

JOSEPH CARDINAL RATZINGER
**THE SPIRIT
OF THE LITURGY**



*“I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw
all men to myself.” –John 12:32*

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*The Spirit
of the Liturgy*

TRANSLATED BY JOHN SAWARD

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Preface

One of the first books I read after starting my theological studies at the beginning of 1946 was Romano Guardini's first little book, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*. It was published at Easter 1918 as the opening volume in the *Ecclesia Or arts* series edited by Abbot Herwegen, and from then until 1957 it was constantly reprinted. This slim volume may rightly be said to have inaugurated the Liturgical Movement in Germany. Its contribution was decisive. It helped us to rediscover the liturgy in all its beauty, hidden wealth, and time-transcending grandeur, to see it as the animating center of the Church, the very center of Christian life. It led to a striving for a celebration of the liturgy that would be "more substantial" (*wesentlicher*, one of Guardini's favorite words). We were now willing to see the liturgy—in its inner demands and form—as the prayer of the Church, a prayer moved and guided by the Holy Spirit himself, a prayer in which Christ unceasingly becomes contemporary with us, enters into our lives.

I should like to suggest a comparison. Like all comparisons, it is in many ways inadequate, and yet it may aid understanding. We might say that in 1918, the year that Guardini published his book, the liturgy was rather like a fresco. It had been preserved from damage, but it had been almost completely overlaid with whitewash by later generations. In the Missal from which the priest celebrated, the form of the liturgy that had grown from its earliest beginnings was still present, but, as far as the faithful were concerned, it was largely concealed beneath instructions for and forms of private prayer. The fresco was laid bare by the Liturgical Movement and, in a definitive way, by the Second Vatican Council. For a moment its colors and figures fascinated us. But since then the fresco has been endangered by climatic conditions as well as by various restorations and reconstructions. In fact, it is threatened with destruction, if the necessary steps are not taken to stop these damaging influences. Of course, there must be no question of its being covered with whitewash again, but what is imperative is a new reverence in the way we treat it, a new understanding of its message and its reality, so that rediscovery does not become the first stage of irreparable loss.

My purpose in writing this little book, which I now lay before the public, is

to assist this renewal of understanding. Its basic intentions coincide with what Guardini wanted to achieve in his own time with *The Spirit of the Liturgy*. That is why I deliberately chose a title that would be immediately reminiscent of that classic of liturgical theology. The only difference is that I have had to translate what Guardini did at the end of the First World War, in a totally different historical situation, into the context of our present-day questions, hopes, and dangers. I am not attempting, any more than Guardini was, to involve myself with scholarly discussion and research. I am simply offering an aid to the understanding of the faith and to the right way to give the faith its central form of expression in the liturgy. If this book were to encourage, in a new way, something like a “liturgical movement”, a preface 9 movement toward the liturgy and toward the right way of celebrating the liturgy, inwardly and outwardly, then the intention that inspired its writing would be richly fulfilled.

Rome
The Feast of St. Augustine of Hippo
August 28, 1999
Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger

PART ONE

THE ESSENCE OF THE LITURGY

Chapter 1

*Liturgy and Life:
The Place of the Liturgy in Reality*

WHAT is the liturgy? What happens during the liturgy? What kind of reality do we encounter here? In the 1920s the suggestion was made that we should understand the liturgy in terms of “play”. The point of the analogy was that a game has its own rules, sets up its own world, which is in force from the start of play but then, of course, is suspended at the close of play. A further point of similarity was that play, though it has a meaning, does not have a purpose and that for this very reason there is something healing, even liberating, about it. Play takes us out of the world of daily goals and their pressures and into a sphere free of purpose and achievement, releasing us for a time from all the burdens of our daily world of work. Play is a kind of other world, an oasis of freedom, where for a moment we can let life flow freely. We need such moments of retreat from the pressure of daily life if its burden is to be bearable. Now there is some truth in this way of thinking, but it is insufficient. It all depends on what we are playing. Everything we have said can be applied to any game, and the trouble is that serious commitment to the rules needed for playing the game soon develops its own burdens and leads to new kinds of purposefulness. Whether we look at modern sport or at chess championships or, indeed, at any game, we find that play, when it does not degenerate into mere fooling about, quickly turns from being another world, a counter-world or non-world, to being a bit of the normal world with its own laws.

We should mention another aspect of this theory of play, something that brings us closer to the essence of the liturgy. Children’s play seems in many ways a kind of anticipation of life, a rehearsal for later life, without its burdens and gravity. On this analogy, the liturgy would be a reminder that we are all children, or should be children, in relation to that true life toward which we yearn to go. Liturgy would be a kind of anticipation, a rehearsal, a prelude for the life to come, for eternal life, which St. Augustine describes, by contrast with life in this world, as a fabric woven, no longer of exigency

and need, but of the freedom of generosity and gift. Seen thus, liturgy would be the rediscovery within us of true childhood, of openness to a greatness still to come, which is still unfulfilled in adult life. Here, then, would be the concrete form of hope, which lives in advance the life to come, the only true life, which initiates us into authentic life—the life of freedom, of intimate union with God, of pure openness to our fellowman. Thus it would imprint on the seemingly real life of daily existence the mark of future freedom, break open the walls that confine us, and let the light of heaven shine down upon earth.

This application of play-theory distinguishes the liturgy by its essence from the ordinary kinds of play, which doubtless always contain a longing for the real “game”, for a wholly different world in which order and freedom are at one. By contrast with the superficial, utilitarian, or humanly vacuous aspects of ordinary play, the play-theory of liturgy brings out what is special and different about that “play” of Wisdom of which the Bible speaks, the play that can be compared to the liturgy. But this analogy still lacks something, something essential. The idea of a life to come appears only as a vague postulate. The reference to God, without whom the “life to come” would only be a wasteland, remains quite indeterminate. I should like to suggest, therefore, a new approach, this time starting from specific biblical texts.

In the accounts of the events leading up to Israel’s flight from Egypt, as well as in those that describe the flight itself, the Exodus appears to have two distinct goals. The first, which is familiar to us all, is the reaching of the Promised Land, in which Israel will at last live on its own soil and territory, with secure borders, as a people with the freedom and independence proper to it. But we also hear repeatedly of another goal. God’s original command to Pharaoh runs as follows: “Let my people go, that they may serve me in the wilderness” (Ex 7:16). These words—“Let my people go, that they may serve me”—are repeated four times, with slight variations, in all the meetings of Pharaoh with Moses and Aaron (cf. Ex 8:1; 9:1; 9:13; 10:3). In the course of the negotiations with Pharaoh, the goal becomes more concrete. Pharaoh shows he is willing to compromise. For him the issue is the Israelites’ freedom of worship, which he first of all concedes in the following form: “Go, sacrifice to your God within the land” (Ex 8:25). But Moses insists—in obedience to God’s command—that they must go out in order to worship. The proper place of worship is the wilderness: “We must go three days’

journey into the wilderness and sacrifice to the Lord our God as he will command us” (Ex 8:27). After the plagues that follow, Pharaoh extends his compromise. He now concedes that worship according to the will of the Deity should take place in the wilderness, but he wants only the men to leave: the women and children, together with the cattle, must stay in Egypt. He is assuming the current religious practice, according to which only men are active participants in worship. But Moses cannot negotiate about the liturgy with a foreign potentate, nor can he subject worship to any form of political compromise. The manner in which God is to be worshipped is not a question of political feasibility. It contains its measure within itself, that is, it can only be ordered by the measure of revelation, in dependency upon God. That is why the third and most far-reaching compromise suggested by the earthly ruler is also rejected. Pharaoh now offers women and children the permission to leave with the men: “Only let your flocks and your herds remain” (Ex 10:24). Moses objects: All the livestock must go too, for “we do not know with what we must serve the Lord until we arrive there” (10:26). In all this, the issue is not the Promised Land: the only goal of the Exodus is shown to be worship, which can only take place according to God’s measure and therefore eludes the rules of the game of political compromise.

Israel departs, not in order to be a people like all the others; it departs in order to serve God. The goal of the departure is the still unknown mountain of God, the service of God. Now the objection could be made that focusing on worship in the negotiations with Pharaoh was purely tactical. The real goal of the Exodus, ultimately its only goal, was not worship but land—this, after all, was the real content of the promise to Abraham. I do not think that this does justice to the seriousness that pervades the texts. To oppose land and worship makes no sense. The land is given to the people to be a place for the worship of the true God. Mere possession of the land, mere national autonomy, would reduce Israel to the level of all the other nations. The pursuit of such a goal would be a misunderstanding of what is distinctive about Israel’s election. The whole history recounted in the books of the Judges and Kings, which is taken up afresh and given a new interpretation in the Chronicles, is intended to show precisely this, that the land, considered just in itself, is an indeterminate good. It only becomes a true good, a real gift, a promise fulfilled, when it is the place where God reigns. Then it will not be just some independent state or other, but the realm of obedience, where God’s will is done and the right kind of human existence developed.

Looking at the biblical texts enables us to define more exactly the relationship of the two goals of the Exodus. In its wanderings, Israel discovers the kind of sacrifice God wants, not after three days (as suggested in the conversation with Pharaoh), but after three months, on the day they come “into the wilderness of Sinai” (Ex 19:1). On the third day God comes down onto the top of the mountain (cf. 19:16, 20). Now he speaks to the people. He makes known his will to them in the Ten Commandments (cf. 20:1-17) and, through the mediation of Moses, makes a covenant with them (cf. Ex 24), a covenant concretized in a minutely regulated form of worship. In this way, the purpose of the wandering in the wilderness, as explained to Pharaoh, is fulfilled. Israel learns how to worship God in the way he himself desires. Cult, liturgy in the proper sense, is part of this worship, but so too is life according to the will of God; such a life is an indispensable part of true worship. “The glory of God is the living man, but the life of man is the vision of God”, says St. Irenaeus (cf. *Adv. Haer.* 4, 20, 7), getting to the heart of what happens when man meets God on the mountain in the wilderness. Ultimately, it is the very life of man, man himself as living righteously, that is the true worship of God, but life only becomes real life when it receives its form from looking toward God. Cult exists in order to communicate this vision and to give life in such a way that glory is given to God.

Three things are important for the question we are considering. First of all, on Sinai the people receive not only instructions about worship, but also an all-embracing rule of law and life. Only thus can it become a people. A people without a common rule of law cannot live. It destroys itself in anarchy, which is a parody of freedom, its exaltation to the point of abolition. When every man lives without law, every man lives without freedom. This brings me to my second point. In the ordering of the covenant on Sinai, the three aspects of worship, law, and ethics are inseparably interwoven. This is the greatness of the Sinai covenant but also its limitation, as is shown in the transition from Israel to the Church of the Gentiles, where the interweaving was to unravel, to make room for a diversity of legal forms and political structures. In the modern age this necessary unravelling has led finally to the total secularization of the law and the exclusion of any God-ward perspective from the fashioning of the law. But we must not forget that there is an essential connection between the three orders of worship, law, and ethics. Law without a foundation in morality becomes injustice. When morality and law do not originate in a God-ward perspective, they degrade man, because

they rob him of his highest measure and his highest capacity, deprive him of any vision of the infinite and eternal. This seeming liberation subjects him to the dictatorship of the ruling majority, to shifting human standards, which inevitably end up doing him violence. Thus we come to a third point, which takes us back to where we started, to the question of the nature of worship and liturgy. When human affairs are so ordered that there is no recognition of God, there is a belittling of man. That is why, in the final analysis, worship and law cannot be completely separated from each other. God has a right to a response from man, to man himself, and where that right of God totally disappears, the order of law among men is dissolved, because there is no cornerstone to keep the whole structure together.

What does this mean for the question we have been considering? We were looking at the two goals of the Exodus, and we saw that the issue was ultimately about the nature of the liturgy. Now it becomes clear that what took place on Sinai, in the period of rest after the wandering through the wilderness, is what gives meaning to the taking of the land. Sinai is not a halfway house, a kind of stop for refreshment on the road to what really matters. No, Sinai gives Israel, so to speak, its interior land without which the exterior one would be a cheerless prospect. Israel is constituted as a people through the covenant and the divine law it contains. It has received a common rule for righteous living. This and this alone is what makes the land a real gift. Sinai remains present in the Promised Land. When the reality of Sinai is lost, the Land, too, is inwardly lost, until finally the people are thrust into exile. Whenever Israel falls away from the right worship of God, when she turns away from God to the false gods (the powers and values of this world), her freedom, too, collapses. It is possible for her to live in her own land and yet still be as she was in Egypt. Mere possession of your own land and state does not give you freedom; in fact, it can be the grossest kind of slavery. And when the loss of law becomes total, it ends in the loss even of the land. The “service of God”, the freedom to give right worship to God, appears, in the encounter with Pharaoh, to be the sole purpose of the Exodus, indeed, its very essence. This fact is evident throughout the Pentateuch. This real “canon in the canon”, the very heart of Israel’s Bible, is set entirely outside of the Holy Land. It ends on the edge of the wilderness, “beyond the Jordan”, where Moses once more sums up and repeats the message of Sinai. Thus we can see what the foundation of existence in the Promised Land must be, the necessary condition for life in community and freedom. It is this:

steadfast adherence to the law of God, which orders human affairs rightly, that is, by organizing them as realities that come from God and are meant to return to God.

But, once again, what does all this mean for our problem? First, it becomes clear that “cult”, seen in its true breadth and depth, goes beyond the action of the liturgy. Ultimately, it embraces the ordering of the whole of human life in Irenaeus’ sense. Man becomes glory for God, puts God, so to speak, into the light (and that is what worship is), when he lives by looking toward God. On the other hand, it is also true that law and ethics do not hold together when they are not anchored in the liturgical center and inspired by it. What kind of reality, then, do we find in the liturgy? As a first answer we can now say this: The man who puts to one side any consideration of the reality of God is a realist only in appearance. He is abstracting himself from the One in whom we “live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28). It is only, therefore, when man’s relationship with God is right that all of his other relationships—his relationships with his fellowmen, his dealings with the rest of creation—can be in good order. As we have seen, law is essential for freedom and community; worship—that is, the right way to relate to God—is, for its part, essential for law. We can now broaden the insight by taking a further step. Worship, that is, the right kind of cult, of relationship with God, is essential for the right kind of human existence in the world. It is so precisely because it reaches beyond everyday life. Worship gives us a share in heaven’s mode of existence, in the world of God, and allows light to fall from that divine world into ours. In this sense, worship—as we said when we were discussing play—has the character of anticipation. It lays hold in advance of a more perfect life and, in so doing, gives our present life its proper measure. A life without such anticipation, a life no longer opened up to heaven, would be empty, a leaden life. That is why there are in reality no societies altogether lacking in cult. Even the decidedly atheistic, materialistic systems create their own forms of cult, though, of course, they can only be an illusion and strive in vain, by bombastic trumpeting, to conceal their nothingness.

And so we come to a final reflection. Man himself cannot simply “make” worship. If God does not reveal himself, man is clutching empty space. Moses says to Pharaoh: “[W]e do not know with what we must serve the Lord” (Ex 10:26). These words display a fundamental law of all liturgy. When God does not reveal himself, man can, of course, from the sense of God within him, build altars “to the unknown god” (cf. Acts 17:23). He can

reach out toward God in his thinking and try to feel his way toward him. But real liturgy implies that God responds and reveals how we can worship him. In any form, liturgy includes some kind of “institution”. It cannot spring from imagination, our own creativity—then it would remain just a cry in the dark or mere self-affirmation. Liturgy implies a real relationship with Another, who reveals himself to us and gives our existence a new direction.

In the Old Testament there is a series of very impressive testimonies to the truth that the liturgy is not a matter of “what you please”. Nowhere is this more dramatically evident than in the narrative of the golden calf (strictly speaking, “bull calf”). The cult conducted by the high priest Aaron is not meant to serve any of the false gods of the heathen. The apostasy is more subtle. There is no obvious turning away from God to the false gods. Outwardly, the people remain completely attached to the same God. They want to glorify the God who led Israel out of Egypt and believe that they may very properly represent his mysterious power in the image of a bull calf. Everything seems to be in order. Presumably even the ritual is in complete conformity to the rubrics. And yet it is a falling away from the worship of God to idolatry. This apostasy, which outwardly is scarcely perceptible, has two causes. First, there is a violation of the prohibition of images. The people cannot cope with the invisible, remote, and mysterious God. They want to bring him down into their own world, into what they can see and understand. Worship is no longer going up to God, but drawing God down into one’s own world. He must be there when he is needed, and he must be the kind of God that is needed. Man is using God, and in reality, even if it is not outwardly discernible, he is placing himself above God. This gives us a clue to the second point. The worship of the golden calf is a self-generated cult. When Moses stays away for too long, and God himself becomes inaccessible, the people just fetch him back. Worship becomes a feast that the community gives itself, a festival of self-affirmation. Instead of being worship of God, it becomes a circle closed in on itself: eating, drinking, and making merry. The dance around the golden calf is an image of this self-seeking worship. It is a kind of banal self-gratification. The narrative of the golden calf is a warning about any kind of self-initiated and self-seeking worship. Ultimately, it is no longer concerned with God but with giving oneself a nice little alternative world, manufactured from one’s own resources. Then liturgy really does become pointless, just fooling around. Or still worse it becomes an apostasy from the living God, an apostasy in sacral disguise. All that is left in the end

is frustration, a feeling of emptiness. There is no experience of that liberation which always takes place when man encounters the living God.

Chapter 2

Liturgy—Cosmos—History

IT IS A WIDELY is a widely accepted opinion in modern theology that in the so-called nature religions, as well as in the non-theistic higher religions, cult is focused on the cosmos, while in the Old Testament and Christianity the orientation is toward history. Islam—like post-biblical Judaism—is familiar only with a liturgy of the Word, which is shaped and ordered by the revelation that took place in history, though, in line with the universal tendency of that revelation, it is definitely meant to have a significance for the world as a whole. The idea of worship being either cosmic or historical is not entirely unfounded, but it is false when it leads to an exclusive opposition. It underestimates the sense of history to be found even in the nature religions, and it narrows the meaning of Christian worship of God, forgetting that faith in redemption cannot be separated from faith in the Creator. In this book we shall discover just how important this question is, even for the apparent externals of liturgical celebration.

I shall try to explain what I am saying in several stages. In the religions of the world, cult and cosmos are always closely bound up with one another. The worship of the gods is never just a kind of act of socialization on the part of the community, the affirmation, through symbols, of its social cohesion. The commonly held idea is that worship involves a circular movement of giving and receiving. The gods sustain the world, while men, by their cultic gifts, feed and sustain the gods. The circle of being has two parts: the power of the gods supporting the world, but also the gift of men, which provides for the gods out of the world's resources. This leads to the idea that man was in fact created in order to sustain the gods and to be an essential link in the circular chain of the universe. However naive this may seem, it reveals a profound intuition into the meaning of human existence. Man exists for God, and thus he serves the whole. Of course, distortion and abuse also lurk behind the door: man somehow has power over the gods; in some small way, in his relationship to them, he has the key to reality in his hand. The gods need him, but, of course, he also needs them. Should he abuse his power, he would do

harm to the gods, but he would also destroy himself.

In the Old Testament's account of creation (Gen 1:1-2:4) these views are certainly discernible but at the same time transformed. Creation moves toward the Sabbath, to the day on which man and the whole created order participates in God's rest, in his freedom. Nothing is said directly about worship, still less about the Creator needing the gifts of men. The Sabbath is a vision of freedom. On this day slave and master are equals. The "hallowing" of the Sabbath means precisely this: a rest from all relationships of subordination and a temporary relief from all burden of work. Now some people conclude from this that the Old Testament makes no connection between creation and worship, that it leads to a pure vision of a liberated society as the goal of human history, that from the very beginning its orientation is anthropological and social, indeed revolutionary. But this is a complete misunderstanding of the Sabbath. The account of creation and the Sinai regulations about the Sabbath come from the same source. To understand the account of creation properly, one has to read the Sabbath ordinances of the Torah. Then everything becomes clear. The Sabbath is the sign of the covenant between God and man; it sums up the inward essence of the covenant. If this is so, then we can now define the intention of the account of creation as follows: creation exists to be a place for the covenant that God wants to make with man. The goal of creation is the covenant, the love story of God and man. The freedom and equality of men, which the Sabbath is meant to bring about, is not a merely anthropological or sociological vision; it can only be understood *theo*-logically. Only when man is in covenant with God does he become free. Only then are the equality and dignity of all men made manifest. If, then, everything is directed to the covenant, it is important to see that the covenant is a relationship: God's gift of himself to man, but also man's response to God. Man's response to the God who is good to him is love, and loving God means worshipping him. If creation is meant to be a space for the covenant, the place where God and man meet one another, then it must be thought of as a space for worship. But what does worship really mean? How is it different from the circle of giving and receiving that characterized the pre-Christian world of worship?

Before turning to this vital question, I should like to refer to the text that concludes the giving of the ceremonial law in the book of Exodus. It is constructed in close parallel to the account of creation. Seven times it says, "Moses did as the Lord had commanded him", words that suggest that the

seven-day work on the tabernacle replicates the seven-day work on creation. The account of the construction of the tabernacle ends with a kind of vision of the Sabbath. “So Moses finished the work. Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle” (Ex 40:33f.). The completion of the tent anticipates the completion of creation. God makes his dwelling in the world. Heaven and earth are united. In this connection we should add that, in the Old Testament, the verb *bara* has two, and only two, meanings. First, it denotes the process of the world’s creation, the separation of the elements, through which the cosmos emerges out of chaos. Secondly, it denotes the fundamental process of salvation history, that is, the election and separation of pure from impure, and therefore the inauguration of the history of God’s dealings with men. Thus begins the spiritual creation, the creation of the covenant, without which the created cosmos would be an empty shell. Creation and history, creation, history, and worship are in a relationship of reciprocity. Creation looks toward the covenant, but the covenant completes creation and does not simply exist along with it. Now if worship, rightly understood, is the soul of the covenant, then it not only saves mankind but is also meant to draw the whole of reality into communion with God.

Once again we face the question: What is worship? What happens when we worship? In all religions sacrifice is at the heart of worship. But this is a concept that has been buried under the debris of endless misunderstandings. The common view is that sacrifice has something to do with destruction. It means handing over to God a reality that is in some way precious to man. Now this handing over presupposes that it is withdrawn from use by man, and that can only happen through its destruction, its definitive removal from the hands of man. But this immediately raises the question: What pleasure is God supposed to take in destruction? Is anything really surrendered to God through destruction? One answer is that the destruction always conceals within itself the act of acknowledging God’s sovereignty over all things. But can such a mechanical act really serve God’s glory? Obviously not. True surrender to God looks very different. It consists—according to the Fathers, in fidelity to biblical thought—in the union of man and creation with God. Belonging to God has nothing to do with destruction or non-being: it is rather a way of being. It means emerging from the state of separation, of apparent autonomy, of existing only for oneself and in oneself. It means losing oneself as the only possible way of finding oneself (cf. Mk 8:35; Mt 10:39). That is why St. Augustine could say that the true “sacrifice” is the *civitas Dei*, that is,

love-transformed mankind, the divinization of creation and the surrender of all things to God: God all in all (cf. 1 Cor 15:28). That is the purpose of the world. That is the essence of sacrifice and worship.

And so we can now say that the goal of worship and the goal of creation as a whole are one and the same—divinization, a world of freedom and love. But this means that the historical makes its appearance in the cosmic. The cosmos is not a kind of closed building, a stationary container in which history may by chance take place. It is itself movement, from its one beginning to its one end. In a sense, creation *is* history.

This can be understood in several ways. For example, against the background of the modern evolutionary world view, Teilhard de Chardin depicted the cosmos as a process of ascent, a series of unions. From very simple beginnings the path leads to ever greater and more complex unities, in which multiplicity is not abolished but merged into a growing synthesis, leading to the “Noosphere”, in which spirit and its understanding embrace the whole and are blended into a kind of living organism. Invoking the epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians, Teilhard looks on Christ as the energy that strives toward the Noosphere and finally incorporates everything in its “fullness”. From here Teilhard went on to give a new meaning to Christian worship: the transubstantiated Host is the anticipation of the transformation and divinization of matter in the christological “fullness”. In his view, the Eucharist provides the movement of the cosmos with its direction; it anticipates its goal and at the same time urges it on.

The older tradition starts from a different conceptual model. Its image is not of an upward flying arrow, but of a kind of cross-shaped movement, the two essential directions of which can be called *exitus* and *reditus*, departure and return. This “paradigm” is common in the general history of religions as well as in Christian antiquity and the Middle Ages. For Christian thinkers, the circle is seen as the great movement of the cosmos. The nature religions and many non-Christian philosophies think of it as a movement of unceasing repetition. On closer inspection, these two points of view are not as mutually exclusive as at first sight they seem. For in the Christian view of the world, the many small circles of the lives of individuals are inscribed within the one great circle of history as it moves from *exitus* to *reditus*. The small circles carry within themselves the great rhythm of the whole, give it concrete forms that are ever new, and so provide it with the force of its movement. And in the one great circle there are also the many circles of the lives of the different

cultures and communities of human history, in which the drama of beginning, development, and end is played out. In these circles, the mystery of beginning is repeated again and again, but they are also the scene of the end of time, of a final collapse, which may in its own way prepare the ground for a new beginning. The totality of the small circles reflects the great circle. The two—the great circle and the small circles—are interconnected and interdependent. And so worship is bound up with all three dimensions of the cross-shaped movement: the personal, the social, and the universal.

Before attempting to explain this in more detail, we must take note of the second, and in many respects more important, possibility lying hidden in the pattern of *exitus* and *reditus*. First there is an idea that received perhaps its most impressive formulation in the work of the great philosopher of late antiquity Plotinus, though, in different forms, it is found in large parts of the non-Christian cults and religions. The exodus by which non-divine being makes its appearance is seen, not as a going out, but as a falling down, a precipitation from the heights of the divine, and by the laws of falling it hurtles into ever greater depths, farther and farther into remoteness from God. This means that non-divine being is itself, as such, fallen being. Finitude is already a kind of sin, something negative, which has to be saved by being brought back into the infinite. And so the journey back—the *reditus*—begins when the fall is arrested in the outer depths, so that now the arrow points upward. In the end the “sin” of the finite, of not-being-God, disappears, and in that sense God becomes “all in all”. The way of *reditus* means redemption, and redemption means liberation from finitude, which is the real burden of our existence. Cult, then, has to do with the movement turning around. It is the sudden awareness that one has fallen, like the prodigal son’s moment of remorse, when he looks back to where he has come from. According to many of these philosophies, knowledge and being coincide, and so this new view of the beginning is already an ascent back toward it. Cult in the sense of the looking up to what is before and above all being is, of its very nature, knowledge, and as knowledge it is movement, return, redemption.

The philosophies of cult go off in different directions. One theory is that only philosophers, only minds qualified for higher thought, are capable of the knowledge that constitutes the “way”. Only they are capable of the ascent, of the full divinization that is redemption and liberation from finitude. For the others, for the simpler souls not yet capable of the full upward vision, there are the different liturgies that offer them a certain redemption without being

able to take them to the height of the Godhead. The doctrine of the transmigration of souls often compensates for these inequalities. It offers the hope that at some time in the wanderings of existence the point will be reached when at last we can find an escape from finitude and its torments. *Knowledge (gnosis)* is the real power of redemption here and therefore the highest form of our elevation—union with God. That is why conceptual and religious systems of this kind—individually, they are all very different—are called “Gnosticism”. In early Christianity the clash with Gnosticism was the decisive struggle for its own identity. The fascination of such views is very great; they seem so easily identifiable with the Christian message. For example, original sin, so hard otherwise to understand, is identified with the fall into finitude, which explains why it clings to everything stuck in the vortex of finitude. Again, the idea of redemption as deliverance from the burden of finitude is readily comprehensible, and so on. In our own times, too, in a variety of forms, the fascination of Gnosticism is at work. The religions of the Far East have the same basic pattern. That is why the various kinds of teaching on redemption that they offer seem highly plausible. Exercises for relaxing the body and emptying the mind are seen as the path to redemption. They aim at liberation from finitude, indeed, they momentarily anticipate that liberation and so have salvific power.

As we have said, Christian thought has taken up the schema of *exitus* and *reditus*, but, in so doing, it distinguishes the two movements from one another. *Exitus* is not a fall from the infinite, the rupture of being and thus the cause of all the sorrow in the world. No, *exitus* is first and foremost something thoroughly positive. It is the Creator’s free act of creation. It is his positive will that the created order should exist as something good in relation to himself, from which a response of freedom and love can be given back to him. Non-divine being is not, therefore, something negative in itself but, on the contrary, the wholly positive fruit of the divine will. It depends, not on a disaster, but on a divine decree that is good and does good. The act of God’s being, which causes created being, is an act of freedom. In this respect, the principle of freedom is present in being itself, from its ground upward. The *exitus*, or rather God’s free act of creation, is indeed ordered toward the *reditus*, but that does not now mean the rescinding of created being, but rather what we have described above. The creature, existing in its own right, comes home to itself, and this act is an answer in freedom to God’s love. It accepts creation from God as his offer of love, and thus ensues a dialogue of

love, that wholly new kind of unity that love alone can create. The being of the other is not absorbed or abolished, but rather, in giving itself, it becomes fully itself. Here is a unity that is higher than the unity of indivisible elementary particles. This *reditus* is a “return”, but it does not abolish creation; rather, it bestows its full and final perfection. This is how Christians understand God being “all in all”. But everything is bound up with freedom, and the creature has the freedom to turn the positive *exitus* of its creation around, as it were, to rupture it in the Fall: this is the refusal to be dependent, saying No to the *reditus*. Love is seen as dependence and is rejected. In its place come autonomy and autarchy: existing from oneself and in oneself, being a god of one’s own making. The arch from *exitus* to *reditus* is broken. The return is no longer desired, and ascent by one’s powers proves to be impossible. If “sacrifice” in its essence is simply returning to love and therefore divinization, worship now has a new aspect: the healing of wounded freedom, atonement, purification, deliverance from estrangement. The essence of worship, of sacrifice—the process of assimilation, of growth in love, and thus the way into freedom—remains unchanged. But now it assumes the aspect of healing, the loving transformation of broken freedom, of painful expiation. Worship is directed to the Other in himself, to his all-sufficiency, but now it refers itself to the Other who alone can extricate me from the knot that I myself cannot untie. Redemption now needs the Redeemer. The Fathers saw this expressed in the parable of the Lost Sheep. For them, the sheep caught in the thorn bush and unable to find its way home is a metaphor for man in general. He cannot get out of the thicket and find his way back to God. The shepherd who rescues him and takes him home is the Logos himself, the eternal Word, the eternal Meaning of the universe dwelling in the Son. He it is who makes his way to us and takes the sheep onto his shoulders, that is, he assumes human nature, and as the God-Man he carries man the creature home to God. And so the *reditus* becomes possible. Man is given a homecoming. But now sacrifice takes the form of the Cross of Christ, of the love that in dying makes a gift of itself. Such sacrifice has nothing to do with destruction. It is an act of new creation, the restoration of creation to its true identity. All worship is now a participation in this “Pasch” of Christ, in his “passing over” from divine to human, from death to life, to the unity of God and man. Thus Christian worship is the practical application and fulfillment of the words that Jesus proclaimed on the first day of Holy Week, Palm Sunday, in the Temple in Jerusalem: “I, when I am lifted up

from the earth, will draw all men to myself” (Jn 12:32).

The circles of the cosmos and of history are now distinguished. The gift of freedom is the center of created as well as of divine being, and so the historical element has its own irrevocable meaning, but it is not for that reason separated from the cosmic element. Ultimately, despite their differences, the two circles continue to be the one circle of being. The historical liturgy of Christendom is and always will be cosmic, without separation and without confusion, and only as such does it stand erect in its full grandeur. Christianity is uniquely new, but it does not spurn the religious quest of human history. It takes up in itself all the prevailing preoccupations of the world’s religions, and in that way it maintains a connection with them.

Chapter 3

*From Old Testament to New:
The Fundamental Form of the Christian Liturgy
—Its Determination by Biblical Faith*

PEACE IN THE UNIVERSE in the universe through peace with God, the union of above and below—that, according to the argument we have presented so far, is how we can describe the essential intention of worship in all the world's religions. But this basic definition of the attributes of worship is marked concretely by an awareness of man's fall and estrangement. Of necessity it takes place as a struggle for atonement, forgiveness, reconciliation. The awareness of guilt weighs down on mankind. Worship is the attempt, to be found at every stage of history, to overcome guilt and bring back the world and one's own life into right order. And yet an immense feeling of futility pervades everything. This is the tragic face of human history. How can man again connect the world with God? How is he supposed to make valid atonement? The only real gift man should give to God is himself. As his religious awareness becomes more highly developed, so his awareness that any gift but himself is too little, in fact absurd, becomes more intense. Historically, this sense of inadequacy has been the source of grotesque and horrific forms of cult. The most extreme example is human sacrifice. Superficially, it seems to give the deity what is best, and yet more deeply it has to be seen as the most horrific evasion of the gift of self, the most horrific and therefore the most to be rejected. Thus, as religion becomes more highly developed, this terrible attempt at atonement is more and more discarded, but it also becomes clearer that in all worship it is not the real gift but a mere replacement that is given.¹The sacrificial system of all the world's religions, including Israel's, rests on the idea of representation—but how can sacrificial animals or the fruits of harvest represent man, make expiation for him? This is not representation but replacement, and worship with replacements turns out to be a replacement for worship. Somehow the real thing is missing.

What, then, is special about the liturgy of Israel? First of all, without doubt,

the One to whom it is directed. Other religions frequently direct their worship to subordinate powers. Precisely because they know that the only true God cannot be served by the sacrifice of animals, they leave him without worship. Sacrifices are aimed at the “principalities and powers” with which man has to deal on a daily basis. These are what he has to fear, to propitiate, to placate. Israel did not merely deny the existence of these “gods” but saw them more and more as demons, which increasingly alienate man from himself and from God. Adoration is due to God alone: that is the first commandment. Now this one God is worshipped through an extensive sacrificial system, the meticulous regulations for which are set out in the Torah. However, when we look at the cultic history of Israel more closely, we run up against a second characteristic, which leads finally, by its inner logic, to Jesus Christ, to the New Testament. It is precisely when we read the New Testament in terms of cultic theology that we see how much it is bound up, in its deepest implications, with the Old. The New Testament corresponds to the inner drama of the Old. It is the inner mediation of two elements that at first are in conflict with one another and find their unity in the form of Jesus Christ, in his Cross and Resurrection. What at first seems to be a break turns out, on closer inspection, to be a real fulfillment, in which all the paths formerly followed converge.

