faith, however, does not require hope, since we may believe in things for which we do not hope. Augustine writes in the *Enchiridion*:

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[233] Augustine's complete exegesis of this line from Paul appears in *Sermon 157* in *Sermons (148-183) on the New Testament*, vol. III/V of *The Works of Saint Augustine: a Translation for the 21st Century*, ed. John E. Rotelle (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1992).

> What is there that we can hope for without believing in it? To be sure, we can believe in things for which we do not hope. Who among the faithful does not believe in the punishments of the wicked, but without hoping for them? Anybody who believes they are destined for them, and in his mind runs away from them in horror, is more rightly said to fear them than to hope for them. […] So there is faith in good things and bad, for both good and bad things are to be believed, and both in good faith, not bad.[234]

While faith is foundational and presupposed by hope, hope itself possesses a more limited scope. It is directed only at those objects of faith that are good and positively to be desired. Insofar as we may expect those bad things that are known by faith, we are more rightly said to fear than to hope. To support this claim, Augustine is fond of quoting James: "Even the demons believe and shudder" (Jas 2:19). Hope emerges, in this perspective, as a more distinctively Christian virtue than faith. It is true that genuine faith is possessed by Christians alone, and not by demons, but the content of faith as such is available to any who know and believe. In contrast, because the field of hope is restricted only to the good, it can be truly possessed only by those for whom the good things of God are rightly expected. Hope is the virtue of those who, knowing by faith what God has promised, are waiting to receive from him temporal blessings and eternal salvation.

Augustine further distinguishes the virtue of hope by limiting its temporal and relational scope. We can believe in what is past, present, or future, but we can hope only in the future. This threefold temporal modeling in Augustine corresponds, I would merely

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[234] *Enchiridion* 8.

suggest, to later doctrines of the threefold body of Christ in medieval theology.[235] Furthermore, writes Augustine, we can believe in things concerning others, but we can hope only in things that concern ourselves. The passage quoted above continues:

> There is also faith in past realities, in present ones, and in future ones. We believe that Christ died, which is now in the past; we believe that he sits at the right hand of the Father, which is in the present; we believe that he will come in judgment, which is the future. There is also faith in things that concern us, and in things that concern others; everybody believes that he had a beginning, that he has not always existed, and that the same is true of other people and other things. We have also many religious beliefs not only concerning other humans but also concerning angels. But hope is only for good things, only for things that are in the future and concern the one who is said to have hope for them. For these reasons it has been necessary to make a rational distinction between faith and hope and to give them different names.[236]

These temporal and relational parameters are intended to demonstrate, logically, how hope differs from faith while nevertheless depending upon it. The field of hope is narrower than faith; its grammar is limited to the first-person singular, future tense. Still, without the gift of faith there is nothing at all that can be hoped for, and so these virtues work together.

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[235] Starting with the ninth century prelate Amalarius, a distinction is made between the past body of Christ, born of the virgin and glorified, the present body of Christ made real on the altar, and the future body of Christ, which is nothing less than the church brought to perfection. See part II of Henri de Lubac, *Corpus Mysticum: The Eucharist and the Church in the Middle Ages*, trans. Gemma Simonds, et al. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010).

[236] Ibid.

We may ask, of course, whether at the level of experience these latter claims are convincing. Perhaps it is intuitively obvious that hope concerns itself exclusively with the future. We only hope in things that are to come; hope is by definition a future-oriented and, in fact, an eschatologically oriented virtue. To expect what has already arrived or what is now arriving is logically impossible. Augustine's restriction of hope to the personal, however, may strike us as less credible. Hans Urs von Balthasar spoke famously, if indeed controversially, of a Christian duty to hope for the salvation of all people.[237] Augustine himself speaks in the *Enchiridion* of the pilgrim church as the community that wanders on earth, redeemed by Christ and expecting one day to be fully united to him in the blessedness of the church triumphant.[238] Nonetheless, he doubts that the personal virtue of hope, poured into the individual soul, can expect the salvation of others. However, in my view, the personal nature of the virtues does not logically restrict them to matters of personal consequence only. In the end, we can no more be sure of our salvation than that of others. The virtue of hope may be mine, but if it does not and cannot provide any *certainty* of salvation, either in my own case or in yours, then there is no reason at all to limit hope to my own future destiny.

Having explained three respects in which faith and hope differ, Augustine proceeds to acknowledge a certain connection between them: "The fact that we do not see either the things we believe in or those we hope for makes not seeing a feature that faith

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[237] Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Dare We Hope that "All Men be Saved"? With a Short Discourse on Hell*, trans. David Kipp and Lothar Krauth (San Francisco, Ignatius Press: 2014). Interestingly, Balthasar takes issue precisely with Augustine, who was certain that some would be damned but unwilling to place hope in the salvation of others.
[238] *Enchiridion* 61.

and hope have in common."[239] Faith is knowledge of things that are unseen, and hope is the expectation of these things. In that regard, they differ from charity, which is the virtue that completes the passage from not seeing to the vision of God himself. To claim that faith works through charity, says Augustine, is to say that the journey that begins in faith and proceeds in hope "progresses by a good life even toward vision, in which the holy and perfect hearts know that unspeakable beauty, the full vision of which is the highest happiness."[240] As virtues concerned with what is not seen, hope and faith are the essence of Christian life in this world, this pilgrimage that has not yet achieved its goal in charity. In Augustine's words, "For we are now, as I said above, living in exile in faith and hope, and what we are striving to attain by love is a certain holy and perpetual rest from all the toil of our troubles."[241] Faith and hope are the quintessential virtues of this life, where the goal of our being is not yet fully seen. They are the essence of our current striving for the promise of charity to come. And the virtues of faith and hope are so deeply related to one another that, in spite of their differences, Augustine envisions them as an existential unity. Faith in the promises of God cannot help but hope: "So when we believe that good things await us in the future, this is nothing other than to hope for them."[242]

