Liturgy, Theurgy, and Active Participation: On Theurgic Participation in God

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis, providing a metaphysical grounding for liturgical participation, argues that 'active participation' in the liturgy must be understood principally as our participation in God's act and particularly in the act of Christ and only secondarily as our ritual involvement. Engaging Thomas Aquinas, Joseph Ratzinger, and Catherine Pickstock, as well as Neoplatonist philosophy, both Pagan and Christian, this thesis proposes that this should be understood in terms of theurgy, which is the human participation in divine action, which finds its consummation in the Incarnation.

This thesis argues that without the Incarnation, all acts will remain extrinsic and imposed but that acts can become real and intrinsic precisely because the Incarnation makes possible true union with the divine, a metaphysical union-in-distinction, without confusion, because this union is not extrinsic. It is rooted in one person or *suppositum*, the incarnate *Logos*. Through union with Christ, as the one common focus of the divine-human relation, we can have true union with God and may offer true worship. In order to make sense of active participation, then, we need to understand theology in theurgic terms, where theurgy is understood not as a mechanical 'coercion' of God but as a participation in His act, in creation and through Christ as the true theurgist, the 'master theurgist,' whose work transforms our act and the liturgy.

Doing so, we find a theological and philosophical basis of how we may participate in the liturgy as a divine work, without either 'collapsing' into God, and consequently denying their real and substantial, though derived, integrity, or divorcing our works from their divine source. This thesis, therefore, explores, liturgically, the relation between grace and nature, noting that in order to obtain a deeper understanding of the liturgical act, we also need a deeper understanding of its ground in God.

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ABBREVIATIONS

General abbreviations:

CofE:	The Church of England.
CoN:	The Church of Norway.
RCC:	The Roman Catholic Church.

Aquinas:[1]

De ente:	*On Being and Essence* (*De ente et essentia*), trans. Robert T. Miller.
De pot.:	*Disputed Questions on the Power of God* (*Quaestiones Disputatae de potentia Dei*), trans. English Dominican Fathers.
De princ. nat.:	*The Principles of Nature* (*De principiis naturae*), trans. Roman A. Kocourek.
De spir. creat.:	*Disputed Questions on Spiritual Creatures* (*Quaestiones Disputatae de spiritualibus creaturis*), trans. Mary C. Fitzpatrick, in collaboration with John J. Wellmuth.
De subst. sep.:	*On Separate Substances* (*De substantiis separatis*), trans. Francis J. Lescoe.
De ver.:	*Disputed Questions on Truth* (*Quaestiones Disputatae de Veritate*), trans. Robert William Mulligan, James V. McGlynn, and Robert W. Schmidt.
In De Hebd.:	*An Exposition of the On the Hebdomads of Boethius* (*Expositio libri Boetii De ebdomadibus*), Latin and English, trans. Janice L. Schultz and Edward A. Synan (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2001).
In Metaph.:	*Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics*, trans. John P. Rowan.
SCG:	*Summa Contra Gentiles*, trans. Lawrence Shapcote.
ST:	*Summa Theologiae*, trans. English Dominican Fathers.

Pseudo-Dionysius:[2]

CD:	*Corpus Dionysiacum* (the Pseudo-Dionysian corpus as a whole).
CH:	*The Celestial Hierarchy* (*De coelesti hierarchia*).
DN:	*The Divine Names* (*De Divinis Nominibus*).
EH:	*The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* (*De Ecclesiastica Hierarchia*).
Ep.:	*The Letters* (*Epistulae*).
MT:	*The Mystical Theology* (*De Mystica Theologia*).

1 If not otherwise noted, the Latin texts and translations used is from *Opera Omnia of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Lander, WY: The Aquinas Institute for the Study of Sacred Doctrine, 2012-), which are available from the publisher's own website (https://aquinas.cc/), last accessed 28 April 2021. Translations not from the Aquinas Institute are listed specifically in the bibliography. The standard Latin editions are the Leonine Commission (*Sancti Thomae Aquinatis Doctoris Angelici. Opera Omnia. Iussu Leonis XIII*, Rome: Vatican Polyglot Press, 1882-) and the Parma edition (*Opera Omnia*, Parma: Fiaccadori, 1852-1873). I have sourced the Latin texts online, both from the Aquinas Institute and *Corpus Thomisticum* (Fundación Tomás de Aquino, University of Navarra, 2000-, https://www.corpusthomisticum.org), last accessed 9 May 2021.

2 For the Greek text, see *Corpus Dionysiacum* I, ed. Beate Regina Suchla (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1990) and *Corpus Dionysiacum* II, eds. Günter Heil and Adolf Martin Ritter (2. Auflage. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012), hereafter: *CD*. There are two complete translations in English, *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, trans. Colm Luibheid, in collaboration with Paul Rorem (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1987) and *The Works of Dionysius the Areopagite*, 2 vols., trans. John Parker (London: James Parker and Co., 1897, 1899). If not otherwise noted, I use Parker's translation. While it is far from perfect, it is closer to the Greek text and does not tone down the Neoplatonic roots. See Alexander Golitzin, "*Pseudo-Dionysius: A Commentary on the Texts and an Introduction to Their Influence* by Paul Rorem" (*Mystics Quarterly* 21:1, 1995), 28-38; Eric Perl, *Theophany: The Neoplatonic Philosophy of Dionysius the Areopagite* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2007), ix; Charles M. Stang, *Apophasis and Pseudonymity in Dionysius the Areopagite: "No Longer I"* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 1, n1.

Other abbreviations:

CA:	*Confessio Augustana* or the *Augsburg Confession* (the most central Lutheran confession).[3]
CW:	*Common Worship: Services and Prayers for the Church of England*.
DM:	Iamblichus, *De mysteriis* (*On the Mysteries*), Greek and English, intro. and trans. Emma C. Clarke, John M. Dillon, and Jackson P. Hershbell.
GDNK 2020:	*Gudsteneste med rettleiingar*, current Divine Liturgy of the Church of Norway (2020).
SC:	*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, the Second Vatican Council's Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy.[4]
TCO:	*The Chaldean Oracles*, ed. and trans. Ruth Majercik.[5]

3 For the English translations of the Lutheran confessions, see *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, eds. Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2000). For the Latin and German, see *Die Bekenntnisschriften der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche*, vollständige neuedition, ed. Irene Dingel (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014).

4 Documents of the council are found in *Vatican II Documents* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2011).

5 *TCO* (with fragment number) refers to the fragments and translations of the *Oracles*. References to the commentary or introduction will refer to the book itself (Majercik, *The Chaldean Oracles*).

STATEMENT OF COPYRIGHT

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INTRODUCTION

1 Background

The Second Vatican Council's constitution on the Sacred Liturgy expresses a central idea of liturgical theology, that "all the faithful should be led to that fully conscious, and active participation in liturgical celebrations which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy," and that such participation "is their right and duty by reason of their baptism."[1] This can be understood in different ways. Some have understood this in principally practical-functional ways, calling for active (practical) involvement of the faithful in concrete liturgical celebrations, while not denying the importance of a grounding in God, based partly on the fact that this is a participation to which we are to "be led" (implying that it is active and not static).[2] Others, while not denying the importance of the active (practical) involvement of the faithful, have understood this principally as a metaphysical concept, calling for our participation in a divine work.[3] This discussion opens up to some important questions: who is active in the liturgy, and what does it

1 *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (hereafter: *SC*), 14, cf. Alcuin Reid, ed., *T&T Clark Companion to Liturgy* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016), 513-514. On Vatican II documents, see abbreviations, p.5, n4.