Anyone who would read the book of Leviticus by itself—without looking at chapter 26, with its threat of exile and its promise of new blessings—would come to the conclusion that it sets up an eternally valid form of worship. Here is an apparently everlasting world order, with no further history to come, because in the course of the year it constantly brings about new expiation, purification, restoration. It seems to be a static or, if you like, cyclical world order. It always remains the same, because it contains weights and counterweights in perfect balance. But chapter 26, to a certain extent, shatters this appearance. More importantly, Leviticus has to be read in the context of the whole Torah and the whole Bible. It seems to me to be of some importance that, at the beginning of cultic history, Genesis and Exodus place two events in which the problem of representation is quite clearly addressed. First of all, there is Abraham’s sacrifice. Out of obedience, Abraham is willing to do something that goes against the mission given by God: to sacrifice his only son, Isaac, the bearer of the promise. In so doing, he would be giving up everything, for, without descendants, the land promised to his descendants has no meaning. At the very last moment God himself stops

Abraham from offering this kind of sacrifice. He is given something else to offer instead of the son of God—a male lamb. And so representative sacrifice is established by divine command. God gives the lamb, which Abraham then offers back to him. Accordingly, we offer sacrifice, as the Roman Canon says, “*de tuis donis ac datis*” (from your own gracious gifts). Somehow there always has to be a stinging reminder of this story, an expectation of the true Lamb, who comes from God and is for that very reason not a replacement but a true representative, in whom we ourselves are taken to God. The Christian theology of worship—beginning with St. John the Baptist—sees in Christ the Lamb given by God. The Apocalypse presents this sacrificed Lamb, who lives as sacrificed, as the center of the heavenly liturgy, a liturgy that, through Christ’s Sacrifice, is now present in the midst of the world and makes replacement liturgies superfluous (see Rev 5).

My second point concerns the institution of the Passover liturgy in Exodus 12. Here the rules are laid down for the sacrifice of the Passover lamb as the center of the liturgical year and of Israel’s memorial of faith, which is at the same time an everlasting foundation of faith. The lamb appears clearly as the ransom through which Israel is delivered from the death of the firstborn. Now this ransom serves also as a reminder. It is ultimately the firstborn itself to which God lays claim: “Consecrate to me all the first-born; whatever is the first to open the womb among the people of Israel, both of man and of beast, is mine” (Ex 13:2). The sacrificed lamb speaks of the necessary holiness of man and of creation as a whole. It points beyond itself. The Passover sacrifice does not, as it were, stop with itself, but places an obligation on the firstborn and, in them, on the people as a whole, on creation as a whole. This fact should help us appreciate the emphatic way in which St. Luke in his infancy narratives describes Jesus as the “first-born” (cf. Lk 2:7). It also helps us understand why the Captivity Epistles present Christ as the “first-born of creation”, in whom takes place a sanctification of the firstborn that embraces us all.

But we are still in the Old Testament. Its sacrificial system is constantly accompanied by prophetic disquiet and questioning. Already in 1 Samuel 15:22 [RSV adapted] we meet a primordial word of prophecy that, with some variations, runs through the Old Testament before being taken up anew by Christ: “More precious than sacrifice is obedience, submission better than the fat of rams!” In Hosea the prophecy appears in this form: “For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God, rather than burnt

offerings” (6:6). In the mouth of Jesus it assumes a very simple and elementary form: “I desire mercy, and not sacrifice” (Mt 9:13; 12:7). Thus Temple worship was always accompanied by a vivid sense of its insufficiency. “If I were hungry, I would not tell you; for the world and all that is in it is mine. Do I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats? Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving, and pay your vows to the Most High” (Ps 50[49]:12-14). The radical critique of the Temple, which, according to the account in Acts chapter 7, Stephen delivered in a fiery speech, is certainly unusual in its form, marked as it is with the new passion of Christian faith, but it is not without precedent in the history of Israel. At the end Stephen takes the key sentence of his critique from the prophet Amos: “I hate, I despise your feasts, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and cereal offerings, I will not accept them, and the peace offerings of your fatted beasts I will not look upon. Take away from me the noise of your songs; to the melody of your harps I will not listen” (Amos 5:21-23; cf. Acts 7:42f., citing Amos 5:25-27).

The whole of St. Stephen’s speech is triggered by the accusation that he had said “Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place [that is, the Temple], and will change the customs which Moses delivered to us” (Acts 6:14). Stephen responds to this allegation only indirectly, by invoking the line of criticism of Temple and sacrifice that runs through the Old Testament. He quotes the controversial criticism of cult to be found in Amos 5:25-27, the original meaning of which is very hard to decipher. He uses the version in the Greek Bible, in which all the worship of the forty years in the wilderness is aligned with the worship of the golden calf. This makes Israel’s liturgy during the whole of this foundational period seem like a continuation of the first apostasy. “Did you offer to me slain beasts and sacrifices, forty years in the wilderness, O house of Israel? And you took up the tent of Moloch, and the star of the god Rephan, the figures which you made to worship; and I will remove you beyond Babylon” (Acts 7:42f.; cf. Amos 5:25-27). The very beasts of sacrifice seem here to be a perversion of worship of the one God. The words of the prophet, used by Stephen in the version of the Alexandrian translators, must have come as a violent shock to his hearers. In fact, he could have added to them the dramatic words of the prophet Jeremiah: “[I]n the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, I did not speak to your fathers or command them concerning burnt offerings and sacrifices” (Jer 7:22). Stephen

refrains from exploiting such texts, which give us a sense of the difficult internal debates in Israel before the Exile. Instead, he adds three other trains of thought to get across his exposition of the message of Christ.

Moses, he says, made the tent of meeting, in obedience to God's command, according to the pattern he had seen on the mountain (cf. Acts 7:44; Ex 25:40). This means that the earthly Temple is only a replica, not the true Temple. It is an image and likeness, which points beyond itself. David, who found favor with God, prayed God to let him build a tabernacle. "But it was Solomon who built a house for him" (Acts 7:47). The transition from the tent with all its impermanence to the house intended to lodge God in an edifice of stone is seen as a deviance, for "the Most High does not dwell in houses made with hands" (7:48). Finally, Stephen adds something to the idea of impermanence, which was conspicuous in the tent but obscured in the house. He brings out the inner dynamism of the Old Testament, which inevitably strove to get beyond the impermanence. He quotes the Messianic prophecy that in a certain sense forms the climax of Deuteronomy (cf. 18:15) and, for Stephen, provides the key for the interpretation of the whole Pentateuch: "God will raise up for you a prophet from your brethren as he raised me up" (7:37). The essential work of Moses was the construction of the tabernacle and the ordering of worship, which was also the very heart of the order of law and moral instruction. If this is so, then it is clear that the new Prophet, the definitive Prophet, will lead the people out of the age of the tabernacle and its impermanence, out of all the inadequacy of sacrificial animals. He will "destroy" the Temple and indeed "change the customs" that Moses had delivered. The prophets who followed Moses were the great witnesses to the impermanence of all these customs. Raising their voices, they pushed history forward toward the New Moses. This is the prophetic line that reached its destination in the Righteous One on the Cross (cf. Acts 7:51f).

Stephen does not contest the words he is accused of having spoken. Instead, he tries to prove that they contain a deeper fidelity to the message of the Old Testament and, indeed, to the message of Moses. It is important also to note that the charge brought against the first martyrs of the Church is identical, almost to the letter, with the accusation that plays such a central role in the trial of Jesus. For Jesus was accused of having said: "I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another, not made with hands" (Mk 14:58). Of course, the witnesses could not agree about

the exact meaning of Jesus' prophecy (cf. 14:59), but it is clear that such words played a central role in the dispute about Jesus. Here we reach the heart of the christological question, the question of who Jesus is, and at the same time we reach the heart of the question of what the true worship of God is. The prophecy of the Temple's destruction, which Jesus is accused of having made, points beyond itself to the incident recorded by all four Evangelists: the cleansing of the Temple. This could not be regarded as just an angry outburst against the abuses that happen in all holy places. No, in the final analysis, this had to be seen as an attack on the Temple cult, of which the sacrificial animals and the special Temple moneys collected there were a part. True, none of the Synoptic Gospels reports any such words of Jesus in this context, but St. John presents them as a prophetic utterance that Jesus makes in explanation of his action: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (Jn 2:19). Jesus does not say that *he* will demolish the Temple—that version was the false witness borne against him. But he does prophesy that his accusers will do exactly that. This is a prophecy of the Cross: he shows that the destruction of his earthly body will be at the same time the end of the Temple. With his Resurrection the new Temple will begin: the living body of Jesus Christ, which will now stand in the sight of God and be the place of all worship. Into this body he incorporates men. It is the tabernacle that no human hands have made, the place of true worship of God, which casts out the shadow and replaces it with reality. Interpreted at its deepest level, the prophecy of the Resurrection is also a prophecy of the Eucharist. The body of Christ is sacrificed and precisely as sacrificed is living. This is the mystery made known in the Mass. Christ communicates himself to us and thus brings us into a real bond with the living God. We should mention in this connection another detail, which is found in all three of the Synoptic Gospels. They all report that, at the moment of Jesus' death, the veil of the Temple was torn in two, from top to bottom (cf. Mk 15:38; Mt 27:51; Lk 23:45). What they mean to say is this: at the moment of Jesus' death, the function of the old Temple comes to an end. It is dissolved. It is no longer the place of God's presence, his "footstool", into which he has caused his glory to descend. Theologically, the visible destruction of the Temple, which will follow in a few decades, has already been anticipated. Worship through types and shadows, worship with replacements, ends at the very moment when the real worship takes place: the self-offering of the Son, who has become man and "Lamb", the "Firstborn", who gathers up and into

himself all worship of God, takes it from the types and shadows into the reality of man's union with the living God. The prophetic gesture of cleansing the Temple, of renewing divine worship and preparing it for its new form, has reached its goal. The prophecy connected with it is fulfilled: "[Z]eal for your house has consumed me" (Ps 69[68]:9; Jn 2:17). At the end it was Jesus' "zeal" for right worship that took him to the Cross. This is precisely what opened the way for the true house of God, the "one not made with human hands"—the risen body of Christ. And the interpretation that the Synoptic Gospels give to Jesus' symbolic act of prophecy is also fulfilled: "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations" (Mk 11:17). The abolition of the Temple inaugurates a new universality of worship, "in spirit and truth" (cf. Jn 4:23), which Jesus foretold in his conversation with the Samaritan woman. Needless to say, the words "spirit and truth" must not be taken in a subjectivist sense, as they were in the Enlightenment. No, they must be seen in the light of him who could say of himself: "I am the truth" (Jn 14:6).

We have so far presented a sketch of the inner dynamism of the idea of worship in the Old Testament and have shown that there was an intense awareness of the impermanence of the Temple sacrifices together with a desire for something greater, something indescribably new. Before trying to pull everything together and draw some conclusions, we must try to hear the voices in which there is already a presentiment of this new thing that is to come. I am thinking of the tendency, that had already become apparent, of taking up an essentially critical attitude toward the previous forms of worship. In pre-exilic Israel one constantly hears voices warning about the rigidifying of the sacrificial system and its degeneration into externalism and syncretism. The Exile came as a challenging opportunity to formulate clearly a positive doctrine about worship and the new thing that was to come. There was no Temple any more, no public and communal form of divine worship as decreed in the law. Deprived as she was of worship, Israel was bound to feel immeasurably poor and pathetic. She stood before God with empty hands. There was no expiation any more, no "holocausts" ascending to God. In this crisis the conviction became ever clearer that Israel's sufferings, through God and for God, the cry of her broken heart, her persistent pleading before the silent God, had to count in his sight as "fatted sacrifices" and whole burnt offerings. It was the very emptiness of Israel's hands, the heaviness of her heart, that was now to be worship, to serve as a spiritual equivalent of the

missing Temple oblations. During the new oppression of Jewish worship under Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-163 B.C.), these ideas, as set forth in the book of Daniel, acquired a new power and profundity. They remained alive even after the restoration of the Temple by the Maccabees. The Qumran community formed an opposition to the priestly monarchy of the Maccabees: it did not recognize the new Temple and saw itself instead as dedicated to “spiritual worship”. In Alexandria, the Jews eventually made contact with the Greek critique of cult, and from then on the concept of *logikē latreia (thusia)* [worship and sacrifice with spirit and mind], which we encounter in the epistle to the Romans (cf. Rom 12:1), grew increasingly important. This was the Christian response to the cultic crisis of the whole ancient world. The sacrifice is the “word”, the word of prayer, which goes up from man to God, embodying the whole of man’s existence and enabling him to become “word” (*logos*) in himself. It is man, conforming himself to *logos* and becoming *logos* through faith, who is the true sacrifice, the true glory of God in the world. Israel’s experience of suffering during the Exile and the Hellenistic period first brought the word of prayer into prominence as the equivalent of exterior sacrifice. Now, through the word *logos*, the whole philosophy of *logos* in the Greek world is incorporated into the concept. The Greek mind elevates it eventually to the idea of a mystical union with the Logos, the very meaning of all things.

The Fathers of the Church took up this spiritual development. They saw the Eucharist as essentially *oratio*, sacrifice in the Word, and in this way they also showed how Christian worship stood in relation to the spiritual struggle of antiquity, to its quest for man’s true path and for his encounter with God. The Fathers call the Eucharist simply “prayer”, that is, the sacrifice of the Word, but in so doing, they go beyond the Greek idea of the sacrifice of the *logos* and provide an answer to the question left open by Old Testament theology, which made prayer the equivalent of sacrifice. A striking conflict is evident in the great Old Testament movement toward worship in the “Word”. On the one hand, the way is open to a new, positive form of divine worship. On the other hand, there is still an insufficiency. The Word alone is not enough. There is an expectation of a restoration of the Temple in purified form. This explains the apparent contradictions that we find in Psalm 51(50). On the one hand, there is a magnificent unfolding of the new idea of worship: “For you take no delight in sacrifice. . . . The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit” (vv. 16-17). On the other hand, the whole psalm ends with a

stirring vision of a fulfillment to come: “[Then will you delight in right sacrifices, in burnt offerings and whole burnt offerings; then bulls will be offered on your altar” (vv. 18-19). For its part, the Hellenistic Logos-mysticism, however grand and beautiful, allows the body to fall into insubstantiality. The hope for spiritual ascent and universal reunion conforms to the Gnostic pattern of which we spoke earlier. Something is missing.

The idea of the sacrifice of the Logos becomes a full reality only in the *Logos incarnatus*, the Word who is made flesh and draws “all flesh” into the glorification of God. When that happens, the Logos is more than just the “Meaning” behind and above things. Now he himself has entered into flesh, has become bodily. He takes up into himself our sufferings and hopes, all the yearning of creation, and bears it to God. The two themes that Psalm 51 (50) could not reconcile, the two themes that throughout the Old Testament keep running toward one another, now really converge. The Word is no longer just the representation of something else, of what is bodily. In Jesus’ self-surrender on the Cross, the Word is united with the entire reality of human life and suffering. There is no longer a replacement cult. Now the vicarious sacrifice of Jesus takes us up and leads us into that likeness with God, that transformation into love, which is the only true adoration. In virtue of Jesus’ Cross and Resurrection, the Eucharist is the meeting point of all the lines that lead from the Old Covenant, indeed from the whole of man’s religious history. Here at last is right worship, ever longed for and yet surpassing our powers: adoration “in spirit and truth”. The torn curtain of the Temple is the curtain torn between the world and the countenance of God. In the pierced heart of the Crucified, God’s own heart is opened up—here we see who God is and what he is like. Heaven is no longer locked up. God has stepped out of his hiddenness. That is why St. John sums up both the meaning of the Cross and the nature of the new worship of God in the mysterious promise made through the prophet Zechariah (cf. 12:10). “They shall look on him whom they have pierced” (Jn 19:37). We shall meet this text again, with a new significance, in Revelation 1:7. For the moment we must try to sum up some of the conclusions that emerge from what we have said so far.

1. Christian worship, or rather the liturgy of the Christian faith, cannot be viewed simply as a Christianized form of the synagogue service, however much its actual development owes to the synagogue service. The synagogue was always ordered toward the Temple and remained so, even after the Temple’s destruction. The synagogue’s liturgy of the Word, which is

celebrated with magnificent profundity, regards itself as incomplete, and for that reason it is very different from the liturgy of the Word in Islam, which, together with pilgrimage and fasting, constitutes the whole of divine worship as decreed by the Koran. By contrast, the synagogue service is the divine worship that takes place in the absence of the Temple and in expectation of its restoration. Christian worship, for its part, regards the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem as final and as theologically necessary. Its place has been taken by the universal Temple of the risen Christ, whose outstretched arms on the Cross span the world, in order to draw all men into the embrace of eternal love. The new Temple already exists, and so too does the new, the definitive sacrifice: the humanity of Christ opened up in his Cross and Resurrection. The prayer of the man Jesus is now united with the dialogue of eternal love within the Trinity. Jesus draws men into this prayer through the Eucharist, which is thus the ever-open door of adoration and the true Sacrifice, the Sacrifice of the New Covenant, the “reasonable service of God”. In modern theological discussion, the exclusive model for the liturgy of the New Covenant has been thought to be the synagogue—in strict opposition to the Temple, which is regarded as an expression of the law and therefore as an utterly obsolete “stage” in religion. The effects of this theory have been disastrous. Priesthood and sacrifice are no longer intelligible. The comprehensive “fulfillment” of pre-Christian salvation history and the inner unity of the two Testaments disappear from view. Deeper understanding of the matter is bound to recognize that the Temple, as well as the synagogue, entered into Christian liturgy.

2. This means that universality is an essential feature of Christian worship. It is the worship of an open heaven. It is never just an event in the life of a community that finds itself in a particular place. No, to celebrate the Eucharist means to enter into the openness of a glorification of God that embraces both heaven and earth, an openness effected by the Cross and Resurrection. Christian liturgy is never just an event organized by a particular group or set of people or even by a particular local Church. Mankind’s movement toward Christ meets Christ’s movement toward men. He wants to unite mankind and bring about the one Church, the one divine assembly, of all men. Everything, then, comes together: the horizontal and the vertical, the uniqueness of God and the unity of mankind, the communion of all who worship in spirit and in truth.

3. Accordingly, we must regard St. Paul’s concept of *logikē latreia*, of

divine worship in accordance with *logos*, as the most appropriate way of expressing the essential form of Christian liturgy. This concept is the confluence of several different streams: the spiritual movement of the Old Testament, the process of inner purification within the history of religion, human quest, and divine response. The *logos* of creation, the *logos* in man, and the true and eternal Logos made flesh, the Son, come together. All other definitions fall short. For example, one could describe the Eucharist, in terms of the liturgical phenomenon, as an “assembly”, or, in terms of Jesus’ act of institution at the Last Supper, as a “meal”. But this seizes on individual elements while failing to grasp the great historical and theological connections. By contrast, the word “Eucharist” points to the universal form of worship that took place in the Incarnation, Cross, and Resurrection of Christ, and so it can happily serve as a summary of the idea of *logikē latreia* and may legitimately serve as an appropriate designation for Christian worship.

4. Finally, all these insights open up an essential dimension of Christian liturgy, which we must consider more concretely in the next chapter. As we have seen, Christian liturgy is a liturgy of promise fulfilled, of a quest, the religious quest of human history, reaching its goal. But it remains a liturgy of hope. It, too, bears within it the mark of impermanence. The new Temple, not made by human hands, does exist, but it is also still under construction. The great gesture of embrace emanating from the Crucified has not yet reached its goal; it has only just begun. Christian liturgy is liturgy on the way, a liturgy of pilgrimage toward the transfiguration of the world, which will only take place when God is “all in all”.

PART TWO

TIME AND SPACE IN THE LITURGY

Chapter 1

The Relationship of the Liturgy to Time and Space: Some Preliminary Questions

CAN THERE REALLY be special holy places and holy times in the world of Christian faith? Christian worship is surely a cosmic liturgy, which embraces both heaven and earth. The epistle to the Hebrews stresses that Christ suffered “outside the gate” and adds this exhortation: “Therefore let us go forth to him outside the camp, bearing abuse for him” (13:12). Is the whole world not now his sanctuary? Is sanctity not to be practiced by living one’s daily life in the right way? Is our divine worship not a matter of being loving people in our daily life? Is *that* not how we become like God and so draw near to the true sacrifice? Can the sacral be anything other than imitating Christ in the simple patience of daily life? Can there be any other holy time than the time for practicing love of neighbor, whenever and wherever the circumstances of our life demand it?

Whoever asks questions like these touches on a crucial dimension of the Christian understanding of worship, but overlooks something essential about the permanent limits of human existence in this world, overlooks the “not yet” that is part of Christian existence and talks as if the New Heaven and New Earth had already come. The Christ-event and the growth of the Church out of all the nations, the transition from Temple sacrifice to universal worship “in spirit and truth”, is the first important step across the frontier, a step toward the fulfillment of the promises of the Old Testament. But it is obvious that hope has not yet fully attained its goal. The New Jerusalem needs no Temple because Almighty God and the Lamb are themselves its Temple. In this City, instead of sun and moon, it is the glory of God and its lamp, the Lamb, that shed their brilliance (cf. Rev 21:22f.). But this City is not yet here. That is why the Church Fathers described the various stages of fulfillment, not just as a contrast between Old and New Testaments, but as the three steps of shadow, image, and reality. In the Church of the New Testament the shadow has been scattered by the image: “[T]he night is far gone, the day is at hand” (Rom 13:12). But, as St. Gregory the Great puts it, it

is still only the time of dawn, when darkness and light are intermingled. The sun is rising, but it has still not reached its zenith. Thus the time of the New Testament is a peculiar kind of “in-between”, a mixture of “already and not yet”. The empirical conditions of life in this world are still in force, but they have been burst open, and must be more and more burst open, in preparation for the final fulfillment already inaugurated in Christ.

This idea of the New Testament as the between-time, as image between shadow and reality, gives liturgical theology its specific form. It becomes even clearer when we bear in mind the three levels on which Christian worship operates, the three levels that make it what it is. There is the middle level, the strictly liturgical level, which is familiar to us all and is revealed in the words and actions of Jesus at the Last Supper. These words and actions form the core of Christian liturgical celebration, which was further constructed out of the synthesis of the synagogue and Temple liturgies. The sacrificial actions of the Temple have been replaced by the Eucharistic Prayer, which enters into what Jesus did at the Last Supper, and by the distribution of the consecrated gifts. But this properly liturgical level does not stand on its own. It has meaning only in relation to something that really happens, to a reality that is substantially present. Otherwise it would lack real content, like bank notes without funds to cover them. The Lord could say that his Body was “given” only because he *had* in fact given it; he could present his Blood in the new chalice as shed for many only because he really *had* shed it. This Body is not the ever-dead corpse of a dead man, nor is the Blood the life-element rendered lifeless. No, sacrifice has become gift, for the Body given in love and the Blood given in love have entered, through the Resurrection, into the eternity of love, which is stronger than death. Without the Cross and Resurrection, Christian worship is null and void, and a theology of liturgy that omitted any reference to them would really just be talking about an empty game.

In considering this foundation of reality that undergirds Christian liturgy, we need to take account of another important matter. The Crucifixion of Christ, his death on the Cross, and, in another way, the act of his Resurrection from the grave, which bestows incorruptibility on the corruptible, are historical events that happen just once and as such belong to the past. The word *semel* (*ephapax*), “once for all”, which the epistle to the Hebrews emphasizes so vigorously in contrast to the multitude of repeated sacrifices in the Old Covenant, is strictly applicable to them. But if they were no more

than facts in the past, like all the dates we learn in history books, then there could be nothing contemporary about them. In the end they would remain beyond our reach. However, the exterior act of being crucified is accompanied by an interior act of self-giving (the Body is “given for you”). “No one takes [my life] from me,” says the Lord in St. John’s Gospel, “but I lay it down of my own accord” (10:18). This act of giving is in no way just a spiritual occurrence. It is a spiritual act that takes up the bodily into itself, that embraces the whole man; indeed, it is at the same time an act of the Son. As St. Maximus the Confessor showed so splendidly, the obedience of Jesus’ human will is inserted into the everlasting Yes of the Son to the Father. This “giving” on the part of the Lord, in the passivity of his being crucified, draws the passion of human existence into the action of love, and so it embraces all the dimensions of reality—Body, Soul, Spirit, Logos. Just as the pain of the body is drawn into the pathos of the mind and becomes the Yes of obedience, so time is drawn into what reaches beyond time. The real interior act, though it does not exist without the exterior, transcends time, but since it comes from time, time can again and again be brought into it. That is how we can become contemporary with the past events of salvation. St. Bernard of Clairvaux has this in mind when he says that the true *semel* (“once”) bears within itself the *semper* (“always”). What is perpetual takes place in what happens only once. In the Bible the Once for All is emphasized most vigorously in the epistle to the Hebrews, but the careful reader will discover that the point made by St. Bernard expresses its true meaning. The *ephapax* (“Once For All”) is bound up with the *aiōnios* (“everlasting”). “Today” embraces the whole time of the Church. And so in the Christian liturgy we not only receive something from the past but become contemporaries with what lies at the foundation of that liturgy. Here is the real heart and true grandeur of the celebration of the Eucharist, which is more, much more than a meal. In the Eucharist we are caught up and made contemporary with the Paschal Mystery of Christ, in his passing from the tabernacle of the transitory to the presence and sight of God.

Let us go back to where we started. We said that there is, first, the level of the event of institution and, secondly, the liturgical making present, the real liturgical level. I have tried to show how the two levels are interconnected. Now if past and present penetrate one another in this way, if the essence of the past is not simply a thing of the past but the far-reaching power of what follows in the present, then the future, too, is present in what happens in the liturgy: it ought to be called, in its essence, an anticipation of what is to

come. But we must not be overhasty. The idea of the *eschaton*, of the Second Coming of Christ, immediately comes to mind, and rightly so. But there is yet another dimension to be considered. This liturgy is, as we have seen, not about replacement, but about representation, vicarious sacrifice [*Stellvertretung*]. Now we can see what this distinction means. The liturgy is not about the sacrificing of animals, of a “something” that is ultimately alien to me. This liturgy is founded on the Passion endured by a man who with his “I” reaches into the mystery of the living God himself, by the man who is the Son. So it can never be a mere *actio liturgica*. Its origin also bears within it its future in the sense that representation, vicarious sacrifice, takes up into itself those whom it represents; it is not external to them, but a shaping influence on them. Becoming contemporary with the Pasch of Christ in the liturgy of the Church is also, in fact, an anthropological reality. The celebration is not just a rite, not just a liturgical “game”. It is meant to be indeed a *logikē latreia*, the “logicizing” of my existence, my interior contemporaneity with the self-giving of Christ. His self-giving is meant to become mine, so that I become contemporary with the Pasch of Christ and assimilated unto God. That is why in the early Church martyrdom was regarded as a real eucharistic celebration, the most extreme actualization of the Christian’s being a contemporary with Christ, of being united with him. The liturgy does indeed have a bearing on everyday life, on me in my personal existence. Its aim, as St. Paul says in the text already referred to, is that “our bodies” (that is, our bodily existence on earth) become “a living sacrifice”, united to the Sacrifice of Christ (cf. Rom 12:1). That is the only explanation of the urgency of the petitions for acceptance that characterize every Christian liturgy. A theology that is blind to the connections we have been considering can only regard this as a contradiction or a lapse into pre-Christian ways, for, so it will be said, Christ’s Sacrifice was accepted long ago. True, but in the form of representation it has not come to an end. The *semel* (“once for all”) wants to attain its *semper* (“always”). This Sacrifice is only complete when the world has become the place of love, as St. Augustine saw in his *City of God*. Only then, as we said at the beginning, is worship perfected and what happened on Golgotha completed. That is why, in the petitions for acceptance, we pray that representation become a reality and take hold of us. That is why, in the prayers of the Roman Canon, we unite ourselves with the great men who offered sacrifice at the dawn of history: Abel, Melchizedek, and Abraham. They set out toward the Christ who was to

come. They were anticipations of Christ, or, as the Fathers say, “types” of Christ. Even his predecessors were able to enter into the contemporaneity with him that we beg for ourselves.

It is tempting to say that this third dimension of liturgy, its suspension between the Cross of Christ and our living entry into him who suffered vicariously for us and wants to become “one” with us (cf. Gal 3:13, 28), expresses its moral demands. And without doubt Christian worship does contain a moral demand, but it goes much farther than mere moralism. The Lord has gone before us. He has already done what we have to do. He has opened a way that we ourselves could not have pioneered, because our powers do not extend to building a bridge to God. He himself became that bridge. And now the challenge is to allow ourselves to be taken up into his being “for” mankind, to let ourselves be embraced by his opened arms, which draw us to himself. He, the Holy One, hallows us with the holiness that none of us could ever give ourselves. We are incorporated into the great historical process by which the world moves toward the fulfillment of God being “all in all”. In this sense, what at first seems like the moral dimension is at the same time the eschatological dynamism of the liturgy. The fullness of Christ, of which the Captivity Epistles of St. Paul speak, becomes a reality, and only thus is the Paschal event completed throughout history. The “today” of Christ lasts right to the end (cf. Heb 4:7ff.).

When we look back on our reflections hitherto in this chapter, we see that we twice encountered—in different contexts—a three-stage process. We saw that the liturgy is characterized by a tension between the historical Pasch of Jesus (his Cross and Resurrection) as the foundation of its reality. The foundation of the liturgy, its source and support, is the historical Pasch of Jesus—his Cross and Resurrection. This once-for-all event has become the ever-abiding form of the liturgy. In the first stage the eternal is embodied in what is once-for-all. The second stage is the entry of the eternal into our present moment in the liturgical action. And the third stage is the desire of the eternal to take hold of the worshipper’s life and ultimately of all historical reality. The immediate event—the liturgy—makes sense and has a meaning for our lives only because it contains the other two dimensions. Past, present, and future interpenetrate and touch upon eternity. Earlier we became acquainted with the three stages of salvation history, which progresses, as the Church Fathers say, from shadow to image to reality. We saw that in our own time, the time of the Church, we were in the middle stage of the movement of

history. The curtain of the Temple has been torn. Heaven has been opened up by the union of the man Jesus, and thus of all human existence, with the living God. But this new openness is only mediated by the signs of salvation. We need mediation. As yet we do not see the Lord “as he is”. Now if we put the two three-part processes together—the historical and the liturgical—it becomes clear that the liturgy gives precise expression to this historical situation. It expresses the “between-ness” of the time of images, in which we now find ourselves. The theology of the liturgy is in a special way “symbolic theology”, a theology of symbols, which connects us to what is present but hidden.

In so saying, we finally discover the answer to the question with which we started. After the tearing of the Temple curtain and the opening up of the heart of God in the pierced heart of the Crucified, do we still need sacred space, sacred time, mediating symbols? Yes, we do need them, precisely so that, through the “image”, through the sign, we learn to see the openness of heaven. We need them to give us the capacity to know the mystery of God in the pierced heart of the Crucified. Christian liturgy is no longer replacement worship but the coming of the representative Redeemer to us, an entry into his representation that is an entry into reality itself. We do indeed participate in the heavenly liturgy, but this participation is mediated to us through earthly signs, which the Redeemer has shown to us as the place where his reality is to be found. In liturgical celebration there is a kind of turning around of *exitus* to *reditus*, of departure to return, of God’s descent to our ascent. The liturgy is the means by which earthly time is inserted into the time of Jesus Christ and into its present. It is the turning point in the process of redemption. The Shepherd takes the lost sheep onto his shoulders and carries it home.

*Sacred Places—
The Significance of the Church Building*

EVEN THE STAUNCHEST opponents of sacred things, of sacred space in this case, accept that the Christian community needs a place to meet, and on that basis they define the purpose of church buildings in a non-sacral, strictly functional sense. Church buildings, they say, make it possible for people to get together for the liturgy. This is without question an essential function of church buildings and distinguishes them from the classical form of the temple in most religions. In the Old Covenant, the high priest performed the rite of atonement in the Holy of Holies. None but he was allowed to enter, and even he could do so only once a year. Similarly, the temples of all the other religions are usually not meeting places for worshippers but cultic spaces reserved to the deity. The Christian church building soon acquired the name *domus ecclesiae* (the house of the Church, the assembly of the People of God), and then, as an abbreviation, the word *ecclesia* (“assembly”, “church”) came to be used, not just of the living community, but also of the building that housed it. This development is accompanied by another idea: Christ himself offers worship as he stands before the Father. He becomes his members’ worship as they come together with him and around him. This essential difference between the Christian place of worship and the temples of the other religions must not, of course, be exaggerated into a false opposition. We must not suggest a break in the inner continuity of mankind’s religious history, a continuity that, for all the differences, the Old and New Testaments never abolish. In his eighteenth catechesis (23-25), St. Cyril of Jerusalem makes an interesting point about the word *convocatio* (*synagogē-ekklēsia*, the assembly of the people called together and made his own by God). He rightly points out that in the Pentateuch, when the word first makes its appearance with the appointment of Aaron, it is ordered toward worship. Cyril shows that this applies to all the later passages in the Torah, and, even in the transition to the New Testament, this ordering is not forgotten. The calling together, the assembly, has a purpose, and that purpose is worship.

The call comes from worship and leads back to worship. It is worship that unites the people called together and gives their being together its meaning and worth: they are united in that “peace” which the world cannot give. This also becomes clear in relation to that great Old and New Testament archetype of the *ekklēsia*, the community on Sinai. They come together to hear God’s Word and to seal everything with sacrifice. That is how a “covenant” is established between God and man.

But instead of continuing with these theoretical considerations, let us look more closely at the process by which church buildings took concrete form. Using the research of E.L. Sukenik, Louis Bouyer has shown how the Christian house of God comes into being in complete continuity with the synagogue and thus acquires a specifically Christian newness, without any dramatic break, through communion with Jesus Christ, the crucified and risen Lord. This close connection with the synagogue, with its architectural structure and liturgical form, does not in any way contradict what we said above about the Christian liturgy not just continuing the synagogue but also incorporating the Temple. For the Jews saw the synagogue in relation to the Temple. The synagogue was never just a place for instruction, a kind of religious classroom, as Bouyer puts it. No, its orientation was always toward the presence of God. Now, for the Jews, this presence of God was (and is) indissolubly connected with the Temple. Consequently, the synagogue was characterized by two focal points. The first is the “seat of Moses”, of which the Lord speaks in the Gospel (cf. Mt 23:2). The rabbi does not speak from his own resources. He is not a professor, analyzing and reflecting on the Word of God in an intellectual way. No, he makes present the Word that God addressed and addresses to Israel. God speaks through Moses today. What the seat of Moses stands for is this: Sinai is not just a thing of the past. It is not mere human speech that is happening here. God is speaking.