In my reading of Augustine, faith and hope are the only theological virtues that may be possessed in their fullness during earthly life. They are the quintessential virtues of this life, the virtues we live by here and now, for charity is by definition deferred to

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[239] *Enchiridion* 8.
[240] *Enchiridion* 5.
[241] Augustine, *Letter 55: Augustine to Januarius* 17 in *Letters 1-99*, vol. II/1 in of *The Works of Saint Augustine: a Translation for the 21st Century*, ed. John E. Rotelle (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2014).
[242] *Enchiridion* 8.

eternal life, and it is inexhaustible. Charity certainly begins in a good Christian life, but Augustine maintains that it will be perfected only in the peace of the life to come. This does not make charity less important in the here and now. To the contrary, Augustine envisions charity as the foundation of Christian life, not only as its eschatological goal but also as a reality being poured into us in the present. He writes in *On the Morals of the Catholic Church*, "It is through love, then, that we become conformed to God […] And this is done by the Holy Spirit."[243] Moreover, virtue itself is for Augustine nothing other than the embodiment of charity. In the same text he writes, "I hold virtue to be nothing else than perfect love of God. For the fourfold division of virtue I regard as taken from four forms of love."[244] Nevertheless, we see in Augustine's discussion of faith and hope an emphasis on these two virtues as the marks of Christian life in the world, without which charity is unintelligible. Charity must be believed in and it must be hoped for. Charity may be primary, but it is experienced only in the mode of faith and hope. Thus, faith and hope define Christian life in the present. It is through the activity of these two virtues that persons apprehend, in a partial and fragmentary way, the goal of charity and progress toward that end. In that particular sense, faith and hope precede charity.

Next, we can ask more directly how hope is connected to charity. Although they differ as regards the fullness of sight, hope and charity for Augustine are siblings that spring from faith. "From this confession of the faith, which is contained in short compass

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[243] Augustine, *On the Morals of the Catholic Church*, trans. Richard Stothert, from *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series,* Vol. 4, ed. Philip Schaff (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Company, 1887), chapter 13. Revised and edited for New Advent by Kevin Knight. <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/1401.htm>.
[244] Ibid., chapter 15.

in the creed […], arises the good hope of the faithful which is accompanied by holy charity."[245] Moreover, Augustine appears to believe that hope depends on charity. Hope requires love to show that it is genuine, for if we hope for the eternal good but do not have love, the object of our hope is no good at all, and we had better to fear than to hope. One who does not love "hopes in vain, even if the things for which he hopes are those which, according to our teaching, belong to true happiness, unless he also believes and hopes that if he asks he may also be given the ability to love."[246] In this way, charity authenticates hope. It abolishes the possibility of false hope, and it becomes itself the principal object of our hope.

How does hope relate to other, non-theological virtues? This topic is much less developed in Augustine, and so I will reiterate that without the virtues of faith, hope, and charity – without the assistance of grace in the life of the believing Christian – no other genuine virtue is possible. In the absence of reference to God, which the theological virtues provide, qualities of character that seem like virtues cannot subject all things to the supreme good. This is the territory of the "splendid vices," which I have previously discussed. Augustine himself writes of the person that seems to have virtue that "the very virtues which the mind imagines that it has, and by which it rules the body and the vices for the sake of gaining or keeping whatever its object of desire are themselves vices, and not virtues at all, if the mind does not direct them to God."[247] In the *City of God*, in fact, it is precisely the lack of reference to God and happiness with him that undermines the

[245] *Enchiridion* 114.
[246] *Enchiridion* 117.
[247] *City of God* XIX.25 and V.15. This line of thought is significantly developed in the *Answer to Julian*.

possibility for any pagan community, including Rome, to form a genuine commonwealth of justice. Whatever we may think of Augustine's opinion on this subject, the illuminating point is that hope, imbricated in the triad of the theological virtues, refers all virtues to God.

The Corresponding Vices of Hope. In his theory of virtue, Aristotle famously articulates the doctrine of the mean, which imagines every virtue as an intermediate condition between two vices, one of excess and the other of defect in the relevant passion or form of conduct.[248] It is simply in the nature of things, says Aristotle, to be destroyed by excess or defect. And just as the skill of an artist aims at the mean, executing the craft with precise judgment, so too does virtue steer a course between excess and deficiency.[249] Importantly, the intermediate point sought by virtue cannot be established by a universal rule, for it is relative to the circumstances of the person and the act in question. Virtue is particular, and it works through practical reason to find the best course between its corresponding vices in the thicket of local circumstances.

Augustine himself does not espouse the doctrine of the mean in an explicit form, and any attempt to locate it within his moral theory would be purely speculative. Without entering into a lengthy discussion of the sources of Augustine's virtue ethics, we can at minimum say that in the classical world of Augustine's thought, virtue was conceived as achieving equilibrium between the excesses of vice. The virtues are most clearly apprehended through contrast with the vices that they cautiously avoided. According to

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[248] *Nichomachean Ethics* II.6.

[249] So, for example, courage is the mean between cowardice and rashness, temperance is the mean between insensibility and self-indulgence, and liberality is the mean between prodigality and meanness. *Nichomachean Ethics* II.7.