2 Anscar J. Chupungco, *Cultural Adaptation of the Liturgy* (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1982); Anscar J. Chupungco, "The Implementation of Sacrosanctum Concilium," in *T&T Clark Companion to Liturgy*, ed., Reid, 279-295; Anscar J. Chupungco, "The Vision of the Constitution on the Liturgy," in *T&T Clark Companion to Liturgy*, ed., Reid, 261-277; Anscar J. Chupungco, ed. *Handbook for Liturgical Studies*, 5 vols. (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1997-2000); Godfried Danneels, "Liturgy Forty Years After the Second Vatican Council: High Point or Recession," in *Liturgy in a Postmodern World*, ed., Keith Pecklers (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark/Continuum, 2003), 8, 10-17, 24-25; Massimo Faggioli, "The Liturgical Reform from 1963 until Today . . . and Beyond" (*Toronto Journal of Theology* 32:2, 2016), 209-213; Clare V. Johnson, "From Organic Growth to Liturgico-Plasticity: Reconceptualizing the Process of Liturgical Reform" (*Theological Studies* 76:1, 2015), 87-111; Léon Ngoy Kalumba, "The Zairean Rite: The Roman Missal for the Dioceses of Zaire (Congo)," in *Liturgy in a Postmodern World*, ed., Pecklers, 94-98; Peter C. Phan, "Liturgical Inculturation: Unity in Diversity in the Postmodern Age," in *Liturgy in a Postmodern World*, ed., Pecklers, 75-79.

3 Joseph Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, commemorative ed. (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius, 2018), 185-191; Joseph Ratzinger, *Theology of the Liturgy: The Sacramental Foundation of Christian Existence* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius, 2014), 541-557; Alcuin Reid, "In Pursuit of Participation—Liturgy and Liturgists in Early Modern and Post Enlightenment Catholicism," in *T&T Clark Companion to Liturgy*, ed., Reid, 133-151; Alcuin Reid, "On the Council Floor: The Council Fathers' Debate of the Schema on the Sacred Liturgy," in *Authentic Liturgical Renewal in Contemporary Perspective*, ed., Uwe Michael Lang (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2017), 125-143; Alcuin Reid, *The Organic Development of the Liturgy*, 2nd. ed. (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius, 2005); Richard J. Schuler, "Participation" (*Sacred Music* 114:4, 1987), 7-10.

mean to engage in it? How should we understand the relationship between divine and human agency in Christian practices, and particularly in the liturgical action? If God is the supreme agent of the liturgical act, how do we understand human participation in the same? How is it even possible to speak of human agency in this context, and why is it even necessary?

In this thesis, I aim to argue that this is best understood in principally dogmatic or metaphysical terms, calling for our participation in the divine work. If not, the ceremonies become isolated events at a particular time and place that some people just happen to be involved in, rather than a participation in the divinely given order in creation and its relation to God. We can see this expressed when the Constitution states that the liturgy is "an exercise of the priestly office of Jesus Christ" and that "in the liturgy the whole public worship is performed by the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ, that is, by the Head and His members" (*SC*, 7). The constitution, therefore, does not reduce 'active participation' to mere occasional or wilful involvement but presupposes participation in Christ, in the divine work, whereby he offers Himself (Hebrews 8:1-6). While the constitution notes that "all the faithful should *be led* to that fully conscious, and active participation in liturgical celebrations which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy,"[4] which implies a level of practicality, any practical involvement follows from our basic participation as creatures in God and as children of God through faith in Christ. The one who leads us must be God, if mediated through intermediaries.[5] But, as I will argue more later, this is not static in the first place. When we participate in the divine, this can grow and come to expression is many ways.[6] The aim, however, is not to argue for a dogmatic and metaphys-

4 *SC*, 14, emphasis added.

5 See more in chapter five, pp.183-185.

6 See chapter one, pp.40-49, cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Disputed Questions on the Power of God* (*Quaestiones Disputatae de potentia Dei*, hereafter: *De pot.*), q.3, a.7. For notes on the Thomistic corpus, see abbreviations, p.4, n1. This participatory approach has gotten an upswing in later decades, both in philosophy and theology. See Arthur Macdonald Allchin, *Participation in God: A Forgotten Strand in Anglican Tradition* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1988); J. Todd Billings, *Calvin, Participation, and the Gift: The Activity of Believers in Union with Christ* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Hans Boersma, *Heavenly Participation: The Weaving of a Sacramental Tapestry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011); Andrew Davison, *Participation in God: A Study in Christian Doctrine and Metaphysics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University

ical approach over and against a ritualistic one, but to reconcile them. As we are embodied creatures, existing in specific places, liturgy always exists in particular ritual contexts.[7] *Confessio Augustana* (hereafter: *CA*), for instance, teaches that the Church, though she exists and is organised outside its local context, is constituted most particularly in the celebrated liturgy. She is "the assembly of saints (Lt. *congregatio sanctorum*) in which the gospel is taught purely and the sacraments are administered rightly" (VII, cf. VII, XXVIII).[8] My goal here is to find a framework in which to understand this active participation and I propose that this framework should be a Christian theurgic Neoplatonism. But what is theurgic Neoplatonism?

In Greek antiquity, particularly in Neoplatonic circles, a form of ritualistic philosophy emerged, advocating for 'theurgy' or 'divine work' (Gk. *theourgía*), formed from Gk. *theós* ('god') and *érgon* ('work').[9] Inspired by Platonic philosophy and Babylonian and Egyptian religious prac-

Press, 2019); Cornelio Fabro, "The Intensive Hermeneutics of Thomistic Philosophy: The Notion of Participation" (*The Review of Metaphysics* 27:3, 1974), 449-491; Jorge N. Ferrer and Jacob H., Sherman, eds., *The Participatory Turn: Spirituality, Mysticism, Religious Studies* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2008); John Milbank, Catherine Pickstock, and Graham Ward, eds., *Radical Orthodoxy: A new theology* (London: Routledge, 1999), 1-20; Simon Oliver, "Introducing Radical Orthodoxy: from participation to late modernity," in *The Radical Orthodoxy Reader*, eds., Simon Oliver and John Milbank (New York, NY: Routledge, 2009), 3-27, esp. 13-21; Fran O'Rourke, *Pseudo-Dionysius and the metaphysics of Aquinas* (New ed. Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005); Adrian Pabst, *Metaphysics: The Creation of Hierarchy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012); Norman Russell, *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); John Michael Rziha, *Perfecting Human Actions: St. Thomas Aquinas on Human Participation in Eternal Law* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2009); Klyne Snodgrass, "The Gospel of Participation," in *Earliest Christianity within the Boundaries of Judaism: Essays in Honor of Bruce Chilton*, eds., Alan J. Avery-Peck, Craig A. Evans, and Jacob Neusner (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 413-430; Olli-Pekka Vainio, *Justification and Participation in Christ: The Development of the Lutheran Doctrine of Justification from Luther to the Formula of Concord (1580)* (Leiden: Brill, 2008); Rudi A. te Velde, *Aquinas on God: The 'Divine Science' of the Summa Theologiae* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 139-142, 160-165, 171-178; Rudi A. te Velde, *Participation and Substantiality in Thomas Aquinas* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), esp. 35-43, 164-183; John Webster, "Perfection and Participation," in *The Analogy of Being: Invention of the Antichrist or the Wisdom of God?*, ed., Thomas Joseph White (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 379-394; A. N. Williams, *The Ground of Union: Deification in Aquinas and Palamas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); John F. Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas: From Finite Being to Uncreated Being* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2000), 94-131.

7 Juliette J. Day, *Reading the Liturgy: An exploration of texts in Christian worship* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2014), 16-20, 45-51, 110, 145-165; Alexander Schmemann, *For the Life of the World: Sacraments and Orthodoxy*, 2nd ed. (Crestwood, NY: SVS Press, 1997), 135-151, esp. 136-138, cf. chapter three, pp.112-114.