The seat of Moses, then, does not stand for itself and by itself, nor is it simply turned toward the people. No, the rabbi looks—as does everyone else in the synagogue—toward the Ark of the Covenant, or rather the shrine of the Torah, which represents the lost Ark. Up to the Exile, the Ark of the Covenant was the only “object” allowed inside the Holy of Holies. That is what gave the Holy of Holies its special dignity. The Ark was seen as an empty throne, upon which the Shekinah—the cloud of God’s presence—came down. The cherubim—representing, as it were, the elements of the world—served as “assistants at the throne”. They were not self-subsistent

deities, but an expression of the created powers that worship the only God. God is addressed as “thou who art enthroned between the cherubim”. The heavens cannot contain him, but he has chosen the Ark as the “footstool” of his presence. In this sense, the Ark embodies something like the real presence of God among his own. At the same time it is an impressive sign of the absence of images from the liturgy of the Old Testament, which maintains God in his sovereignty and holds out to him, so to speak, only the footstool of his throne. During the Exile, the Ark of the Covenant was lost, and from then on the Holy of Holies was empty. That is what Pompeius found when he strode through the Temple and pulled back the curtain. He entered the Holy of Holies full of curiosity and there, in the very emptiness of the place, discovered what is special about biblical religion. The empty Holy of Holies had now become an act of expectation, of hope, that God himself would one day restore his throne.

The synagogue, in its shrine of the Torah, contains a kind of Ark of the Covenant, which means it is the place of a kind of “real presence”. Here are kept the scrolls of the Torah, the living Word of God, through which he sits on his throne in Israel among his own people. The shrine is surrounded, therefore, with signs of reverence befitting the mysterious presence of God. It is protected by a curtain, before which burn the seven lights of the menorah, the seven-branch candlestick. Now the furnishing of the synagogue with an “Ark of the Covenant” does not in any way signify that the local community has become, so to speak, independent, self-sufficient. No, it is the place where the local community reaches out beyond itself to the Temple, to the commonality of the one People of God as defined by the one God. The Torah is in all places one and the same. And so the Ark points beyond itself, to the one place of its presence that God chose for himself—the Holy of Holies in the Temple in Jerusalem. This Holy of Holies, as Bouyer puts it, remained “the ultimate focus of the synagogal worship” (p. 15). “Thus have all the synagogues, at the time of Our Lord and since that time, been oriented” (p. 15). The rabbi and the people gaze at the “Ark of the Covenant”, and in so doing, they orient themselves toward Jerusalem, turn themselves toward the Holy of Holies in the Temple as the place of God’s presence for his people. This remained the case even after the destruction of the Temple. The empty Holy of Holies had already been an expression of hope, and so, too, now is the destroyed Temple, which waits for the return of the Shekinah, for its restoration by the Messiah when he comes.

This orientation toward the Temple, and thus the connection of the synagogue's liturgy of the Word with the sacrificial liturgy of the Temple, can be seen in its form of prayer. The prayers said at the unrolling and reading of the scrolls of Scripture developed out of the ritual prayers originally linked to the sacrificial actions in the Temple and now regarded, in accord with the tradition of the time without the Temple, as an equivalent of sacrifice. The first of the two great prayers of the synagogue rite comes to a climax in the common recitation of the *Kiddush*, of which the hymn of the seraphim in Isaiah chapter 6 and the hymn of the cherubim in Ezekiel chapter 3 are a part. Bouyer makes this comment: "But the truth must be that the association of men with these heavenly canticles, in the worship of the Temple, had probably been a central feature of the offering of the sacrifice of incense morning and evening of every day" (p. 22). Who would not be reminded of the Trisagion of the Christian liturgy, the "thrice holy" hymn at the beginning of the Canon? Here the congregation does not offer its own thoughts or poetry but is taken out of itself and given the privilege of sharing in the cosmic song of praise of the cherubim and seraphim. The other great prayer of the synagogue culminates in "the recitation of the *Abodah* which, according to the rabbis, was formerly the consecration prayer of the daily burnt offering in the Temple" (p. 22). The petition added to it about the coming of the Messiah and the final restoration of Israel may be seen, according to Bouyer, "as the expression of the essence of the sacrificial worship" (p. 22). Let us remind ourselves here of that transition from animal sacrifices to "worship in harmony with *logos*" which characterizes the path from the Old Testament into the New. Finally, we must mention the fact that no special architectural form was created for the synagogue. The "typical Greek building for public meetings: the basilica", was used (p. 17). Its aisles, divided off by rows of columns, enabled people entering the building to circulate around it.

I have lingered over this description of the synagogue because it exhibits already the essential and constant features of Christian places of worship. Once again we see clearly the essential unity of the two Testaments. Not surprisingly, in Semitic, non-Greek Christianity, the original form of church buildings generally retains the close connection of church with synagogue, a pattern of religious continuity and innovation. (I am thinking here of the Monophysite and Nestorian Churches of the Near East, which broke away from the Church of the Byzantine Empire during the christological debates of

the fifth century.) Christian faith produced three innovations in the form of the synagogue as we have just sketched it. These give Christian liturgy its new and proper profile. First of all, the worshipper no longer looks toward Jerusalem. The destroyed Temple is no longer regarded as the place of God's earthly presence. The Temple built of stone has ceased to express the hope of Christians; its curtain is torn forever. Christians look toward the east, the rising sun. This is not a case of Christians worshipping the sun but of the cosmos speaking of Christ. The song of the sun in Psalm 19(18) is interpreted as a song about Christ when it says: "[The sun] comes forth like a bridegroom leaving his chamber. . . . Its rising is from the end of the heavens, and its circuit to the end of them" (vv. 5f.). This psalm proceeds directly from applauding creation to praising the law. Christians interpret it in terms of Christ, who is the living Word, the eternal Logos, and thus the true light of history, who came forth in Bethlehem from the bridal chamber of the Virgin Mother and now pours out his light on all the world. The east supersedes the Jerusalem Temple as a symbol. Christ, represented by the sun, is the place of the Shekinah, the true throne of the living God. In the Incarnation, human nature truly becomes the throne and seat of God, who is thus forever bound to the earth and accessible to our prayers. In the early Church, prayer toward the east was regarded as an apostolic tradition. We cannot date exactly when this turn to the east, the diverting of the gaze from the Temple, took place, but it is certain that it goes back to the earliest times and was always regarded as an essential characteristic of Christian liturgy (and indeed of private prayer). This "orientation"¹ of Christian prayer has several different meanings. Orientation is, first and foremost, a simple expression of looking to Christ as the meeting place between God and man. It expresses the basic christological form of our prayer.

The fact that we find Christ in the symbol of the rising sun is the indication of a Christology defined eschatologically. Praying toward the east means going to meet the coming Christ. The liturgy, turned toward the east, effects entry, so to speak, into the procession of history toward the future, the New Heaven and the New Earth, which we encounter in Christ. It is a prayer of hope, the prayer of the pilgrim as he walks in the direction shown us by the life, Passion, and Resurrection of Christ. Thus very early on, in parts of Christendom, the eastward direction for prayer was given added emphasis by a reference to the Cross. This may have come from linking Revelation 1:7 with Matthew 24:30. In the first of these, the Revelation of St. John, it says:

“Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, every one who pierced him; and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen.” Here the seer of the Apocalypse depends on John 19:37, where, at the end of the account of the Crucifixion, the mysterious text of the prophet Zechariah (12:10) is quoted, a text that suddenly acquires a wholly new meaning: “They shall look on him whom they have pierced.” Finally, in Matthew 24:30 we are given these words of the Lord: “[T]hen [on the Last Day] will appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn [cf. Zech 12:10], and they will see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven [cf. Dan 7:13] with power and great glory.” The sign of the Son of Man, of the Pierced One, is the Cross, which has now become the sign of victory of the Risen One. Thus the symbolism of the Cross merges with that of the east. Both are an expression of one and the same faith, in which the remembrance of the Pasch of Jesus makes it present and gives dynamism to the hope that goes out to meet the One who is to come. But, finally, this turning toward the east also signifies that cosmos and saving history belong together. The cosmos is praying with us. It, too, is waiting for redemption. It is precisely this cosmic dimension that is essential to Christian liturgy. It is never performed solely in the self-made world of man. It is always a cosmic liturgy. The theme of creation is embedded in Christian prayer. It loses its grandeur when it forgets this connection. That is why, wherever possible, we should definitely take up again the apostolic tradition of facing the east, both in the building of churches and in the celebration of the liturgy. We shall come back to this later, when we say something about the ordering of liturgical prayer.

The second innovation in regard to the synagogue is as follows. A new element has appeared that could not exist in the synagogue. At the east wall, or in the apse, there now stands an altar on which the Eucharistic Sacrifice is celebrated. As we saw, the Eucharist is an entry into the liturgy of heaven; by it we become contemporaries with Jesus Christ’s own act of worship, into which, through his Body, he takes up worldly time and straightway leads it beyond itself, snatching it out of its own sphere and enfolding it into the communion of eternal love. Thus the altar signifies the entry of him who is the Orient into the assembled community and the going out of the community from the prison of this world through the curtain now torn open, a participation in the Pasch, the “passing over” from the world to God, which Christ has opened up. It is clear that the altar in the apse both looks toward

the *Oriens* and forms part of it. In the synagogue the worshippers looked beyond the “Ark of the Covenant”, the shrine of the Word, toward Jerusalem. Now, with the Christian altar, comes a new focal point. Let us say it again: on the altar, what the Temple had in the past foreshadowed is now present in a new way. Yes, it enables us to become the contemporaries of the Sacrifice of the Logos. Thus it brings heaven into the community assembled on earth, or rather it takes that community beyond itself into the communion of saints of all times and places. We might put it this way: the altar is the place where heaven is opened up. It does not close off the church, but opens it up—and leads it into the eternal liturgy. We shall have more to say about the practical consequences of the significance of the Christian altar, because the question of the correct position for the altar is at the center of the postconciliar debate.

But first we must finish what we were saying about the different ways in which Christian faith transformed the synagogue. The third point to be noted is that the shrine of the Word remained, even with regard to its position in the church building. However, of necessity, there is a fundamental innovation here. The Torah is replaced by the Gospels, which alone can open up the meaning of the Torah. “Moses”, says Christ, “wrote of me” (Jn 5:46). The shrine of the Word, the “Ark of the Covenant”, now becomes the throne of the Gospel. The Gospel does not, of course, abolish the “Scriptures”, nor push them to one side, but rather interprets them, so that henceforth and forever they form the Scriptures of Christians, without which the Gospel would have no foundation. The practice in the synagogue of covering the shrine with a curtain, in order to express the sacredness of the Word, is retained. Quite spontaneously, the new, second holy place, the altar, is surrounded by a curtain, from which, in the Eastern Church, the Iconostasis develops. The fact that there are two holy places had significance for the celebration of the liturgy. During the Liturgy of the Word, the congregation gathered around the shrine of the Sacred Books, or around the seat associated with it, which evolved quite spontaneously from the seat of Moses to the bishop’s throne. Just as the rabbi did not speak by his own authority, so the bishop expounds the Bible in the name, and by the mandate, of Christ. Thus, from being a written word from the past, it again becomes what it is: God’s addressing us here and now. At the end of the Liturgy of the Word, during which the faithful stand around the bishop’s seat, everyone walks together with the bishop to the altar, and now the cry resounds: “*Conversi ad Dominum*”, Turn toward the Lord! In other words, look toward the east with

the bishop, in the sense of the words from the epistle to the Hebrews: “[Look] . . . to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith” (12:2). The Liturgy of the Eucharist is celebrated as we look up to Jesus. It is our looking up to Jesus. Thus, in early church buildings, the liturgy has two places. First, the Liturgy of the Word takes place at the center of the building. The faithful are grouped around the *bema*, the elevated area where the throne of the Gospel, the seat of the bishop, and the lectern are located. The Eucharistic celebration proper takes place in the apse, at the altar, which the faithful “stand around”. Everyone joins with the celebrant in facing east, toward the Lord who is to come.

Finally, we must mention one last difference between the synagogue and the earliest church buildings. In Israel only the presence of men was deemed to be necessary for divine worship. The common priesthood described in Exodus chapter 19 was ascribed to them alone. Consequently, in the synagogue, women were only allowed into the tribunes or galleries. As far as the apostles were concerned, as far as Jesus himself is concerned, there was no such discrimination in the Church of Christ. Even though the public Liturgy of the Word was not entrusted to women, they were included in the liturgy as a whole in exactly the same way as men. And so now they had a place—albeit in separation from men—in the sacred space itself, around both the *bema* and the altar.

The Altar and the Direction of Liturgical Prayer

THE RESHAPING so far described, of the Jewish synagogue for the purpose of Christian worship, clearly shows—as we have already said—how, even in architecture, there is both continuity and newness in the relationship of the Old Testament to the New. As a consequence, expression in space had to be given to the properly Christian act of worship, the celebration of the Eucharist, together with the ministry of the Word, which is ordered toward that celebration. Plainly, further developments became not only possible but necessary. A place set aside for Baptism had to be found. The Sacrament of Penance went through a long process of development, which resulted in changes to the form of the church building. Popular piety in its many different forms inevitably found expression in the place dedicated to divine worship. The question of sacred images had to be resolved. Church music had to be fitted into the spatial structure. We saw that the architectural canon for the liturgy of Word and sacrament is not a rigid one, though with every new development and reordering the question has to be posed: What is in harmony with the essence of the liturgy, and what detracts from it? In the very form of its places of divine worship, which we have just been considering, Christianity, speaking and thinking in a Semitic way, has laid down principles by which this question can be answered. Despite all the variations in practice that have taken place far into the second millennium, one thing has remained clear for the whole of Christendom: praying toward the east is a tradition that goes back to the beginning. Moreover, it is a fundamental expression of the Christian synthesis of cosmos and history, of being rooted in the once-for-all events of salvation history while going out to meet the Lord who is to come again. Here both the fidelity to the gift already bestowed and the dynamism of going forward are given equal expression.

Modern man has little understanding of this “orientation”. Judaism and Islam, now as in the past, take it for granted that we should pray toward the central place of revelation, to the God who has revealed himself to us, in the manner and in the place in which he revealed himself. By contrast, in the

Western world, an abstract way of thinking, which in a certain way is the fruit of Christian influence, has become dominant. God is spiritual, and God is everywhere: Does that not mean that prayer is not tied to a particular place or direction? Now, we can indeed pray everywhere, and God is accessible to us everywhere. This idea of the universality of God is a consequence of Christian universality, of the Christian's looking up to God above all gods, the God who embraces the cosmos and is more intimate to us than we are to ourselves. But our knowledge of this universality is the fruit of revelation: God has shown himself to us. Only for this reason do we know him; only for this reason can we confidently pray to him everywhere. And precisely for this reason is it appropriate, now as in the past, that we should express in Christian prayer our turning to the God who has revealed himself to us. Just as God assumed a body and entered the time and space of this world, so it is appropriate to prayer—at least to communal liturgical prayer—that our speaking to God should be “incarnational”, that it should be christological, turned through the incarnate Word to the triune God. The cosmic symbol of the rising sun expresses the universality of God above all particular places and yet maintains the concreteness of divine revelation. Our praying is thus inserted into the procession of the nations to God.

But what about the altar? In what direction should we pray during the Eucharistic liturgy? In Byzantine church buildings the structure just described was by and large retained, but in Rome a somewhat different arrangement developed. The bishop's chair was shifted to the center of the apse, and so the altar was moved into the nave. This seems to have been the case in the Lateran basilica and in St. Mary Major's well into the ninth century. However, in St. Peter's, during the pontificate of St. Gregory the Great (590-604), the altar was moved nearer to the bishop's chair, probably for the simple reason that he was supposed to stand as much as possible above the tomb of St. Peter. This was an outward and visible expression of the truth that we celebrate the Sacrifice of the Lord in the communion of saints, a communion spanning all times and ages. The custom of erecting an altar above the tombs of the martyrs probably goes back a long way and is an outcome of the same motivation. Throughout history the martyrs continue Christ's self-oblation; they are like the Church's living altar, made not of stones but of men, who have become members of the Body of Christ and thus express a new kind of cultus: sacrifice is humanity becoming love with Christ.

The ordering of St. Peter's was then copied, so it would seem, in many other stational churches in Rome. For the purposes of this discussion, we do not need to go into the disputed details of this process. The controversy in our own century was triggered by another innovation. Because of topographical circumstances, it turned out that St. Peter's faced west. Thus, if the celebrating priest wanted—as the Christian tradition of prayer demands—to face east, he had to stand behind the people and look—this is the logical conclusion—toward the people. For whatever reason it was done, one can also see this arrangement in a whole series of church buildings within St. Peter's direct sphere of influence. The liturgical renewal in our own century took up this alleged model and developed from it a new idea for the form of the liturgy. The Eucharist—so it was said—had to be celebrated *versus populum* (toward the people). The altar—as can be seen in the normative model of St. Peter's—had to be positioned in such a way that priest and people looked at each other and formed together the circle of the celebrating community. This alone—so it was said—was compatible with the meaning of the Christian liturgy, with the requirement of active participation. This alone conformed to the primordial model of the Last Supper. These arguments seemed in the end so persuasive that after the Council (which says nothing about “turning toward the people”) new altars were set up everywhere, and today celebration *versus populum* really does look like the characteristic fruit of Vatican II's liturgical renewal. In fact it is the most conspicuous consequence of a reordering that not only signifies a new external arrangement of the places dedicated to the liturgy, but also brings with it a new idea of the essence of the liturgy—the liturgy as a communal meal.

This is, of course, a misunderstanding of the significance of the Roman basilica and of the positioning of its altar, and the representation of the Last Supper is also, to say the least, inaccurate. Consider, for example, what Louis Bouyer has to say on the subject: “The idea that a celebration facing the people must have been the primitive one, and that especially of the last supper, has no other foundation than a mistaken view of what a meal could be in antiquity, Christian or not. In no meal of the early Christian era, did the president of the banqueting assembly ever face the other participants. They were all sitting, or reclining, on the convex side of a C-shaped table, or of a table having approximately the shape of a horse shoe. The other side was always left empty for the service. Nowhere in Christian antiquity, could have arisen the idea of having to ‘face the people’ to preside at a meal. The

communal character of a meal was emphasized just by the opposite disposition: the fact that all the participants were on the same side of the table” (pp. 53-54).

In any case, there is a further point that we must add to this discussion of the “shape” of meals: the Eucharist that Christians celebrate really cannot adequately be described by the term “meal”. True, the Lord established the new reality of Christian worship within the framework of a Jewish (Passover) meal, but it was precisely this new reality, not the meal as such, that he commanded us to repeat. Very soon the new reality was separated from its ancient context and found its proper and suitable form, a form already predetermined by the fact that the Eucharist refers back to the Cross and thus to the transformation of Temple sacrifice into worship of God that is in harmony with *logos*. Thus it came to pass that the synagogue liturgy of the Word, renewed and deepened in a Christian way, merged with the remembrance of Christ’s death and Resurrection to become the “Eucharist”, and precisely thus was fidelity to the command “Do this” fulfilled. This new and all-encompassing form of worship could not be derived simply from the meal but had to be defined through the interconnection of Temple and synagogue, Word and sacrament, cosmos and history. It expresses itself in the very form that we discovered in the liturgical structure of the early Churches in the world of Semitic Christianity. It also, of course, remained fundamental for Rome. Once again let me quote Bouyer: “Never, and nowhere, before that [that is, before the sixteenth century] have we any indication that any importance, or even attention, was given to whether the priest celebrated with the people before him or behind him. As Professor Cyrille Vogel has recently demonstrated it, the only thing ever insisted upon, or even mentioned, was that he should say the eucharistic prayer, as all the other prayers, facing East. . . . Even when the orientation of the church enabled the celebrant to pray turned toward the people, when at the altar, we must not forget that it was not the priest alone who, then, turned East: it was the whole congregation, together with him” (pp. 55-56).

Admittedly, these connections were obscured or fell into total oblivion in the church buildings and liturgical practice of the modern age. This is the only explanation for the fact that the common direction of prayer of priest and people were labelled as “celebrating toward the wall” or “turning your back on the people” and came to seem absurd and totally unacceptable. And this alone explains why the meal—even in modern pictures—became the

normative idea of liturgical celebration for Christians. In reality what happened was that an unprecedented clericalization came on the scene. Now the priest—the “presider”, as they now prefer to call him—becomes the real point of reference for the whole liturgy. Everything depends on him. We have to see him, to respond to him, to be involved in what he is doing. His creativity sustains the whole thing. Not surprisingly, people try to reduce this newly created role by assigning all kinds of liturgical functions to different individuals and entrusting the “creative” planning of the liturgy to groups of people who like to, and are supposed to, “make their own contribution”. Less and less is God in the picture. More and more important is what is done by the human beings who meet here and do not like to subject themselves to a “pre-determined pattern”. The turning of the priest toward the people has turned the community into a self-enclosed circle. In its outward form, it no longer opens out on what lies ahead and above, but is closed in on itself. The common turning toward the east was not a “celebration toward the wall”; it did not mean that the priest “had his back to the people”: the priest himself was not regarded as so important. For just as the congregation in the synagogue looked together toward Jerusalem, so in the Christian liturgy the congregation looked together “toward the Lord”. As one of the fathers of Vatican II’s Constitution on the Liturgy, J.A. Jungmann, put it, it was much more a question of priest and people facing in the same direction, knowing that together they were in a procession toward the Lord. They did not close themselves into a circle; they did not gaze at one another; but as the pilgrim People of God they set off for the *Oriens*, for the Christ who comes to meet us.

But is this not all romanticism and nostalgia for the past? Can the original form of Christian prayer still say something to us today, or should we try to find our own form, a form for our own times? Of course, we cannot simply replicate the past. Every age must discover and express the essence of the liturgy anew. The point is to discover this essence amid all the changing appearances. It would surely be a mistake to reject all the reforms of our century wholesale. When the altar was very remote from the faithful, it was right to move it back to the people. In cathedrals this made it possible to recover the tradition of having the altar at the crossing, the meeting point of the nave and the presbyterium. It was also important clearly to distinguish the place for the Liturgy of the Word from the place for the properly Eucharistic liturgy. For the Liturgy of the Word is about speaking and responding, and so

a face-to-face exchange between proclaimer and hearer does make sense. In the psalm the hearer internalizes what he has heard, takes it into himself, and transforms it into prayer, so that it becomes a response. On the other hand, a common turning to the east during the Eucharistic Prayer remains essential. This is not a case of something accidental, but of what is essential. Looking at the priest has no importance. What matters is looking together at the Lord. It is not now a question of dialogue but of common worship, of setting off toward the One who is to come. What corresponds with the reality of what is happening is not the closed circle but the common movement forward, expressed in a common direction for prayer.

Häussling has levelled several objections at these ideas of mine, which I have presented before. The first I have just touched on. These ideas are alleged to be a romanticism for the old ways, a misguided longing for the past. It is said to be odd that I should speak only of Christian antiquity and pass over the succeeding centuries. Coming as it does from a liturgical scholar, this objection is quite remarkable. As I see it, the problem with a large part of modern liturgiology is that it tends to recognize only antiquity as a source, and therefore normative, and to regard everything developed later, in the Middle Ages and through the Council of Trent, as decadent. And so one ends up with dubious reconstructions of the most ancient practice, fluctuating criteria, and never-ending suggestions for reform, which lead ultimately to the disintegration of the liturgy that has evolved in a living way. On the other hand, it is important and necessary to see that we cannot take as our norm the ancient in itself and as such, nor must we automatically write off later developments as alien to the original form of the liturgy. There can be a thoroughly living kind of development in which a seed at the origin of something ripens and bears fruit. We shall have to come back to this idea in a moment. But in our case, as we have said, what is at issue is not a romantic escape into antiquity, but a rediscovery of something essential, in which Christian liturgy expresses its permanent orientation. Of course, Häussling thinks that turning to the east, toward the rising sun, is something that nowadays we just cannot bring into the liturgy. Is that really the case? Are we not interested in the cosmos any more? Are we today really hopelessly huddled in our own little circle? Is it not important, precisely today, to pray with the whole of creation? Is it not important, precisely today, to find room for the dimension of the future, for hope in the Lord who is to come again, to recognize again, indeed to live, the dynamism of the new creation as an

essential form of the liturgy?

Another objection is that we do not need to look toward the east, toward the crucifix—that, when priest and faithful look at one another, they are looking at the image of God in man, and so facing one another is the right direction for prayer. I find it hard to believe that the famous critic thought this was a serious argument. For we do not see the image of God in man in such a simplistic way. The “image of God” in man is not, of course, something that we can photograph or see with a merely photographic kind of perception. We can indeed see it, but only with the new seeing of faith. We can see it, just as we can see the goodness in a man, his honesty, interior truth, humility, love—everything, in fact, that gives him a certain likeness to God. But if we are to do this, we must learn a new kind of seeing, and that is what the Eucharist is for.

A more important objection is of the practical order. Ought we really to be rearranging everything all over again? Nothing is more harmful to the liturgy than a constant activism, even if it seems to be for the sake of genuine renewal. I see a solution in a suggestion that comes from the insights of Erik Peterson. Facing east, as we heard, was linked with the “sign of the Son of Man”, with the Cross, which announces the Lord’s Second Coming. That is why very early on the east was linked with the sign of the Cross. Where a direct common turning toward the east is not possible, the cross can serve as the interior “east” of faith. It should stand in the middle of the altar and be the common point of focus for both priest and praying community. In this way we obey the ancient call to prayer: “*Conversi ad Dominum*”, Turn toward the Lord! In this way we look together at the One whose death tore the veil of the Temple—the One who stands before the Father for us and encloses us in his arms in order to make us the new and living Temple. Moving the altar cross to the side to give an uninterrupted view of the priest is something I regard as one of the truly absurd phenomena of recent decades. Is the cross disruptive during Mass? Is the priest more important than the Lord? This mistake should be corrected as quickly as possible; it can be done without further rebuilding. The Lord is the point of reference. He is the rising sun of history. That is why there could be a cross of the Passion, which represents the suffering Lord who for us let his side be pierced, from which flowed blood and water (Eucharist and Baptism), as well as a cross of triumph, which expresses the idea of the Second Coming and guides our eyes toward it. For it is always the one Lord: Christ yesterday, today, and forever (Heb 13:8).

The Reservation of the Blessed Sacrament

THE CHURCH of the first millennium knew nothing of tabernacles. Instead, first the shrine of the Word, and then even more so the altar, served as sacred “tent”. Approached by steps, it was sheltered, and its sacredness underscored, by a “ciborium”, or marble baldacchino, with burning lamps hanging from it. A curtain was hung between the columns of the ciborium (Bouyer, pp. 46-48). The tabernacle as sacred tent, as place of the Shekinah, the presence of the living Lord, developed only in the second millennium. It was the fruit of passionate theological struggles and their resulting clarifications, in which the permanent presence of Christ in the consecrated Host emerged with greater clarity. Now here we run up against the decadence theory, the canonization of the early days and romanticism about the first century. Transubstantiation (the substantial change of the bread and wine), the adoration of the Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, eucharistic devotions with monstrance and processions—all these things, it is alleged, are medieval errors, errors from which we must once and for all take our leave. “The Eucharistic Gifts are for eating, not for looking at”—these and similar slogans are all too familiar. The glib way such statements are made is quite astonishing when we consider the intense debates in the history of dogma, theology, and ecumenism undertaken by the great theologians in the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth. All that seems now to be forgotten.

It is not the intention of this little book to enter into these theological discussions in detail. It is plain for all to see that already for St. Paul bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Christ, that it is the risen Lord himself who is present and gives himself to us to eat. The vigor with which the Real Presence is emphasized in John chapter 6 could hardly be surpassed. For the Church Fathers, too, from the earliest witnesses onward—just think of St. Justin Martyr or St. Ignatius of Antioch—there is no doubt about the great mystery of the Presence bestowed upon us, about the change of the gifts during the Eucharistic Prayer. Even a theologian of such a spiritualizing tendency as St. Augustine never had a doubt about it. Indeed, he shows just

how far confession of faith in the Incarnation and Resurrection, which is so closely bound up with eucharistic faith in the bodily presence of the risen Lord, has transformed Platonism. “Flesh and blood” have received a new dignity and entered into the Christian’s hope for eternal life. An important finding of Henri de Lubac has often been misunderstood. It has always been clear that the goal of the Eucharist is our own transformation, so that we become “one body and spirit” with Christ (cf. 1 Cor 6:17). This correlation of ideas—the insight that the Eucharist is meant to transform *us*, to change humanity itself into the living temple of God, into the Body of Christ—was expressed, up to the early Middle Ages, by the twin concepts of *corpus mysticum* and *corpus verum*. In the vocabulary of the Fathers, *mysticum* did not mean “mystical” in the modern sense, but rather “pertaining to the mystery, the sphere of the sacrament”. Thus the phrase *corpus mysticum* was used to express the sacramental Body, the corporeal presence of Christ in the Sacrament. According to the Fathers, that Body is given to us, so that we may become the *corpus verum*, the real Body of Christ. Changes in the use of language and the forms of thought resulted in the reversal of these meanings. The Sacrament was now addressed as the *corpus verum*, the “true Body”, while the Church was called the *corpus mysticum*, the “Mystical Body”, “mystical” here meaning no longer “sacramental” but “mysterious”. Many people have drawn the conclusion from de Lubac’s careful description of the linguistic change that a hitherto unknown realism, indeed naturalism, was now forcing its way into eucharistic doctrine, and the large views of the Fathers were giving way to a static and one-sided idea of the Real Presence.

It is true that this linguistic change also represented a spiritual development, but we should not describe it in the slanted way just mentioned. We can agree that something of the eschatological dynamism and corporate character (the sense of “we”) of eucharistic faith was lost or at least diminished. As we saw above, the Blessed Sacrament contains a dynamism, which has the goal of transforming mankind and the world into the New Heaven and New Earth, into the unity of the risen Body. This truth was not seen so vividly as before. Again, the Eucharist is not aimed primarily at the individual. Eucharistic personalism is a drive toward union, the overcoming of the barriers between God and man, between “I” and “thou” in the new “we” of the communion of saints. People did not exactly forget this truth, but they were not so clearly aware of it as before. There were, therefore, losses in Christian awareness, and in our time we must try to make up for them, but

still there were gains overall. True, the Eucharistic Body of the Lord is meant to bring us together, so that we become his “true Body”. But the gift of the Eucharist can do this only because in it the Lord gives us *his true Body*. Only the true Body in the Sacrament can build up the true Body of the new City of God. This insight connects the two periods and provides our starting point.

The early Church was already well aware that the bread once changed remains changed. That is why they reserved it for the sick, and that is why they showed it such reverence, as is still the case today in the Eastern Church. But now, in the Middle Ages, this awareness is deepened: the gift is changed. The Lord has definitively drawn this piece of matter to himself. It does not contain just a matter-of-fact kind of gift. No, the Lord himself is present, the Indivisible One, the risen Lord, with Flesh and Blood, with Body and Soul, with Divinity and Humanity. The whole Christ is there. In the early days of the Liturgical Movement, people sometimes argued for a distinction between the “thing-centered” view of the Eucharist in the patristic age and the personalistic view of the post-medieval period. The Eucharistic Presence, they said, was understood, not as the presence of a Person, but as the presence of a gift distinct from the Person. This is nonsense. Anyone reading the texts will find that there is no support anywhere for these ideas. How is the Body of Christ supposed to become a “thing”? The only presence is the presence of the whole Christ. Receiving the Eucharist does not mean eating a “thing-like” gift (Body and Blood?). No, there is a person-to-person exchange, a coming of the one into the other. The living Lord gives himself to me, enters into me, and invites me to surrender myself to him, so that the Apostle’s words come true: “[I]t is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me” (Gal 2:20). Only thus is the reception of Holy Communion an act that elevates and transforms a man.

“He is here, he himself, the whole of himself, and he remains here.” This realization came upon the Middle Ages with a wholly new intensity. It was caused in part by the deepening of theological reflection, but still more important was the new experience of the saints, especially in the Franciscan movement and in the new evangelization undertaken by the Order of Preachers. What happens in the Middle Ages is not a misunderstanding due to losing sight of what is central, but a new dimension of the reality of Christianity opening up through the experience of the saints, supported and illuminated by the reflection of the theologians. At the same time, this new development is in complete continuity with what had always been believed

hitherto. Let me say it again: This deepened awareness of faith is impelled by the knowledge that in the consecrated species *he* is there and remains there. When a man experiences this with every fiber of his heart and mind and senses, the consequence is inescapable: “We must make a proper place for this Presence.” And so little by little the tabernacle takes shape, and more and more, always in a spontaneous way, it takes the place previously occupied by the now disappeared “Ark of the Covenant”. In fact, the tabernacle is the complete fulfillment of what the Ark of the Covenant represented. It is the place of the “Holy of Holies”. It is the tent of God, his throne. Here he is among us. His presence (Shekinah) really does now dwell among us—in the humblest parish church no less than in the grandest cathedral. Even though the definitive Temple will only come to be when the world has become the New Jerusalem, still what the Temple in Jerusalem pointed to is here present in a supreme way. The New Jerusalem is anticipated in the humble species of bread.

So let no one say, “The Eucharist is for eating, not looking at.” It is not “ordinary bread”, as the most ancient traditions constantly emphasize. Eating it—as we have just said—is a spiritual process, involving the whole man. “Eating” it means worshipping it. Eating it means letting it come into me, so that my “I” is transformed and opens up into the great “we”, so that we become “one” in him (cf. Gal 3:16). Thus adoration is not opposed to Communion, nor is it merely added to it. No, Communion only reaches its true depths when it is supported and surrounded by adoration. The Eucharistic Presence in the tabernacle does not set another view of the Eucharist alongside or against the Eucharistic celebration, but simply signifies its complete fulfillment. For this Presence has the effect, of course, of keeping the Eucharist forever in church. The church never becomes a lifeless space but is always filled with the presence of the Lord, which comes out of the celebration, leads us into it, and always makes us participants in the cosmic Eucharist. What man of faith has not experienced this? A church without the Eucharistic Presence is somehow dead, even when it invites people to pray. But a church in which the eternal light is burning before the tabernacle is always alive, is always something more than a building made of stones. In this place the Lord is always waiting for me, calling me, wanting to make me “eucharistic”. In this way, he prepares me for the Eucharist, sets me in motion toward his return.

The changes in the Middle Ages brought losses, but they also provided a

wonderful spiritual deepening. They unfolded the magnitude of the mystery instituted at the Last Supper and enabled it to be experienced with a new fullness. How many saints—yes, including saints of the love of neighbor—were nourished and led to the Lord by this experience! We must not lose this richness. If the presence of the Lord is to touch us in a concrete way, the tabernacle must also find its proper place in the architecture of our church buildings.