Anglican writer Jeffrey Metcalfe, in the case of the theological virtues, Augustine departs from the classical tradition of placing virtues at the mean. Excellence in these virtues, he says, is not achieved through moderation, for it is impossible to have excessive faith, hope, or charity.[250] That interpretation of Augustine is not exactly correct. Charity alone is limitless and unsusceptible to excess, since it is nothing less than our share in the infinite being of God himself through grace. Faith and hope, however, are virtues that belong only to this life, and they are susceptible both to deficiency and to excess. Like any moral virtue, they represent the intermediate condition between two vices.[251]

For evidence on this point, we can look to the virtue of hope. It is not until Aquinas that we have a systematic account of the vices that correspond to hope, but the names of these vices already appear in the writings of Augustine.[252] Hope navigates the perilous road between the vices of *despair* and *presumption*, and these correspond to deficient and excessive confidence in the promises of God. Once again, Augustine never endorses Aristotle's doctrine of the mean, but in discussing the lived experience of virtue, he is well aware of these vices in relation to which we can go wrong. Hope is subject to these two pitfalls of despair and presumption, and so with the help of God it must seek a middle path. This path is the Christian way:

> To keep, however, the middle way, the true, straight road, threading its way, as it were, between the left hand of despair and the right hand of presumption would be extremely difficult for us, unless Christ had said *I am the way*. *I am*, he says,

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[250] Jeffrey S. Metcalfe, "Hoping without a Future: Augustine's Theological Virtues beyond Melancholia," *Anglican Theological Review* 95, no. 2 (2013): 235-50. Here, 237.
[251] We do not have room to discuss the vices that correspond to faith, but an initial guess might identify them as hardness of heart and credulity.
[252] For Aquinas, see *ST* II, Q. 20-21.

> *the way, the truth, and the life* (Jn 14:6). […] So let us walk serenely along this highway without a care in the world; but let us have a healthy fear of the traps set beside the road. The enemy doesn't dare lay his traps on the highway, because Christ is the way; but next to the road, on the wayside, he certainly never stops doing so.[253]

The promise of salvation and the threat of damnation, especially as they are mediated through the sayings of scripture, are intended to strike a balance in the soul between the loss of hope that occurs in despair and the corruption of hope with pride that occurs in presumption. Eternal salvation and perpetual damnation are real possibilities, and they must always be held in view. With a healthy understanding of both realities, the Christian can have confidence enough in God's generosity without erring into an excessive confidence that favors the self.

In short, hope is the virtue that measures our confidence in expecting the good things of God. Augustine tells us, moreover, that hope is given in order to preserve us from the sins that are occasioned by despair and presumption. Speaking about the mercy of God, who does not permit us to know the span of our lives or the hour of Christ's return, he writes:

> Suppose, on the contrary, he had notified everyone of his or her appointed day. It would have led to an increase of sins, because they would all feel safe. He chose rather to give you the hope of pardon, so that you may not plunge deeper into sin out of desperation. Both presumption and despair are pitfalls for sinners. Listen to

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[253] Augustine, *Sermon 142* 1 in *Sermons, (94A-147A) on the Old Testament*, vol. III/4 of *The Works of Saint Augustine: a Translation for the 21st Century*, ed. John E. Rotelle (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1992).

> the voice of a desperate person whose despair is driving him to multiply sins, and to the voice of a presumptuous person who is lured into multiplying sins by rash hope, and then see how the mercy of God counters both errors. […] The one sins because he despairs, the other because he is presumptuously confident. Either extreme is to be feared, both are perilous. Beware of desperation! Beware of misplaced hope! [254]

Significantly, hope is not absolute certainty of what will come at the end of our lives, or when the end will come, for this would lead us into a presumptuous sense of security and permit any number of sins. Nonetheless, hope entails some kind of certainty: certainty of the forgiveness of sins, which keeps us from sins of desperation. Hope emerges, then, as a crucial feature of the divine pedagogy, whereby God preserves us from sin and provides just enough knowledge and confidence for the achievement of our salvation.

In his book on the theological virtues, the Catholic philosopher Josef Pieper summarized the tradition that we are now examining in Augustine, which places despair and presumption alongside the middle way of virtue.[255] These vices, he says, are two forms of hopelessness, one anticipating that what is hoped for will not be fulfilled and the other anticipating that surely it will. The central characteristic of despair and presumption, therefore, is that they vitiate hope. By so doing, the vices that correspond to hope reject the gift of grace and stifle the operation of the Holy Spirit, who pours faith, hope, and charity into our hearts. It is not surprising, then, that in the Christian tradition,

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[254] Augustine, *Exposition of Psalm 144* 11 in *Expositions of the Psalms: 121-150*, vol. III/20 of *The Works of Saint Augustine: a Translation for the 21st Century*, ed. John E. Rotelle (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2004).
[255] Josef Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love*, trans. Richard and Clara Winston and Sister Mary Frances McCarthy, S.N.D. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1997).

these vices would come to be counted first among the unforgivable sins against the Holy Spirit.[256] To lose hope in despair or presumption is unforgivable precisely because without the virtue of hope, we do not allow ourselves to be forgiven.

The Practice or Act of Hope. Virtues are ordered to action. They require expression in human conduct and, in the case of the acquired virtues at least, they require cultivation through practice. This brings us to two remaining questions. First, what are the practices through which hope is cultivated? And second, what are the distinctive acts of hope, or what kind of practices express hope? The first of these questions is decidedly more challenging, since it touches on the causality of hope, which as a theological virtue is given by God and not acquired. The second question, we will see, is somewhat more straightforward, but equally illuminating on the subject of what hope in practice looks like.