8 For notes on the Lutheran confessions, see abbreviations, p.5, n3. If not otherwise noted, quotations from *CA* follow the translation of the Latin text.

9 There has been a significant amount of research on theurgy, in both Pagan and Christian contexts, in the 20th century and beyond, especially since the 1980s onwards. For a few discussions and introductions, see Crystal Addey, *Divination and Theurgy in Neoplatonism: Oracles of the Gods* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016); Eu-

tices, this has in turn influenced Pagans and Christians alike. This tradition finds its roots among the so-called Chaldeans, who wrote, or at least compiled, a sacred second century AD text, the *Chaldean Oracles*, at times called 'the Bible of Neoplatonists.'[10] This text focuses specifically on 'anagogy' (Gk. *anagōgē*), on the ascent of the human spirit or soul (and possibly the body as well) to the gods, through a so-called 'sacrament of immortality.'[11] There are tendencies, in the Chaldean tradition, towards a spiritualistic and coercive understanding of theurgy, often called magic or sorcery,[12] maintaining that there exists a 'sympathy' between a heavenly realm and ours, permitting "the theurgist, or "god-worker," to use the earthly to manipulate the heavenly, that is, to use special elements and words in rituals in order to compel the gods to do our bidding."[13] Later, with Iamblichus, arguably the most central (critical) interpreter of this tradi-

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gene Afonasin, John Dillon, and John F. Finamore, eds., *Iamblichus and the Foundations of Late Platonism* (Leiden: Brill, 2012); Riccardo Chiaradonna and Adrien Lecerf, "Iamblichus," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Fall 2019 Edition (ed., Edward N. Zalta); Gregory Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul: The Neoplatonism of Iamblichus* (2nd ed. Angelico Press/Sophia Perennis, 2014); Charles M. Stang, *Apophasis and Pseudonymity in Dionysius the Areopagite: "No Longer I"* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Peter T. Struck, "Pagan and Christian Theurgies: Iamblichus, Pseudo-Dionysius, Religion and Magic in Late Antiquity" (*Ancient World* 32:2, 2001), 25-38; Ilinca Tanaseanu-Döbler, *Theurgy in Late Antiquity: The Invention of a Ritual Tradition* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013); Algis Uždavinys, *Philosophy and Theurgy in Late Antiquity* (Kettering: Angelico Press/Sophia Perennis, 2014); Sarah Klitenic Wear and John Dillon, *Dionysius the Areopagite and the Neoplatonist Tradition: Despoiling the Hellenes* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), esp. 1-13.

10 Ruth Majercik, *The Chaldean Oracles: Text, Translation, and Commentary* (Leiden: Brill, 1989, hereafter: *TCO*), 2, cf. 1-46, 138-221; Hans Lewy, *Chaldaean Oracles and Theurgy: Mysticism Magic and Platonism in the Later Roman Empire* (Paris: Institut d'Études Augustiniennes, 2011), 741; Anne Sheppard, "Proclus' Attitude to Theurgy" (*The Classical Quarterly* 31:1, 1982), 212. For notes on the *Chaldean Oracles*, see abbreviations, p.5, n5.

11 Alan Philip Darley, "Ritual as erotic anagogy in Pseudo-Dionysius: a Reformed critique" (*International Journal of Philosophy and Theology* 79:3, 2018), 262; Lewy, *Chaldaean Oracles and Theurgy*, 177-226, 276-278, 305, 487-489; Majercik, *The Chaldean Oracles*, 30-46, 199-200; Tanaseanu-Döbler, *Theurgy in Late Antiquity*, 21-44, 56-95. From *TCO*, frag. 158, there are some disagreements among scholars. Some hold that matter will be perfected and other that it will perish. See Lewy, *Chaldaean Oracles and Theurgy*, 219; Majercik, *The Chaldean Oracles*, 199-200; Tanaseanu-Döbler, *Theurgy in Late Antiquity*, 39.

12 If possible, I avoid using the term 'magic' in this thesis. As a first-order term, it is rejected by the central actors in both Pagan and Christian theurgy, as a second-order term it is notoriously hard to define and practically useless, and it is usually (at least in modern parlance) meant to mean something evil, bad or irrational, i.e. as a description of what 'the others' are doing. See Addey, *Divination and Theurgy*, 32-38, 171-213; Kevin Corrigan and L. Michael Harrington, "Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite," 4.2, in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Summer 2019 Edition (ed., Edward N. Zalta); Wouter. J. Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Academy: Rejected Knowledge and Western Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 164-177.

13 Charles M. Stang, "Dionysius, Paul and the Significance of the Pseudonym" (*Modern Theology* 24:4, 2008), 544.

tion,[14] we see a shift. Though Iamblichus affirms that the ultimate end is to be freed from the body in anagogical ascent, anagogy happens, paradoxically, by a further kenotic descent into matter, which is not evil. Challenging Plotinus's emphasis on inner contemplation as a means to achieve unity (Gk. *hénōsis*) with the One, his rejection of matter as evil or bad, and his idea that the soul is not fully descended, Iamblichus upholds (alongside Proclus) the importance of ritual practice, holding that created reality, including materiality, becomes absolutely central for human ascent and that rather than compelling the divine to do our bidding, we "step into the stream of divine work and are thereby deified."[15] In this tradition, contact with the divine, and recollection, is always given through physical creation and through the body (which is not evil), though it should also be noted that Iamblichus still regards the body as less noble than the soul and holds that the the ultimate goal, for those who are able, is to transcend matter. Iamblichean Neoplatonists see theurgy first and foremost as a ritual and embodied enactment or participation in a work that is already divine (which was also adopted by Christians, though in a transformed manner), and not as a 'manipulation' of divine forces, in contrast to some earlier tendencies

[14] Afonasin, Dillon, and Finamore, eds., *Iamblichus and the Foundations of Late Platonism*; Chiaradonna and Lecerf, "Iamblichus"; María Jesús Hermoso Félix, "Philosophy and Theurgy in the Thought of Iamblichus," in *Greek Philosophy and Mystery Cults*, eds., María José Martin-Velasco and María José Garcia Blanco (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016), 171-186; Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul*. For Iamblichus's main works, see *De Anima*, Greek and English, trans. and comm. John F. Finamore and John M. Dillon (Leiden: Brill, 2002) and *De mysteriis*, Greek and English, intro. and trans. Emma C. Clarke, John M. Dillon, and Jackson P. Hershbell (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003, hereafter: *DM*). *DM* is the most central work.