Chapter 5

Sacred Time

AS WE BEGIN to consider the significance of sacred time in the structure of Christian liturgy, we must remember all that we said in the first chapter of this second part about the significance of time and space in Christian worship. All time is God's time. When the eternal Word assumed human existence at his Incarnation, he also assumed temporality. He drew time into the sphere of eternity. Christ is himself the bridge between time and eternity. At first it seems as if there can be no connection between the "always" of eternity and the "flowing away" of time. But now the Eternal One himself has taken time to himself. In the Son, time co-exists with eternity. God's eternity is not mere time-lessness, the negation of time, but a power over time that is really present with time and in time. In the Word incarnate, who remains man forever, the presence of eternity with time becomes bodily and concrete.

All time is God's time. On the other hand, as we saw above, the time of the Church is a "between" time, between the shadow and the reality, and so its special structure demands a sign, a time specially chosen and designated to draw time as a whole into the hands of God. This, of course, is one of the marks of the Bible's universalism: it is not based on some general, transcendental character of mankind, but strives to attain the whole through an election. But now there can be no escaping the question: *What is time?* Needless to say, this is not the place to plumb the depths of this question, which has exercised the minds of all the great thinkers of history. However, a few hints at an answer are imperative if the contact of the liturgy with time is to be properly understood. The first thing to say is that time is a cosmic reality. The orbiting of the sun by the earth (or, as the ancients thought, of the earth by the sun) gives existence the rhythm that we call time—from hour to hour, from morning to evening and evening to morning, from spring through summer and autumn to winter. In addition to this rhythm of the sun there is the shorter rhythm of the moon—from its slow growth to its disappearance with the new moon and the new beginning. The two rhythms have created two measures, which appear in the history of culture in various combinations.

Both show how much man is woven into the fabric of the universe. Time is first of all a cosmic phenomenon. Man lives with the stars. The course of the sun and the moon leaves its mark on his life.

But beside and beneath this there are other rhythms, each with its own measure, at the various levels of being. Plants have their time. For example, the rings in the trunk of a tree display the tree's own internal time, which is, of course, inseparably intertwined with cosmic time. Again, man, as he matures and declines, has his own time. We could say that his heartbeat is like the internal rhythm of his own time. In the time of man the different levels of life, the organic and the spiritual-intellectual, enter into a mysterious synthesis, which is inserted into the immensity of the universe but also into a common history. The path of man that we call history is a specific form of time.

All of this is present in the liturgy and in the liturgy's own particular way of relating to time. The sacred space of the Christian worship of God is itself already opened toward time. Facing east means that when one prays, one is turned toward the rising sun, which has now become a subject of historical significance. It points to the Paschal Mystery of Jesus Christ, to his death and new rising. It points to the future of the world and the consummation of all history in the final coming of the Redeemer. Thus time and space are interconnected in Christian prayer. Space itself has become time, and time has, so to speak, become spatial, has entered into space. And just as time and space intertwine, so, too, do history and cosmos. Cosmic time, which is determined by the sun, becomes a representation of human time and of historical time, which moves toward the union of God and world, of history and the universe, of matter and spirit—in a word, toward the New City whose light is God himself. Thus time becomes eternity, and eternity is imparted to time.

In the piety of the Old Testament we find a double division of time: one determined by the weekly rhythm, which moves toward the Sabbath, and the other by the feast days, which are determined partly by the theme of creation (seed-time and harvest, in addition to feasts of the nomadic tradition) and partly by the remembrance of God's actions in history. These two sources are frequently interconnected. This basic arrangement still applies in Christianity. Even in its ordering of time, Christianity retains a profound, interior continuity with its Jewish heritage, in which, in turn, the heritage of the world's religions is taken up and dedicated to the one God, albeit purified and

illuminated by him.

Let us begin with the weekly rhythm. We have already seen that the Sabbath brought the sign of the covenant into time, tied creation and covenant together. This fundamental ordering of things, which was also incorporated into the Decalogue, was still taken for granted in Christianity. But now the covenant was raised up to a new level through the Incarnation, Cross, and Resurrection, so that henceforth we must speak of a “New Covenant”. God has acted once more in a new way, in order to give the covenant its universal breadth and definitive form. But this divine action had something to do with the rhythm of the week. Its climax, toward which everything else was ordered, was the Resurrection of Jesus “on the third day”. In our reflections on the Last Supper we saw that Supper, Cross, and Resurrection belong together. Jesus’ giving of himself unto death gives the words he speaks at the Supper their realism. On the other hand, his self-giving would be meaningless were death to have the last word. Thus only through the Resurrection does the covenant come fully into being. Now man is forever united with God. Now the two are really bound together indissolubly. Thus the Day of Resurrection is the new Sabbath. It is the day on which the Lord comes among his own and invites them into his “liturgy”, into his glorification of God, and communicates himself to them. The morning of the “third day” becomes the hour of Christian worship of God. St. Augustine showed—in regard to the connection of Supper, Cross, and Resurrection—how through their inner unity the Supper has become quite spontaneously the morning sacrifice, and precisely thus is the task entrusted to the apostles at the time of the Last Supper fulfilled. The transition from Old to New Testament is plainly revealed in the transition from Sabbath to Day of Resurrection as the new sign of the covenant, and in the process Sunday takes over the significance of the Sabbath. There are three different names for this day. Seen from the Cross, it is the third day—in the Old Testament the third day was regarded as the day of theophany, the day when God entered into the world after the time of expectation. In terms of the weekly schedule, it is the first day of the week. Finally, the Fathers added another consideration: seen in relation to the whole preceding week, Sunday is the eighth day.

Thus the three symbolisms are interlocked. Of the three the most important is that of its being the first day of the week. In the Mediterranean world in which Christianity came into being, the first day of the week was regarded as

the day of the sun, while the other days were allotted to the various planets then known. The Christians' day of worship was determined by the remembrance of God's action, the date of the Resurrection of Jesus. But now this date came to carry the same cosmic symbolism that also determined the Christian direction of prayer. The sun proclaims Christ. Cosmos and history together speak of him. And to this a third factor was added: the first day is the beginning of creation. The new creation takes up the old creation. The Christian Sunday is also a festival of creation: thanksgiving for the gift of creation, for the "Let there be . . ." with which God established the being of the world. It is thanksgiving for the fact that God does not let creation be destroyed but restores it after all of man's attempts to destroy it. The "first day" contains St. Paul's idea of the whole creation waiting for the revelation of the sons of God (cf. Rom 8:19). Just as sin wrecks creation (as we can see!), so it is restored when the "sons of God" make their appearance. Sunday thus explains the commission given to man in the account of creation: "Subdue [the earth]!" (Gen 1:28). This does not mean: Enslave it! Exploit it! Do with it what you will! No, what it does mean is: Recognize it as God's gift! Guard it and look after it, as sons look after what they have inherited from their father. Look after it, so that it becomes a true garden for God and its meaning is fulfilled, so that for it, too, God is "all in all". This is the orientation that the Fathers wanted to express by calling the Day of the Resurrection the "eighth day". Sunday looks not only backward but forward. Looking toward the Resurrection means looking toward the final consummation. With the Day of the Resurrection coming after the Sabbath, Christ, as it were, strode across time and lifted it up above itself. The Fathers connected with this the idea that the history of the world as a whole can be seen as one great week of seven days corresponding to the ages of a man's life. The eighth day, therefore, signifies the new time that has dawned with the Resurrection. It is now, so to speak, concurrent with history. In the liturgy we already reach out to lay hold of it. But at the same time it is ahead of us. It is the sign of God's definitive world, in which shadow and image are superseded in the final mutual indwelling of God and his creatures. It was to reflect this symbolism of the eighth day that people liked to build baptisteries, baptismal churches, with eight sides. This was meant to show that Baptism is birth into the eighth day, into the Resurrection of Christ and into the new time that opened up with the Resurrection.

Sunday is thus, for the Christian, time's proper measure, the temporal

measure of his life. It is not based on an arbitrary convention that could be exchanged for another, but contains a unique synthesis of the remembrance of history, the recalling of creation, and the theology of hope. For Christians, it is the weekly returning feast of the Resurrection, though it is one that does not render a specific remembrance of Christ's Passover superfluous. It is quite clear from reading the New Testament that Jesus approached his "hour" with full awareness. The phrase emphasized in St. John's Gospel, the "hour of Jesus", certainly has many layers of meaning. But first and foremost it refers to a date: Jesus did not want to die on just any date. His death had a significance for history, for mankind, for the world. That is why it had to be woven into a very particular cosmic and historical hour. It coincides with the Passover of the Jews as set out and regulated in Exodus chapter 12. St. John and the epistle to the Hebrews show in a special way how it incorporates the content of other feasts, especially the Day of Atonement, but its proper date is Passover. The Lord's death is not any kind of accident. It is a "feast". It brings to an end what is symbolically opened up in the Passover. He takes it—as we have seen—from replacement to reality, to the vicarious ministry of his self-oblation.

The Passover is the "hour" of Jesus. It is precisely in connection with this date that we see the universal significance of Jesus' death for human history. At first Passover was the feast of nomads. From Abel to the Apocalypse the sacrificed lamb is a type of the Redeemer, of his pure self-giving. We do not need to go farther into the importance of nomadic culture in the origins of biblical religion. What is significant is this, that monotheism was not able to develop in the great cities and fertile countryside of Mesopotamia. No, it was in the wilderness, where heaven and earth face each other in stark solitude, that monotheism was able to grow—in the homelessness of the wanderer, who does not deify places but has constantly to put his trust in the God who wanders with him. It has recently been pointed out that the date of Passover coincides with the constellation of Aries the Ram—the Lamb. This was of no more than marginal importance for the fixing of the date of Easter. What was essential was the connection with the date of the death and Resurrection of Jesus, which was of its very nature linked with the Jewish liturgical calendar. Now this link, raising as it does the question of the relation of New Testament to Old and of the newness of Christianity, was to have explosive potential. In the second century A.D. it led to the Easter controversy, which was not to be settled, at least for the Great Church, until the Council of

Nicaea (325). On the one hand, there was the custom in Asia Minor of conforming to the Jewish calendar and always celebrating the Christian Easter on 14 Nisan, the date of the Jewish Passover. On the other hand, there was the custom, especially in Rome, of regarding Sunday, the day of the Resurrection, as the determining factor: the Christian Easter should, therefore, be celebrated on the Sunday after the first full moon of spring. The Council of Nicaea promulgated this decision. Through its ruling, the solar and lunar calendars were interconnected, and the two great cosmic forms of ordering time were linked to each other in association with the history of Israel and the life of Jesus. But let us return to the image of the lamb (or ram). In the fifth century there was a controversy between Rome and Alexandria about what the latest possible date for Easter could be. According to Alexandrian tradition, it was April 25. Pope St. Leo the Great (440-461) criticized this very late date by pointing out that, according to the Bible, Easter should fall in the first month, and the first month did not mean April but the time when the sun is passing through the first part of the Zodiac—the sign of Aries. The constellation in the heavens seemed to speak, in advance and for all time, of the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world (Jn 1:29), the one who sums up in himself all the sacrifices of the innocent and gives them their meaning. The mysterious story of the ram, caught in the thicket and taking the place of Isaac as the sacrifice decreed by God himself, was now seen as the pre-history of Christ. The fork of the tree in which the ram was hanging was seen as a replica of the sign of Aries, which in turn was the celestial foreshadowing of the crucified Christ. We should also say that Jewish tradition gave the date of March 25 to Abraham's sacrifice. Now, as we shall see presently, this day was also regarded as the day of creation, the day when God's Word decreed: "Let there be light." It was also considered, very early on, as the day of Christ's death and eventually as the day of his conception. We may see a reflection of these connections in the first epistle of St. Peter, which describes Christ as the lamb "without blemish" demanded by Exodus 12:5 and "destined before the foundation of the world" (1 Pet 1:20). The mysterious words in Revelation 13:8 about the "Lamb slain from the beginning of the world" [translated from the German] could also perhaps be interpreted in the same way—though other translations are possible that tone down the paradox. These cosmic images enabled Christians to see, in an unprecedented way, the world-embracing meaning of Christ and so to understand the grandeur of the hope inscribed in Christian faith. This is most

illuminating. It seems clear to me that we have to recapture this cosmic vision if we want once again to understand and live Christianity in its full breadth.

I should like to make two further remarks about the celebration of Easter. In our reflections so far, we have seen how deeply Christianity is marked by the symbolism of the sun. The dating of Easter, finally fixed at Nicaea, incorporated the feast into the solar calendar, but it did not break its link with the lunar calendar. In the world of religion, the moon, with its alternating phases, is frequently seen as the symbol of the feminine, but especially as a symbol of transitoriness. Thus the cosmic symbolism of the moon corresponds to the mystery of death and resurrection, which is celebrated in the Christian Passover. When the Sunday after the first full moon of spring comes to be the date of Easter, the symbolism of sun and moon are linked together. Transitoriness is taken up into what never passes away. Death becomes resurrection and passes into eternal life.

Finally, we should add that, for Israel, Passover was not simply a cosmic festival but essentially aimed at historical remembrance. It is the feast of the Exodus out of Egypt, the feast of Israel's liberation, with which it begins its own journey in history as the People of God. Israel's Passover is the recalling of an act of God that was liberation and thus the foundation of the community. This content of the feast also entered into Christianity and helped it understand the depth of meaning in the Resurrection of Christ. Jesus had consciously connected his final journey with Israel's Passover. He defined it as his "hour". There must, therefore, be an inner connection between Israel's remembrance and the new event of Christendom's sacred triduum. Man's last enemy is death. Man is fully set free only when he is set free from death. The oppression of Israel in Egypt was indeed a kind of death, which threatened to, and was intended to, destroy the people as such. Death was imposed on all male progeny. But on the night of Passover the angel of death now passes over Egypt and strikes down its firstborn. Liberation is liberation for life. Christ, the Firstborn from the dead, takes death upon himself and, by his Resurrection, shatters death's power. Death no longer has the last word. The love of the Son proves to be stronger than death because it unites man with God's love, which is God's very being. Thus, in the Resurrection of Christ, it is not just the destiny of an individual that is called to mind. He is now perpetually present, because he lives, and he gathers us up, so that we may live: "[B]ecause I live, you will live also" (Jn 14:19). In the light of Easter, Christians see themselves as people who truly *live*. They have found their

way out of an existence that is more death than life. They have discovered real life: “And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent” (Jn 17:3). Deliverance from death is at the same time deliverance from the captivity of individualism, from the prison of self, from the incapacity to love and make a gift of oneself. Thus Easter becomes the great feast of Baptism, in which man, as it were, enacts the passage through the Red Sea, emerges from his own existence into communion with Christ and so into communion with all who belong to Christ. Resurrection builds communion. It creates the new People of God. The grain of wheat that dies all alone does not remain alone but brings much fruit with it. The risen Lord does not remain alone. He draws all mankind to himself and so creates a new universal communion of men. The whole meaning of the Jewish Passover is made present in the Christian Easter. At the same time, it is not about remembering a past and unrepeatable event, but, as we have seen, “once for all” here becomes “forever”. The Risen Lord lives and gives life. He lives and brings about communion. He lives and opens up the future. He lives and shows the way. But we must also not forget that this feast of salvation history, open as it is to the future, to what lies ahead, has its roots in a cosmic celebration, roots that it does not relinquish. The dying and rising moon becomes the sign in the cosmos for death and resurrection. The sun of the first day becomes the messenger of Christ, who “comes forth like a bridegroom leaving his chamber, and like a strong man runs its course with joy” (Ps 19:5f). That is why the calendar of the Christian feasts is not to be manipulated at will. The “hour” of Jesus makes its appearance, again and again, within the unity of cosmic and historical time. Through the feast we enter into the rhythm of creation and into God’s plan for human history.

A question comes up at this point that I should like to discuss briefly before moving to the Christmas season. The cosmic symbolism that I have been describing has its precise setting in the area of the Mediterranean and the Near East in which the Jewish and Christian religions came into being. By and large it applies to the Northern Hemisphere of the globe. Now in the Southern Hemisphere everything is reversed. The Christian Easter falls, not in the spring, but in the autumn. Christmas coincides, not with the winter solstice, but with high summer. This raises the question of “inculturation” with great urgency. If the cosmic symbolism is so important, ought we not to adjust the liturgical calendar for the Southern Hemisphere? G. Voss has rightly responded by pointing out that, if we did this, we would reduce the

mystery of Christ to the level of a merely cosmic religion; we would be subordinating history to the cosmos. But the historical does not serve the cosmic; no, the cosmic serves the historical. Only in history is the cosmos given its center and goal. To believe in the Incarnation means to be bound to Christianity's origins, their particularity, and, in human terms, their contingency. Here is the guarantee that we are not chasing myths; that God really has acted in our history and taken our time into his hands. Only over the bridge of this "once for all" can we come into the "forever" of God's mercy. At the same time, we must take account of the full breadth of the symbol and of God's action in history. Voss has very beautifully pointed to the "autumnal" aspects of the Easter mystery, which deepen and broaden our understanding of the feast and give it a special profile appropriate to the Southern Hemisphere. Incidentally, the Scriptures and the liturgy offer their own suggestions for a transferral of the symbols. I have already pointed out that, in interpreting the Passion of Jesus, St. John's Gospel and the epistle to the Hebrews do not just refer to the feast of Passover, which is the Lord's "hour", in terms of date. No, they also interpret it in light of the ritual of the Day of Atonement celebrated on the tenth day of the seventh month (September-October). In the Passover of Jesus there is, so to speak, a coincidence of Easter (spring) and the Day of Atonement (autumn). Christ connects the world's spring and autumn. The autumn of declining time becomes a new beginning, while the spring, as the time of the Lord's death, now points to the end of time, to the autumn of the world, in which, according to the Fathers, Christ came among us.

The liturgical calendar used before the postconciliar reforms contained a strange transferral of the seasons, a use which, of course, had long eluded people's understanding and was interpreted in a much too superficial way. Depending on how late or early Easter fell, the time after Epiphany had to be shortened or lengthened. The Sundays left out after Epiphany had to be moved to the end of the Church's year. If one looks carefully at the readings then in use, one finds that the texts are largely taken up with the theme of sowing the seed, which is a metaphor for the seed of the Gospel to be scattered throughout the world. Now these texts and their respective Sundays can be accommodated just as well in the spring as in the autumn. Both seasons are seed-time. In the spring the farmer sows seed for autumn, in autumn for the coming year. Sowing seed always points to the future. It belongs to the waxing year but also to the waning year, for the waning year

also points to a new future. In both seasons the mystery of hope is at work and reaches its proper depth in the waning year, which leads beyond decline to a new beginning. It would be a great work of inculturation to develop this approach and to bring it into the common consciousness of Christians in the two hemispheres, southern and northern. The South could help the North to discover a new breadth and depth in the mystery, thus enabling us all to draw afresh on its richness.

Let us turn—albeit very briefly—to the second focal point of the Church’s year, the Christmas season, which developed somewhat later than the cycle that leads to and comes from Easter. Sunday, like the eastward stance for Christian prayer, is a primordial *datum* of Christianity. It had a fixed place from the beginning and shaped Christian existence so profoundly that St. Ignatius of Antioch said that we “no longer observe the Sabbath, but live in the observance of the Lord’s Day” (*Mag.* 9, 1). But already in the New Testament Christians look back from the Easter mystery to the Incarnation of Christ from the Virgin Mary. In the Gospel of St. John, which is the concluding synthesis of New Testament faith, the theology of the Incarnation stands on equal footing alongside the theology of Easter. Or rather the theology of the Incarnation and the theology of Easter do not simply stand alongside each other. No, these are the two inseparable focal points of the one faith in Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God and Redeemer. The Cross and Resurrection presuppose the Incarnation. It is only because the Son, and in him God himself, “came down from heaven” and “became incarnate from the Virgin Mary” that Jesus’ death and Resurrection are events that are contemporary with us all and touch us all, delivering us from a past marked by death and opening up the present and future. On the other hand, the Incarnation has as its goal the attainment by the “flesh”, by corruptible earthly existence, of an incorruptible form, in other words, an entry into Paschal transformation. Having been recognized as a focal point of faith in Christ, the Incarnation had to be given some expression in liturgical celebration, some place in the rhythm of sacred time. It is hard to say how far back the beginnings of the Christmas feast go. It assumed its definitive form in the third century. At about the same time the feast of the Epiphany emerged in the East on January 6 and the feast of Christmas in the West on December 25. The two feasts had different emphases because of the different religious and cultural contexts in which they arose, but essentially their meaning was the same: the celebration of the birth of Christ as the dawning

of the new light, the true sun, of history. The complicated and somewhat disputed details of the development of the two feasts need not detain us in this little book. Here I should simply like to indicate what seems to me to be helpful to understanding the two days. Astonishingly, the starting point for dating the birth of Christ was March 25. As far as I know, the most ancient reference to it is in the writings of the African ecclesiastical author Tertullian (c. 150-c. 207), who evidently assumes as a well-known tradition that Christ suffered death on March 25. In Gaul, right up to the sixth century, this was kept as the immovable date of Easter. In a work on the calculation of the date of Easter, written in A.D. 243, and also emanating from Africa, we find March 25 interpreted as the day of the world's creation, and, in connection with that, we find a very peculiar dating for the birth of Christ. According to the account of creation in Genesis 1, the sun was created on the fourth day, that is, on March 28. This day should, therefore, be regarded as the day of Christ's birth, as the rising of the true sun of history. This idea was altered during the third century, so that the day of Christ's Passion and the day of his conception were regarded as identical. On March 25 the Church honored both the Annunciation by the angel and the Lord's conception by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin. The feast of Christ's birth on December 25—nine months after March 25—developed in the West in the course of the third century, while the East—probably because of a difference of calendar—at first celebrated January 6 as the birthday of Christ. It may also have been the response to a feast of the birth of the mythical gods observed on this day in Alexandria. The claim used to be made that December 25 developed in opposition to the Mithras myth, or as a Christian response to the cult of the unconquered sun promoted by Roman emperors in the third century in their efforts to establish a new imperial religion. However, these old theories can no longer be sustained. The decisive factor was the connection of creation and Cross, of creation and Christ's conception. In the light of the "hour of Jesus", these dates brought the cosmos into the picture. The cosmos was now thought of as the pre-annunciation of Christ, the Firstborn of creation (cf. Col 1:15). It is he of whom creation speaks, and it is by him that its mute message is deciphered. The cosmos finds its true meaning in the Firstborn of creation, who has now entered history. From him comes the assurance that the adventure of creation, of a world with its own free existence distinct from God, does not end up in absurdity and tragedy but, throughout all its calamities and upheavals, remains something positive. God's blessing of the

seventh day is truly and definitively confirmed. The fact that the dates of the Lord's conception and birth originally had a cosmic significance means that Christians can take on the challenge of the sun cult and incorporate it positively into the theology of the Christmas feast. There are magnificent texts in the writings of the Fathers that express this synthesis. For example, St. Jerome in a Christmas sermon says this: "Even creation approves our preaching. The universe itself bears witness to the truth of our words. Up to this day the dark days increase, but from this day the darkness decreases. . . . The light advances, while the night retreats." Likewise, St. Augustine, preaching at Christmas to his flock in Hippo: "Brethren, let us rejoice. The heathen, too, may still make merry, for this day consecrates for us, not the visible sun, but the sun's invisible Creator." Again and again, the Fathers take up the verse about the sun that we have already quoted from Psalm 18(19). For the early Church, this became the real Christmas psalm: the sun, that is, Christ, is like a bridegroom coming forth from his chamber. An echo of the Marian mystery was also heard in this psalm, which was interpreted as a prophecy of Christ. Between the two dates of March 25 and December 25 comes the feast of the Forerunner, St. John the Baptist, on June 24, at the time of the summer solstice. The link between the dates can now be seen as a liturgical and cosmic expression of the Baptist's words: "He [Christ] must increase, but I must decrease" (Jn 3:30). The birthday of St. John the Baptist takes place on the date when the days begin to shorten, just as the birthday of Christ takes place when they begin again to lengthen. The fabric of this feast is of an entirely Christian weave, without direct precedent in the Old Testament. However, it stands in continuity with the synthesis of cosmos and history, of remembrance and hope, that was already characteristic of the Old Testament feasts and took on a new form in the Christian calendar. The close interweaving of incarnation and resurrection can be seen precisely in the relation, both proper and common, that each has to the rhythm of the sun and its symbolism.

I should like briefly to mention the feast of the Epiphany, celebrated on January 6, which is closely connected with Christmas. Let us leave on one side all the historical details and the many glorious patristic texts on the subject. Let us try to understand it very simply in the form that we have here in the West. It interprets the Incarnation of the Logos in terms of the ancient category of "epiphany", that is, of the self-revelation of God, the God who manifests himself to his creatures. In this perspective the feast links together

several different epiphanies: the adoration of the Magi as the beginning of the Church of the Gentiles, the procession of the nations to the God of Israel (cf. Is 60); the Baptism of Jesus in the Jordan, in which the voice from above publicly proclaims Jesus as the Son of God; and the wedding at Cana, where he reveals his glory. The narrative of the adoration of the Magi became important for Christian thought, because it shows the inner connection between the wisdom of the nations and the Word of promise in Scripture; because it shows how the language of the cosmos and the truth-seeking thought of man lead to Christ. The mysterious star could become the symbol for these connections and once again emphasize that the language of the cosmos and the language of the human heart trace their descent from the Word of the Father, who in Bethlehem came forth from the silence of God and assembled the fragments of our human knowledge into a complete whole.

The great feasts that structure the year of faith are feasts of Christ and precisely as such are ordered toward the one God who revealed himself to Moses in the burning bush and chose Israel as the confessor of faith in his uniqueness. In addition to the sun, which is the image of Christ, there is the moon, which has no light of its own but shines with a brightness that comes from the sun. This is a sign to us that we men are in constant need of a “little” light, whose hidden light helps us to know and love the light of the Creator, God one and triune. That is why the feasts of the saints from earliest times have formed part of the Christian year. We have already encountered Mary, whose person is so closely interwoven with the mystery of Christ that the development of the Christmas cycle inevitably introduced a Marian note into the Church’s year. The Marian dimension of the christological feasts was made visible. Then, in addition, come the commemorations of the apostles and martyrs and, finally, the memorials of the saints of every century. One might say that the saints are, so to speak, new Christian constellations, in which the richness of God’s goodness is reflected. Their light, coming from God, enables us to know better the interior richness of God’s great light, which we cannot comprehend in the refulgence of its glory.

PART THREE

ART AND LITURGY

The Question of Images

IN THE FIRST commandment of the Decalogue, which underscores the uniqueness of the God to whom alone adoration is due, we read this admonition: “You shall not make for yourself a graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth” (Ex 20:4; cf. Deut 5:8). There is a notable exception to this prohibition of images at the very center of the Old Testament, one that concerns the most sacred of places, the gold covering of the Ark of the Covenant, which was regarded as the place of expiation. “There I will meet with you”, says God to Moses, “I will speak with you of all that I will give you in commandment for the people of Israel” (Ex 25:22). With regard to the fashioning of the covering, Moses receives the following instructions: “And you shall make two cherubim of gold; of hammered work shall you make them, on the two ends of the mercy seat. . . . The cherubim shall spread out their wings above. . . . [T]heir faces [shall be turned] one to another; toward the mercy seat shall the faces of the cherubim be” (Ex 25:18-20). The mysterious beings that cover and protect the place of divine revelation can be represented, precisely to conceal the mystery of the presence of God himself. As we have already seen, St. Paul saw the crucified Christ as the true and living “place of expiation”, of whom the “mercy seat”, the *kapporeth* lost during the Exile, was but a foreshadowing. In him God has now, so to speak, lifted the veil from his face. The Eastern Church’s icon of the Resurrection of Christ takes up this link between the Ark of the Covenant and the Paschal Mystery of Christ when it shows Christ standing on cross-shaped slabs, which symbolize the grave but also suggest a reference to the *kapporeth* of the Old Covenant. Christ is flanked by the cherubim and approached by the women who came to the tomb to anoint him. The fundamental image of the Old Testament is retained, but it is reshaped in the light of the Resurrection and given a new center: the God who no longer completely conceals himself but now shows himself in the form of the Son. This transformation of the narrative of the Ark of the Covenant into an image

of the Resurrection reveals the very heart of the development from Old Testament to New. However, if we are to understand it correctly in its totality, we must follow the main lines of the development a little more closely.

The prohibition of images in Islam and in Judaism since about the third or fourth century A.D. has been interpreted in a radical way, so that only non-figurative, geometrical designs are permitted in the ornamentation of the sanctuary. However, in the Judaism at the time of Jesus and well into the third century, a much more generous interpretation of the image-question developed. Paradoxically, in the images of salvation we see exactly the same continuity between synagogue and church that we have already noticed in our discussion of liturgical space. As a result of archaeological discoveries, we now know that the ancient synagogues were richly decorated with representations of scenes from the Bible. They were by no means regarded as mere images of past events, as a kind of pictorial history lesson, but as a narrative (*haggadah*), which, while calling something to mind, makes it present. On liturgical feasts the deeds of God in the past are made present. The feasts are a participation in God's action in time, and the images themselves, as remembrance in visible form, are involved in the liturgical representation. The Christian images, as we find them in the catacombs, simply take up and develop the canon of images already established by the synagogue, while giving it a new modality of presence. The individual events are now ordered toward the Christian sacraments and to Christ himself. Noah's ark and the crossing of the Red Sea now point to Baptism. The sacrifice of Isaac and the meal of the three angels with Abraham speak of Christ's Sacrifice and the Eucharist. Shining through the rescue of the three young men from the fiery furnace and of Daniel from the lions' den we see Christ's Resurrection and our own. Still more than in the synagogue, the point of the images is not to tell a story about something in the past, but to incorporate the events of history into the sacrament. In past history Christ with his sacraments is on his way through the ages. We are taken into the events. The events themselves transcend the passing of time and become present in our midst through the sacramental action of the Church.

The centering of all history in Christ is both the liturgical transmission of that history and the expression of a new experience of time, in which past, present, and future make contact, because they have been inserted into the presence of the risen Lord. As we have seen already and now find confirmed

anew, liturgical presence contains eschatological hope within it. All sacred images are, without exception, in a certain sense images of the Resurrection, history read in the light of the Resurrection, and for that very reason they are images of hope, giving us the assurance of the world to come, of the final coming of Christ. However inferior the first images of the Christian tradition may often be in their artistic qualities, an extraordinary spiritual process has taken place in them, though one that is in close and deep unity with the iconography of the synagogue. The Resurrection sheds a new light on history. It is seen as a path of hope, into which the images draw us. Thus the images of the early Church have a thoroughly sacramental significance. They have the character of mysteries, going far beyond the didactic function of telling the stories of the Bible.

None of the early images attempts to give us anything like a portrait of Christ. Instead, Christ is shown in his significance, in “allegorical” images—for example, as the true philosopher instructing us in the art of living and dying. He appears as the great teacher, but above all in the form of the shepherd. The reason why this image, which is derived from Sacred Scripture, became so precious to early Christianity is that the shepherd was regarded as an allegory of the Logos. The Logos, through whom all things were made, who bears within himself, so to speak, the archetypes of all existing things, is the guardian of creation. In the Incarnation he takes the lost sheep, human nature, humanity as a whole, onto his shoulders and carries it home. The image of the shepherd thus sums up the whole of salvation history: God’s entry into history, the Incarnation, the pursuit of the lost sheep and the homeward path into the Church of the Jews and Gentiles.

One development of far-reaching importance in the history of the images of faith was the emergence for the first time of a so-called *acheiropoietos*, an image that has not been made by human hands and portrays the very face of Christ. Two of these images appeared in the East at about the same time in the middle of the sixth century. The first of these was the so-called *camulianum*, the imprint of the image of Christ on a woman’s gown. The second was the *mandylion*, as it was called later, which was brought from Edessa in Syria to Constantinople and is thought by many scholars today to be identical with the Shroud of Turin. In each case, as with the Turin Shroud, it must have been a question of a truly mysterious image, which no human artistry was capable of producing. In some inexplicable way, it appeared imprinted upon cloth and claimed to show the true face of Christ, the

crucified and risen Lord. The first appearance of this image must have provoked immense fascination. Now at last could the true face of the Lord, hitherto hidden, be seen and thus the promise be fulfilled: “He who has seen me has seen the Father” (Jn 14:9). The sight of the God-Man and, through him, of God himself seemed to have been opened up; the Greek longing for the vision of the Eternal seemed to be fulfilled. Thus the icon inevitably assumed in its form the status of a sacrament. It was regarded as bestowing a communion no less than that of the Eucharist. People began to think that there was virtually a kind of real presence of the Person imaged in the image. The image in this case, the image not made by human hands, was an image in the full sense, a participation in the reality concerned, the refulgence and thus the presence of the One who gives himself in the image. It is not hard to see why the images modelled on the *acheiropoietos* became the center of the whole canon of iconography, which meanwhile had made progress and was understood better in its wider implications.

Clearly, though, there was a danger lurking here: a false sacramentalizing of the image, which seemed to lead beyond the sacraments and their hiddenness into a direct vision of the divine presence. And so it is also clear that this new development was bound to lead to violent countermovements, to that radical rejection of the image that we call “iconoclasm”, the destruction of images. Iconoclasm derived its passion in part from truly religious motives, from the undeniable dangers of a kind of adoration of the image, but also from a cluster of political factors. It was important for the Byzantine emperors not to give any unnecessary provocation to Moslems and Jews. The suppression of images could be beneficial to the unity of the Empire and to relations with the Empire’s Moslem neighbors. And so the thesis was proposed that Christ must not be represented in an image. Only the sign of the Cross (without a *corpus*) could be, as it were, his seal. Cross or image—that was the choice. In the course of this struggle the true theology of icons matured and bequeathed us a message that has a profound relevance to us today in the iconographic crisis of the West.