What are the practices through which hope is cultivated? When it comes to the Pauline virtues of faith, hope, and charity, a paradox appears. They are given by God, and thus caused by grace, but as virtues they must also be developed through the free action of individuals. Human beings cannot take credit for virtuous action if it is not practiced as our own, and yet with faith, hope, and charity, all credit is finally due to God. I cannot enter here into theological debates on the relationship between divine agency and human

[256] See *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1864. The idea of "unforgivable" sins is based on the saying of Jesus reported in Matthew 12:31: "Therefore I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven." For a short history and analysis of this tradition, see Nicholas Lamme, "The Blasphemy Against the Holy Spirit: the Unpardonable Sin in Matthew 12:22-32," *Mid-America Journal of Theology* 23 (2012): 19-51.

effort. Let us restrict ourselves, therefore, to the words of Augustine on this subject, specifically in relation to the Pauline virtues:

> Since there is no doubt whatever that a man, if he is already old enough to have the use of reason, cannot believe, hope, or love unless he wills to do so, nor can he win the reward of God's high vocation unless he runs for it willingly, how can it depend not on human will or exertion but on the God who shows us mercy unless the will itself is prepared by the Lord, as it is written? […] For the good will of man precedes many of God's gifts but not all of them, and it is itself one of the gifts that it does not precede.[257]

Unlike the moral virtues, faith, hope, and charity originate not from any action attributable to the human will but from the transformative action of God. However, these virtues cannot exclude the endorsement of the will. Faith, hope, and charity must be "taken up" by the individual in order to have any effect in human life or any bearing on moral responsibility. For Augustine, this means that not only the Pauline virtues but also the will that embraces them is a gift from God.[258]

This picture does not exclude, in principle, an account of those practices that habituate or cultivate hope. As long as one acknowledges that no action on its own can cause us to acquire hope without divine assistance, it is possible to speak of building up our hope through practice. What is a practice that develops hope in us? Recall the connection that Augustine draws between hope and the petitionary genre of the Lord's Prayer. Hope is a virtue that looks forward with expectation to the good things that God

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[257] *Enchiridion* 32.

[258] This is why Augustine can affirm that the presence of hope in a person is rightly called "good conscience." See *Sermon 158* 6.

desires to give us. Hope emboldens us to ask these things of God, struggling as we are in the miseries of life, confident that he will not deny them to us. "Hope prays." In a letter to a widow named Proba, Augustine explores the close connection between hope and prayer. He offers a long interpretation of 1 Timothy 5:5, "But she who is truly a widow and desolate has placed her hope in the Lord and persists in prayers," and he encourages Proba likewise to persist. For prayer leads us by way of the Pauline virtues to God himself: "Therefore, faith, hope, and love lead one who prays to God, that is, one who believes, hopes, desires, and considers what he asks of God in the Lord's Prayer."[259] For Augustine, through prayer we express our longing for what we have now only in hope.[260]

What are the acts that embody hope? What does hope in action look like? Apart from prayer itself, which not only cultivates but also expresses the virtue of hope, I offer an obvious but important answer. The principal act of hope is *placing our hope* in something. Moving from the noun to the verb, from the virtue to the act, we ought to consider what placing our hope in something means. Or better, we should ask what the Christian places hope in. This returns us to the topic of the object of hope, which I dealt with earlier, though here something more is added. In a final sense, we do in fact hope only in God and in the promise of eternal life. But according to Augustine, we may quite rightly place our hope in temporal things as well. Augustinian virtue does not seek God to the exclusion of all else but seeks all things in reference to God. Thus, we can reasonably hope for any number of earthly goods, so long as we do this in the pursuit of our eternal

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[259] Augustine, *Letter 130: Augustine to Proba* 24 in *Letters 100-155*, vol. II/2 of *The Works of Saint Augustine: a Translation for the 21st Century*, ed. Boniface Ramsey (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2003).
[260] *Enchiridion*, 27.

good. Augustine points out, in fact, that of the seven petitions to be found in the Lord's Prayer, four are for temporal goods, or things to be realized in the present life before the coming of the next: daily bread, forgiveness of sins, protection from temptation, and deliverance from all evil.[261] Just as we can and should love created beings "in God," so we are expected to hope for temporal goods with God as our final goal and aspiration.[262] Theologically, and well beyond the orbit of Augustine, this raises the possibility of hope as a socially transformative virtue, one that aspires not only to the peace of the next life but also to peace and justice in the present.

Ultimately, virtues are not conceptual entities but qualities of persons seeking the good in the varied and complex circumstances of life. To name a virtue, like hope, and to scrutinize its philosophical features is not fully to understand the virtue but only to establish the contours of a heuristic. A conceptual anatomy of hope cannot by itself lead us to awareness of what hope is like without reference to the storied particularity of persons in whom we recognize hope. It is necessary, therefore, to consider hope not only from a conceptual perspective but also from an existential perspective. Apart from the theoretical features we have described, what does hope look like in the lives of the hopeful? How does Augustine, especially in the role of pastor, see the virtue of hope to function? Where does hope fit in the mystery of human life before God? I will offer three brief observations.

First, according to Augustine, hope emerges in human experience as a response to the reality of finitude and contingency. Life is inescapably stricken with miseries. But in

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[261] Ibid., 115.
[262] Linguistically, we might say that we should hope *in* God alone, though we may hope *for* things in this life.

the promise of Christ's resurrection, death itself becomes the cause of our hope. For in death we will have our rest, and by rising in Christ we will have perfect happiness.[263] Hope is the virtue that shines in sorrow. Paradoxically, it answers the tribulations of life and the threat of death with rejoicing. The cross and the grave are transfigured by the resurrection, and so they become the cause of our hope.[264] As a result, this earthly life in which we endure corruption calls for hope in the newness of life to come:

> This renovation of our life, therefore, is indeed a passage from death to life that first takes place through faith in order that we may rejoice in hope and may be patient in tribulation, as long as our exterior self is still being corrupted, but our interior self is renewed from day to day.[265]