[15] Stang, "Dionysius, Paul and the Significance of the Pseudonym," 544, cf. Addey, *Divination and Theurgy*, 79-80, 98-102, 252-255; R. M. van den Berg, "Plotinus' Attitude to Traditional Cult: A Note on Porphyry VP c. 10" (*Ancient Philosophy* 19, 1999), 345-360 (esp. 358-359); Radek Chlup, *Proclus: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 47-136, 163-184; Eyjólfur Kjalar Emilsson, "Plotinus' doctrine of badness as matter in *Ennead* I.8 [51]," in *Platonism and Christian Thought in Late Antiquity*, eds., Panagiotis G. Pavlos et al. (London: Routledge, 2019), 78-99; Wayne J. Hankey, *God In Himself: Aquinas' Doctrine of God as Expounded in the Summa Theologiae* (Reprinted ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 48-49; John Milbank and Aaron Riches, "Neoplatonic Theurgy and Christian Incarnation," (foreword to Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul*), xiv-xvi; Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul*, xxviii, 26, 34-35, 104, 108-109, 126, 154, 173-182, 232-233, 267. Addey, *Divination and Theurgy*, 173-180, 199-211 notes that the Plotinian doctrine is not 'anti-ritualistic.' While Plotinus holds that the soul is not fully descended, he still values ritual as an inner concept. Arguments to the contrary, Addey argues, are based on a modern dichotomy between thought and action. This, of course, reveals some central similarities but also central divergences, from a Christian view. The Christian hope is not to be freed from the body but for it to be resurrected. But this hope is not a hope for mere reconstruction but for a perfected material existence, a perfecting which also includes the soul (cf. 1 Corinthians 15).

to emphasises that we can 'compel' the divine.[16] As Peter Struck puts it, commenting on the Iamblichean notion of theurgy: "Theurgy is a divine act, a *θεῖον ἔργον*, insofar as it is action, established by gods, put into use by humans, whose effect is to bring the material world (including that part of the celebrant which is material) into harmony with the divine order."[17] A central feature of this worldview, which we also find later in Aquinas, is the distinction between *monos*, *prodos*, and *epistrophe*, "the plenitudinous source, the coming forth, and the return (or 'revision')."[18] The *monos* is the source or the One, while *prodos* and *epistrophe* represents the participatory emanation from the One and the return to Him.[19] In the Iamblichean tradition, theurgy is this return, happening through ritual and the use of certain symbols, which "the Paternal Intellect has sown … throughout the cosmos," to quote the *Chaldean Oracles*.[20] This tradition was highly influential on Christianity, particularly on Pseudo-Dionysius.[21] Before I go on to explain why I propose a Christian theurgic framework, however, I need to address an important question: is theurgy not Pagan?

Exploring the reasons why people hold that theurgy, as understood in the Iamblichean tradition, is necessarily Pagan, we see that they tend to fall into one of three categories: (1) A Christian rejection of theurgy and theurgic language as a whole, often from an Augustinian

16 See the introduction, xxvi (part 3), to *DM* (cf. pp.xiii-lii); Majercik, *The Chaldean Oracles*, 199-200; Stang, "Dionysius, Paul and the Significance of the Pseudonym," 544.

17 Struck, "Pagan and Christian Theurgies," 30.

18 Davison, *Participation in God*, 64.

19 Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, 2nd ed., reprint, ed., trans., intro., and comm. E.R. Dodds (Oxford: Clarendon, 1971), props. 25-39, cf. 1-13, 23-24. In Aquinas, this is expressed through the binary pair of *exitus*, emanating or coming forth from God (God as the beginning of a thing), and *reditus*, turning or returning to God (God as the end or *telos* of a thing), though he understands the two as participating in God (the *monos*) as their source. See Brendan Thomas Sammon, "Redeeming Chenu? A Reconsideration of the Neoplatonic Influence on Aquinas's *Summa Theologiae*" (*The Heythrop Journal*, 20 June 2017), 1-17. Also see chapter one, pp.28-29, 33.

20 *TCO*, frag. 108, cf. *DM* V, 18, 24; VI, 6. Also see Addey, *Divination and Theurgy*, 79-80, 283-290; Uždavinys, *Philosophy and Theurgy*, 204-228.

21 Stang, *Apophasis and Pseudonymity*; Struck, "Pagan and Christian Theurgies"; Wear and Dillon, *Dionysius the Areopagite and the Neoplatonist Tradition*. Pseudo-Dionysius's works are *The Divine Names* (*De Divinis Nominibus*, hereafter: *DN*), *The Celestial (or heavenly) Hierarchy* (*De coelesti hierarchia*, hereafter: *CH*), *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* (*De Ecclesiastica Hierarchia*, hereafter: *EH*), *The Mystical Theology* (*De Mystica Theologia*, hereafter: *MT*), and *The Letters/Epistles* (*Epistulae*, hereafter: *Ep.*). For notes on the Pseudo-Dionysian corpus, see abbreviations, p.4, n2.

perspective, presupposing that there can be no Christian foundation for theurgy;[22] (2) a Pagan re-interpretation of the Pseudo-Dionysian tradition, arguing that Christian theurgy, especially in this tradition, is covertly non-Christian;[23] and (3) a Christian re-interpretation of Pseudo-Dionysius, arguing that while he uses Neoplatonic and theurgic language, his use differs significantly enough from the Iamblichean and Procleans traditions that it boils down to a mere borrowing of terminology.[24] I take issue with all three. While theurgy is, in some sense, Pagan, as it has its background in Greek philosophy, the same can be said of many other concepts that have informed Christian theology throughout history: the use of *Logos* in Jewish and Christian thought,[25] the Nicene use of *homooúsion tō Patrí* ("of one Being with the Father"),[26] Aquinas's use of Aristotle, Proclus, or Islamic and Jewish philosophers,[27] and the Christian

[22] Augustine states that theurgy "promises a fraudulent purification of souls by the invocation of demons," in *City of God*, trans. David S. Wiesen et al., in *Loeb Classical Library*, ed. Jeffrey Henderson, vols. 411-417 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1957-1972), X, c.10. Also see Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. Carolyn J. B. Hammond, in *Loeb Classical Library*, ed. Jeffrey Henderson, vols. 26-27 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014, 2016), X, c.42 (67); James K. A. Smith, *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy: Mapping a Post-secular Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004), 112, n85; James K. A. Smith, *Speech and Theology: Language and the logic of incarnation* (London: Routledge, 2002), 170-176, cf. Addey, *Divination and Theurgy*, 4, 18, 21, 47-48, 85-88, 106, 152-157, 180-183 (cf. 83-126).

[23] In his introduction to Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, xii, xxvi-xxxiii, Eric R. Dodds argues that Pseudo-Dionysius was an unknown crypto-Pagan Proclean Neoplatonist, while Tuomo Lankila, "The Corpus Areopagiticum as a Crypto-Pagan Project" (*Journal for Late Antique Religion and Culture* 5, 2011), 14-40 and Carlo Maria Mazzucchi, "Damascio, autore del *Corpus Dionysiacum*, e il dialogo *Περὶ πολιτικῆς ἐπιστήμης*" (*Aevum* 80, 2006), 299-334 take this further, arguing that he was actually Damascius, the last head of the Neoplatonist School in Athens. Lankila, for example, argues that we should ignore Pseudo-Dionysius's 'overt claim of Christianity,' seeing the corpus as a crypto-Pagan project, where the author was looking forward to a moment when the polytheistic religion could be resurrected. While Lankila claims that his argument is not about what counts as 'genuine Christianity,' or whether or not Christianity could be Neoplatonist, it is hard to see what other reasons one would have of putting forward the thesis in the first place, especially considering the author's 'overt claim of Christianity.' For arguments against this, see Gioacchino Curiello, "Pseudo-Dionysius and Damascius: An Impossible Identification" (*Dionysius* 31, 2013), 101-116.

[24] Andrew Louth, "Pagan Theurgy and Christian Sacramentalism" (*The Journal of Theological Studies*, new series, 27:2, 1986), 432-438; *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, trans. Colm Luibheid, in collaboration with Paul Rorem (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1987), 52, n11; Paul E. Rorem, "Iamblichus and the Anagogical Method in Pseudo-Dionysian Liturgical Theology," in *Studia Patristica*, vol. XVIII (part one), ed., Elizabeth A. Livingstone (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1982), 456.

[25] George R. Beasley-Murray, *John* (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1999), 6-10; Erich S. Gruen, *Constructs of Identity in Hellenistic Judaism: Essays on Early Jewish Literature and History* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2016), esp. 21-75, 113-131.

[26] *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, eds. Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2000), 22 (cf. 19-20, 22-23); J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, 3rd ed. (London: Continuum, 2006).