The icon of Christ is the icon of the risen Lord. That truth, with all its implications, now dawned on the Christian mind. There is no *portrait* of the risen Lord. At first the disciples do not recognize him. They have to be led toward a new kind of seeing, in which their eyes are gradually opened from within to the point where they recognize him afresh and cry out: “It is the Lord!” Perhaps the most telling episode of all is that of the disciples on the

road to Emmaus. Their hearts are transformed, so that, through the outward events of Scripture, they can discern its inward center, from which everything comes and to which everything tends: the Cross and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. They then detain their mysterious companion and give him their hospitality, and at the breaking of bread they experience in reverse fashion what happened to Adam and Eve when they ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil: their eyes are opened. Now they no longer see just the externals but the reality that is not apparent to their senses yet shines through their senses: it is the Lord, now alive in a new way. In the icon it is not the facial features that count (though icons essentially adhere to the appearance of the *acheiropoietos*). No, what matters is the new kind of seeing. The icon is supposed to originate from an opening up of the inner senses, from a facilitation of sight that gets beyond the surface of the empirical and perceives Christ, as the later theology of icons puts it, in the light of Tabor. It thus leads the man who contemplates it to the point where, through the interior vision that the icon embodies, he beholds in the sensible that which, though above the sensible, has entered into the sphere of the senses. As Evdokimov says so beautifully, the icon requires a “fast from the eyes”. Icon painters, he says, must learn how to fast with their eyes and prepare themselves by a long path of prayerful asceticism. This is what marks the transition from art to sacred art (p. 188). The icon comes from prayer and leads to prayer. It delivers a man from that closure of the senses which perceives only the externals, the material surface of things, and is blind to the transparency of the spirit, the transparency of the Logos. At the most fundamental level, what we are dealing with here is nothing other than the transcendence of faith. The whole problem of knowledge in the modern world is present. If an interior opening-up does not occur in man that enables him to see more than what can be measured and weighed, to perceive the reflection of divine glory in creation, then God remains excluded from our field of vision. The icon, rightly understood, leads us away from false questions about portraits, portraits comprehensible at the level of the senses, and thus enables us to discern the face of Christ and, in him, of the Father. Thus in the icon we find the same spiritual orientations that we discovered previously when emphasizing the eastward direction of the liturgy. The icon is intended to draw us onto an inner path, the eastward path, toward the Christ who is to return. Its dynamism is identical with the dynamism of the liturgy as a whole. Its Christology is trinitarian. It is the Holy Spirit who

makes us capable of seeing, he whose work is always to move us toward Christ. “We have drunk deeply of the Spirit,” says St. Athanasius, “and we drink Christ” (Evdokimov, p. 204). This seeing, which teaches us to see Christ, not “according to the flesh”, but according to the Spirit (cf. 2 Cor 5:16), grants us also a glimpse of the Father himself.

Only when we have understood this interior orientation of the icon can we rightly understand why the Second Council of Nicaea and all the following councils concerned with icons regard it as a confession of faith in the Incarnation and iconoclasm as a denial of the Incarnation, as the summation of all heresies. The Incarnation means, in the first place, that the invisible God enters into the question of images in the visible world, so that we, who are bound to matter, can know him. In this sense, the way to the Incarnation was already being prepared in all that God said and did in history for man’s salvation. But this descent of God is intended to draw us into a movement of ascent. The Incarnation is aimed at man’s transformation through the Cross and to the new corporeality of the Resurrection. God seeks us where we are, not so that we stay there, but so that we may come to be where he is, so that we may get beyond ourselves. That is why to reduce the visible appearance of Christ to a “historical Jesus” belonging to the past misses the point of his visible appearance, misses the point of the Incarnation.

The senses are not to be discarded, but they should be expanded to their widest capacity. We see Christ rightly only when we say with Thomas: “My Lord and my God!” We have just established that the icon has a trinitarian scope, and now we must come to terms with its ontological proportions. The Son could only become incarnate as man because man was already planned in advance in relation to him, as the image of him who is in himself the image of God. As Evdokimov again says so strikingly, the light of the first day and the light of the eighth day meet in the icon. Present already in creation is the light that will shine with its full brightness on the eighth day in the Resurrection of the Lord and in the new world, the light that enables us to see the splendor of God. The Incarnation is rightly understood only when it is seen within the broad context of creation, history, and the new world. Only then does it become clear that the senses belong to faith, that the new seeing does not abolish them, but leads them to their original purpose. Iconoclasm rests ultimately on a one-sided apophatic theology, which recognizes only the Wholly Other-ness of the God beyond all images and words, a theology that in the final analysis regards revelation as the inadequate human reflection of

what is eternally imperceptible. But if this is the case, faith collapses. Our current form of sensibility, which can no longer apprehend the transparency of the spirit in the senses, almost inevitably brings with it a flight into a purely “negative” (apophatic) theology. God is beyond all thought, and therefore all propositions about him and every kind of image of God are in equal proportions valid and invalid. What seems like the highest humility toward God turns into pride, allowing God no word and permitting him no real entry into history. On the one hand, matter is absolutized and thought of as completely impervious to God, as mere matter, and thus deprived of its dignity. But, as Evdokimov says, there is also an apophatic Yes, not just an apophatic No, the denial of all likeness. Following Gregory Palamas, he emphasizes that in his essence God is radically transcendent, but in his existence he can be, and wants to be, represented as the Living One. God is the Wholly Other, but he is powerful enough to be able to show himself. And he has so fashioned his creature that it is capable of “seeing” him and loving him.

With these reflections we once again make contact with our own times and therefore also the development of liturgy, art, and faith in the Western world. Is this theology of the icon, as developed in the East, true? Is it valid for us? Or is it just a peculiarity of the Christian East? Let us start with the historical facts. In early Christian art, right up to the end of the Romanesque period, in other words up to the threshold of the thirteenth century, there is no *essential* difference between East and West with regard to the question of images. True, if we think of St. Augustine or St. Gregory the Great, the West emphasized, almost exclusively, the pedagogical function of the image. The so-called *Libri Carolini*, as well as the synods of Frankfurt (794) and Paris (824), came out against the poorly understood Seventh Ecumenical Council, Nicaea II, which canonized the defeat of iconoclasm and the rooting of the icon in the Incarnation. By contrast, the western synods insist on the purely educative role of the images: “Christ”, they said, “did not save us by paintings” (cf. Evdokimov, p. 167).

But the themes and fundamental orientation of iconography remained the same, even though now, in the Romanesque style, plastic art emerges, something that never had a foothold in the East. It is always the risen Christ, even on the Cross, to whom the community looks as the true *Oriens*. And art is always characterized by the unity of creation, Christology, and eschatology: the first day is on its way toward the eighth, which in turn takes

up the first. Art is still ordered to the mystery that becomes present in the liturgy. It is still oriented to the heavenly liturgy. The figures of the angels in Romanesque art are essentially no different from those in Byzantine painting. They show that we are joining with the cherubim and seraphim, with all the heavenly powers, in praise of the Lamb. In the liturgy the curtain between heaven and earth is torn open, and we are taken up into a liturgy that spans the whole cosmos.

With the emergence of Gothic, a change slowly takes place. Much remains the same, especially the fundamental inner correspondence between the Old Testament and the New, which for its part always has a reference to what is still to come. But the central image becomes different. The depiction is no longer of the *Pantocrator*, the Lord of all, leading us into the eighth day. It has been superseded by the image of the crucified Lord in the agony of his passion and death. The story is told of the historical events of the Passion, but the Resurrection is not made visible. The historical and narrative aspect of art comes to the fore. It has been said that the mysterical image has been replaced by the devotional image. Many factors may have been involved in this change of perspective. Evdokimov thinks that the turn from Platonism to Aristotelianism during the thirteenth century played a part. Platonism sees sensible things as shadows of the eternal archetypes. In the sensible we can and should know the archetypes and rise up through the former to the latter. Aristotelianism rejects the doctrine of Ideas. The thing, composed of matter and form, exists in its own right. Through abstraction I discern the species to which it belongs. In place of seeing, by which the super-sensible becomes visible in the sensible, comes abstraction. The relationship of the spiritual and the material has changed and with it man's attitude to reality as it appears to him. For Plato, the category of the beautiful had been definitive. The beautiful and the good, ultimately the beautiful and God, coincide. Through the appearance of the beautiful we are wounded in our innermost being, and that wound grips us and takes us beyond ourselves; it stirs longing into flight and moves us toward the truly Beautiful, to the Good in itself. Something of this Platonic foundation lives on in the theology of icons, even though the Platonic ideas of the beautiful and of vision have been transformed by the light of Tabor. Moreover, Plato's conception has been profoundly reshaped by the interconnection of creation, Christology, and eschatology, and the material order as such has been given a new dignity and a new value. This kind of Platonism, transformed as it is by the Incarnation, largely disappears

from the West after the thirteenth century, so that now the art of painting strives first and foremost to depict events that have taken place. Salvation history is seen less as a sacrament than as a narrative unfolded in time. Thus the relationship to the liturgy also changes. It is seen as a kind of symbolic reproduction of the event of the Cross. Piety responds by turning chiefly to meditation on the mysteries of the life of Jesus. Art finds its inspiration less in the liturgy than in popular piety, and popular piety is in turn nourished by the historical images in which it can contemplate the way to Christ, the way of Jesus himself and its continuation in the saints. The separation in iconography between East and West, which took place at the latest by the thirteenth century, doubtless goes very deep: very different themes, different spiritual paths, open up. A devotion to the Cross of a more historicizing kind replaces orientation to the *Oriens*, to the risen Lord who has gone ahead of us.

Nevertheless, we should not exaggerate the differences that developed. True, the depiction of Christ dying in pain on the Cross is something new, but it still depicts him who bore *our* pains, by whose stripes we are healed. In the extremes of pain it represents the redemptive love of God. Though Grünewald's altarpiece takes the realism of the Passion to a radical extreme, the fact remains that it was an image of consolation. It enabled the plague victims cared for by the Antonians to recognize that God identified with them in their fate, to see that he had descended into their suffering and that their suffering lay hidden in his. There is a decisive turn to what is human, historical, in Christ, but it is animated by a sense that these human afflictions of his belong to the mystery. The images are consoling, because they make visible the overcoming of our anguish in the incarnate God's sharing of our suffering, and so they bear within them the message of the Resurrection. These images, too, come from prayer, from interior meditation on the way of Christ. They are identifications with Christ, which are based in turn on God's identification with us in Christ. They open up the realism of the mystery without diverging from it. As for the Mass, as the making present of the Cross, do these images not enable us to understand that mystery with a new vividness? The mystery is unfolded in an extremity of concreteness, and popular piety is enabled thereby to reach the heart of the liturgy in a new way. These images, too, do not show just the "surface of the skin", the external sensible world; they, too, are intended to lead us through mere outward appearance and open our eyes to the heart of God. What we are

suggesting here about the images of the Cross applies also to all the rest of the “narrative” art of the Gothic style. What power of inward devotion lies in the images of the Mother of God! They manifest the new humanity of the faith. Such images are an invitation to prayer, because they are permeated with prayer from within. They show us the true image of man as planned by the Creator and renewed by Christ. They guide us into man’s authentic being. And finally, let us not forget the glorious art of Gothic stained glass! The windows of the Gothic cathedrals keep out the garishness of the light outside, while concentrating that light and using it so that the whole history of God in relation to man, from creation to the Second Coming, shines through. The walls of the church, in interplay with the sun, become an image in their own right, the iconostasis of the West, lending the place a sense of the sacred that can touch the hearts even of agnostics.

The Renaissance did something quite new. It “emancipated” man. Now we see the development of the “aesthetic” in the modern sense, the vision of a beauty that no longer points beyond itself but is content in the end with itself, the beauty of the appearing thing. Man experiences himself in his autonomy, in all his grandeur. Art speaks of this grandeur of man almost as if it were surprised by it; it needs no other beauty to seek. There is often scarcely a difference between the depictions of pagan myths and those of Christian history. The tragic burden of antiquity has been forgotten; only its divine beauty is seen. A nostalgia for the gods emerges, for myth, for a world without fear of sin and without the pain of the Cross, which had perhaps been too overpowering in the images of the late Middle Ages. True, Christian subjects are still being depicted, but such “religious art” is no longer sacred art in the proper sense. It does not enter into the humility of the sacraments and their time-transcending dynamism. It wants to enjoy today and to bring redemption through beauty itself. Perhaps the iconoclasm of the Reformation should be understood against this background, though doubtless its roots were extensive.

Baroque art, which follows the Renaissance, has many different aspects and modes of expression. In its best form it is based on the reform of the Church set in motion by the Council of Trent. In line with the tradition of the West, the Council again emphasized the didactic and pedagogical character of art, but, as a fresh start toward interior renewal, it led once more to a new kind of seeing that comes from and returns within. The altarpiece is like a window through which the world of God comes out to us. The curtain of

temporality is raised, and we are allowed a glimpse into the inner life of the world of God. This art is intended to insert us into the liturgy of heaven. Again and again, we experience a Baroque church as a unique kind of *fortissimo* of joy, an Alleluia in visual form. “The joy of the Lord is your strength” (Neh 10). These words from the Old Testament express the basic emotion that animates this iconography. The Enlightenment pushed faith into a kind of intellectual and even social ghetto. Contemporary culture turned away from the faith and trod another path, so that faith took flight in historicism, the copying of the past, or else attempted compromise or lost itself in resignation and cultural abstinence. The last of these led to a new iconoclasm, which has frequently been regarded as virtually mandated by the Second Vatican Council. The destruction of images, the first signs of which reach back to the 1920s, eliminated a lot of *kitsch* and unworthy art, but ultimately it left behind a void, the wretchedness of which we are now experiencing in a truly acute way.

Where do we go from here? Today we are experiencing, not just a crisis of sacred art, but a crisis of art in general of unprecedented proportions. The crisis of art for its part is a symptom of the crisis of man’s very existence. The immense growth in man’s mastery of the material world has left him blind to the questions of life’s meaning that transcend the material world. We might almost call it a blindness of the spirit. The questions of how we ought to live, how we can overcome death, whether existence has a purpose and what it is—to all these questions there is no longer a common answer. Positivism, formulated in the name of scientific seriousness, narrows the horizon to what is verifiable, to what can be proved by experiment; it renders the world opaque. True, it still contains mathematics, but the *logos* that is the presupposition of this mathematics and its applicability is no longer evident. Thus our world of images no longer surpasses the bounds of sense and appearance, and the flood of images that surrounds us really means the end of the image. If something cannot be photographed, it cannot be seen. In this situation, the art of the icon, sacred art, depending as it does on a wider kind of seeing, becomes impossible. What is more, art itself, which in impressionism and expressionism explored the extreme possibilities of the sense of sight, becomes literally object-less. Art turns into experimenting with self-created worlds, empty “creativity”, which no longer perceives the *Creator Spiritus*, the Creator Spirit. It attempts to take his place, and yet, in so doing, it manages to produce only what is arbitrary and vacuous, bringing

home to man the absurdity of his role as creator.

Again we must ask: Where do we go from here? Let us try to sum up what we have said so far and to identify the fundamental principles of an art ordered to divine worship.

1. The complete absence of images is incompatible with faith in the Incarnation of God. God has acted in history and entered into our sensible world, so that it may become transparent to him. Images of beauty, in which the mystery of the invisible God becomes visible, are an essential part of Christian worship. There will always be ups and downs in the history of iconography, upsurge and decline, and therefore periods when images are somewhat sparse. But they can never be totally lacking. Iconoclasm is not a Christian option.

2. Sacred art finds its subjects in the images of salvation history, beginning with creation and continuing all the way from the first day to the eighth day, the day of the resurrection and Second Coming, in which the line of human history will come full circle. The images of biblical history have pride of place in sacred art, but the latter also includes the history of the saints, which is an unfolding of the history of Jesus Christ, the fruit borne throughout history by the dead grain of wheat. "You are not struggling against icons", said St. John Damascene to the iconoclastic emperor Leo III, "but against the saints." In the same period, and with the same view in mind, Pope St. Gregory III instituted in Rome the feast of All Saints (cf. Evdokimov, p. 164).

3. The images of the history of God in relation to man do not merely illustrate the succession of past events but display the inner unity of God's action. In this way they have a reference to the sacraments, above all, to Baptism and the Eucharist, and, in pointing to the sacraments, they are contained within them. Images thus point to a presence; they are essentially connected with what happens in the liturgy. Now history becomes sacrament in Christ, who is the source of the Sacraments. Therefore, the icon of Christ is the center of sacred iconography. The center of the icon of Christ is the Paschal Mystery: Christ is presented as the Crucified, the risen Lord, the One who will come again and who here and now hiddenly reigns over all. Every image of Christ must contain these three essential aspects of the mystery of Christ and, in this sense, must be an image of Easter. At the same time, it goes without saying that different emphases are possible. The image may give more prominence to the Cross, the Passion, and in the Passion to the

anguish of our own life today, or again it may bring the Resurrection or the Second Coming to the fore. But whatever happens, one aspect can never be completely isolated from another, and in the different emphases the Paschal Mystery as a whole must be plainly evident. An image of the Crucifixion no longer transparent to Easter would be just as deficient as an Easter image forgetful of the wounds and the suffering of the present moment. And, centered as it is on the Paschal Mystery, the image of Christ is always an icon of the Eucharist, that is, it points to the sacramental presence of the Easter mystery.

4. The image of Christ and the images of the saints are not photographs. Their whole point is to lead us beyond what can be apprehended at the merely material level, to awaken new senses in us, and to teach us a new kind of seeing, which perceives the Invisible in the visible. The sacredness of the image consists precisely in the fact that it comes from an interior vision and thus leads us to such an interior vision. It must be a fruit of contemplation, of an encounter in faith with the new reality of the risen Christ, and so it leads us in turn into an interior gazing, an encounter in prayer with the Lord. The image is at the service of the liturgy. The prayer and contemplation in which the images are formed must, therefore, be a praying and seeing undertaken in communion with the seeing faith of the Church. The ecclesial dimension is essential to sacred art and thus has an essential connection with the history of the faith, with Scripture and Tradition.

5. The Church in the West does not need to disown the specific path she has followed since about the thirteenth century. But she must achieve a real reception of the Seventh Ecumenical Council, Nicaea II, which affirmed the fundamental importance and theological status of the image in the Church. The Western Church does not need to subject herself to all the individual norms concerning images that were developed at the councils and synods of the East, coming to some kind of conclusion in 1551 at the Council of Moscow, the Council of the Hundred Canons. Nevertheless, she should regard the fundamental lines of this theology of the image in the Church as normative for her. There must, of course, be no rigid norms. Freshly received intuitions and the ever-new experiences of piety must find a place in the Church. But still there is a difference between sacred art (which is related to the liturgy and belongs to the ecclesial sphere) and religious art in general. There cannot be completely free expression in sacred art. Forms of art that deny the *logos* of things and imprison man within what appears to the senses

are incompatible with the Church's understanding of the image. No sacred art can come from an isolated subjectivity. No, it presupposes that there is a subject who has been inwardly formed by the Church and opened up to the "we". Only thus does art make the Church's common faith visible and speak again to the believing heart. The freedom of art, which is also necessary in the more narrowly circumscribed realm of sacred art, is not a matter of do-as-you-please. It unfolds according to the measure indicated by the first four points in these concluding reflections, which are an attempt to sum up what is constant in the iconographic tradition of faith. Without faith there is no art commensurate with the liturgy. Sacred art stands beneath the imperative stated in the second epistle to the Corinthians. Gazing at the Lord, we are "changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit" (3:18).

But what does all this mean practically? Art cannot be "produced", as one contracts out and produces technical equipment. It is always a gift. Inspiration is not something one can choose for oneself. It has to be received, otherwise it is not there. One cannot bring about a renewal of art in faith by money or through commissions. Before all things it requires the gift of a new kind of seeing. And so it would be worth our while to regain a faith that sees. Wherever that exists, art finds its proper expression.

Chapter 2

Music and Liturgy

THE IMPORTANCE of music in biblical religion is shown very simply by the fact that the verb “to sing” (with related words such as “song”, and so forth) is one of the most commonly used words in the Bible. It occurs 309 times in the Old Testament and thirty-six in the New. When man comes into contact with God, mere speech is not enough. Areas of his existence are awakened that spontaneously turn into song. Indeed, man’s own being is insufficient for what he has to express, and so he invites the whole of creation to become a song with him: “Awake, my soul! Awake, O harp and lyre! I will awake the dawn! I will give thanks to you, O Lord, among the peoples; I will sing praises to you among the nations. For your steadfast love is great to the heavens, your faithfulness to the clouds” (Ps 57:8f.). We find the first mention of singing in the Bible after the crossing of the Red Sea. Israel has now been definitively delivered from slavery. In a desperate situation, it has had an overwhelming experience of God’s saving power. Just as Moses as a baby was taken from the Nile and only then really received the gift of life, so Israel now feels as if it has been, so to speak, taken out of the water: it is free, newly endowed with the gift of itself from God’s own hands. In the biblical account, the people’s reaction to the foundational event of salvation is described in this sentence: “[T]hey believed in the Lord and in his servant Moses” (Ex 14:31). But then follows a second reaction, which soars up from the first with elemental force: “Then Moses and the people of Israel sang this song to the Lord” (15:1). Year by year, at the Easter Vigil, Christians join in the singing of this song. They sing it in a new way as their song, because they know that they have been “taken out of the water” by God’s power, set free by God for authentic life. The Apocalypse of St. John draws the bow back even farther. The final enemies of the People of God have stepped onto the stage of history: the satanic trinity, consisting of the beast, its image, and the number of its name. Everything seems lost for the holy Israel of God in the face of such overwhelming odds. But then the Seer is given the vision of the conquerors, “standing beside the sea of glass with harps of God in their

hands. And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb” (Rev 15:3). The paradox now becomes even more powerful. It is not the gigantic beasts of prey, with their power over the media and their technical strength, who win the victory. No, it is the sacrificed Lamb that conquers. And so once again, definitively, there resounds the song of God’s servant Moses, which has now become the song of the Lamb.

Liturgical singing is established in the midst of this great historical tension. For Israel, the event of salvation in the Red Sea will always be the main reason for praising God, the basic theme of the songs it sings before God. For Christians, the Resurrection of Christ is the true Exodus. He has stridden through the Red Sea of death itself, descended into the world of shadows, and smashed open the prison door. In Baptism this Exodus is made ever present. To be baptized is to be made a partaker, a contemporary, of Christ’s descent into hell and of his rising up therefrom, in which he takes us up into the fellowship of new life. On the very next day after the joy of the Exodus, the Israelites had to accept that they were now exposed to the wilderness and its terrors, and even entry into the Promised Land did not put a stop to the threats to their life. But there were also the mighty deeds of God, which were new every day. These were cause for singing Moses’ song anew and proved that God is not a God of the past, but of the present and future. Of course, while singing the song, they realized it was only provisional, and so they longed for the definitive new song, for the salvation that would no longer be followed by a moment of anguish but would be a song only of praise. The man who believes in the Resurrection of Christ really does know what definitive salvation is. He realizes that Christians, who find themselves in the “New Covenant”, now sing an altogether new song, which is truly and definitively new in view of the wholly new thing that has taken place in the Resurrection of Christ. What we discovered in the first part about the “in-between” state of Christian reality (no longer a shadow, but still not full reality, only an “image”) applies again here. The definitively new song has been intoned, but still all the sufferings of history must be endured, all pain gathered in and brought into the sacrifice of praise, in order to be transformed there into a song of praise.

Here, then, is the theological basis for liturgical singing. We need now to look more closely at its practical reality. In addition to the various witnesses that are found throughout Scripture to the singing of the individual and of the community, as well as to the music of the Temple, the book of Psalms is the

proper source for us to rely on here. Because it lacks musical notation, we are unable to reconstruct the “sacred music” of Israel, but it does give us an idea of the richness of both the instruments and the different kinds of singing used in Israel. In their prayed poetry, the Psalms display the whole range of human experiences, which become prayer and song in the presence of God. Lamentation, complaint, indeed accusation, fear, hope, trust, gratitude, joy—the whole of human life is reflected here, as it is unfolded in dialogue with God. It is striking that even complaints made in desperate affliction almost always end with words of trust, with an anticipation, as it were, of God’s saving act. In a certain sense, one might describe all these “new songs” as variations on the song of Moses. Singing before God rises up, on the one hand, out of an affliction from which no earthly power can save man—his only refuge is God. But at the same time it emerges out of a trust that, even in utter darkness, knows that the crossing of the Red Sea is a promise that will have the last word in life and in history. Finally, it is important to say that the Psalms frequently come from very personal experiences of suffering and answered prayer, and yet they always flow into the common prayer of Israel. They are nourished out of the common store of God’s saving deeds in the past.

With regard to the singing of the Church, we notice the same pattern of continuity and renewal that we have seen in the nature of the liturgy in general, in church architecture, and in sacred images. Quite spontaneously, the Psalter becomes the prayer book of the infant Church, which, with equal spontaneity, has become a Church that sings her prayers. That applies first of all to the Psalter, which Christians, of course, now pray together with Christ. In its canon of Scripture, Israel had ascribed most of the Psalms to King David and had given them a definite interpretation in terms of theology and the history of salvation. For Christians, it is clear that Christ is the true David, that David in the Holy Spirit prays through and with the One who is to be his Son and who is the only begotten Son of God. With this new key, Christians entered into the prayer of Israel and came to realize that, precisely through them, that prayer was to become the new song. The Holy Spirit, who had inspired David to sing and to pray, moves him to speak of Christ, indeed causes him to become the very mouth of Christ, thus enabling us in the Psalms to speak through Christ, in the Holy Spirit, to the Father. Now this exegesis of the Psalms, at once christological and pneumatological, not only concerns the text but also includes the element of music. It is the Holy Spirit

who teaches us to sing—first David and then, through him, Israel and the Church. Yes, singing, the surpassing of ordinary speech, is a “pneumatic” event. Church music comes into being as a “charism”, a gift of the Spirit. It is the true *glossolalia*, the new tongue that comes from the Holy Spirit. It is above all in Church music that the “sober inebriation” of faith takes place—an inebriation surpassing all the possibilities of mere rationality. But this intoxication remains sober, because Christ and the Holy Spirit belong together, because this drunken speech stays totally within the discipline of the Logos, in a new rationality that, beyond all words, serves the primordial Word, the ground of all reason. This is a matter to which we must return.

We have already seen how in the Apocalypse the horizon is widened by the confession of faith in Christ: the song of the conquerors is described as the song of God’s servant Moses and of the Lamb. Now this opens up a further dimension of singing before God. In Israel’s Bible we have so far discovered two principal motivations of this singing before God: affliction and joy, distress and deliverance. Man’s relationship with God was doubtless too strongly marked by reverential fear of the Creator’s eternal might for anyone to dare to see these songs to God as love songs. Ultimately, love lies hidden in the trust that deeply marks all these texts, but the love remains diffident, precisely hidden. The alliance of love and song came into the Old Testament in a rather curious way, namely, through the acceptance of the Song of Songs. This was a collection of thoroughly human love songs, but almost certainly its acceptance involved a far deeper interpretation. These very beautiful love poems of Israel could be seen as the inspired words of Sacred Scripture because of the conviction that, in this serenading of human love, the mystery of the love of God and Israel shines through. The prophets described the worship of foreign gods as harlotry, a term that in this case has an exact meaning, because fertility rites and temple prostitution were part of the fertility cults. Conversely, the election of Israel now appears as the love story of God and his people. The covenant is expounded through the analogy of betrothal and marriage, as the binding of God’s love to man and of man to God. Thus human love was able to serve as a profoundly real analogy for God’s action in Israel. Jesus took up this line in Israel’s tradition and presented himself, in an early parable, as the Bridegroom. When asked why his disciples, unlike John’s and the Pharisees, did not fast, he replied: “Can the wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. The days will come, when

the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in that day” (Mk 2:19f.). This is a prophecy of the Passion but also an announcement of the marriage that constantly appears in Jesus’ parables of the wedding banquet and that, in the Apocalypse, the last book of the New Testament, becomes the central theme. Everything moves through the Passion toward the wedding of the Lamb. Since, in the visions of the heavenly liturgy, that wedding seems always to be already anticipated, Christians came to see the Eucharist as the presence of the Bridegroom and thus as a foretaste of the wedding feast of God. In the Eucharist a communion takes place that corresponds to the union of man and woman in marriage. Just as they become “one flesh”, so in Communion we all become “one spirit”, one person, with Christ. The spousal mystery, announced in the Old Testament, of the intimate union of God and man takes place in the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ, precisely through his Passion and in a very real way (cf. Eph 5:29-32; 1 Cor 6:17; Gal 3:28). The singing of the Church comes ultimately out of love. It is the utter depth of love that produces the singing. “*Cantare amantis est*”, says St. Augustine, singing is a lover’s thing. In so saying, we come again to the trinitarian interpretation of Church music. The Holy Spirit is love, and it is he who produces the singing. He is the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit who draws us into love for Christ and so leads to the Father.

We must turn once more from these inner driving forces of liturgical music to more practical questions. The expression used in the Psalms for “singing” has its etymological roots in the common stock of ancient oriental languages and denotes an instrumentally supported singing, the instruments probably being stringed. The singing was clearly related to a text and always, with regard to content, directed to a particular statement. It presumably involved a kind of speech-song that allowed changes of note in the melody only at the beginning and end. The Greek Bible translated the Hebrew *zamir* by the word *psallein*, which in Greek meant “to pluck” (especially in the sense of a stringed instrument) but now became the word for the special kind of instrumental playing used in Jewish worship and later described the singing of Christians. Several times there is an additional expression, the meaning of which is obscure, but in any case it refers in some way to ordered artistic singing. Thus, in the musical sphere, biblical faith created its own form of culture, an expression appropriate to its inward essence, one that provides a standard for all later forms of inculturation.

The question of how far inculturation can go soon became a very practical

one for early Christianity, especially in the area of music. The Christian communities had grown out of the synagogue and, along with the christologically interpreted Psalter, had also taken over the synagogue's way of singing. Very soon new Christian hymns and canticles came into being: first, with a wholly Old Testament foundation, the Benedictus and Magnificat, but then christologically focused texts, preeminently the prologue of St. John's Gospel (1:1-18), the hymn of Christ in the epistle to the Philippians (2:6-11), and the song of Christ in the first epistle to Timothy (3:16). In his first epistle to the Corinthians, St. Paul provides us with some very interesting information about the order of service in early Christian liturgy: "When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification" (14:26). Through the Roman author Pliny, who informed the emperor about the religious services of the Christians, we know that, at the beginning of the second century A.D., singing to the glory of Christ in his divinity was at the very heart of Christian liturgy. One can well imagine that, with these new Christian texts, came a more varied use of the singing than hitherto and the composition of new melodies. It would seem that one of the ways in which Christian faith was developed was precisely in the writing of canticles, which arose at this time in the Church as "gifts of the Spirit". Herein lay hope but also danger. As the Church was uprooted from her Semitic soil and moved into the Greek world, a spontaneous and far-reaching fusion took place with Greek *logos* mysticism, with its poetry and music, that eventually threatened to dissolve Christianity into a generalized mysticism. It was precisely hymns and their music that provided the point of entry for Gnosticism, that deadly temptation which began to subvert Christianity from within. And so it is understandable that, in their struggle for the identity of the faith and its rooting in the historical figure of Jesus Christ, the Church authorities resorted to a radical decision. The fifty-ninth canon of the Council of Laodicea forbids the use of privately composed psalms and non-canonical writings in divine worship. The fifteenth canon restricts the singing of psalms to the choir of psalm-singers, while "other people in church should not sing." That is how post-biblical hymns were almost entirely lost. There was a rigorous return to the restrained, purely vocal style of singing taken over from the synagogue. We may regret the cultural impoverishment this entailed, but it was necessary for the sake of a greater good. A return to apparent cultural poverty saved the identity of biblical faith, and the very rejection of false

inculturation opened up the cultural breadth of Christianity for the future.

When we look at the history of liturgical music, we can see extensive parallels with the evolution of the image question. The East, at least in the Byzantine world, kept to purely vocal music. True, among the Slavs, probably under Western influence, it has been extended into polyphony. The male-voice choirs of this tradition, through their sacral dignity and restrained power, touch the heart and make the Eucharist a true feast of faith. In the West, in the form of Gregorian chant, the inherited tradition of psalm-singing was developed to a new sublimity and purity, which set a permanent standard for sacred music, music for the liturgy of the Church. Polyphony developed in the late Middle Ages, and then instruments came back into divine worship—quite rightly, too, because, as we have seen, the Church not only continues the synagogue, but also takes up, in the light of Christ's Pasch, the reality represented by the Temple. Two new factors are thus at work in Church music. Artistic freedom increasingly asserts its rights, even in the liturgy. Church music and secular music are now each influenced by the other. This is particularly clear in the case of the so-called "parody Masses", in which the text of the Mass was set to a theme or melody that came from secular music, with the result that anyone hearing it might think he was listening to the latest "hit". It is clear that these opportunities for artistic creativity and the adoption of secular tunes brought danger with them. Music was no longer developing out of prayer, but, with the new demand for artistic autonomy, was now heading away from the liturgy; it was becoming an end in itself, opening the door to new, very different ways of feeling and of experiencing the world. Music was alienating the liturgy from its true nature.

At this point the Council of Trent intervened in the culture war that had broken out. It was made a norm that liturgical music should be at the service of the Word; the use of instruments was substantially reduced; and the difference between secular and sacred music was clearly affirmed. At the beginning of the last century, Pope St. Pius X made a similar intervention. The age of the Baroque, albeit in different forms in the Catholic and Protestant worlds, achieved an astounding unity of secular music-making with the music of the liturgy. It succeeded in dedicating the whole luminous power of music, which reached such a high point in this period of cultural history, to the glorifying of God. Whether it is Bach or Mozart that we hear in church, we have a sense in either case of what *gloria Dei*, the glory of God, means. The mystery of infinite beauty is there and enables us to experience

the presence of God more truly and vividly than in many sermons. But there are already signs of danger to come. Subjective experience and passion are still held in check by the order of the musical universe, reflecting as it does the order of the divine creation itself. But there is already the threat of invasion by the virtuoso mentality, the vanity of technique, which is no longer the servant of the whole but wants to push itself to the fore. During the nineteenth century, the century of self-emancipating subjectivity, this led in many places to the obscuring of the sacred by the operatic. The dangers that had forced the Council of Trent to intervene were back again. In similar fashion, Pope Pius X tried to remove the operatic element from the liturgy and declared Gregorian chant and the great polyphony of the age of the Catholic Reformation (of which Palestrina was the outstanding representative) to be the standard for liturgical music. A clear distinction was made between liturgical music and religious music in general, just as visual art in the liturgy has to conform to different standards from those employed in religious art in general. Art in the liturgy has a very specific responsibility, and precisely as such does it serve as a wellspring of culture, which in the final analysis owes its existence to cult.

After the cultural revolution of recent decades, we are faced with a challenge no less great than that of the three moments of crisis that we have encountered in our historical sketch: the Gnostic temptation, the crisis at the end of the Middle Ages and the beginning of modernity, and the crisis at the beginning of the twentieth century, which formed the prelude to the still more radical questions of the present day. Three developments in recent music epitomize the problems that the Church has to face when she is considering liturgical music. First of all, there is the cultural universalization that the Church has to undertake if she wants to get beyond the boundaries of the European mind. This is the question of what inculturation should look like in the realm of sacred music if, on the one hand, the identity of Christianity is to be preserved and, on the other, its universality is to be expressed in local forms. Then there are two developments in music itself that have their origins primarily in the West but that for a long time have affected the whole of mankind in the world culture that is being formed. Modern so-called “classical” music has maneuvered itself, with some exceptions, into an elitist ghetto, which only specialists may enter—and even they do so with what may sometimes be mixed feelings. The music of the masses has broken loose from this and treads a very different path. On the one hand, there is pop music,

which is certainly no longer supported by the people in the ancient sense (*populus*). It is aimed at the phenomenon of the masses, is industrially produced, and ultimately has to be described as a cult of the banal. “Rock”, on the other hand, is the expression of elemental passions, and at rock festivals it assumes a cultic character, a form of worship, in fact, in opposition to Christian worship. People are, so to speak, released from themselves by the experience of being part of a crowd and by the emotional shock of rhythm, noise, and special lighting effects. However, in the ecstasy of having all their defenses torn down, the participants sink, as it were, beneath the elemental force of the universe. The music of the Holy Spirit’s sober inebriation seems to have little chance when self has become a prison, the mind is a shackle, and breaking out from both appears as a true promise of redemption that can be tasted at least for a few moments.