According to Augustine, hope is so powerful that it creates a kind of second self, redeemed and rejoicing, in spite of ongoing toil and suffering. This is core of his claim that hope provides a measure of anticipatory happiness, in spite of the equally crucial fact that true happiness waits for us only in eternity. This is also how Augustine wishes to interpret Paul's notion that, in some real sense, we are saved in hope: "We, therefore, walk in the reality of toil, but in the hope of rest, in the flesh of our old self, but in the faith of our new self."[266]

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[263] Augustine, *Letter 36: Augustine to Casulanus* 31 in *Letters 1-99*, vol. II/1 of *The Works of Saint Augustine: a Translation for the 21st Century*, ed. John E. Rotelle (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2014).
[264] Augustine has a fascinating passage in which he describes the horizontal and vertical beams of the cross as signifying our joyful toil and final expectation, respectively. *Letter 55* 25.
[265] Ibid., 5.
[266] Ibid., 26. Elsewhere Augustine says that it was by hope that the martyrs themselves won their crowns. *Sermon 158* 8.

Second, Augustine places special emphasis on the role of the Holy Spirit and Jesus Christ in the experience of Christian hope. Hope is not an abstract principle or general kind of optimism in the possibility of heaven. It is the personal gift of the Holy Spirit, and it places us along with faith into a personal relationship with Christ:

> But may you be consoled by your faith and hope and love that is poured out in the hearts of the faithful by the Holy Spirit, of whom we have already received something as a down payment, in order that we may know how to desire the full amount. After all, you ought not to think that you have been abandoned, since in your interior self you have Christ present in your heart through faith.[267]

Together with faith and charity, the Spirit of God freely grants human beings hope, so that even in the present life we can know something of his peace and with that knowledge merit the full amount. This hope is not directed toward an impersonal, heavenly state of affairs but toward the person of Jesus Christ, who accompanies us in our hearts through faith already. Jesus Christ is our hope. In the life to come, he will be our eternal abode: "Christ as man is your way, Christ as God is your home country."[268]

Third, Christian hope provides an alternative to false hope in human beings, material wealth, or moral righteousness. This is perhaps the most vital and most typically Augustinian feature of hope that we have encountered. Hope goes wrong not only by deficiency in despair and excess in presumption. It also, more ubiquitously, errs by

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[267] Augustine, *Letter 92: Augustine to Italica* 1 in *Letters 1-99*, vol. II/1 of *The Works of Saint Augustine: a Translation for the 21st Century*, ed. John E. Rotelle (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2014).

[268] Augustine, *Sermon 375C* in *Sermons, 341-400*, vol. III/10 of *The Works of Saint Augustine: a Translation for the 21st Century*, ed. John E. Rotelle (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1995). Furthermore, because our hope is in Christ, who resurrected in the body, so too do we hope for a fully bodily resurrection in him. See *Letter 55* 3.

directing itself at created things wrongly and at the potential of human effort. By placing hope in Christ, who is God and man, the church avoids the inevitable destruction of placing hope in human beings alone:

> But accursed be everyone who places his hope in man. So that's why God became man, and wanted to die and rise again, so that what the future held in store for humanity might be revealed in human flesh, and yet that we might believe God, not man.[269]

Moreover, Augustine urges Proba to avoid the temptation of putting her hope in the uncertainty of riches.[270] Just as he did against the Pelagians, Augustine excoriates the Stoics for hoping in their own moral achievement. These are "proud men claiming to distance themselves from the flesh, and setting all their hopes of happiness on their souls, by placing their supreme good in their own virtue."[271] This is a serious problem for Augustine, and salvation itself is at stake. Christ only "forgives the sins of those who are humble, who place no reliance on any merits of their own and do not hope in their own virtue for salvation, but now their need for the grace of their Savior."[272] The genuine Christian, writes Augustine to Julian, does not trust in his or her own righteousness but hopes only in the mercy of God.[273] Hence, we must make a psychological and theological

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[269] *Sermon 157* 6. See also, *Letter 89* 5 and *Enchiridion* 60.
[270] *Letter 130* 2.
[271] Augustine, *Sermon 156* 7 in *Sermons (148-183) on the New Testament*, vol. III/V of *The Works of Saint Augustine: a Translation for the 21st Century*, ed. John E. Rotelle (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1992).
[272] Augustine, *Exposition of Psalm 71* 15 in *Expositions of the Psalms, 51-72*, vol. III/17 of *The Works of Saint Augustine: a Translation for the 21st Century*, ed. John E. Rotelle (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2014).
[273] *Answer to Julian* II.29 in *Answer to the Pelagians, II*, vol. I/24 of *The Works of Saint Augustine: a Translation for the 21st Century*, ed. John E. Rotelle (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1998). Related to this warning against hoping in one's righteousness is the

distinction between optimism, which has final confidence in earthly goods, and hope, which places final confidence in the goodness of God.

By detailing Augustine's understanding of hope, both in its conceptual and existential dimensions, I have attempted to demonstrate the centrality of this virtue not only to his thought but also to Christian existence itself. To live as heirs of God's promises and subjects of his grace is to live in the virtue of hope. By faith we may believe, but by hope we expect the good things of God. Hoping in his mercy, we experience our destiny even now. For we have been saved in hope. Augustine invites us, therefore, to ground ourselves in the virtue of hope: "Let our hope also be steadfast. Let it be fixed in him, never sagging or wavering or shaken, just as God himself, the fixed point in whom our hope is fastened, can never be shaken either. In this life, it is called hope, but in the life beyond it will be realization."[274]

5.3 IN DEFENSE OF HOPE: A VIRTUE FOR ACTION IN THE PRESENT

There are three major insights from the foregoing study of Augustine that I would like to highlight in defense of hope. First, while the proper object of hope is eternal life with God, this does not preclude hope in temporal things. Just as we can love earthly things rightly by loving them in light of God, so too can we hope for earthly things by hoping for them in God. There is always the danger, of course, that we might hope in

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problem of sacramental efficacy. Augustine wishes to say that the sacraments, and Baptism especially, do effect salvation in us but only under the mode of hope. Present evils are not washed away by Baptism, nor is final happiness obtained. See *Enchiridion* 66.