[27] Rahim Acar, *Talking about God and Talking about Creation: Avicenna's and Thomas Aquinas' Positions* (Leiden: Brill, 2005); Edward Booth, "Thomas Aquinas: The 'Aufhebung' of Radical Aristotelian Ontology into a Pseudodionysian-Proclean Ontology of 'Esse'," in Edward Booth, *Aristotelian Aporetic Ontology in*

re-interpretation of the Greek notion of *leitourgía*.[28] We do not claim that liturgy is Pagan, so why is theurgy necessarily so? Furthermore, Pseudo-Dionysius is so reliant on Iamblichean and Proclean thought that we cannot divorce his use of theurgy from its Neoplatonism sources. The Pagan and Christian theurgic traditions understands theurgy to mean basically the same thing.[29] There is, however, a central difference: Jesus Christ.

For Pagans, theurgy can in theory be performed by anyone, though it is understood in elitist terms. The *Chaldean Oracles* distinguish between 'the theurgists' (Gk. *hoi theourgoí*), who are privy to a certain hidden knowledge, and 'the herd' (Gk. *hē agélē*) or 'the mass of men' (Gk. *tò plēthos tō̃n anthrṓpōn*), who are 'subject to Destiny' and who are not privy to this knowledge.[30] For Christians, however, when we worship or pray, we do so *through* Christ, in the Holy Spirit, as a participation in His self-offering, as we read in Hebrews 9:13-14: "For if the blood of goats and bulls, with the sprinkling of the ashes of a heifer, sanctifies those who have been defiled so that their flesh is purified, how much more will the blood of Christ, who

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Islamic and Christian Thinkers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 205-267; David B. Burrell, *Knowing the Unknowable God: Ibn-Sina, Maimonides, Aquinas* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1986); Idit Dobbs-Weinstein, *Maimonides and St. Thomas On the Limits of Reason* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1995); Gilles Emery and Matthew Levering, eds., *Aristotle in Aquinas's Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); Wayne J. Hankey, "Aquinas, Pseudo-Denys, Proclus and Isaiah VI. 6" (*Archives D'histoire Doctrinale Et Littéraire Du Moyen Âge* 64, 1997), 59-93.

28 Matthew R. Christ, "Liturgy Avoidance and Antidosis in Classical Athens" (*Transactions of the American Philological Association* 120, 1990), 147-169, cf. Romans 15:16; Philippians 2:17; Hebrews 8:2; 8:6; 9:21, and others.

29 Stang, *Apophasis and Pseudonymity*, 143-152 notes that to ask whether or not Pseudo-Dionysius is a Christian *or* a Neoplatonist introduces a false dichotomy. Also see Dylan Burns, "Proclus and the Theurgic Liturgy of Pseudo-Dionysius" (*Dionysius* 22, 2004), 111-132; Corrigan and Harrington, "Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite," 4.2; Rebecca Coughlin, "Spiritual Motion and the Incarnation in the *Divine Names* of Dionysius The Areopagite," in *Proclus and his Legacy*, eds., David D. Butorac and Danielle A. Layne (Berlin/Boston, MS: de Gruyter, 2017), 161-173; Alexander Golitzin, *Et Introibo ad Altare Dei: The Mystagogy of Dionysius Areopagita, with Special Reference to its Predecessors in the Eastern Christian Tradition* (Thessalonica: Patriarchikon Idryma Paterikon Meleton, 1994); Alexander Golitzin, "*Pseudo-Dionysius: A Commentary on the Texts and an Introduction to Their Influence* by Paul Rorem" (*Mystics Quarterly* 21:1, 1995), 28-38; Ernesto Sergio Mainoldi, "The Transfiguration of Proclus' Legacy: Pseudo-Dionysius and the Late Neoplatonic School of Athens," in *Proclus and his Legacy*, eds., Butorac and Layne, 199-217; Henri-Dominique Saffrey, "New Objective Links Between the Pseudo-Dionysius and Proclus," in *Neoplatonism and Christian Thought*, ed., Dominic J. O'Meara (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1982), 64-74, 246-248; Stang, "Dionysius, Paul and the Significance of the Pseudonym," 554, n15; Sarah Klitenic Wear, "Pseudo-Dionysius and Proclus on *Parmenides* 137d: On Parts and Wholes," in *Proclus and his Legacy*, eds., Butorac and Layne, 219-231; Wear and Dillon, *Dionysius the Areopagite and the Neoplatonist Tradition*, 101.

30 *TCO*, frag. 153-154, 194, cf. *DM* V, 18; Majercik, *The Chaldean Oracles*, 20, 198, 212, cf. my discussion in chapter three, pp.115-117.

through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to worship the living God!"[31] For Pseudo-Dionysius, theurgy is defined principally as the works of God and particularly the divine-human (or 'theandric') works of Christ. He is seen as "exercising for us a certain new God-incarnate energy (Gk. *theandrikḗn enérgeian*) of God having become man."[32] To use Struck's words, He is the 'master theurgist.'[33] And according to Pseudo-Dionysius, we become *theourgikoì*, co-workers with God or initiates in His work through baptism, because we participate in Christ.[34] Through Christ, and only through Him, we can celebrate, participate in, and re-enact the divine works in liturgy, prayers, service, and the sacramental life of the Church.[35] And precisely because Christian theurgy is rooted in one person, to whom many relate, it is communal, not individualistic or elitist. It is accessible for anyone, regardless of age, capability, or anything else. As Mark A. McIntosh puts it, "a Neoplatonic itinerary has been re-contextualized in the sacramental life of the community."[36] What happens in the Christian theurgic tradition is not the uncritical adoption of theurgic Neoplatonism as a replacement of Christian theology but its Christian consummation and re-interpretation.[37] As I will argue particularly later, without the Incarnation, with regards to union with the divine, all acts that we perform will remain extrinsic and imposed, even if divinely sanctioned.[38] These

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31 Cf. Romans 8; Galatians 2:19-20; 4:6; Hebrews 7; 8:1-6; 9:6-14; 1 Peter 2:5. Unless otherwise noted, quotations from Scripture in this thesis follow *The Holy Bible: The New Revised Standard Edition, Catholic Edition, Anglicized* (Nashville, TN: Catholic Bible Press, 1995).

32 *Ep.* IV (1072C), cf. Panagiotis G. Pavlos, "Theurgy in Dionysius the Areopagite," in *Platonism and Christian Thought in Late Antiquity*, eds., Pavlos et al., 157; Stang, "Dionysius, Paul and the Significance of the Pseudonym," 545; Struck, "Pagan and Christian Theurgies," 31-33, 37-38.

33 Struck, "Pagan and Christian Theurgies," 31-33, 37-38.

34 *EH*, I, 1 (372B), cf. III, 15 (445BC).

35 1 Corinthians 5:7-8; 10:16-17; 11:23-26; Galatians 2:19-20; Hebrews 7; 8:1-6; 9:6-14; 1 Peter 2:5.

36 Mark A. McIntosh, *Mystical Theology: The Integrity of Spirituality and Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 45, cf. 44-56.

37 See Curiello, "Pseudo-Dionysius and Damascius"; Darley, "Ritual as erotic anagogy"; Wayne J. Hankey, "Denys and Later Platonic Traditions," in *The Oxford Handbook of Catholic Theology*, eds., Lewis Ayres and Medi Ann Volpe (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 496-510; Louth, "Pagan Theurgy and Christian Sacramentalism"; Catherine Pickstock, *After Writing: On the Liturgical Consummation of Philosophy* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 186-198, 213-215, 241-246; Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 129-170; Gregory Shaw, "Neoplatonic Theurgy and Dionysius the Areopagite" (*Journal of Early Christian Studies* 7:4, 1999), 573-599; Wear and Dillon, *Dionysius the Areopagite and the Neoplatonist Tradition*, esp. 11-13, 85-115.