What is to be done? Theoretical solutions are perhaps even less helpful here. There has to be renewal from within. Nevertheless, by way of conclusion, I am going to try to sum up the principles that have emerged from our look at the inner foundations of Christian sacred music.

The music of Christian worship is related to *logos* in three senses:

1. It is related to the events of God’s saving action to which the Bible bears witness and which the liturgy makes present. God’s action continues in the history of the Church, but it has its unshakeable center in the Paschal Mystery of Jesus Christ, his Cross, Resurrection, and Ascension. This takes up, interprets, and brings to fulfillment the history of salvation in the Old Testament as well as the hopes and experiences of deliverance in the religious history of mankind. In liturgical music, based as it is on biblical faith, there is, therefore, a clear dominance of the Word; this music is a higher form of proclamation. Ultimately, it rises up out of the love that responds to God’s love made flesh in Christ, the love that for us went unto death. After the Resurrection, the Cross is by no means a thing of the past, and so this love is always marked by pain at the hiddenness of God, by the cry that rises up from the depths of anguish, *Kyrie eleison*, by hope and by supplication. But it also has the privilege, by anticipation, of experiencing the reality of the Resurrection, and so it brings with it the joy of being loved, that gladness of heart that Haydn said came upon him when he set liturgical texts to music. Thus the relation of liturgical music to *logos* means, first of all, simply its relation to words. That is why singing in the liturgy has priority over instrumental music, though it does not in any way exclude it. It goes without

saying that the biblical and liturgical texts are the normative words from which liturgical music has to take its bearings. This does not rule out the continuing creation of “new songs”, but instead inspires them and assures them of a firm grounding in God’s love for mankind and his work of redemption.

2. St. Paul tells us that of ourselves we do not know how to pray as we ought but that the Spirit himself intercedes for us “with sighs too deep for words” (Rom 8:26). Prayer is a gift of the Holy Spirit, both prayer in general and that particular kind of prayer which is the gift of singing and playing before God. The Holy Spirit is love. He enkindles love in us and thus moves us to sing. Now the Spirit of Christ “takes what is [Christ’s]” (cf. Jn 16:14), and so the gift that comes from him, the gift that surpasses all words, is always related to Christ, *the Word*, the great Meaning that creates and sustains all life. Words are superseded, but not the Word, the Logos. This is the second, deeper sense in which liturgical music is related to *logos*. The Church’s Tradition has this in mind when it talks about the sober inebriation caused in us by the Holy Spirit. There is always an ultimate sobriety, a deeper rationality, resisting any decline into irrationality and immoderation. We can see what this means in practice if we look at the history of music. The writings of Plato and Aristotle on music show that the Greek world in their time was faced with a choice between two kinds of worship, two different images of God and man. Now what this choice came down to concretely was a choice between two fundamental types of music. On the one hand, there is the music that Plato ascribes, in line with mythology, to Apollo, the god of light and reason. This is the music that draws senses into spirit and so brings man to wholeness. It does not abolish the senses, but inserts them into the unity of this creature that is man. It elevates the spirit precisely by wedding it to the senses, and it elevates the senses by uniting them with the spirit. Thus this kind of music is an expression of man’s special place in the general structure of being. But then there is the music that Plato ascribes to Marsyas, which we might describe, in terms of cultic history, as “Dionysian”. It drags man into the intoxication of the senses, crushes rationality, and subjects the spirit to the senses. The way Plato (and more moderately, Aristotle) allots instruments and keys to one or other of these two kinds of music is now obsolete and may in many respects surprise us. But the Apollonian/Dionysian alternative runs through the whole history of religion and confronts us again today. Not every kind of music can have a place in Christian worship. It has

its standards, and that standard is the Logos. If we want to know whom we are dealing with, the Holy Spirit or the unholy spirit, we have to remember that it is the Holy Spirit who moves us to say, “Jesus is Lord” (1 Cor 12:3). The Holy Spirit leads us to the Logos, and he leads us to a music that serves the Logos as a sign of the *sursum corda*, the lifting up of the human heart. Does it integrate man by drawing him to what is above, or does it cause his disintegration into formless intoxication or mere sensuality? That is the criterion for a music in harmony with *logos*, a form of that *logikē latreia* (reason-able, *logos*-worthy worship) of which we spoke in the first part of this book.

3. The Word incarnate in Christ, the Logos, is not just the power that gives meaning to the individual, not even just the power that gives meaning to history. No, he is the creative Meaning from which the universe comes and which the universe, the cosmos, reflects. That is why this Word leads us out of individualism into the communion of saints spanning all times and places. This is the “broad place” (Ps 31:8), the redemptive breadth into which the Lord places us. But its span stretches still farther. As we have seen, Christian liturgy is always a cosmic liturgy. What does this mean for our question? The Preface, the first part of the Eucharistic Prayer, always ends with the affirmation that we are singing “Holy, Holy, Holy” together with the cherubim and seraphim and with all the choirs of heaven. The liturgy is echoing here the vision of God in Isaiah chapter 6. In the Holy of Holies in the Temple, the prophet sees the throne of God, protected by the seraphim, who call to one another: “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory” (Is 6:1-3). In the celebration of Holy Mass, we insert ourselves into this liturgy that always goes before us. All our singing is a singing and praying with the great liturgy that spans the whole of creation.

Among the Fathers, it was especially St. Augustine who tried to connect this characteristic view of the Christian liturgy with the world view of Greco-Roman antiquity. In his early work “On Music” he is still completely dependent on the Pythagorean theory of music. According to Pythagoras, the cosmos was constructed mathematically, a great edifice of numbers. Modern physics, beginning with Kepler, Galileo, and Newton, has gone back to this vision and, through the mathematical interpretation of the universe, has made possible the technological use of its powers. For the Pythagoreans, this mathematical order of the universe (“cosmos” means “order”!) was identical with the essence of beauty itself. Beauty comes from meaningful inner order.

And for them this beauty was not only optical but also musical. Goethe alludes to this idea when he speaks of the singing contest of the fraternity of the spheres: the mathematical order of the planets and their revolutions contains a secret timbre, which is the primal form of music. The courses of the revolving planets are like melodies, the numerical order is the rhythm, and the concurrence of the individual courses is the harmony. The music made by man must, according to this view, be taken from the inner music and order of the universe, be inserted into the “fraternal song” of the “fraternity of the spheres”. The beauty of music depends on its conformity to the rhythmic and harmonic laws of the universe. The more that human music adapts itself to the musical laws of the universe, the more beautiful will it be.

St. Augustine first took up this theory and then deepened it. In the course of history, transplanting it into the world view of faith was bound to bring with it a twofold personalization. Even the Pythagoreans did not interpret the mathematics of the universe in an entirely abstract way. In the view of the ancients, intelligent actions presupposed an intelligence that caused them. The intelligent, mathematical movements of the heavenly bodies was not explained, therefore, in a purely mechanical way; they could only be understood on the assumption that the heavenly bodies were animated, were themselves “intelligent”. For Christians, there was a spontaneous turn at this point from stellar deities to the choirs of angels that surround God and illuminate the universe. Perceiving the “music of the cosmos” thus becomes listening to the song of the angels, and the reference to Isaiah chapter 6 naturally suggests itself. But a further step was taken with the help of trinitarian faith, faith in the Father, the Logos, and the Pneuma. The mathematics of the universe does not exist by itself, nor, as people now came to see, can it be explained by stellar deities. It has a deeper foundation: the mind of the Creator. It comes from the Logos, in whom, so to speak, the archetypes of the world’s order are contained. The Logos, through the Spirit, fashions the material world according to these archetypes. In virtue of his work in creation, the Logos is, therefore, called the “art of God” (*ars = technē!*). The Logos himself is the great artist, in whom all works of art—the beauty of the universe—have their origin. To sing with the universe means, then, to follow the track of the Logos and to come close to him. All true human art is an assimilation to *the* artist, to Christ, to the mind of the Creator. The idea of the music of the cosmos, of singing with the angels, leads back again to the relation of art to *logos*, but now it is broadened and deepened in

the context of the cosmos. Yes, it is the cosmic context that gives art in the liturgy both its measure and its scope. A merely subjective “creativity” is no match for the vast compass of the cosmos and for the message of its beauty. When a man conforms to the measure of the universe, his freedom is not diminished but expanded to a new horizon.

One final point follows from this. The cosmic interpretation remained alive, with some variations, well into the early modern age. Only in the nineteenth century is there a move away from it, because “metaphysics” seemed so outdated. Hegel now tried to interpret music as just an expression of the subject and of subjectivity. But whereas Hegel still adhered to the fundamental idea of reason as the starting point and destination of the whole enterprise, a change of direction took place with Schopenhauer that was to have momentous consequences. For him, the world is no longer grounded in reason but in “will and idea” (*Wille und Vorstellung*). The will precedes reason. And music is the primordial expression of being human as such, the pure expression of the will—anterior to reason—that creates the world. Music should not, therefore, be subjected to the word, and only in exceptional cases should it have any connection with the word. Since music is pure will, its origin precedes that of reason. It takes us back behind reason to the actual foundation of reality. It is reminiscent of Goethe’s recasting of the prologue of St. John: no longer “In the beginning was the Word”, but now “In the beginning was the Deed.” In our own times this continues in the attempt to replace “orthodoxy” by “orthopraxy”—there is no common faith any more (because truth is unattainable), only common praxis. By contrast, for Christian faith, as Guardini shows so penetratingly in his masterly early work, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, *logos* has precedence over *ethos*. When this is reversed, Christianity is turned upside down. The cosmic character of liturgical music stands in opposition to the two tendencies of the modern age that we have described: music as pure subjectivity, music as the expression of mere will. We sing with the angels. But this cosmic character is grounded ultimately in the ordering of all Christian worship to *logos*.

Let us have one last brief look at our own times. The dissolution of the subject, which coincides for us today with radical forms of subjectivism, has led to “deconstructionism”—the anarchistic theory of art. Perhaps this will help us to overcome the unbounded inflation of subjectivity and to recognize once more that a relationship with the Logos, who was at the beginning, brings salvation to the subject, that is, to the person. At the same time it puts

us into a true relationship of communion that is ultimately grounded in trinitarian love.

As we have seen in both chapters of this part of the book, the problems of the present day pose without doubt a grave challenge to the Church and the culture of the liturgy. Nevertheless, there is no reason at all to be discouraged. The great cultural tradition of the faith is home to a presence of immense power. What in museums is only a monument from the past, an occasion for mere nostalgic admiration, is constantly made present in the liturgy in all its freshness. But the present day, too, is not condemned to silence where the faith is concerned. Anyone who looks carefully will see that, even in our own time, important works of art, inspired by faith, have been produced and are being produced—in visual art as well as in music (and indeed literature). Today, too, joy in the Lord and contact with his presence in the liturgy has an inexhaustible power of inspiration. The artists who take this task upon themselves need not regard themselves as the rearguard of culture. They are weary of the empty freedom from which they have emerged. Humble submission to what goes before us releases authentic freedom and leads us to the true summit of our vocation as human beings.

PART FOUR
LITURGICAL FORM

Chapter 1

Rite

FOR MANY PEOPLE today, the word “rite” does not have a very good ring to it. “Rite” suggests rigidity, a restriction to prescribed forms. It is set in opposition to that creativity and dynamism of inculturation by which, so people say, we get a really living liturgy, in which each community can express itself. Before going into the questions raised here, we must first of all see what rite in the Church really means, what rites there are, and how they relate to one another. In the second century, the Roman jurist Pomponius Festus, who was not a Christian, defined *ritus* as an “approved practice in the administration of sacrifice” (*mos comprobatus in administrandis sacrificiis*). He thereby summed up in a precise formula one of the great realities in the history of religion. Man is always looking for the right way of honoring God, for a form of prayer and common worship that pleases God and is appropriate to his nature. In this connection, we must remember that originally the word “orthodoxy” did not mean, as we generally think today, right doctrine. In Greek, the word *doxa* means, on the one hand, opinion or splendor. But then in Christian usage it means something on the order of “true splendor”, that is, the glory of God. Orthodoxy means, therefore, the right way to glorify God, the right form of adoration. In this sense, orthodoxy is inward “orthopraxy”. If we go back to the word’s origins, the modern opposition disappears. It is not a question of theories about God but of the right way to encounter him. This, then, was seen as Christian faith’s great gift: we know what right worship is. We know how we should truly glorify God—by praying and living in communion with the Paschal journey of Jesus Christ, by accomplishing with him his *Eucharistia*, in which Incarnation leads to Resurrection—along the way of the Cross. To adapt a saying of Kant, liturgy “covers everything” from the Incarnation to the Resurrection, but only on the way of the Cross. For Christians, then, “rite” means the practical arrangements made by the community, in time and space, for the basic type of worship received from God in faith. And, of course, as we saw in the first part, worship always includes the whole conduct of one’s life. Thus rite has

its primary place in the liturgy, but not only in the liturgy. It is also expressed in a particular way of doing theology, in the form of spiritual life, and in the juridical ordering of ecclesiastical life.

At this point we must try, as we have just indicated, to get at least a brief overview of the major rites that have left their stamp on the Church. What rites are there? Where do they come from? These are questions that in their details present a multitude of problems, which we cannot discuss here. If we want to get an overview of the whole, then the sixth canon of the First Council of Nicaea may be a helpful starting point. It speaks of three primatial sees: Rome, Alexandria, and Antioch. The fact that all three sees are connected with Petrine traditions need not concern us here. At any rate, all three are points of crystallization in the liturgical tradition. We should also realize that since the fourth century (soon after Nicaea) Byzantium emerged as an additional regulatory center of ecclesiastical, and thus also of liturgical, life. After the transfer of imperial rule to the Bosphorus, Byzantium regarded itself as the “New Rome” and assumed the prerogatives of Rome. But it also increased its influence through the waning importance of Antioch, and indeed the functions of Antioch to a large extent passed over to Byzantium. Thus we may speak of four great circles of liturgical tradition. At the beginning, the relations of Rome and Alexandria were comparatively close, while Byzantium and Antioch were nearer to each other.

Without going into details outside the scope of this book, we must become a little more specific. Antioch was bound to be a center of liturgical tradition. It was here that Gentile Christianity came into being and the name “Christian” was first used (cf. Acts 11:26). It was the capital of Syria and therefore of the cultural and linguistic world in which divine revelation took place. Syria was also the setting for the great theological debates about how rightly to confess faith in Christ, and so it is not surprising that such a culturally dynamic area should become the birthplace of distinctive traditions in the liturgy. On the one hand, there are the West Syrian rites, prominent among which is the Syro-Malankar rite, which still flourishes in India and goes back to the Apostle James. The Maronite rite should also be assigned to the West Syrian family. On the other hand, there are the so-called Chaldean rites (also called East Syrian or “Assyrian”). Their starting point is to be found in the great theological schools of Nisibis and Edessa. These rites were characterized by an extraordinary missionary zeal and spread as far as India, Central Asia, and China. In the early Middle Ages there were about seventy

million of the faithful in this ritual family, which suffered irretrievable losses through Islam and the Mongol invasions. At any rate, the Syro-Malabar Church still continues to exist in India. The Chaldean liturgical family goes back to the Apostle Thomas and to Addai and Mari, disciples of the Apostles. There is no doubt that it has preserved very ancient traditions, and the tradition that the Apostle Thomas was a missionary in India definitely has to be taken seriously at the historical level.

The great ecclesiastical sphere of Alexandria includes above all the Coptic and Ethiopian rites. The Liturgy of St. Mark, which developed in Alexandria, bears the marks of strong Byzantine influence, to which we shall return. In a category and with a significance all its own is the Armenian rite, which Tradition traces back to the Apostles Bartholomew and Thaddeus. St. Gregory the Illuminator (260-323) is to be regarded as its special Father. In its form it largely follows the Byzantine liturgy.

And so we come finally to the two greatest families of rites: the Byzantine and the Roman. As we saw, Byzantium takes up, first and foremost, the tradition of Antioch. The Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom carries the Antiochene heritage to Byzantium, but the influences of Asia Minor and Jerusalem are also taken up, so that there is a confluence here of the rich inheritance of the lands evangelized by the apostles. A large part of the Slavic world adopted the Byzantine liturgy and, by this means, entered into communion of prayer with the Fathers and the apostles. In the West three great ritual groups can at first be discerned. Alongside the Roman liturgy, which was very similar to the Latin liturgy of Africa, stood the old Gaulish or "Gallican" liturgy, to which in turn the Celtic was closely related, as was the old Spanish or "Mozarabic" liturgy. All three ritual domains were at first very similar to one another, but, in contrast to the conservatism of Rome, which in liturgical matters was rather archaic and sober, Spain and Gaul opened themselves to Eastern influences and assimilated them in their own distinctive way. By comparison with the strict brevity of Rome, the Gallican liturgy is characterized by poetic exuberance. From about the end of the first millennium, Rome began to appropriate the Gallican heritage, and the Gallican rite, in its proper grandeur, disappeared, though precious elements of it lived on in the Roman rite. Only with the liturgical reform after the Second Vatican Council, with its concern to restore the Roman tradition in its purity, did the Gallican inheritance more or less completely disappear. For the first time a radical standardization of the liturgy had been carried out, though in

the previous century the surviving rites proper to particular places and religious orders had increasingly been disappearing. Meanwhile, of course, what began as a process of making everything uniform has swung to the opposite extreme: a widespread dissolution of the rite, which must now be replaced by the “creativity” of the community.

Before exploring the fundamental question that this once more raises, the question of the meaning and validity of rite, we must draw some conclusions from our perhaps rather tedious sketch of the existing ritual landscape. First, it is important that the individual rites have a relation to the places where Christianity originated and the apostles preached: they are anchored in the time and place of the event of divine revelation. Here again “once for all” and “always” belong together. The Christian faith can never be separated from the soil of sacred events, from the choice made by God, who wanted to speak to us, to become man, to die and rise again, in a particular place and at a particular time. “Always” can only come from “once for all”. The Church does not pray in some kind of mythical omnitemporality. She cannot forsake her roots. She recognizes the true utterance of God precisely in the concreteness of its history, in time and place: to these God ties us, and by these we are all tied together. The diachronic aspect, praying with the Fathers and the apostles, is part of what we mean by rite, but it also includes a local aspect, extending from Jerusalem to Antioch, Rome, Alexandria, and Constantinople. Rites are not, therefore, just the products of inculturation, however much they may have incorporated elements from different cultures. They are forms of the apostolic Tradition and of its unfolding in the great places of the Tradition.

We must add a second point. Rites are not rigidly fenced off from each other. There is exchange and crossfertilization between them. The clearest example is in the case of the two great focal points of ritual development: Byzantium and Rome. In their present form, most of the Eastern rites are very strongly marked by Byzantine influences. For its part, Rome has increasingly united the different rites of the West in the universal Roman rite. While Byzantium gave a large part of the Slavic world its special form of divine worship, Rome left its liturgical imprint on the Germanic and Latin peoples and on a part of the Slavs. In the first millennium there was still liturgical exchange between East and West. Then, of course, the rites hardened into their definitive forms, which allowed hardly any crossfertilization. What is important is that the great forms of rite embrace many cultures. They not only

incorporate the diachronic aspect, but also create communion among different cultures and languages. They elude control by any individual, local community, or regional Church. Unspontaneity is of their essence. In these rites I discover that something is approaching me here that I did not produce myself, that I am entering into something greater than myself, which ultimately derives from divine revelation. That is why the Christian East calls the liturgy the “Divine Liturgy”, expressing thereby the liturgy’s independence from human control. The West, by contrast, has felt ever more strongly the historical element, which is why Jungmann tried to sum up the Western view in the phrase “the liturgy that has come to be”. He wanted to show that this coming-to-be still goes on—as an organic growth, not as a specially contrived production. The liturgy can be compared, therefore, not to a piece of technical equipment, something manufactured, but to a plant, something organic that grows and whose laws of growth determine the possibilities of further development. In the West there was, of course, another factor. With his Petrine authority, the pope more and more clearly took over responsibility for liturgical legislation, thus providing a juridical authority for the continuing formation of the liturgy. The more vigorously the primacy was displayed, the more the question came up about the extent and limits of this authority, which, of course, as such had never been considered. After the Second Vatican Council, the impression arose that the pope really could do anything in liturgical matters, especially if he were acting on the mandate of an ecumenical council. Eventually, the idea of the givenness of the liturgy, the fact that one cannot do with it what one will, faded from the public consciousness of the West. In fact, the First Vatican Council had in no way defined the pope as an absolute monarch. On the contrary, it presented him as the guarantor of obedience to the revealed Word. The pope’s authority is bound to the Tradition of faith, and that also applies to the liturgy. It is not “manufactured” by the authorities. Even the pope can only be a humble servant of its lawful development and abiding integrity and identity. Here again, as with the questions of icons and sacred music, we come up against the special path trod by the West as opposed to the East. And here again is it true that this special path, which finds space for freedom and historical development, must not be condemned wholesale. However, it would lead to the breaking up of the foundations of Christian identity if the fundamental intuitions of the East, which are the fundamental intuitions of the early Church, were abandoned. The authority of the pope is not unlimited; it is at

the service of Sacred Tradition. Still less is any kind of general “freedom” of manufacture, degenerating into spontaneous improvisation, compatible with the essence of faith and liturgy. The greatness of the liturgy depends—we shall have to repeat this frequently—on its unspontaneity (*Unbeliebigkeit*).

Let us ask the question again: “What does ‘rite’ mean in the context of Christian liturgy?” The answer is: “It is the expression, that has become form, of ecclesiality and of the Church’s identity as a historically transcendent communion of liturgical prayer and action.” Rite makes concrete the liturgy’s bond with that living subject which is the Church, who for her part is characterized by adherence to the form of faith that has developed in the apostolic Tradition. This bond with the subject that is the Church allows for different patterns of liturgy and includes living development, but it equally excludes spontaneous improvisation. This applies to the individual and the community, to the hierarchy and the laity. Because of the historical character of God’s action, the “Divine Liturgy” (as they call it in the East) has been fashioned, in a way similar to Scripture, by human beings and their capacities. But it contains an essential exposition of the biblical legacy that goes beyond the limits of the individual rites, and thus it shares in the authority of the Church’s faith in its fundamental form. The authority of the liturgy can certainly be compared to that of the great confessions of faith of the early Church. Like these, it developed under the guidance of the Holy Spirit (cf. Jn 16:13). It was the tragedy of Luther’s efforts at reform that they occurred at a time when the essential form of the liturgy was not understood and had to a large extent been obscured. Despite the radicalism of his reversion to the principle of “Scripture alone”, Luther did not contest the validity of the ancient Christian creeds and thereby left behind an inner tension that became the fundamental problem in the history of the Reformation. The Reformation would surely have run a different course if Luther had been able to see the analogous binding force of the great liturgical tradition and its understanding of sacrificial presence and of man’s participation in the vicarious action of the Logos. With the radicalization of the historical-critical method, it has become very clear today that the *sola scriptura* principle cannot provide a foundation for the Church and the commonality of her faith. Scripture is Scripture only when it lives within the living subject that is the Church. This makes it all the more absurd that a not insignificant number of people today are trying to construct the liturgy afresh on the basis of *sola scriptura*. In these reconstructions they identify Scripture

with the prevailing exegetical opinions, thus confusing faith with opinion. Liturgy “manufactured” in this way is based on human words and opinions. It is a house built on sand and remains totally empty, however much human artistry may adorn it. Only respect for the liturgy’s fundamental unspontaneity and pre-existing identity can give us what we hope for: the feast in which the great reality comes to us that we ourselves do not manufacture but receive as a gift.

This means that “creativity” cannot be an authentic category for matters liturgical. In any case, this is a word that developed within the Marxist world view. Creativity means that in a universe that in itself is meaningless and came into existence through blind evolution, man can creatively fashion a new and better world. Modern theories of art think in terms of a nihilistic kind of creativity. Art is not meant to copy anything. Artistic creativity is under the free mastery of man, without being bound by norms or goals and subject to no questions of meaning. It may be that in such visions a cry for freedom is to be heard, a cry that in a world totally in the control of technology becomes a cry for help. Seen in this way, art appears as the final refuge of freedom. True, art has something to do with freedom, but freedom understood in the way we have been describing is empty. It is not redemptive, but makes despair sound like the last word of human existence. This kind of creativity has no place within the liturgy. The life of the liturgy does not come from what dawns upon the minds of individuals and planning groups. On the contrary, it is God’s descent upon our world, the source of real liberation. He alone can open the door to freedom. The more priests and faithful humbly surrender themselves to this descent of God, the more “new” the liturgy will constantly be, and the more true and personal it becomes. Yes, the liturgy becomes personal, true, and new, not through tomfoolery and banal experiments with the words, but through a courageous entry into the great reality that through the rite is always ahead of us and can never quite be overtaken.

Does it still need to be explicitly stated that all this has nothing to do with rigidity? Whereas, for Moslems, the Koran is God’s speech, pure and simple, without any human mediation, Christians know that God has spoken through man and that the human and historical factor is, therefore, part of the way God acts. That, too, is why the Word of the Bible becomes complete only in that responsive word of the Church which we call Tradition. That is why the accounts of the Last Supper in the Bible become a concrete reality only when

they are appropriated by the Church in her celebration. That is why there can be development in the “Divine Liturgy”, a development, though, that takes place without haste or aggressive intervention, like the grain that grows “of itself” in the earth (cf. Mk 4:28). We saw above that each of the various ritual families grew out of the “apostolic sees”, the central places of the apostolic Tradition, and that this connection with apostolic origins is essential to what defines them. From this it follows that there can be no question of creating totally new rites. However, there can be variations within the ritual families. The Christian West, in particular, well into modern times, saw such variations taking place within the general framework of a fundamental ritual form. An example of this kind of development seems to me to be the Missal that may be used in Zaire (the Congo). It is the Roman rite “in the Zairean mode”. It still belongs within the great fellowship of the apostolically rooted Roman rite, but that rite is now, so to speak, clad in Congolese garments, with the addition—this seems to me to make perfect sense—of certain elements from the Christian East. For example, in line with what is said in Matthew 5:23-25, the sign of peace is exchanged, not before Communion, but before the Presentation of the Gifts, which would be desirable for the whole of the Roman rite, insofar as the sign of peace is something we want to retain.

The Body and the Liturgy

1. “Active Participation”

TO EXPRESS one of its main ideas for the shaping of the liturgy, the Second Vatican Council gave us the phrase *participatio actuosa*, the “active participation” of everyone in the *opus Dei*, in what happens in the worship of God. It was quite right to do so. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* points out that the word “liturgy” speaks to us of a common service and thus has a reference to the whole holy People of God (cf. CCC 1069). But what does this active participation come down to? What does it mean that we have to do? Unfortunately, the word was very quickly misunderstood to mean something external, entailing a need for general activity, as if as many people as possible, as often as possible, should be visibly engaged in action. However, the word “participation” refers to a principal action in which everyone has a “part”. And so if we want to discover the kind of doing that active participation involves, we need, first of all, to determine what this central *actio* is in which all the members of the community are supposed to participate. The study of the liturgical sources provides an answer that at first may surprise us, though, in the light of the biblical foundations considered in the first part, it is quite self-evident. By the *actio* of the liturgy the sources mean the Eucharistic Prayer. The real liturgical action, the true liturgical act, is the *oratio*, the great prayer that forms the core of the Eucharistic celebration, the whole of which was, therefore, called *oratio* by the Fathers. At first, simply in terms of the form of the liturgy, this was quite correct, because the essence of the Christian liturgy is to be found in the *oratio*; this is its center and fundamental form. Calling the Eucharist *oratio* was, then, a quite standard response to the pagans and to questioning intellectuals in general. What the Fathers were saying was this: The sacrificial animals and all those things that you had and have, and which ultimately satisfy no one, are now abolished. In their place has come the Sacrifice of the Word. We are the spiritual religion, in which in truth a Word-based worship takes place.

Goats and cattle are no longer slaughtered. Instead, the Word, summing up our existence, is addressed to God and identified with *the* Word, the Word of God, who draws us into true worship. Perhaps it would be useful to note here that the word *oratio* originally means, not “prayer” (for which the word is *prex*), but solemn public speech. Such speech now attains its supreme dignity through its being addressed to God in full awareness that it comes from him and is made possible by him.

But this is only just a hint of the central issue. This *oratio*—the Eucharistic Prayer, the “Canon”—is really more than speech; it is *actio* in the highest sense of the word. For what happens in it is that the human *actio* (as performed hitherto by the priests in the various religions of the world) steps back and makes way for the *actio divina*, the action of God. In this *oratio* the priest speaks with the I of the Lord—“This is my Body”, “This is my Blood.” He knows that he is not now speaking from his own resources but in virtue of the Sacrament that he has received, he has become the voice of Someone Else, who is now speaking and acting. This action of God, which takes place through human speech, is the real “action” for which all of creation is in expectation. The elements of the earth are transubstantiated, pulled, so to speak, from their creaturely anchorage, grasped at the deepest ground of their being, and changed into the Body and Blood of the Lord. The New Heaven and the New Earth are anticipated. The real “action” in the liturgy in which we are all supposed to participate is the action of God himself. This is what is new and distinctive about the Christian liturgy: God himself acts and does what is essential. He inaugurates the new creation, makes himself accessible to us, so that, through the things of the earth, through our gifts, we can communicate with him in a personal way. But how can we participate, have a part, in this action? Are not God and man completely incommensurable? Can man, the finite and sinful one, cooperate with God, the Infinite and Holy One? Yes, he can, precisely because God himself has become man, become body, and here, again and again, he comes through his body to us who live in the body. The whole event of the Incarnation, Cross, Resurrection, and Second Coming is present as the way by which God draws man into cooperation with himself. As we have seen, this is expressed in the liturgy in the fact that the petition for acceptance is part of the *oratio*. True, the Sacrifice of the Logos is accepted already and forever. But we must still pray for it to become *our* sacrifice, that we ourselves, as we said, may be transformed into the Logos (*logisiert*), conformed to the Logos, and so be

made the true Body of Christ. That is the issue, and that is what we have to pray for. This petition itself is a way into the Incarnation and the Resurrection, the path that we take in the wayfaring state of our existence. In this real “action”, in this prayerful approach to participation, there is no difference between priests and laity. True, addressing the *oratio* to the Lord in the name of the Church and, at its core, speaking with the very “I” of Jesus Christ—that is something that can be done only through sacramental empowerment. But participation in that which no human being does, that which the Lord himself and only he can do—that is equally for everyone. In the words of St. Paul, it is a question of being “united to the Lord” and thus becoming “one spirit with him” (1 Cor 6:17). The point is that, ultimately, the difference between the *actio Christi* and our own action is done away with. There is only *one* action, which is at the same time his and ours—ours because we have become “one body and one spirit” with him. The uniqueness of the Eucharistic liturgy lies precisely in the fact that God himself is acting and that we are drawn into that action of God. Everything else is, therefore, secondary.

Of course, external actions—reading, singing, the bringing up of the gifts—can be distributed in a sensible way. By the same token, participation in the Liturgy of the Word (reading, singing) is to be distinguished from the sacramental celebration proper. We should be clearly aware that external actions are quite secondary here. *Doing* really must stop when we come to the heart of the matter: the *oratio*. It must be plainly evident that the *oratio* is the heart of the matter, but that it is important precisely because it provides a space for the *actio* of God. Anyone who grasps this will easily see that it is not now a matter of looking at or toward the priest, but of looking together toward the Lord and going out to meet him. The almost theatrical entrance of different players into the liturgy, which is so common today, especially during the Preparation of the Gifts, quite simply misses the point. If the various external actions (as a matter of fact, there are not very many of them, though they are being artificially multiplied) become the essential in the liturgy, if the liturgy degenerates into general activity, then we have radically misunderstood the “theo-drama” of the liturgy and lapsed almost into parody. True liturgical education cannot consist in learning and experimenting with external activities. Instead one must be led toward the essential *actio* that makes the liturgy what it is, toward the transforming power of God, who wants, through what happens in the liturgy, to transform us and the world. In

this respect, liturgical education today, of both priests and laity, is deficient to a deplorable extent. Much remains to be done here.

At this point the reader will perhaps ask: “What about the body? With this idea of a word-based sacrifice (*oratio*), have you not shifted everything over to the spiritual side?” That charge might have applied to the pre-Christian idea of a *logos*-liturgy, but it cannot be true of the liturgy of the Word incarnate, who offers himself to us in his Body and Blood, and thus in a corporeal way. It is, of course, the new corporeality of the risen Lord, but it remains true corporeality, and it is this that we are given in the material signs of bread and wine. This means that we are laid hold of by the Logos and for the Logos in our very bodies, in the bodily existence of our everyday life. The true liturgical action is the deed of God, and for that very reason the liturgy of faith always reaches beyond the cultic act into everyday life, which must itself become “liturgical”, a service for the transformation of the world. Much more is required of the body than carrying objects around and other such activities. A demand is made on the body in all its involvement in the circumstances of everyday life. The body is required to become “capable of resurrection”, to orient itself toward the resurrection, toward the Kingdom of God, in a word: “Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven.” Where God’s will is done, there is heaven, there earth becomes heaven. Surrendering ourselves to the action of God, so that we in our turn may cooperate with him—that is what begins in the liturgy and is meant to unfold further beyond it. Incarnation must always lead through Cross (the transforming of our wills in a communion of will with God) to Resurrection—to that rule of love which is the Kingdom of God. The body must be trained, so to speak, for the resurrection. Let us remember incidentally that the unfashionable word *askēsis* can be simply translated into English as “training”. Nowadays we train with enthusiasm, perseverance, and great renunciation for many different purposes—why do we not train ourselves for God and his Kingdom? “I train my body”, says St. Paul, “and subdue it” (1 Cor 9:27, RSV adapted). He also uses the discipline of athletes as an image for training in one’s own life. This training is an essential part of everyday life, but it has to find its inner support in the liturgy, in the liturgy’s “orientation” toward the risen Christ. Let me say once again: it is a way of learning to accept the other in his otherness, a training for love, a training to help us accept the Wholly Other, God, to be shaped and used by him. The body has a place within the divine worship of the Word made flesh, and it is expressed liturgically in a

certain discipline of the body, in gestures that have developed out of the liturgy's inner demands and that make the essence of the liturgy, as it were, bodily visible. These gestures may vary in their details from culture to culture, but in their essential forms they are part of that culture of faith which has grown out of Christian cult. They form, therefore, a common language that crosses the borders of the different cultures. Let us have a closer look at them.