[274] Augustine, *Exposition of Psalm 91* in *Exposition of the Psalms 73-98*, vol. III/18 of *The Works of Saint Augustine: a Translation for the 21st Century*, ed. John E. Rotelle (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2002).

things wrongly. To place our hope in human effort or in the achievement of a temporal state of affairs through human exertion is to lose sight of our total dependence on God. Augustine criticizes the Stoics for exactly this reason. Strictly speaking, to hope in one's own moral goodness or in any earthly good, without reference to God, is no longer to hope at all. It is not hope but optimism. And if it is directed to the achievement of some temporal state of affairs, it is utopianism. However, if we follow Augustine, it is entirely conceivable and even necessary (though he does not state this himself) to hope for progress in the work of peace and justice on earth, so long as this hope is practiced in awareness of human dependence on God and so long as this goal is pursued as an expression of God's will and God's desire for human happiness.

Second, the virtue of hope for Augustine is not certainty. To be certain is to enter into the territory of vice. Certainty of our final fulfillment in God is presumption. Certainty of damnation is despair. Augustine envisions hope as a middle way that eschews certainty in favor of divinely given confidence. In hope, we are confident that God is the kind of God who keeps promises. So much so that, in our hope, God's promises are in some sense already fulfilled. The virtue of hope does not, therefore, transport us out of this world and into the next. It does not redirect attention toward some heavenly future at the expense of the present. To the contrary, hope is a virtue of the present. It exists, for Augustine, only in the present. And it enables us to live in the present in an extraordinary new way: to live as though salvation is already real in us. Salvation is already incipiently and partially realized in hope, and in my view, this hope is rooted in the Eucharist. This is not a denial of all that is not yet redeemed in our lives and in our world. Nor does hope abolish an awareness of finitude and death. According to

Augustine, hope *transforms* our awareness of these limitations into the very condition of possibility for our fulfillment in God. Death itself becomes the door to life. Sin itself becomes the door to redemption. I am reminded here of the words of the *Exsultet*, proclaimed at the Easter Vigil in the Roman Rite. This idea is often attributed to Augustine and to his teacher Ambrose: *O felix culpa, quae talem ac tantum meruit habere Redemptorem!*[275]

Third, Augustine understands that hope, as a virtue of the present world, must be active. It must result in a certain form of conduct, a certain way of living in the world. I observed earlier that Augustine's emphasis falls mainly on prayer and on placing our hope on things. Admittedly, he sees hope as a virtue of pious endurance. It is possible, however, to elaborate on Augustine's theology of hope, as I have described it, and to propose that the act of hope goes further. Hope is not only the basis of endurance in the trials of life. It is also the virtue that energizes the ongoing pursuit of holiness and social transformation. It does so without certainty and therefore without presumption. But it also refuses to lapse into despair. Fully aware of our ultimate dependence on God – aware of the fact that we alone cannot make ourselves holy and cannot make the world fully just – hope pushes forward anyway. In fact, hope is most truly itself when it is hope against hope. Hope struggles to bring about God's vision for the world, even when it seems impossible, because it is a vision of the truth of our destiny, a gift that comes from God.

What I wish to propose, therefore, is an approach to liturgy and ethics that sees hope as mediating moral action in the present. As Paul says, we have been saved in hope. Augustine is deeply moved by these words. He comes back to them again and again. He

[275] "O happy fault, that earned so great, so glorious a Redeemer!"

takes these words to mean that through hope, we become someone new. We encounter in our hope a version of our deepest selves, in whom the salvation of God is already at hand, not deferred to a future world. To that extent, I contend, we are made through hope into the embodiment of God's future in the present. We are reshaped into agents of the world to come. Hope does not distract us from the here and now or neutralize our striving for justice in favor of some otherworldly goal. Hope does not make us into mere aspirants of the eschaton. It makes us into workers for what the eschaton must mean in history: peace and justice, the participation of all in the common good, and the flourishing of all persons and the earth together.

Jürgen Moltmann provides the fullest account of this theological connection between hope and action.[276] In his *Ethics of Hope*, he develops that connection in detail and in relation to a number of applied issues. This book is the ethical extension of Moltmann's celebrated *Theology of Hope*, which he published almost fifty years before.[277] The virtue of hope, argues Moltmann, delivers a decidedly positive ethics. It is an ethics rooted in possibility. For hope "awakens our sense for potentiality – for what could be."[278] In that regard, hope connects the future and its distant goals to the present and to what is in reach. Hope orients us to the concrete steps we can actually take now: to what is truly possible. This runs directly against De La Torre, who sees in hope a "pie in the sky" idealization of the historical future or the world beyond that undermines the

[276] Jürgen Moltmann, *Ethics of Hope* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012).
[277] Jürgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope: On the Ground and Implications of a Christian Eschatology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993). This version is translated from the German, *Theologie der Hoffnung*: *Untersuchungen zur Begründung und zu den Konsequenzen einer christlichen Eschatologie* (Munich: Christian Kaiser Verlag, 1964).
[278] Moltmann, *Ethics of Hope*, 3.

praxis of liberation. For him, to take concrete steps toward justice now requires hopelessness; it requires people to have nothing left to lose. Moltmann offers an entirely different view. What De La Torre calls hope, Moltmann instead calls utopianism, and this is indeed an unhelpful and unrealistic optimism about the future. Genuine hope, for Moltmann, turns our attention and our action to what is possible in the present. Though Moltmann also emphasizes love as the reason for God's creative action and the meaning of eternal life, it is hope that founds his ethics because it is hope that grounds us in the present and awakens our awareness of possibility.[279]