38 Chapter four, pp.140-146, cf. Colossians 1:15-20; 2:6-15.

acts, and our union with God, become real and intrinsic in Christ precisely because the Incarnation makes possible true union with the divine "without confusion, change, division, or separation."[39] While theurgy gives us a philosophical framework through which we can understand human participation in, and ritual celebration of, divine work, Christian theology explains why we need the incarnation to make sure that this participation is a real union between God and humanity (and, through humanity, with creation as a whole). Without the hypostatic union, which is not an extrinsic union but a true metaphysical union-in-distinction, rooted in one person or *suppositum*, the Incarnate *Logos*, who is both true God and true man, any union will remain voluntary and contractual, rather than metaphysical. In Christ, then, we find both the divine work and its human re-enactment, in perfect harmony. And through union with Christ, as the one common focus of the divine-human relation, to which we can relate or in which we can participate, we have true union with the divine and may offer true worship. Theurgy is first and foremost our reception, by grace, of the divine gift, God's actions for us, particularly in Christ, which allows us, also by grace, to offer ourselves and the world back to God, in worship and service, but always with grace as the priority. As Yves Congar notes, commenting on the relation between the sacramental life of the Church and the self-worship of God, which is mediated down to us as a gift, and which is always prior to our (upwards) response: "Before being latreutic,[40] and in order to be latreutic, the Christian sacramental cult is theurgic and soteriological: it does not consist at first in offering, in making something rise up from us to God, but in receiving the effective gift of God."[41] When we understand our relation to God in line with Neoplatonic metaphysics, distinguishing between the divine source, the emanation from

[39] *The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon*, trans., introd. and notes, Richard Price and Michael Gaddis (3 vols., Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2005, 2007), II, 204, cf. Michael J. Gorman, *Aquinas on the Metaphysics of the Hypostatic Union* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 73-125.

[40] I.e. a service or an act of praise rendered unto God.

[41] Yves Congar, "Le sacerdoce du Nouveau Testament: mission et culte," in *Les Prêtres*, eds., Jean Frisque and Yves Congar (Paris: Cerf, 1968), 254, quoted (and translated) in Guy Mansini and Lawrence J. Welch, "The Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests, *Presbyterorum Ordinis*," in *Vatican II*, eds., Lamb and Levering, 222, n19, 224, n45, cf. 208, 212.

Him, and the return to Him (*monos*, *prodos*, and *epistrophe*),[42] we see that everything is rooted in the creative act of God. It comes from Him as a gift and because of this gift, we may return to Him in Christ, by grace. This thesis explores the liturgical manifestations of this return. How, then, do I define theurgy, in this Christian sense? Looking back to *Sacrosanctum Concilium*'s definition of liturgy and Peter Struck's definition of theurgy,[43] I offer this rephrase: Theurgy is an act of the triune God for us, put into use by Christ as the God-man, and the Church as His body, whose effect is to reconcile the world to God and make humans capable of worship and service through participation in Him.

Before going on, however, I must note that while this thesis focuses specifically on the Christological foundations of Christian theurgy, more research is needed on its pneumatological dimensions. One area in particular seems to be a fitting candidate for further study: the Epiclesis.[44] This is central to the Eastern liturgical tradition but has increased in importance in the West. It emphasises the fact that the Spirit is the one through whom Christ acts in the Eucharist, which reveals some avenues for future research.[45] Where Pagan theurgists called God down into statues,[46] the Church calls down the Holy Spirit on bread and wine, on Christ's own promise, so that they "may be to us the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ."[47]

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42 Davison, *Participation in God*, 64.

43 *SC*, 7; Struck, "Pagan and Christian Theurgies," 30.

44 For some research on the Epiclesis and Pneumatology, see Yves Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit* (3 vols. London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1983) III, 228-274; David J. Kennedy, *Eucharistic Sacramentality in an Ecumenical Context: The Anglican Epiclesis* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008); Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology* (3 vols. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991, 1994, 1998) III, 282-324 (cf. 1-27); Robert F. Taft, "Problems in Anaphoral Theology: "Words of Consecration" versus "Consecratory Epiclesis"" (*St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 57:1, 2013), 37-65.

45 Jason B. Parnell, *The Theurgic Turn in Christian Thought: Iamblichus, Origen, Augustine and the Eucharist* (PhD dissertation, University of Michigan, 2009), 27-28, n30 draws some similarities between the Epiclesis and Platonic and Greek magic formulae but does not mention it further.

46 *DM*, I, 9; Majercik, *The Chaldean Oracles*, 26-27; Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul*, 100, n4, 152, 188-190; Tanaseanu-Döbler, *Theurgy in Late Antiquity*, 41-42.

47 *Common Worship: Services and Prayers for the Church of England* (London: Church House, 2000, hereafter: *CW*), 189, cf. *Gudsteneste med rettleiingar* (Stavanger: Eide, 2020, hereafter: *GDNK 2020*), 175, 186; *Missale Romanum*, Editio Typica Tertia (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2008), 100-101, 109, 118; *The Roman Missal*, third typical edition (Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2011), 100-101, 109, 118. If not otherwise noted, citations from *Missale Romanum* and *Roman Missal* use paragraph numbers (which are identical in the two), not page numbers.

If we understand liturgical theology in theurgic terms, where theurgy is understood not as a mechanical 'coercion' of the divine but as a participation in and imitation of the divine act, in creation and through Christ as the true theurgist, the 'master theurgist,' we can make sense of active participation. Theurgy provides a theological and philosophical basis for our participation in the liturgy as a divine work, without either 'collapsing' into God or divorcing our works from their divine source,[48] and it helps us understand liturgy and ritual, not only culturally or sociologically, but *metaphysically*. It explains how liturgy is both a gift received and something we may offer back, though the offering back is always also a divine work in us, a participation in God's self-worship. To put this in terms of grammar, while you could read *theourgía* as an objective genitive ('a work *addressed to* the divine'), the Iamblichean and Pseudo-Dionysian traditions explicitly sees it as a subjective genitive ('a work *of* the divine').[49] From this, I attempt to reconcile dogmatic, metaphysical, and ritualistic approaches to liturgy. While there have been some studies on the dogmatic nature of liturgy and Christian practices, especially in connection to youth ministry,[50] studies on liturgical reforms have tended to focus on the historical background of the liturgies, their 'external side,' and particularly the practical involvement of the congregation(s),[51] While historical and practical studies of liturgy are crucial, proper

48 Davison, *Participation in God*, 42-83, 217-238.

49 Stang, "Dionysius, Paul and the Significance of the Pseudonym," 554, n15; Struck, "Pagan and Christian Theurgies," 26-30; Wear and Dillon, *Dionysius the Areopagite and the Neoplatonist Tradition*, 101. On the difference between subjective and objective genitives, see Herbert Weir Smyth, *Greek Grammar*, rev. Gordon M. Messing (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1956), #1330–1331.

50 Bård Norheim, *Practicing Baptism: A Theological Investigation of the Presence of Christ in Christian Practices in the Context of Youth Ministry* (PhD dissertation, MF Norwegian School of Theology, Oslo, 2011).