2. *The Sign of the Cross*

The most basic Christian gesture in prayer is and always will be the sign of the Cross. It is a way of confessing Christ crucified with one's very body, in accordance with the programmatic words of St. Paul: "[W]e preach Christ Crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God" (1 Cor 1:23f.). Again he says: "I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified" (2:2). To seal oneself with the sign of the Cross is a visible and public Yes to him who suffered for us; to him who in the body has made God's love visible, even to the utmost; to the God who reigns not by destruction but by the humility of suffering and love, which is stronger than all the power of the world and wiser than all the calculating intelligence of men. The sign of the Cross is a confession of faith: I believe in him who suffered for me and rose again; in him who has transformed the sign of shame into a sign of hope and of the love of God that is present with us. The confession of faith is a confession of hope: I believe in him who in his weakness is the Almighty; in him who can and will save me even in apparent absence and impotence. By signing ourselves with the Cross, we place ourselves under the protection of the Cross, hold it in front of us like a shield that will guard us in all the distress of daily life and give us the courage to go on. We accept it as a signpost that we follow: "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me" (Mk 8:34). The Cross shows us the road of life—the imitation of Christ.

We connect the sign of the Cross with confession of faith in the triune God—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. In this way it becomes a remembrance of Baptism, which is particularly clear when we use holy water with it. The Cross is a sign of the Passion, but at the same time it is a sign of

the Resurrection. It is, so to speak, the saving staff that God holds out to us, the bridge by which we can pass over the abyss of death, and all the threats of the Evil One, and reach God. It is made present in Baptism, in which we become contemporary with Christ's Cross and Resurrection (cf. Rom 6:1-14). Whenever we make the sign of the Cross, we accept our Baptism anew; Christ from the Cross draws us, so to speak, to himself (cf. Jn 12:32) and thus into communion with the living God. For Baptism and the sign of the Cross, which is a kind of summing up and re-acceptance of Baptism, are above all a divine event: the Holy Spirit leads us to Christ, and Christ opens the door to the Father. God is no longer the "unknown god"; he has a name. We are allowed to call upon him, and he calls us.

Thus we can say that in the sign of the Cross, together with the invocation of the Trinity, the whole essence of Christianity is summed up; it displays what is distinctively Christian. Nevertheless, or rather for this very reason, it also opens the way into the wider history of religion and the divine message of creation. In 1873, on the Mount of Olives, Greek and Hebrew grave inscriptions bearing the sign of a cross were discovered from the time of Jesus. The excavators inevitably assumed that they were dealing with Christians of the earliest times. In about 1945 increasing numbers of Jewish graves with the sign of the cross were being discovered and assigned to more or less the first century after Christ. The discoveries no longer left room for the view that these were first-generation Christians. On the contrary, it had to be recognized that signs of the cross were established in the Jewish *milieu*. How are we to make sense of this? The key is to be found in Ezekiel 9:4f. In the vision described there, God says to his linen-clad messenger, who carries the writing case at his side: "Go through the city, through Jerusalem, and put a mark [*Tav*] upon the foreheads of the men who sigh and groan over all the abominations that are committed in it." In the terrible catastrophe now imminent, those who do not connive in the sin of the world yet suffer from it for the sake of God, suffering impotently yet at a distance from sin, are sealed with the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet, the *Tav*, which was written in the form of a cross (T or + or X). The *Tav*, which as a matter of fact had the form of a cross, becomes the seal of God's ownership. It corresponds to man's longing for God, his suffering for the sake of God, and so places him under God's special protection. E. Dinkier was able to show that cultic stigmatization—on the hands or forehead—was occasionally practiced in the Old Testament and that this custom was also well known in New Testament

times. In the New Testament, Revelation 7:1-8 takes up the basic idea in Ezekiel's vision. The discoveries of the graves, in conjunction with the texts of the time, prove that in certain circles within Judaism the *Tav* was a widespread sacred sign—a sign of confession of faith in the God of Israel and at the same time a sign of hope in his protection. Dinkier summarizes his findings by saying that, in the cross-shaped *Tav*, “a whole confession of faith is summed up in *one* sign.” “The realities believed in and hoped for”, he says, “are read into a visible image, but the image is more than a mere reflection; it is in fact an image in whose saving power one places one's hopes” (p. 24). As far as we know, Christians did not at first take up this Jewish symbol of the cross, but they found the sign of the Cross from within their faith and were able to see in it the summing up of their whole faith. But was Ezekiel's vision of the salvific *Tav*, with the whole tradition built upon it, not bound to appear to Christians later as a glimpse of the One who was to come? Was the meaning of this mysterious sign not now “unveiled” (cf. 2 Cor 3:18)? Did it not now become clear to whom this sign belonged, from whom it derived its power? Could they fail to see in all this a prophecy of the Cross of Jesus Christ, who has transformed the *Tav* into the power of salvation?

The Fathers belonging to the Greek cultural world were more directly affected by another discovery. In the writings of Plato, they found the remarkable idea of a cross inscribed upon the cosmos (cf. *Timaeus* 34ab and 36bc). Plato took this from the Pythagorean tradition, which in its turn had a connection with the traditions of the ancient East. First, there is an astronomical statement about the two great movements of the stars with which ancient astronomy was familiar: the ecliptic (the great circle in the heavens along which the sun appears to run its course) and the orbit of the earth. These two intersect and form together the Greek letter *Chi*, which is written in the form of a cross (like an X). The sign of the cross is inscribed upon the whole cosmos. Plato, again following more ancient traditions, connected this with the image of the deity: the Demiurge (the fashioner of the world) “stretched out” the world soul “throughout the whole universe”. (St. Justin Martyr d. c. 165), the Palestinian-born first philosopher among the Fathers, came across this Platonic text and did not hesitate to link it with the doctrine of the triune God and his action in salvation history in the person of Jesus Christ. He sees the idea of the Demiurge and the world soul as premonitions of the mystery of the Father and the Son—premonitions that are in need of correction and yet also capable of correction. What Plato says

about the world soul seems to him to refer to the coming of the Logos, the Son of God. And so he can now say that the shape of the cross is the greatest symbol of the lordship of the Logos, without which nothing in creation holds together (cf. *I Apol.* 55). The Cross of Golgotha is foreshadowed in the structure of the universe itself. The instrument of torment on which the Lord died is written into the structure of the universe. The cosmos speaks to us of the Cross, and the Cross solves for us the enigma of the cosmos. It is the real key to all reality. History and cosmos belong together. When we open our eyes, we can read the message of Christ in the language of the universe, and conversely, Christ grants us understanding of the message of creation.

From Justin onward, this “prophecy of the Cross” in Plato, together with the connection of cosmos and history that it reveals, was one of the fundamental ideas in patristic theology. It must have been an overwhelming discovery for the Fathers to find that the philosopher who summed up and interpreted the most ancient traditions had spoken of the cross as a seal imprinted on the universe. St. Irenaeus of Lyons (d. c. 200), the real founder of systematic theology in its Catholic form, says in his work of apologetics, the *Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching*, that the Crucified One is “the very Word of Almighty God, who penetrates our universe by an invisible presence. And for this reason he embraces the whole world, its breadth and length, its height and depth, for through the Word of God all things are guided into order. And the Son of God is crucified in them, since, in the form of the Cross, he is imprinted upon all things” (1, 3). This text of the great Father of the Church conceals a biblical quotation that is of great importance for the biblical theology of the Cross. The epistle to the Ephesians exhorts us to be rooted and grounded in love, so that, together with all the saints, we “may have power to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge” (3:18f). There can be little doubt that this epistle emanating from the school of St. Paul is referring to the cosmic Cross and thereby taking up traditions about the cross-shaped tree of the world that holds everything together—a religious idea that was also well known in India. St. Augustine has a wonderful interpretation of this important passage from St. Paul. He sees it as representing the dimensions of human life and as referring to the form of the crucified Christ, whose arms embrace the world and whose path reaches down into the abyss of the underworld and up to the very height of God himself (cf. *De doctrina Christiana* 2, 41, 62; *Corpus Christianorum* 32,

75f.). Hugo Rahner has assembled the most beautiful patristic texts relevant to the cosmic mystery of the Cross. I should like to add only two more. In Lactantius (d. c. 325) we read: “In his Passion God spread out his arms and thus embraced the globe as a sign that a future people, from the rising of the sun to its setting, would gather under his wings” (81). An unknown Greek author of the fourth century, contrasting the Cross with the cult of the sun, says that *Helios* (the sun) has now been conquered by the Cross. “Behold, man, whom the created sun in the heavens could not instruct, is now irradiated by the sunlight of the Cross and (in Baptism) enlightened.” Then the anonymous author takes up some words of St. Ignatius of Antioch (d. c. 110), who described the Cross as the cosmic hoist (*mēchanē*) for going up to heaven, and says: “O what truly divine wisdom is this! O Cross, thou hoist to heaven! The Cross was driven into the ground—and behold, idol worship was destroyed. No ordinary wood is this, but the wood that God used for victory” (87f).

In his eschatological discourse, Jesus had announced that at the end of time “the sign of the Son of man” would appear in heaven (Mt 24:30). The eye of faith was now able to recognize that this sign had been inscribed into the cosmos from the beginning and thus see faith in the crucified Redeemer confirmed by the cosmos. At the same time, Christians thus realized that the paths of religious history converged on Christ, that their expectations, expressed in many different images, led to him. Conversely, this meant that philosophy and religion gave faith the images and concepts in which alone it could fully understand itself.

“[Y]ou will be a blessing”, God had said to Abraham at the beginning of salvation history (Gen 12:2). In Christ, the Son of Abraham, these words are completely fulfilled. He is a blessing, and he is a blessing for the whole of creation as well as for all men. Thus the Cross, which is his sign in heaven and on earth, was destined to become the characteristic gesture of blessing for Christians. We make the sign of the Cross on ourselves and thus enter the power of the blessing of Jesus Christ. We make the sign over people to whom we wish a blessing; and we also make it over things that are part of our life and that we want, as it were, to receive anew from the hand of Jesus Christ. Through the Cross, we can become sources of blessing for one another. I shall never forget the devotion and heartfelt care with which my father and mother made the sign of the Cross on the forehead, mouth, and breast of us children when we went away from home, especially when the parting was a

long one. This blessing was like an escort that we knew would guide us on our way. It made visible the prayer of our parents, which went with us, and it gave us the assurance that this prayer was supported by the blessing of the Savior. The blessing was also a challenge to us not to go outside the sphere of this blessing. Blessing is a priestly gesture, and so in this sign of the Cross we felt the priesthood of parents, its special dignity and power. I believe that this blessing, which is a perfect expression of the common priesthood of the baptized, should come back in a much stronger way into our daily life and permeate it with the power of the love that comes from the Lord.

3. *Posture*

Kneeling (prostratio)

There are groups, of no small influence, who are trying to talk us out of kneeling. “It doesn’t suit our culture”, they say (which culture?). “It’s not right for a grown man to do this—he should face God on his feet.” Or again: “It’s not appropriate for redeemed man—he has been set free by Christ and doesn’t need to kneel any more.” If we look at history, we can see that the Greeks and Romans rejected kneeling. In view of the squabbling, partisan deities described in mythology, this attitude was thoroughly justified. It was only too obvious that these gods were not God, even if you were dependent on their capricious power and had to make sure that, whenever possible, you enjoyed their favor. And so they said that kneeling was unworthy of a free man, unsuitable for the culture of Greece, something the barbarians went in for. Plutarch and Theophrastus regarded kneeling as an expression of superstition. Aristotle called it a barbaric form of behavior (cf. *Rhetoric* 1361 a 36). St. Augustine agreed with him in a certain respect: the false gods were only the masks of demons, who subjected men to the worship of money and to self-seeking, thus making them “servile” and superstitious. He said that the humility of Christ and his love, which went as far as the Cross, have freed us from these powers. We now kneel before that humility. The kneeling of Christians is not a form of inculturation into existing customs. It is quite the opposite, an expression of Christian culture, which transforms the existing culture through a new and deeper knowledge and experience of God.

Kneeling does not come from any culture—it comes from the Bible and its knowledge of God. The central importance of kneeling in the Bible can be

seen in a very concrete way. The word *proskynein* alone occurs fifty-nine times in the New Testament, twenty-four of which are in the Apocalypse, the book of the heavenly liturgy, which is presented to the Church as the standard for her own liturgy. On closer inspection, we can discern three closely related forms of posture. First, there is *prostratio*—lying with one’s face to the ground before the overwhelming power of God; secondly, especially in the New Testament, there is falling to one’s knees before another; and thirdly, there is kneeling. Linguistically, the three forms of posture are not always clearly distinguished. They can be combined or merged with one another.

For the sake of brevity, I should like to mention, in the case of *prostratio*, just one text from the Old Testament and another from the New. In the Old Testament, there is an appearance of God to Joshua before the taking of Jericho, an appearance that the sacred author quite deliberately presents as a parallel to God’s revelation of himself to Moses in the burning bush. Joshua sees “the commander of the army of the Lord” and, having recognized who he is, throws himself to the ground. At that moment he hears the words once spoken to Moses: “Put off your shoes from your feet; for the place where you stand is holy” (Josh 5:15). In the mysterious form of the “commander of the army of the Lord”, the hidden God himself speaks to Joshua, and Joshua throws himself down before him. Origen gives a beautiful interpretation of this text: “Is there any other commander of the powers of the Lord than our Lord Jesus Christ?” According to this view, Joshua is worshipping the One who is to come—the coming Christ. In the case of the New Testament, from the Fathers onward, Jesus’ prayer on the Mount of Olives was especially important. According to St. Matthew (22:39) and St. Mark (14:35), Jesus throws himself to the ground; indeed, he falls to the earth (according to Matthew). However, St. Luke, who in his whole work (both the Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles) is in a special way the theologian of kneeling prayer, tells us that Jesus prayed on his knees. This prayer, the prayer by which Jesus enters into his Passion, is an example for us, both as a gesture and in its content. The gesture: Jesus assumes, as it were, the fall of man, lets himself fall into man’s fallenness, prays to the Father out of the lowest depths of human dereliction and anguish. He lays his will in the will of the Father’s: “Not my will but yours be done.” He lays the human will in the divine. He takes up all the hesitation of the human will and endures it. It is this very conforming of the human will to the divine that is the heart of redemption. For the fall of man depends on the contradiction of wills, on the opposition of

the human will to the divine, which the tempter leads man to think is the condition of his freedom. Only one's own autonomous will, subject to no other will, is freedom. "Not my will, but yours . . ."—those are the words of truth, for God's will is not in opposition to our own, but the ground and condition of its possibility. Only when our will rests in the will of God does it become truly will and truly free. The suffering and struggle of Gethsemane is the struggle for this redemptive truth, for this uniting of what is divided, for the uniting that is communion with God. Now we understand why the Son's loving way of addressing the Father, "Abba", is found in this place (cf. Mk 14:36). St. Paul sees in this cry the prayer that the Holy Spirit places on our lips (cf. Rom 8:15; Gal 4:6) and thus anchors our Spirit-filled prayer in the Lord's prayer in Gethsemane.

In the Church's liturgy today, prostration appears on two occasions: on Good Friday and at ordinations. On Good Friday, the day of the Lord's crucifixion, it is the fitting expression of our sense of shock at the fact that we by our sins share in the responsibility for the death of Christ. We throw ourselves down and participate in his shock, in his descent into the depths of anguish. We throw ourselves down and so acknowledge where we are and who we are: fallen creatures whom only he can set on their feet. We throw ourselves down, as Jesus did, before the mystery of God's power present to us, knowing that the Cross is the true burning bush, the place of the flame of God's love, which burns but does not destroy. At ordinations prostration comes from the awareness of our absolute incapacity, by our own powers, to take on the priestly mission of Jesus Christ, to speak with his "I". While the ordinands are lying on the ground, the whole congregation sings the Litany of the Saints. I shall never forget lying on the ground at the time of my own priestly and episcopal ordination. When I was ordained bishop, my intense feeling of inadequacy, incapacity, in the face of the greatness of the task was even stronger than at my priestly ordination. The fact that the praying Church was calling upon all the saints, that the prayer of the Church really was enveloping and embracing me, was a wonderful consolation. In my incapacity, which had to be expressed in the bodily posture of prostration, this prayer, this presence of all the saints, of the living and the dead, was a wonderful strength—it was the only thing that could, as it were, lift me up. Only the presence of the saints with me made possible the path that lay before me.

Secondly, we must mention the gesture of falling to one's knees before

another, which is described four times in the Gospels (cf. Mk 1:40; 10:17; Mt 17:14; 27:29) by means of the word *gonypetein*. Let us single out Mark 1:40. A leper comes to Jesus and begs him for help. He falls to his knees before him and says: “If you will, you can make me clean.” It is hard to assess the significance of the gesture. What we have here is surely not a proper act of adoration, but rather a supplication expressed fervently in bodily form, while showing a trust in a power beyond the merely human. The situation is different, though, with the classical word for adoration on one’s knees—*proskynein*. I shall give two examples in order to clarify the question that faces the translator. First there is the account of how, after the multiplication of the loaves, Jesus stays with the Father on the mountain, while the disciples struggle in vain on the lake with the wind and the waves. Jesus comes to them across the water. Peter hurries toward him and is saved from sinking by the Lord. Then Jesus climbs into the boat, and the wind lets up. The text continues: “And the ship’s crew came and said, falling at his feet, ‘Thou art indeed the Son of God’ ” (Mt 14:33, Knox version). Other translations say: “[The disciples] in the boat worshipped [Jesus], saying . . .” (RSV). Both translations are correct. Each emphasizes one aspect of what is going on. The Knox version brings out the bodily expression, while the RSV shows what is happening interiorly. It is perfectly clear from the structure of the narrative that the gesture of acknowledging Jesus as the Son of God is an act of worship. We encounter a similar set of problems in St. John’s Gospel when we read the account of the healing of the man born blind. This narrative, which is structured in a truly “theo-dramatic” way, ends with a dialogue between Jesus and the man he has healed. It serves as a model for the dialogue of conversion, for the whole narrative must also be seen as a profound exposition of the existential and theological significance of Baptism. In the dialogue, Jesus asks the man whether he believes in the Son of Man. The man born blind replies: “Tell me who he is, Lord.” When Jesus says, “It is he who is speaking to you”, the man makes the confession of faith: “I do believe, Lord”, and then he “[falls] down to worship him” (Jn 9:35-38, Knox version adapted). Earlier translations said: “He worshipped him.” In fact, the whole scene is directed toward the act of faith and the worship of Jesus, which follows from it. Now the eyes of the heart, as well as of the body, are opened. The man has in truth begun to see. For the exegesis of the text it is important to note that the word *proskynein* occurs eleven times in St. John’s Gospel, of which nine occurrences are found in Jesus’

conversation with the Samaritan woman by Jacob's well (Jn 4:19-24). This conversation is entirely devoted to the theme of worship, and it is indisputable that here, as elsewhere in St. John's Gospel, the word always has the meaning of "worship". Incidentally, this conversation, too, ends—like that of the healing of the man born blind—with Jesus' revealing himself: "I who speak to you am he" (Jn 4:26).

I have lingered over these texts, because they bring to light something important. In the two passages that we looked at most closely, the spiritual and bodily meanings of *proskynein* are really inseparable. The bodily gesture itself is the bearer of the spiritual meaning, which is precisely that of worship. Without the worship, the bodily gesture would be meaningless, while the spiritual act must of its very nature, because of the psychosomatic unity of man, express itself in the bodily gesture. The two aspects are united in the one word, because in a very profound way they belong together. When kneeling becomes merely external, a merely physical act, it becomes meaningless. On the other hand, when someone tries to take worship back into the purely spiritual realm and refuses to give it embodied form, the act of worship evaporates, for what is purely spiritual is inappropriate to the nature of man. Worship is one of those fundamental acts that affect the whole man. That is why bending the knee before the presence of the living God is something we cannot abandon.

In saying this, we come to the typical gesture of kneeling on one or both knees. In the Hebrew of the Old Testament, the verb *barak*, "to kneel", is cognate with the word *berek*, "knee". The Hebrews regarded the knees as a symbol of strength; to bend the knee is, therefore, to bend our strength before the living God, an acknowledgment of the fact that all that we are we receive from him. In important passages of the Old Testament, this gesture appears as an expression of worship. At the dedication of the Temple, Solomon kneels "in the presence of all the assembly of Israel" (2 Chron 6:13). After the Exile, in the afflictions of the returned Israel, which is still without a Temple, Ezra repeats this gesture at the time of the evening sacrifice: "I . . . fell upon my knees and spread out my hands to the Lord my God" (Ezra 9:5). The great psalm of the Passion, Psalm 22 ("My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"), ends with the promise: "Yes, to him shall all the proud of the earth fall down; before him all who go down to the dust shall throw themselves down" (v. 29, RSV adapted). The related passage Isaiah 45:23 we shall have to consider in the context of the New Testament. The Acts of the Apostles tells

us how St. Peter (9:40), St. Paul (20:36), and the whole Christian community (21:5) pray on their knees. Particularly important for our question is the account of the martyrdom of St. Stephen. The first man to witness to Christ with his blood is described in his suffering as a perfect image of Christ, whose Passion is repeated in the martyrdom of the witness, even in small details. One of these is that Stephen, on his knees, takes up the petition of the crucified Christ: “Lord, do not hold this sin against them” (7:60). We should remember that Luke, unlike Matthew and Mark, speaks of the Lord kneeling in Gethsemane, which shows that Luke wants the kneeling of the first martyr to be seen as his entry into the prayer of Jesus. Kneeling is not only a Christian gesture, but a christological one.

For me, the most important passage for the theology of kneeling will always be the great hymn of Christ in Philippians 2:6-11. In this pre-Pauline hymn, we hear and see the prayer of the apostolic Church and can discern within it her confession of faith in Christ. However, we also hear the voice of the Apostle, who enters into this prayer and hands it on to us, and, ultimately, we perceive here both the profound inner unity of the Old and New Testaments and the cosmic breadth of Christian faith. The hymn presents Christ as the antitype of the First Adam. While the latter high-handedly grasped at likeness to God, Christ does not count equality with God, which is his by nature, “a thing to be grasped”, but humbles himself unto death, even death on the Cross. It is precisely this humility, which comes from love, that is the truly divine reality and procures for him the “name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth” (Phil 2:5-10). Here the hymn of the apostolic Church takes up the words of promise in Isaiah 45:23: “By myself I have sworn, from my mouth has gone forth in righteousness a word that shall not return: ‘To me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear.’ ” In the interweaving of Old and New Testaments, it becomes clear that, even as crucified, Jesus bears the “name above every name”—the name of the Most High—and is himself God by nature. Through him, through the Crucified, the bold promise of the Old Testament is now fulfilled: all bend the knee before Jesus, the One who descended, and bow to him precisely as the one true God above all gods. The Cross has become the world-embracing sign of God’s presence, and all that we have previously heard about the historical and cosmic Christ should now, in this passage, come back into our minds. The Christian liturgy is a cosmic liturgy precisely because it bends the knee

before the crucified and exalted Lord. Here is the center of authentic culture—the culture of truth. The humble gesture by which we fall at the feet of the Lord inserts us into the true path of life of the cosmos.

There is much more that we might add. For example, there is the touching story told by Eusebius in his history of the Church as a tradition going back to Hegesippus in the second century. Apparently, St. James, the “brother of the Lord”, the first bishop of Jerusalem and “head” of the Jewish Christian Church, had a kind of callous on his knees, because he was always on his knees worshipping God and begging for forgiveness for his people (2, 23, 6). Again, there is a story that comes from the sayings of the Desert Fathers, according to which the devil was compelled by God to show himself to a certain Abba Apollo. He looked black and ugly, with frighteningly thin limbs, but, most strikingly, *he had no knees*. The inability to kneel is seen as the very essence of the diabolical.

But I do not want to go into more detail. I should like to make just one more remark. The expression used by St. Luke to describe the kneeling of Christians (*theis tagonata*) is unknown in classical Greek. We are dealing here with a specifically Christian word. With that remark, our reflections return full circle to where they began. It may well be that kneeling is alien to modern culture—insofar as it is a culture, for this culture has turned away from the faith and no longer knows the One before whom kneeling is the right, indeed the intrinsically necessary gesture. The man who learns to believe learns also to kneel, and a faith or a liturgy no longer familiar with kneeling would be sick at the core. Where it has been lost, kneeling must be rediscovered, so that, in our prayer, we remain in fellowship with the apostles and martyrs, in fellowship with the whole cosmos, indeed in union with Jesus Christ Himself.

Standing and Sitting—Liturgy and Culture

We can be considerably more brief in what we say about these two postures, because they are not very controversial these days, and the importance that each has is not hard to see. In the Old Testament, standing is a classic posture for prayer. Let us content ourselves with just one example—the prayer of the childless Hannah, who becomes, in answer to her prayers, the mother of Samuel. In the New Testament, St. Luke paints a portrait of Elizabeth, the

mother of John the Baptist, with colors reminiscent of Hannah. After she has weaned the child Samuel, the happy mother comes to the Temple, in order to hand over the child of promise to the Lord: “I am the woman”, she says, “who was standing here in your presence, praying to the Lord” (i Sam 1:26). A whole series of New Testament texts show us that in Jesus’ time standing was the ordinary posture for prayer among the Jews (cf. Mt 6:5; Mk 11:25; Lk 18:11ff.). Among Christians, standing was primarily the Easter form of prayer. The twentieth canon of Nicaea decrees that Christians should stand, not kneel, during Eastertide. It is the time of the victory of Jesus Christ, the time of joy, in which we show forth the Paschal victory of the Lord, even in the posture of our prayer. This may remind us once again of the passion of St. Stephen. Faced with the fury of his persecutors, he looks up to heaven, where he sees Jesus standing at the right hand of the Father [cf. Acts 7:55]. Standing is the posture of the victor. Jesus stands in God’s presence—he stands, because he has trodden death and the power of the Evil One underfoot. At the end of this struggle, he is the one who stands upright, the one who remains standing. This standing is also an expression of readiness: Christ is standing up at the right hand of God, in order to meet us. He has not withdrawn. It is for us that he stands, and in the very hour of anguish we can be sure that he will set off and come to us, just as once he set off from the Father and came to his own across the water, when wind and waves were overpowering their boat. When we stand, we know that we are united to the victory of Christ, and when we stand to listen to the Gospel, it is an expression of reverence. When this Word is heard, we cannot remain sitting; it pulls us up. It demands both reverence and courage, when he calls us to set off in some new direction, to do his will and to carry it into our lives and into the world.

Just one further reminder may help us here. We are familiar, from the painting in the catacombs, with the figure of the *orans*, the female figure standing and praying with outstretched hands. According to recent research, the *orans* normally represents, not the praying Church, but the soul that has entered into heavenly glory and stands in adoration before the face of God. This has two important aspects. First, the soul is almost always represented as a woman, because what is specific to human existence in relation to God is expressed in the form of a woman: the bridal element, in regard to the eternal nuptials, and also the ready acceptance of the grace bestowed upon us. The second point is this: it is not the earthly liturgy, the liturgy of pilgrimage, that is represented here, but prayer in the state of glory. Thus, once again, this

time in light of the *orans*, it becomes clear that standing prayer is an anticipation of the future, of the glory that is to come; it is meant to orient us toward it. Insofar as liturgical prayer is an anticipation of what has been promised, standing is its proper posture. However, insofar as liturgical prayer belongs to that “between” time in which we live, then kneeling remains indispensable to it as an expression of the “now” of our life.

Finally, the liturgy permits sitting during the readings, the homily, and the meditative assimilation of the Word (the responsorial psalm, and so on). Whether it is also appropriate during the Preparation of the Gifts may be regarded as an open question. In recent times, sitting has been introduced here because of a particular understanding of this part of the sacred liturgy. Certain people deny it has a sacred character and regard it as something purely practical. I shall not debate the issue here. New research—including the theological comparison of the different rites—is necessary. Sitting should be at the service of recollection. Our bodies should be relaxed, so that our hearing and understanding are unimpeded.

Today (as, doubtless, in different ways, also in the past) it is noticeable that there is some curious mixing and matching going on with the different postures. Here and there, sitting has become very like the lotus position of Indian religiosity, which is regarded as the proper posture for meditation. Now I do not want absolutely to rule out the Christian use of the lotus position, which is again being practiced, in different ways, by some Christians. However, I do not believe it has any place in the liturgy. If we try to understand the inner language of bodily gestures, then we can begin to understand their origin and spiritual purpose. When a man kneels, he lowers himself, but his eyes still look forward and upward, as when he stands, toward the One who faces him. To kneel is to be oriented toward the One who looks upon us and toward whom we try to look, as the epistle to the Hebrews says, “looking to Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith” (Heb 12:2; cf 3:1). Keep your eyes fixed on Jesus—that is a maxim of the Fathers’ doctrine of prayer, which takes up again the Old Testament motif of “seeking [God’s] face”. The man who prays looks beyond himself to the One who is above him and approaches him. He in turn, by his gazing and praying, tries to approach the Lord and thus seeks to enter into nuptial union with him. In the sitting position of oriental meditation, it is all quite different. Man looks into himself. He does not go away from himself to the Other but tends to sink inward, into the nothing that is at the same time everything. True, the

Christian tradition is also familiar with the God who is more interior to us than we are to ourselves—the God whom we seek precisely by breaking away from aimless wandering in the external world and going inward. It is there, inside ourselves, that we find ourselves and the deepest ground of our being. In this sense, there are real bridges from the one attitude to the other. With all of today's empiricism and pragmatism, with its loss of soul, we have good reason to learn again from Asia. But however open Christian faith may be, must be, to the wisdom of Asia, the difference between the personal and the a-personal understandings of God remains. We must, therefore, conclude that kneeling and standing are, in a unique and irreplaceable way, the Christian posture of prayer—the Christian's orientation of himself toward the face of God, toward the face of Jesus Christ, in seeing whom we are able to see the Father (Jn 14:9).

Dancing is not a form of expression for the Christian liturgy. In about the third century, there was an attempt in certain Gnostic-Docetic circles to introduce it into the liturgy. For these people, the Crucifixion was only an appearance. Before the Passion, Christ had abandoned the body that in any case he had never really assumed. Dancing could take the place of the liturgy of the Cross, because, after all, the Cross was only an appearance. The cultic dances of the different religions have different purposes—incantation, imitative magic, mystical ecstasy—none of which is compatible with the essential purpose of the liturgy of the “reasonable sacrifice”. It is totally absurd to try to make the liturgy “attractive” by introducing dancing pantomimes (wherever possible performed by professional dance troupes), which frequently (and rightly, from the professionals' point of view) end with applause. Wherever applause breaks out in the liturgy because of some human achievement, it is a sure sign that the essence of liturgy has totally disappeared and been replaced by a kind of religious entertainment. Such attractiveness fades quickly—it cannot compete in the market of leisure pursuits, incorporating as it increasingly does various forms of religious titillation. I myself have experienced the replacing of the penitential rite by a dance performance, which, needless to say, received a round of applause. Could there be anything farther removed from true penitence? Liturgy can only attract people when it looks, not at itself, but at God, when it allows him to enter and act. Then something truly unique happens, beyond competition, and people have a sense that more has taken place than a recreational activity. None of the Christian rites includes dancing. What people call dancing in the

Ethiopian rite or the Zairean form of the Roman liturgy is in fact a rhythmically ordered procession, very much in keeping with the dignity of the occasion. It provides an inner discipline and order for the various stages of the liturgy, bestowing on them beauty and, above all, making them worthy of God. Once again we face the question: What do we have here, liturgy or popular piety? Very often these old forms of religious expression, which could not be inserted as such into the liturgy, have been integrated into the world of faith. Popular piety has a special importance as a bridge between the faith and each culture. Of its very nature, it is directly indebted to its culture. It enlarges the world of faith and gives it its vitality in the various circumstances of life. It is less universal than the liturgy, which connects vast regions with each other and embraces different cultures. Consequently, the various forms of popular piety are farther removed from each other than the liturgies are, and yet they embody the humanity of man, which, for all the differences of culture, remains similar in so many ways. The best-known example in Europe is the spring procession in Echternach.¹ In a little sanctuary in the middle of the desert of northern Chile, I was once able to attend some Marian devotions that were followed in the open air by a dance, in honor of the Madonna, employing masks that looked rather frightening to me. Doubtless behind this lay very ancient, pre-Columbian traditions. What once might have been marked by a terrifying seriousness, in view of the power of the gods, had now been set free, transformed into an act of homage to the humble woman who can be called the Mother of God and the ground of our trust. Once again it is something different if, after the liturgy, the joy that it contains turns into a “secular” feast, which is expressed in a common meal and dancing but does not lose sight of the reason for the joy, of what gives it its purpose and measure. This connection between the liturgy and cheerful earthiness (“Church and inn”) has always been regarded as typically Catholic, and so it is still.

At this point a brief remark about the theme of liturgy and inculturation suggests itself. Needless to say, we cannot go into it too widely and deeply, but by the same token it should not be overlooked. Everywhere these days the liturgy seems to be the proving ground for experiments in inculturation. Whenever people talk about inculturation, they almost always think only of the liturgy, which then has to undergo often quite dismal distortions. The worshippers usually groan at this, though it is happening for their sake. An inculturation that is more or less just an alteration of outward forms is not

inculturation at all, but a misunderstanding of inculturation. Moreover, it frequently insults cultural and religious communities, from whom liturgical forms are borrowed in an all too superficial and external way. The first and most fundamental way in which inculturation takes place is the unfolding of a Christian culture in all its different dimensions: a culture of cooperation, of social concern, of respect for the poor, of the overcoming of class differences, of care for the suffering and dying; a culture that educates mind and heart in proper cooperation; a political culture and a culture of law; a culture of dialogue, of reverence for life, and so on. This kind of authentic inculturation of Christianity then creates culture in the stricter sense of the word, that is, it leads to artistic work that interprets the world anew in the light of God. As the Greeks so rightly saw, culture is, before all else, education, taking that word in its deepest sense as the inner opening up of a man to his possibilities, in which his external abilities are developed in harmony with his gifts. In the religious sphere, culture manifests itself above all in the growth of authentic popular piety. Despite all the inadequacies of the Christian mission in Latin America, and despite the fact that so much still needs to be done, Christian faith has put down deep roots in souls. This can be seen in the popular piety in which the mystery of Christ has come very close to people, in which Christ has become truly their own. Think, for example, of devotion to the Passion, in which these suffering peoples, after the cruelty of the gods of the past, gratefully look upon the God who suffers with them as the answer to their deepest longings. Think, too, of Marian devotion, in which the whole mystery of the Incarnation, the tenderness of God, the participation of man in God's own nature, and the nature of God's saving action are experienced at a profound level. Popular piety is the soil without which the liturgy cannot thrive. Unfortunately, in parts of the Liturgical Movement and on the occasion of the postconciliar reform, it has frequently been held in contempt or even abused. Instead, one must love it, purifying and guiding it where necessary, but always accepting it with great reverence, even when it seems alien or alienating, as the dedicated sanctuary of faith in the hearts of the people. It is faith's secure inner rooting; when it dries up, rationalism and sectarianism have an easy job. Tried and tested elements of popular piety may pass over, then, into liturgical celebration, without officious and hasty fabrication, by a patient process of lengthy growth. Incidentally, the liturgy, without any manipulation of the rite, has always quite spontaneously, through the way it is celebrated, borne the imprint of each culture in which it is

celebrated. A liturgy in an Upper Bavarian village looks very different from High Mass in a French cathedral, which in turn seems quite unlike Mass in a southern Italian parish, and again that looks different from what you would find in a mountain village in the Andes, and so on. The decoration and arrangement of the altar and the interior of the church, the style of singing and praying—all of these give the liturgy its own special character, enabling people to feel completely at home. And yet in every place we can experience it as one and the same liturgy, and in this way we experience, too, the great communion of faith. The unity of the rite gives us a real experience of *communio*. When the rite is respected and animated from within, unity and diversity are not in opposition.