For Christians, of course, hope has a theological referent. It belongs to what Moltmann describes as a "transformative eschatology." This is an orientation to the future conceived not as an abstract and supernatural state of affairs, which we usually refer to as "heaven," but instead as the promise of new life in Jesus Christ. Writes Moltmann, "Christian hope is founded on Christ's resurrection and opens up a life in the light of God's new world. Christian ethics anticipates the universal coming of God in the potentialities of history."[280] Christ is our hope. And the risen life of Christ, God's answer to the violence of the cross, is our destiny. To live in hope, therefore, is to keep Christ squarely in view as the embodiment of God's promise. Life led in this way, lived in light of the resurrection, has two features for Moltmann: waiting and hastening.

Waiting, in Moltmann's sense, does not mean passivity, or waiting around for the gifts of God spontaneously to appear. It means active expectation. The promise of God's future acquires power in the present. Waiting is not giving up but standing firm. It is a

[279] Ibid. 122, 157.
[280] Ibid., 5.

kind of endurance, but this does not mean "keeping our head down" in this present life until the next life comes. It is the endurance of those who, looking to the resurrection of the crucified Christ and hence to God's justice which has been poured into historical time, refuse to conform to the injustice and violence of the world. In hope lives the power of resistance. Writes Moltmann, "People who expect God's justice and righteousness no longer accept the so-called normative force of what is fact, because they know that a better world is possible and that changes in the present are necessary."[281] Once again, hope is about the possible, and for Christians it is a rejection of the status quo.

Hastening, continues Moltmann, is a spatial metaphor for our movement through time. It draws attention to the present as the space through which we are passing – a space of transition on the way to the future for which we hope. From that perspective, hastening means crossing the frontiers of the present into the horizon of possibility. When we do this, we anticipate the future hoped for. Every step forward is a step in favor of the future:

> With every doing of the right, we prepare the way for the 'new earth' on which righteousness will 'dwell'. If we achieve some justice for those who are suffering violence, then God's future shines into their world. If we take up the cause of 'widows and orphans', a fragment of life comes into our own life. […] Not to take things as they are but to see them as they can be in that future, and to bring about this 'can be' in the present means living up to the future.[282]

[281] Ibid., 7.
[282] Ibid., 8.

This is a powerful claim from Moltmann. When we take a step toward the good and achieve some small measure of justice in history, *we bring God's future into the present*. This is done simply by living up to what the future means and what the resurrection of Jesus Christ means: the refusal of all that erodes and degrades life in favor of new life, transfigured life. This is the life of the Triune God, poured into history in the cross and resurrection of Jesus. This is the radical transformation of history, I would add, that begins and ends in the Eucharist.

Moltmann is clearly aware, of course, that Christians do not all subscribe to this kind of transformative eschatology. He discusses several alternatives including apocalyptic eschatology in Luther and in the modern cultural obsession with Armageddon; Christological eschatology in the Reformed tradition; and separatist eschatology among the Radical Reformers. Still, by way of a dispute with Karl Barth, Moltmann defends a transformative eschatology as the basis of a transformative ethics. While Barth argued for a *Christological eschatology*, in which Christ has already completed the salvation of the world that waits to be unveiled, Moltmann proposes an *eschatological Christology*, in which Christ is the beginning of the eschatological future already breaking into the present. God's future emerges in the present without ceasing to be the future. This happens in the resurrection of Jesus Christ and, through our discipleship and participation, in every human action on behalf of what is right and what is just.

Hope for God's future is therefore the beginning of God's future. It is the virtue through which we are remade as bearers of that future for the world. That transformation of our identity is rooted, as I argue, in liturgy. This is because the source and center of

liturgy is the Eucharist, the sacrament in which we encounter Christ himself, the sacrament through which we are invited to share his risen life. From the standpoint of history, we do not yet share that life fully. It is still on its way; still flowing into the world. It flows into the world through us as a eucharistic people, a people drawn by the sacrament of Christ's body and blood into a special kind of communion: a communion in hope. The fellowship which is the heart of that communion is nothing other than the fellowship of the life of the Trinity, poured and extended in history. Recent commentaries on the virtue of hope from the standpoint of moral theology are therefore quite right in emphasizing the theological and Trinitarian foundations of this virtue.[283] However, this should not come at the expense of attention to the ethical consequences of this virtue. To be a people that hopes – to be a communion in hope – must mean, as Moltmann says, that we live up to what we hope for. Hope requires us to act the part as bearers of God's future. We must not do this in a triumphalist way but in a critical and creative way. To the extent that we hope, we should search for possibilities of holiness in ourselves, our communities, and even in sources beyond the church. But we must also be on guard against anything that works against what we hope for, against God's vision for the world, which is justice and peace. Hope can hold this duality because it is a virtue of possibility and also a virtue of endurance. In that role, hope is the first virtue of a eucharistic ethics.

[283] See John Webster, "Hope," in *The Oxford Handbook of Theological Ethics*, eds. Gilbert Meilander and William Werpehowski (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 291-306. See also the chapter by Margaret Farley, cited above.

5.4 CONCLUSION: CONCRETE IMPLICATIONS OF A EUCHARISTIC ETHICS OF HOPE

I wish to conclude this project on a practical note by asking the next logical question: So what? What are the concrete ethical implications of the framework that I have proposed? What does a eucharistic ethics of hope actually look like in action? Moltmann expands his ethics of hope in several directions. He takes Christian hope primarily to imply a valuing of life, and so he applies his thinking to medical ethics, including questions of death and dying. He also discusses questions of ecological ethics, the ethics of war and peace, justice, and human rights. Moltmann does not, however, make clear in each of these domains how hope as such makes a difference. It is evident that hope, for Moltmann, *motivates* ethics. But how does hope *shape* ethics?