51 Chupungco, "Implementation," 283-288, 292-294; Chupungco, "The Vision of the Constitution on the Liturgy," 265-274; *GDNK 2020*, 290-293, 300-321; Geir Hellemo, "Liturgisk teologi for Den norske kirke," in *Gudstjeneste på ny*, ed., Geir Hellemo (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 2014), 13-31; Elisabeth Tveito Johnsen, "Gudstjenestelæring gjennom deltagelse," in *Gudstjeneste på ny*, ed., Hellemo, 151-179; Elisabeth Tveito Johnsen, ed., *Gudstjenester med konfirmanter: En praktisk-teologisk dybdestudie med teoretisk bredde* (Oslo: IKO-forlaget, 2017); Martin Modéus, *Menneskelig gudstjeneste: Om gudstjenesten som relation og ritual*, trans. and comm. Anita Hansen Engdahl (København: Alfa, 2011), esp. 25-70, 128-245, 274-287; Hallvard Olavson Mosdøl, "Strategier for involvering i gudstjenesten: En casestudie av to menigheter," in *Gudstjeneste á la carte: Liturgireformen i Den norske kirke*, eds., Anne Haugland Balsnes, et al. (Oslo: Verbum akademisk, 2015), 155-172; Hallvard Olavson Mosdøl and Anne Haugland Balsnes, "Mer enn ord – om gudstjenestereformen og sanselighet," in *Gudstjeneste á la carte*, eds., Balsnes, et al., 210-229; Gunnfrid Ljones Øierud, "Inkluderende gudstjenestekommunikasjon," in *Gudstjeneste på ny*, ed., Hellemo, 180-194; Marit Rong, *Det liturgiske møte: Språk og gudsmetaforer i Den norske kirkes høymesse* (PhD dissertation, Univer-

systematic and metaphysical understandings of participation are needed.

2 Argument

As noted, the main question of this project concerns the nature of liturgical participation. When we speak of active participation in the liturgy, what do we mean by it? Is the concept primarily practical-functional or metaphysical? This thesis proposes that, in order to make sense of this participation, we ought to understand it as a Christian *theurgy*, as a participation in the divine work, rooted in God's descent in the Incarnation and connected specifically to concrete rituals that we re-enact, non-identically. In order to argue for this vision, this thesis particularly engages the contributions of Thomas Aquinas, Joseph Ratzinger, and Catherine Pickstock.

Aquinas, in his decisive synthesis of Platonic and Aristotelian philosophy in the explication of *sacra doctrina*, proposes the metaphysics of participation as the central aspect of the doctrine of creation and, consequently, the liturgical and sacramental life of the church.[52] While he does not define his approach as theurgic, and only uses the term once, in principally negative terms,[53] he was indebted to both Proclus and Pseudo-Dionysius, and to their metaphysics.[54] I have chosen to use Aquinas not because he is explicitly theurgic in his approach, though I will argue that his approach can be interpreted in that way, but that I can, through him, establish the

sity of Bergen, 2009), 51; Kari Veiteberg, "Gudstenesta som ei hending med handlingar," in *Gudstjeneste på ny*, ed., Hellemo, 73-88; Finn Wagle, "Etterord: …*liv fra kilder utenfor oss selv*," in *Gudstjeneste á la carte*, eds., Balsnes, et al., 283-293 (esp. 287-292), cf. Andrew Davison and Alison Milbank, *For the Parish: A Critique of Fresh Expressions* (London: SCM Press, 2010); Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 173-191.

52 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* (hereafter: *ST*) I, qq.2–6; q.13; qq.44–45; I-II, qq.6–21, 49-70; III, qq.60–83; *De pot.*, q.3, a.7, cf. Booth, "Thomas Aquinas"; Alan Philip Darley, "Predication or Participation? What is the Nature of Aquinas' Doctrine of Analogy?" (*The Heythrop Journal* 57, 2016), 312-324; Hankey, *God In Himself*; Matthew Levering, "Aquinas on the Liturgy of the Eucharist," in *Aquinas on Doctrine: A Critical Introduction*, eds., Thomas Weinandy, Daniel Keating, and John Yocum (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 183-197; te Velde, *Participation and Substantiality*; Liam G. Walsh, "Sacraments," in *The Theology of Thomas Aquinas*, eds., Rik Van Nieuwenhove and Joseph Wawrykow (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), 326-364; John P. Yocum, "Sacraments in Aquinas," in *Aquinas on Doctrine*, eds., Weinandy, Keating, and Yocum, 159-181.

53 *ST* II-II, q.96, a.1.

54 Booth, "Thomas Aquinas"; Hankey, "Aquinas, Pseudo-Denys, Proclus and Isaiah VI. 6"; Sammon, "Redeeming Chenu?"

central aspects of a participatory metaphysics, and its liturgical and sacramental implications, which will in turn lay the groundwork for a proper understanding of theurgy.

Ratzinger, who represents the tradition of *ressourcement*, specifically addresses the nature of active participation in the liturgy, maintaining that it must be understood principally as a participation in the divine act in Christ.[55] I have chosen to work with him specifically because he understands his theology within a Platonic framework, consummated in Christ,[56] and because he sees liturgy as a participation in the divine work, as this reveals that his approach is theurgic, even if he does not explicitly say so himself. He notes that after Vatican II, 'active participation' 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," while he emphasises that the "real "action" in the liturgy in which we are all supposed to participate is the action of God himself" and that what is "new and distinctive about the Christian liturgy" is that "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."[57]

The metaphysics of participation, Christian Platonism, and a liturgical approach to theology, have been central to the work of Catherine Pickstock and radical orthodoxy (RO). She notes

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55 Joseph Ratzinger, *The Feast Of Faith: Approaches to a Theology of the Liturgy*, trans. Graham Harrison (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius, 1986); Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*; Ratzinger, *Theology of the Liturgy*, cf. Lewis Ayres, Patricia Kelly, and Thomas Humphries, "Benedict XVI: A *Ressourcement* Theologian?," in *Ressourcement: A Movement for Renewal in Twentieth-Century Catholic Theology*, eds., Gabriel Flynn and Paul D. Murray (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 423-439; Thomas G. Dalzell, "Eucharist, Communion, and Orthopraxis in the Theology of Joseph Ratzinger" (*Irish Theological Quarterly* 78:2, 2013), 103-122; Emery de Gaál, *The Theology of Pope Benedict XVI: The Christocentric Shift* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 239-301; Scott W. Hahn, *Covenant and Communion: The Biblical Theology of Pope Benedict XVI* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Brazos Press, 2009), 41-62, 137-185; Kjetil Kringlebotten, *«Do this in remembrance of me…» The Sacrificial Aspect of the Eucharist in the Systematic Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg and Joseph Ratzinger* (Master's thesis, NLA University College, Bergen, 2013), 37-63; Roland Millare, "The Sacred Is Still Beautiful: The Liturgical and Theological Aesthetics of Pope Benedict XVI" (*Logos* 16:1, 2013), 101-125; Aidan Nichols, *The Thought of Pope Benedict XVI: An Introduction to the Theology of Joseph Ratzinger*, new ed. (London: Burns & Oates, 2007), 147-159; Tracey Rowland, *Ratzinger's Faith: The Theology of Pope Benedict XVI* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 123-143.

56 Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 140-141.

57 Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 185, 187, cf. 185-191.

that "the Eucharistic liturgy, which represents the event of Christ as the advent of truth, is the theurgic performance and realisation of this double vision: the bringing about and recognition of the divine truth of all things."[58] I have chosen to engage her work precisely because she sees liturgy first and foremost as our participation in the divine work, particularly that of Christ, and because she understands this as a form of theurgy.