4. *Gestures*

The oldest gesture of prayer in Christendom is prayer with arms extended, the *orans* posture, which we have already briefly mentioned. This is one of the primal gestures of man in calling upon God and is found in virtually every part of the religious world. It is first of all an expression of nonviolence, a gesture of peace. A man opens his arms and thus opens himself to another person. It is also a gesture of seeking and hoping. Man reaches out to the hidden God, stretches out toward him. Arms extended have been compared to wings: man seeks the heights, he wants to be, as it were, carried upward by God on the wings of prayer. But for Christians, arms extended also have a christological meaning. They remind us of the extended arms of Christ on the Cross. The crucified Lord has given this primal human gesture of prayer a new depth. By extending our arms, we resolve to pray with the Crucified, to unite ourselves to his “mind” (Phil 2:5). In the arms of Christ, stretched on the Cross, Christians see a twofold meaning. In his case too, in his case above all, this gesture is the radical form of worship, the unity of his human will with the will of the Father, but at the same time these arms are opened toward us—they are the wide embrace by which Christ wants to draw us to himself (Jn 12:32). Worship of God and love of neighbor—the content of the chief commandment, which sums up the law and the prophets—coincide in this gesture. To open oneself to God, to surrender oneself completely to him, is at the same time—the two things cannot be separated—to devote oneself to one’s neighbor. This combining of the two directions of love in the gesture of

Christ on the Cross reveals, in a bodily and visible way, the new depth of Christian prayer and thus expresses the inner law of our own prayer.

A later development was the gesture of praying with hands joined. This comes from the world of feudalism. The recipient of a feudal estate, on taking tenure, placed his joined hands in those of his lord—a wonderful symbolic act. I lay my hands in yours, allow yours to enclose mine. This is an expression of trust as well as of fidelity. The gesture has been retained in priestly ordination. The newly ordained man receives his priestly task as a kind of feudal estate held on tenure. He is not the source of his priesthood. He is a priest, not through his own skills and abilities, but by the gift of the Lord, a gift that always remains a gift and never becomes simply his possession, a power of his own. The new priest receives the gift and task of priesthood as a gift from another, from Christ, and recognizes that all he is ever able and allowed to be is a “steward of the mysteries of God” (cf. 1 Cor 4:1), “a good steward of God’s varied grace” (cf. 1 Pet 4:10). If this is what he is to become, he must commit his whole existence to the task. And that can only take place in the “house of God” (Heb 3:2-6), the Church, in which the bishop, in the place of Christ, accepts the individual into the priesthood, into a relationship of fidelity to Christ. When the ordinand lays his joined hands in the hands of the bishop and promises him reverence and obedience, he is dedicating his service to the Church as the living Body of Christ, laying his hands in the hands of Christ, entrusting himself to him and giving him his hands, so that they may be his. What within feudalism may be questionable—for all human lordship is questionable and can only be justified if it represents and is faithful to the real Lord—finds its true meaning in the relationship of the believer to Christ the Lord. This, then, is what is meant when we join our hands to pray: we are placing our hands in his, and with our hands we place in his hands our personal destiny. Trusting in his fidelity, we pledge our fidelity to him.

We have already said something about kneeling as a gesture of prayer. I should like at this point to mention bowing. One of the petitions for acceptance in the Roman Canon (Eucharistic Prayer I) begins with the word *supplices*: Bowing low, we implore thee. Here again the bodily gesture and the spiritual process are inseparable and flow into one another. This is the gesture of the tax collector, who knows that he cannot endure the gaze of God and so bows low before it. And yet this prayer asks that our sacrifice may come before the face of God, into his sight, and be for us a blessing. Out of

the depths of our insufficiency we call upon God, that he may set us upright, enable us to gaze upon him, and make us such that he may gaze upon us. The *supplices*—our being “bowed low”—is the bodily expression, so to speak, of what the Bible calls humility (cf. “he humbled himself”, Phil 2:8). For the Greeks, humility was the attitude of a slave, and so they rejected it. The transformation of values brought about by Christianity sees in it something different. Humility is the ontologically appropriate attitude, the state that corresponds to the truth about man, and as such it becomes a fundamental attitude of Christian existence. St. Augustine constructed his whole Christology, indeed, I would say his entire apologetics for Christianity, upon the concept of *humilitas*. He took up the teaching of the ancients, of the Greek and Roman world, that *hybris*—self-glorifying pride—is the real sin of all sins, as we see in exemplary form in the fall of Adam. Arrogance, the ontological lie by which man makes himself God, is overcome by the humility of God, who makes himself the slave, who bows down before us. The man who wants to come close to God must be able to look upon him — that is essential. But he must likewise learn to bend, for God has bent himself down. In the gesture of humble love, in the washing of feet, in which he kneels at our feet—that is where we find him. Thus the *supplices* is a gesture of great profundity. It is a physical reminder of the spiritual attitude essential to faith. Astonishingly, several modern translations of the Roman Canon have simply omitted the *supplices*. Perhaps they regarded the physical expression, which as a matter of fact has disappeared, as unimportant. Perhaps, too, they thought it was an unsuitable thing for a modern man to do. To bow low before a human being, to win his favor, is indeed unfitting. But to bow low before God can never be unmodern, because it corresponds to the truth of our being. And if modern man has forgotten this truth, then it is all the more incumbent on Christians in the modern world to rediscover it and teach it to our fellowmen.

Another gesture came into Christianity from the narrative already mentioned of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector (cf. Lk 18:9-14): striking the breast. Apparently, in the North Africa of St. Augustine, it was very popular and practiced in a somewhat exaggerated and superficial manner, so much so, in fact, that the Bishop of Hippo had to remind his flock, with gentle irony, to moderate their “sin-bashing”. However, this gesture, by which we point not at someone else but at ourselves as the guilty party, remains a meaningful gesture of prayer. This is exactly what we need, time and again, to do: to see

and acknowledge our guilt and so also to beg for forgiveness. When we say *mea culpa* (through my fault), we turn, so to speak, to ourselves, to our own front door, and thus we are able rightly to ask forgiveness of God, the saints, and the people gathered around us, whom we have wronged. During the *Agnus Dei* (Lamb of God), we look upon him who is the Shepherd and for us became Lamb and, as Lamb, bore our iniquities. At this moment it is only right and proper that we should strike our breasts and remind ourselves, even physically, that our iniquities lay on his shoulders, that “with his stripes we are healed” (Is 53:5).

5. *The Human Voice*

It is clear that in the liturgy of the Logos, of the Eternal Word, the word and thus the human voice have an essential role to play. In this little book, which is not intended to give instructions for liturgical practice but only insights into the spirit of the liturgy, we do not need to discuss the detailed forms in which the human voice is deployed in the liturgy. We have seen much of this already in early chapters, especially in connection with sacred music. First there is the *oratio*, the priestly mode of prayer, in which the priest, in the name of the whole community, speaks through Christ, in the Holy Spirit, to the Father. Then there are the various forms of proclamation: the readings (“Prophet and Apostle”, as they used to say in the early Church, meaning by “prophecy” the whole of the Old Testament), the Gospel (solemnly sung at High Mass), and the homily, which in the strict sense is reserved to the bishop and then to the priest and deacon as well. Then there is the response to the Word [*Ant-Wort*], by which the assembled congregation takes up and accepts the Word. This structure of Word and response, which is essential to the liturgy, is modelled on the basic structure of the process of divine revelation, in which Word and response, the speech of God and the receptive hearing of the Bride, the Church, go together. In the liturgy, the response has different forms. For example, there is the acclamation (“shout”), which is of great importance in the world of ancient law. The responsive acclamation confirms the arrival of the Word and makes the process of revelation, of God’s giving of himself in the Word, at last complete. The Amen, the Alleluia, and the *Et cum spiritu tuo*, and so on, are all part of this. One of the important results of the liturgical renewal is the fact that the people really do

again respond in the acclamation and do not have to leave it to a representative, the altar server. This is the only way the true structure of the liturgy can be restored, a structure that, as we have just seen, makes concrete in divine worship the fundamental structure of divine action. God, the Revealer, did not want to stay as *solus Deus, solus Christus* (God alone, Christ alone). No, he wanted to create a Body for himself, to find a Bride—he sought a response. It was really for her that the Word went forth. Alongside the acclamation are the various forms of meditative appropriation of the Word, especially in the singing of psalms (but also in hymns), the different forms of which (responsorial and antiphonal) do not need to be discussed in detail here. Then there is the “new song”, the great song the Church sings as she goes off toward the music of the New Heaven and New Earth.

This explains why, in addition to congregational singing, Christian liturgy of its very nature finds a suitable place for the choir, and for musical instruments, too, which no purism about collective singing should be allowed to contest. The possibilities will, of course, always differ from place to place, but the Church as a whole must, for the sake of God, strive for the best, for from the very nature of the liturgy, by an inner necessity, comes a culture that becomes a standard for all secular culture.

We are realizing more and more clearly that silence is part of the liturgy. We respond, by singing and praying, to the God who addresses us, but the greater mystery, surpassing all words, summons us to silence. It must, of course, be a silence with content, not just the absence of speech and action. We should expect the liturgy to give us a positive stillness that will restore us. Such stillness will not be just a pause, in which a thousand thoughts and desires assault us, but a time of recollection, giving us an inward peace, allowing us to draw breath and rediscover the one thing necessary, which we have forgotten. That is why silence cannot be simply “made”, organized as if it were one activity among many. It is no accident that on all sides people are seeking techniques of meditation, a spirituality for emptying the mind. One of man’s deepest needs is making its presence felt, a need that is manifestly not being met in our present form of the liturgy.

For silence to be fruitful, as we have already said, it must not be just a pause in the action of the liturgy. No, it must be an integral part of the liturgical event. How is that to be done? In recent times, the attempt has been made to insert two short periods of silence into the liturgy as a way of addressing the problem: a pause for reflection after the homily and a period

of silent prayer after the reception of Holy Communion. The pause for silence after the homily has not proved to be very satisfactory: it seems artificial, with the congregation just waiting for as long as the celebrant feels inclined to let it go on. What is more, the homily often leaves questions and contradictions in people's minds rather than an invitation to meet the Lord. As a general rule, the homily should conclude with an encouragement to prayer, which would give some content to the brief pause. But even then it remains just a pause in the liturgy, not something from which a liturgy of silence can develop. More helpful and spiritually appropriate is the silence after Communion. This, in all truth, is the moment for an interior conversation with the Lord who has given himself to us, for that essential "communicating", that entry into the process of communication, without which the external reception of the Sacrament becomes mere ritual and therefore unfruitful. Unfortunately, there are often hindrances that spoil this precious moment. The distribution of Communion continues with the noise of people going back and forth. In relation to the rest of the liturgical action, the distribution often lasts too long, which means that the priest feels the need to move the liturgy on quickly so that there is no empty period of waiting and restlessness, with people already getting ready to leave. Nevertheless, whenever possible, this silence after Communion should be used, and the faithful should be given some guidance for interior prayer.

In some places, the Preparation of the Gifts is intended as a time for silence. This makes good sense and is fruitful, if we see the Preparation, not as just a pragmatic external action, but as an essentially interior process. We need to see that we ourselves are, or should be, the real gift in the "Word-centered sacrifice" through our sharing in Jesus Christ's act of self-offering to the Father (of which we spoke in the first part). Then this silence is not just a period of waiting, something external. Then something happens inwardly that corresponds to what is going on outwardly—we are disposing ourselves, preparing the way, placing ourselves before the Lord, asking him to make us ready for transformation. Shared silence becomes shared prayer, indeed shared action, a journey out of our everyday life toward the Lord, toward merging our time with his own. Liturgical education ought to regard it as its duty to facilitate this inner process, so that in the common experience of silence the inner process becomes a truly liturgical event and the silence is filled with content.

The structure of the liturgy itself provides for other moments of silence.

First there is the silence of the Consecration at the elevation of the consecrated species. It is an invitation to direct our eyes toward Christ, to look at him from within, in a gaze that is at once gratitude, adoration, and petition for our own transformation. There are fashionable objections that would try to talk us out of this silence at the Consecration. The showing of the Gifts, it is said, is a medieval error, which disturbs the structure of the Eucharistic Prayer, the expression of a false and too grossly materialistic piety. The argument is that the elevation is out of keeping with the essential direction of the Eucharist. At this moment, so it is claimed, we should not be worshipping Christ—the whole Canon addresses the Father, to whom we pray through Christ. We do not need to go into these criticisms in detail. The essential answer to them is provided by what was said in chapter 2 about reverence for the Blessed Sacrament and the rightfulness of the medieval developments, which unfolded what had been there from the beginning in the faith of the Church. It is correct to say that the Canon has a trinitarian structure and consequently as a totality moves “through Christ, in the Holy Spirit, to the Father”. But the liturgy in this respect knows nothing of rigidity and fixation. The reformed Missal of 1970 itself places on our lips a greeting directed toward the Lord: “We proclaim your death, O Lord, and we confess your Resurrection, until you come [in glory]!” The moment when the Lord comes down and transforms bread and wine to become his Body and Blood cannot fail to stun, to the very core of their being, those who participate in the Eucharist by faith and prayer. When this happens, we cannot do other than fall to our knees and greet him. The Consecration is the moment of God’s great *actio* in the world for us. It draws our eyes and hearts on high. For a moment the world is silent, everything is silent, and in that silence we touch the eternal—for one beat of the heart we step out of time into God’s being-with-us.

Another approach to the question of content-filled silence is provided by the liturgy itself. There is a silence that is part of the liturgical action, not an interruption. I am thinking of the silent prayers of the priest. Those who hold a sociological or activist view of the priest’s duties in the Mass frown upon these prayers, and, whenever possible, they leave them out. The priest is defined in a narrowly sociological and functionalistic way as the “presider” at the liturgical celebration, which is thought of as a kind of meeting. If that is what he is, then, of course, for the sake of the meeting, he has to be in action all the time. But the priest’s duties in the Mass are much more than a matter

of chairing a meeting. The priest presides over an encounter with the living God and as a person who is on his way to God. The silent prayers of the priest invite him to make his task truly personal, so that he may give his whole self to the Lord. They highlight the way in which all of us, each one personally yet together with everyone else, have to approach the Lord. The number of these priestly prayers has been greatly reduced in the liturgical reform, but, thank God, they do exist—they have to exist, now as before. First there is the short prayer of preparation before the proclamation of the Gospel. The priest should pray it with real recollection and devotion, conscious of his responsibility to proclaim the Gospel aright, conscious, too, of the need which that entails for a purification of lips and heart. When the priest does this, he shows the congregation the dignity and grandeur of the Gospel and helps them understand how tremendous it is that God's Word should come into our midst. The priest's prayer creates reverence and a space for hearing the Word. Again, liturgical education is necessary if the priest's prayer is to be understood and the people are not only to stand up physically but also to rise up spiritually and open the ears of their hearts to the Gospel. We have already spoken of the Preparation of the Gifts, the significance of which in the new rite is not entirely clear. The priest's reception of Holy Communion is preceded by two very beautiful and profound prayers, from which, to avoid the silence being too long, he is to choose one. Perhaps we shall again one day take the time to use both. But even if only one of them is prayed, the priest should with all the more reason really pray it in recollected silence as a personal preparation for receiving the Lord. This will help to bring everyone else into silence before the Sacred Presence, and then going to Communion will not degenerate into something merely external. This is particularly necessary, because in the present order of the Mass the sign of peace frequently causes a lot of hustle and bustle in the congregation, into which the invitation to "Behold the Lamb of God" then comes as a rather abrupt intervention. If in a moment of quiet the eyes of the hearts of all are directed toward the Lamb, this can become a time of blessed silence. After the priest's reception of Communion another (formerly, there were two) silent prayer of thanksgiving is provided for him, which again can and should be made their own by the faithful.

I should like to mention at this point that old prayer books contain, alongside a lot of kitsch, much that is a valuable resource for prayer, much that has grown out of deep interior experience and can again become today a

school for prayer. What St. Paul says in the epistle to the Romans—that we do not know how to pray as we ought (Rom 8:26)—applies even more to us today. So often we are without words in our encounter with God. The Holy Spirit does indeed teach us to pray; he does indeed give us the words, as St. Paul says; but he also uses human mediation. The prayers that have risen up from the hearts of believers under the guidance of the Holy Spirit are a school, provided us by the Holy Spirit, that will slowly open our mute mouths and help us to learn how to pray and to fill the silence.

In 1978, to the annoyance of many liturgists, I said that in no sense does the whole Canon always *have* to be said out loud. After much consideration, I should like to repeat and underline the point here in the hope that, twenty years later, this thesis will be better understood. Meanwhile, in their efforts to reform the Missal, the German liturgists have explicitly stated that, of all things, the Eucharistic Prayer, the high point of the Mass, is in crisis. Since the reform of the liturgy, an attempt has been made to meet the crisis by incessantly inventing new Eucharistic Prayers, and in the process we have sunk farther and farther into banality. Multiplying words is no help—that is all too evident. The liturgists have suggested all kinds of remedies, which certainly contain elements that are worthy of consideration. However, as far as I can see, they balk, now as in the past, at the possibility that silence, too, silence especially, might constitute communion before God. It is no accident that in Jerusalem, from a very early time, parts of the Canon were prayed in silence and that in the West the silent Canon—overlaid in part with meditative singing—became the norm. To dismiss all this as the result of misunderstandings is just too easy. It really is not true that reciting the whole Eucharistic Prayer out loud and without interruptions is a prerequisite for the participation of everyone in this central act of the Mass. My suggestion in 1978 was as follows. First, liturgical education ought to aim at making the faithful familiar with the essential meaning and fundamental orientation of the Canon. Secondly, the first words of the various prayers should be said out loud as a kind of cue for the congregation, so that each individual in his silent prayer can take up the intonation and bring the personal into the communal and the communal into the personal. Anyone who has experienced a church united in the silent praying of the Canon will know what a really *filled* silence is. It is at once a loud and penetrating cry to God and a Spirit-filled act of prayer. Here everyone does pray the Canon together, albeit in a bond with the special task of the priestly ministry. Here everyone is united, laid hold of by

Christ, and led by the Holy Spirit into that common prayer to the Father which is the true sacrifice—the love that reconciles and unites God and the world.

6. Vestments

The liturgical attire worn by the priest during the celebration of Holy Mass should, first and foremost, make clear that he is not there as a private person, as this or that man, but stands in place of Another—Christ. What is merely private, merely individual, about him should disappear and make way for Christ. “[I]t is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me” (Gal 2:20). These words of St. Paul, in which, from his own, very personal experience of Christ, he describes the newness of the baptized person, apply in a special way to the priest in celebrating Mass. It is not he himself who is important, but Christ. It is not he himself whom he is communicating to men, but Christ. He makes himself the instrument of Christ, acting, not from his own resources, but as the messenger, indeed as the presence, of Another—*in persona Christi*, as the liturgical tradition says. Liturgical vestments are a direct reminder of those texts in which St. Paul speaks of being clothed with Christ: “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (Gal 3:27). In the epistle to the Romans, the image is connected with the opposition between two ways of living. To those who waste their lives in immoderate eating and drinking, in debauchery and licentiousness, St. Paul shows the Christian way: “But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires” (Rom 13:14). In the epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians, the same idea is interpreted in an even more fundamental way in relation to the anthropology of the new man: “[P]ut on the new nature, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness” (Eph 4:24). “[You] have put on the new nature, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. Here there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free man, but Christ is all, and in all” (Col 3:10f). The assumption is that the image of putting on Christ was developed by analogy with a man’s putting on of the cultic mask of the deity when he was initiated into mystery cults. For St. Paul, there is no question any more of masks and rituals, but of a process of spiritual transformation. The goal is the inward renewal of man, his real

assimilation to God, and thus his unity, the overcoming of all the barriers that have been, and continue to be, erected in the history of human sinfulness. The image of putting on Christ is, therefore, a dynamic image, bearing on the transformation of man and the world, the new humanity. Vestments are a reminder of all this, of this transformation in Christ, and of the new community that is supposed to arise from it. Vestments are a challenge to the priest to surrender himself to the dynamism of breaking out of the capsule of self and being fashioned anew by Christ and for Christ. They remind those who participate in the Mass of the new way that began with Baptism and continues with the Eucharist, the way that leads to the future world already delineated in our daily lives by the sacraments.

In his two epistles to the Corinthians, St. Paul gives further elaboration to the eschatological orientation of the image of clothing. In the first epistle he says: “[T]his perishable nature must put on the imperishable, and this mortal nature must put on immortality” (15:53). The Apostle gives us an even deeper insight into his own hopes and struggles in the fifth chapter of the second epistle. Paul describes the body of this earthly time as an “earthly tent”, which will be taken down, and looks ahead to the house not made with human hands, “eternal in the heavens”. He is anxious about the taking down of the tent, anxious about the “nakedness” in which he will then find himself. His hope is to be, not “unclothed”, but “further clothed”, to receive the “heavenly house”—the definitive body—as a new garment. The Apostle does not want to discard his body, he does not want to be bodiless. He is not interested in any flight of the soul from the “prison of the body”, as envisaged by the Pythagorean tradition taken up by Plato. He does not want flight but transformation. He hopes for resurrection. Thus the theology of clothing becomes a theology of the body. The body is more than an external dressing up of man—it is part of his very being, of his essential constitution. And yet this body is subject to decay. It is only a tent. It is provisional. But at the same time it is an anticipation of the definitive body, the definitive and complete form of human existence. The liturgical vestment carries this message in itself. It is a “further clothing”, not an “unclothing”, and the liturgy guides us on the way to this “further clothing”, on the way to the body’s salvation in the risen body of Jesus Christ, which is the new “house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens” (2 Cor 5:1). The Body of Christ, which we receive in the Eucharist, to which we are united in the Eucharist (“one Body with him”, cf. 1 Cor 6:12-20), saves us from “nakedness”, from

the bareness in which we cannot stand before God. In the context of this teaching of St. Paul, I am very fond of the old formula for the distribution of Holy Communion: “The Body of our Lord Jesus Christ preserve thy soul unto everlasting life.” These words turn the teaching of 2 Corinthians 5:1-10 into prayer. The soul on its own would be a sad fragment. But even before the general resurrection, it enters into the Body of Christ, which in a sense becomes our body, just as we are supposed to become his Body. The Body (of Christ) saves our soul for eternal life—for Greek thought a nonsensical paradox, but because of the risen Christ, living hope. The liturgical vestment has a meaning that goes beyond that of external garments. It is an anticipation of the new clothing, the risen Body of Jesus Christ, that new reality which awaits us when the earthly “tent” is taken down and which gives us a “place to stay” (cf. Jn 14:2: “In my Father’s house are many rooms”: the word translated “room” here really means “place to stay”, highlighting the definitiveness, the privilege of having somewhere we can remain).

When the Fathers were thinking about the theology of clothing, two other biblical texts came to their minds, which I should like to include in my reflections here to give us a better understanding of liturgical vestments. First there is the story of the Prodigal Son, in which the father, having embraced his son on his return, gives this instruction: “Bring quickly the best robe . . .” (Lk 15:22). In the Greek text, it says “the *first* robe”, and that is how the Fathers read and understood it. For them, the first robe is the robe in which Adam was created and which he lost after he had grasped at likeness to God. All the clothes subsequently worn by man are only a poor substitute for the light of God coming from within, which was Adam’s true “robe”. Thus, in reading the account of the Prodigal Son and his return, the Fathers heard the account of Adam’s fall, the fall of man (cf. Gen 2:7), and interpreted Jesus’ parable as a message about the return home and reconciliation of mankind as a whole. The man who in faith returns home receives back the first “robe”, is clothed again in the mercy and love of God, which are his true beauty. The white garment presented at Baptism is meant to suggest these great connections in salvation history, and at the same time it points toward the white garment of eternity, of which the Apocalypse speaks (cf. 19:8)—an expression of the purity and beauty of the risen body. The great arch that connects Adam’s creation and fall with the white garment of eternity is contained in the symbolism of liturgical vestments, and the cornerstone supporting the whole arch is Christ: “Put on Christ”—even now be one with

him, even now be members of his Body.

7. *Matter*

The Catholic liturgy is the liturgy of the Word made flesh—made flesh for the sake of the resurrection. And, as we have seen, it is a cosmic liturgy. Thus it is clear that not only do the human body and signs from the cosmos play an essential role in the liturgy but that the matter of this world is part of the liturgy. Matter comes into the liturgy in two ways: first, in the form of many kinds of symbols—the holy fire of Easter night, the candle and the flame that burns on it, the various kinds of liturgical objects such as the bell, the altar cloth, and so on. In the last century, Romano Guardini opened up our understanding of this symbolic world in a new way by his little book *Sacred Signs*. Recently, Bishop Kapellari of Klagenfurt gave us a new book, with many pictures, in which Guardini’s insights are developed, deepened, and applied to our present situation. There is no need, therefore, to discuss the matter here.

The second, even more important way in which matter comes into the liturgy is in the sacraments, the sacred actions that go back to Christ himself, which in the strict sense constitute the liturgy—precisely because they were not invented by men but were given to us in their substance by the Lord himself. Three of the seven sacraments relate directly to man as a person at very particular points in his life and consequently do not need any other “matter” than man himself in the situation to which the sacrament is ordered. First there is Penance, in which as sinners we beg for the word of forgiveness and renewal. Then there is Holy Orders, in which the Lord, by the bishop’s laying on of hands, gives a man mission and authority in succession to the ministry of the apostles. Finally, there is Matrimony, in which two human beings give themselves to each other for a lifelong union and thereby become a real, living, and tangible image of the covenant between Christ and his Church (cf. Eph 5:27-32).

But then there are four sacraments—Baptism, Confirmation, the Eucharist, and the Anointing of the Sick—in which material things become the vessels of God’s action upon us. It is not for this little book to develop a theology of the sacraments. I should just like to highlight the elements that come into the liturgy here as a mediation of the divine action. For these elements, which the

Lord himself chose, are full of meaning. We need to meditate on them as such if we are to understand the spirit of the liturgy better. They are: water, (olive) oil, (wheaten) bread, and wine. Let us remember in parenthesis here that of the four elements in antiquity—water, air, fire, earth—the first three are all symbols of the Holy Spirit, while the earth represents man, who comes from the earth and to the earth returns. Fire and air in the form of breath are present in many ways in the symbolism of the liturgy, but only water, which comes from above and yet belongs to the earth, has become, as the primordial element of life, sacramental matter in the strict sense. The Church's Tradition discerns a twofold symbolism in water. The salt water of the sea is a symbol of death, a threat and a danger; it reminds us of the Red Sea, which was deadly to the Egyptians, though the Israelites were rescued from it. Baptism is a kind of passing through the Red Sea. A death occurs within it. It is more than a bath or washing—it touches the very depths of existence, as far as death itself. It is a crucifying communion with Christ. This is precisely what is signified by the Red Sea, which is an image of death and resurrection (cf. Rom 6:1-11). On the other hand, water flowing from a spring is a symbol of the source of all life, *the* symbol of life. That is why the early Church laid down that Baptism had to be administered by means of “living water”, spring water, so that Baptism could be experienced as the beginning of new life. In this connection, the Fathers always had at the back of their minds the conclusion of the Passion narrative according to St. John: blood and water flow from the opened side of Jesus; Baptism and Eucharist spring from the pierced heart of Jesus. He has become the living spring that makes us alive (cf. Jn 19:34f.; 1 Jn 5:6). At the Feast of Tabernacles Jesus had prophesied that streams of living water would flow from the man who came to him and drank: “Now this he said about the Spirit, which those who believed in him were to receive” (Jn 7:39). The baptized man himself becomes a spring. When we think of the great saints of history, from whom streams of faith, hope, and love really came forth, we can understand these words and thus understand something of the dynamism of Baptism, of the promise and vocation it contains.

When we look at the three other elements in the sacraments of the Church—olive oil, wheaten bread, and wine, we are struck by the characteristic that distinguishes them from the gift of water. Whereas water is the common element of life for the whole earth and is therefore suitable in all places as a door of entry to communion with Christ, in the case of the other three

elements we are dealing with the typical gifts of Mediterranean culture. We encounter this triad in explicit association in the glorious psalm of creation, Psalm 104, where the Psalmist thanks God for giving man the food of the earth and “wine to gladden the heart of man, oil to make his face shine, and bread to strengthen man’s heart” (v. 15). These three elements of Mediterranean life express the goodness of creation, in which we receive the goodness of the Creator himself. And now they become the gift of an even higher goodness, a goodness that makes our face shine anew in likeness to the “Anointed” God, to his beloved Son, Jesus Christ, a goodness that changes the bread and wine of the earth into the Body and Blood of the Redeemer, so that, through the Son made man, we may have communion with the triune God himself.

At this point comes the objection that these gifts have a symbolic force only in the Mediterranean area and that in other growing regions they ought to be replaced by elements appropriate to those regions. This is the same issue that we encountered when we were discussing the inversion of the cosmic symbolism of the seasons in the Southern Hemisphere. The answer we gave there applies again here: in the interplay of culture and history, history has priority. God has acted in history and, through history, given the gifts of the earth their significance. The elements become sacraments through connection with the unique history of God in relation to man in Jesus Christ. As we have said before, Incarnation does not mean doing as we please. On the contrary, it binds us to the history of a particular time. Outwardly, that history may seem fortuitous, but it is the form of history willed by God, and for us it is the trustworthy trace he has imprinted on the earth, the guarantee that we are not thinking up things for ourselves but are truly touched by God and come into touch with him. Precisely through what is particular and once-for-all, the here and now, we emerge from the “ever and never” vagueness of mythology. It is with this particular face, with this particular human form, that Christ comes to us, and precisely thus does he make us brethren beyond all boundaries. Precisely thus do we recognize him: “It is the Lord” (Jn 21:7).

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PART ONE

Chapter 1

Particularly important for the theme of play is J. Huizinga, *Homo ludens* (Amsterdam, 1939 [English translation: New York: J. and J. Harper, 1970]) as well as the precious little book of Hugo Rahner's, drawn entirely from the Fathers: *Der spielende Mensch* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1952); English translation: *Man at Play*, translated by Brian Battershaw and Edward Quinn (New York: Herder and Herder, 1967).

In *The Spirit of the Liturgy* Romano Guardini to a large extent unfolded the special nature of the liturgy with the help of the concept of play. However, in the fourth and fifth printing (1920), he inserted a chapter "On the Seriousness of the Liturgy", which clearly limits the concept of play.

Chapter 2

On the *exitus-reditus* theme:

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Chapter 3

The view set out here, of the path from the Old Testament to the New and of the nature of the liturgy in general, is one I have developed over the course of many years through my acquaintance with the Scriptures and the liturgy. Preliminary sketches for it, together with references to the literature, can be found in the two works of mine mentioned above, *The Feast of Faith* and *A New Song for the Lord* as well as in the article "Eucharistie und Mission" (*Forum katholische Theologie* 14 [1998], 81-98), which has been published in several different languages.

PART TWO

Chapter 1

On the "Church between the Testaments", see:

Ratzinger, J. *Volk und Haus Gottes in Augustins Lehre von der Kirche*. 2d ed. Pp. 304-8. St. Ottilien, 1992.

On *semel quia semper*, see:

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Chapter 2

My presentation here takes its bearings from L. Bouyer, *Architecture et liturgie* (Paris: Cerf, 1991). The page numbers given refer to the English edition: *Liturgy and Architecture* (Notre Dame, Ind.: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1967).

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Chapter 3

Here once again I refer to Bouyer and my own *Feast of Faith*. More of the literature can be found in the latter.

Chapter 4

On faith in the Real Presence and its unfolding in theology, see:

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Chapter 5

As ever, the handbooks of liturgiology mentioned above should be consulted. On the question of Sunday, see also my own book, *A New Song for the Lord*.

In addition, see:

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PART THREE

Chapter 1

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Chapter 2

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PART FOUR

Chapter 1

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Chapter 2

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especially pp. 139-209.

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Endnotes

Part One

Chapter One

¹ Cardinal Ratzinger here uses the German word *Ersatz*, which is generally translated as “substitute” (as in *Ersatzkaffee*, coffee made out of a substitute for coffee beans such as acorns). I have not used “substitute” because of the more positive theological connotations of that English word when used as a translation of *Stellvertreter*. The Cardinal is contrasting the two ways in which one thing can take the place of another. In the first case, there is mere absence: something that should be there is missing (cf. “a poor substitute for real coffee”). In the second case, there is mysterious presence: somehow one thing is present in the other. This explains the contrast I have put into the English between “replacement” (*Ersatz*) sacrifices and “representation” (*Vertretung*) sacrifices.—Trans. [Back to text.](#)

Part Two

Chapter Two

¹ The word “orientation” comes from *oriens*, “the East”. “Orientation” means “east-ing”, turning toward the east. [Back to text.](#)

Part Four

Chapter Two

¹ Echternach, in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, holds an annual “Dancing Procession” (*Springprozession, procession dansante*) in honor of St. Willibrord, the Apostle of the Netherlands, who died in 739 in the Abbey of Echternach, which he founded. It is a tradition that goes back to the Middle Ages and takes place on the Tuesday after Pentecost. As the thousands of pilgrims pass round the tomb of the saint and through the streets of the little town, they dance to an ancient melody, hopping twice on the right foot and twice on the left. At the same time they call upon the saint for his

protection against epilepsy and St. Vitus' Dance. [Back to text.](#)