My own answer to that question returns to the unique character of hope as a virtue that embraces the paradox of Christian living. Hope reminds us both that the present world matters – that God is working to transform the world here and now, and that we are called to be a part of that work – and also that what we can achieve in the present world is not the fullness of what we are destined for. As a result, hope gives life to an ethics that is relentlessly ambitious in pursuit of holiness and social transformation but also critical and realistic. Insofar as this is a eucharistic ethics, which envisions Christian worship and Christian living as part of God's pouring of the divine life into history, it will direct our attention especially to liturgy. It will be an ethics of worship that impels us to worship God creatively and also critically. Have we worshipped well? How might we worship better? Answers to these questions will look to the norm of what we hope for: the flourishing of all things God, for the glory of God. To the extent that our liturgies undermine human wellbeing and the full participation of all creatures in the common

good, they will be judged harmful. To the extent that our liturgies prioritize divine transcendence and the otherworldly nature of our values at the expense of God's transformative presence in and for the world, they will be judged inadequate. This has direct implications not only for ecclesial matters, such as women's ordination, eucharistic discipline, and the allocation of church funding, but also for the life of Christian discipleship beyond the walls of the sanctuary.

Individual Christians cannot seriously conceive of themselves as partakers of the divine life and participants in the eucharistic mystery if they do not attempt to act the part in every dimension of their personal and social existence. "Acting the part" does not mean achieving perfection, for this is an ethics of hope. It means striving to embody the truth of one's identity as a guest at the table of the Lord, as a participant in the divine banquet of God's life given in Jesus Christ. This striving will involve two key aspects. First, Christians must endeavor to identify, in their own contexts and given the particularities of their character and opportunities, positive avenues for contributing to the wellbeing of other creatures and the earth. How can each of us offer the sacrament of ourselves, a taste of God's vision of universal communion, to those whom we encounter in our lives? This is not an ethics of kindness only. It requires creative study of the ways in which we are already connected to the world around us, so that we may strive to practice those connections in ways that are life-giving. Second, Christians must endeavor to critique and revise our ways of being that suppress possibilities for the flourishing of creation. A eucharistic ethics of hope is inherently critical and revisionist. In hope, we are deeply aware that although we are joyfully incorporated into the giving of God's life for the world, we are not yet complete partakers of that life. Hence, we scour our practices

for those missteps and failures which cause us to interrupt the flow of life, whether intentionally or not. We *take for granted* that our way of life requires revision, and we commit ourselves to the ongoing work of conversion and pursuit of holiness. This requires profound humility, but it is a hopeful humility. It is not critique for the sake of critique, and it is not a merely reflexive spouting of progressive, justice-seeking values. It is a persistent engagement with our failures and also our possibilities.

A eucharistic ethics of hope is an ethics of embodiment. It invites us to think deeply about how we as bodies are connected to other bodies and to the body of the earth and to shape these connections justly in light of what we hope for in God. For instance, I may shape my eating and meal practices in a way that lessens and eventually eliminates reliance on factory farming. This is an act of hope, for I know that my entanglements with animal cruelty and ecological destruction do not end there, but I also know that every choice in favor of life and justice is a sacramental and indeed eucharistic act. I may likewise interrogate my complicity in structures of white supremacy, attentive not only to my personal racial bias but to the various ways in which I draw life from a system of privilege at the expense of black life. My effort to disentangle myself from this system of death will always be partial and fragmentary, but it will be meaningful and necessary. Consciousness of my own body and how it draws life out of other bodies unjustly within a habitat of white supremacy leads me to replace death-dealing practices whenever possible, with alternative practices and ultimately to engage in social efforts in favor of those who experience racial violence and in order to dismantle the systems that oppress them.

The ethics that I am describing is therefore gradualist in nature. It is not an ethics of all-or-nothing but instead an ethics of incremental progress toward the good. Hope is the virtue that empowers us to see that good where it appears and also to acknowledge that it has not yet fully arrived. Hope calls, therefore, for an ethics of conscience and discernment. This ethics requires the moral maturity to look inward honestly at who we are and outward honestly at how we are related to others. It relies on mature individuals and communities to discern truthfully where progress is possible and to push for change in concrete ways without risking ethical burnout but also without justifying moral laxity. This leads me, of course, to the observation that the way forward is not always clear. It is not always clear where the boundary between what is required and what is realistic lies. It is also not always clear which values are at stake and which values must take priority when they appear to conflict. It is not always clear whether there is a way through impasse. A eucharistic ethics of hope is useful in these circumstances insofar as it permits uncertainty but propels us forward nonetheless. What is the best way forward ethically in relation to abortion? What are the best policies to support in addressing climate change? What is the most fitting strategy for implementing vaccine mandates? Just because these are questions without clear answers does not mean that we are excused from asking them. We must push forward toward the horizon of our hope, gathering whatever data and whatever wisdom will help us in pursuit of holiness and justice.

Having established the outline of my fundamental eucharistic ethics, any number of practical questions arise. What kind of ecological ethics does a eucharistic and hope-based paradigm yield? What kind of response to racism and homophobia in the church does it support? What does the call to live eucharistically teach us in relation to social

problems? I believe that writers in liturgy and ethics can and must engage these kinds of questions more directly when they go about the work of connecting morality to worship, and I believe that my reflections in this dissertation can support that work. In future research, I myself hope to explore in detail what this effort looks like in applied ethics.