These three all have a particular emphasis on liturgy and our participation in God, for being and existence and consequently for action and worship, and it is from this perspective we will discuss how the particular, extraordinary, and extrinsic nature of the liturgy ought to be understood. Both *ressourcement* and RO are indebted to Aquinas, and to the Thomistic tradition, while RO is also indebted to *ressourcement*.[59]

Engaging Aquinas, Ratzinger, and Pickstock, I argue that a theurgic and participatory view of liturgy (and of Christian life as a whole), where everything is rooted in the divine act, provides a way to understand better a genuine Christian perspective on liturgy, on the sacraments and gifts of God, and our return of this in praise and thanksgiving, understood as a participation in (or repetition or imitation of) the work of God. I emphasise that through Christ and in the Holy Spirit, humans are incorporated into the very life of God, so that we, by his grace, can participate, in a distinct way, in His act. This may help us understand that liturgy as such is connected to concrete and recognisable rituals which are not primarily a human invention but are gifts given by God in which we may participate. But they are, nonetheless, enacted and repeated non-identically, in different rites and traditions, and they reveal something to us about

58 Catherine Pickstock, *Aspects of Truth: A New Religious Metaphysics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 280-281, cf. Milbank, Pickstock, and Ward, eds., *Radical Orthodoxy*; Catherine Pickstock, "Ritual. An introduction" (*International Journal of Philosophy and Theology* 79:3, 2018), 217-221; Catherine Pickstock, "The Ritual Birth of Sense" (*Telos* 162, 2013), 29-55; Smith, *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy*, 30-122.

59 Stephen M. Fields, "*Ressourcement* and the Retrieval of Thomism for the Contemporary World," in *Ressourcement*, eds., Flynn and Murray, 355-371; Simon Oliver, "Henri de Lubac and Radical Orthodoxy," in *T&T Clark Companion to Henri de Lubac*, ed., Jordan Hillebert (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2017), 393-418.

reality as such and of God's working in it. While any human work may become liturgical or an act of worship, it can do so only because of a rootedness in a sacramental worship, and because it participates in the divine work.

3 Outline

This thesis will have six chapters, followed by a general conclusion.

In chapter one, I particularly engage Thomas Aquinas. First, I examine his notion of participation by discussing his basic metaphysics, emphasising the nature of being, existence, and essence, and his use of analogical language, arguing that this establishes God as the centre of existence and our dependence on Him. Secondly, I investigate Aquinas's conception of participation and human action, arguing that we cannot act unless we participate in God as the first cause and that any supernatural acts are furthermore only granted through divine grace. This, however, does not mean that secondary causality is unreal or unsubstantial. Thirdly, I turn to Aquinas's views on the nature of worship and the sacraments, arguing that this is only possible because we participate in God through Christ, and that this finds its highest liturgical expression in the Eucharist. This helps us in our contemporary discussion of liturgical participation. While Aquinas himself does not define his theology as explicitly theurgic, his theology, and especially his metaphysics, is highly indebted to both Proclus and Pseudo-Dionysius.[60] The engagement with Aquinas will serve as a springboard to my engagement with Ratzinger and Pickstock, as they both make use of Aquinas, as do their respective traditions (*ressourcement* and radical orthodoxy), and because his views on participation are central to the Catholic metaphysical and liturgical tradition.

In chapter two, engaging Joseph Ratzinger, I employ Aquinas's participatory metaphysics in

[60] *ST* II-II, q.96, a.1, cf. Booth, "Thomas Aquinas"; Hankey, "Aquinas, Pseudo-Denys, Proclus and Isaiah VI. 6."

a discussion of Ratzinger's claim that 'active participation' must be understood principally as a participation in the divine work and only secondarily as the active involvement in the liturgy.[61] First, I scrutinise his largely Platonic understanding of participation, focusing on his notion of beauty, arguing that it must be understood in Christian theurgic terms, something which is also central for Pseudo-Dionysius.[62] Secondly, I investigate his understanding of the Paschal mystery and our participation in Christ and in His sacrifice, both of which I will argue must be understood theurgically, because this is the centre not only of the life and ministry of Christ but of Christian theology as a whole (1 Corinthians 2:1-2). Through participation in Christ's offering, we can offer our rational service (Romans 12:1). This is significant because it helps us give liturgical participation a metaphysical and Christological grounding.

In chapter three, engaging Catherine Pickstock, I develop my argument further. While I argued that Christ is the ground for our rational service in the previous chapter, with Pickstock I will develop this in a more explicitly theurgic and philosophical direction, arguing that Christian theurgy is neither the opposite nor the destruction of philosophy or reason, but its ritual consummation. First, discussing the philosophical dimension of our ritual participation in God, I emphasise St. Paul's treatment of order in the liturgy (1 Corinthians 14:26-40), arguing that ritual is rational and a defining characteristic of humanity. Because, as we see from the previous chapters, the liturgy is a participation in God through the incarnate *Logos*, in the ground of reason, our ritual acts are rational, as they are ordered to Him. Secondly, developing further my defense of transubstantiation in chapter one, I root it in a metaphysics of participation and analogy, arguing that this is the centre of a Christian account of theurgy, as a mode of philosophy. Exploring how our liturgical imitation and involvement (expressed through the Platonic notion of *mímēsis*) is rooted in a deeper metaphysical participation (expressed through the Platonic

61 Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 185-191.
62 *DN*, IV, 7 (704A).

notion of *méthexis*), I argue that this points to creation's *telos*, as union with God.

In chapter four, I argue that Christ is the 'master theurgist' in whom we participate, developing further the discussions of the previous chapters. I argue this by first presenting a conception of the metaphysics of Christology and the hypostatic union, informed by Aquinas's Christology, showing that in Christ we find the divine consummation of human activity, real metaphysical union between God and creation. Secondly, I argue that this finds expression most particularly in Christ's high priestly acts, through which He gives Himself for us. And thirdly, developing further the argument made in the previous chapter, that we are ordered to God, I argue that this must be grounded Christologically, as a Christological and theurgic approach gives us a way to explicate how we participate in Christ and are thereby enabled to offer our own worship. We are ordered towards Christ, who is the common focus of the divine-human union because He is simultaneously divine and human, "without confusion, change, division, or separation."[63]

In chapter five, I explore the sacramental and liturgical implication of the Christological argument of the previous chapter, that the hypostatic union makes Christian theurgy possible. First, developing my discussion of analogical language from chapter one, I provide an account of the metaphysics of worship, arguing that God is always mediated to us, and unites Himself with us, through symbols and words and that this approach is best explained and defended if we assume an analogical rather than univocal approach to being, where Christ becomes a kind of 'primordial sacrament.' Secondly, I argue that while this may be expressed in many ways, its fullest expression is in the celebration of the Eucharist and particularly in a proper doctrine of transubstantiation, in critique of John Calvin's Eucharistic doctrine, showing how such a doctrine not only provides the most coherent way of holding together real presence, divine act, and an analogical understanding of reality, but that it also preserves the place of nature, *as nature*, in a concrete cultural context.

63 *The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon*, II, 204.

In chapter six, I apply the previous arguments on the latest reform of the Church of Norway, partly in relation to reforms in the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church, by scrutinising its methodological tools – the *ordo*, as a principle of unity, and three so-called core values *flexibility*, *involvement*, and *localised contextuality* (No., *fleksibilitet*, *involvering*, and *stadeigengjering/stedegengjøring*).[64] First, I will investigate how the reform understands the *ordo*, arguing that it is reduced to a formal unity which presupposes a horizontal and immanentist understanding of order and emphasises human autonomy and creativity in such a way that the revealed or given nature of the liturgy is deemphasised. Secondly, I examine the emphasis on *flexibility* and *involvement*, arguing that the reform envision liturgical participation in an activistic sense, rather than as participation in God. Against this, I will argue that liturgical participation is only possible through participation in divine agency. And thirdly, analysing the emphasis on *localised contextuality*, I argue that the reform tends to a congregationalist understanding of communion, which deemphasises the catholic or universal nature of the Church, and that this is also partly where some of these attempts at reform 'failed,' leading to a less 'congregationalist' liturgy. I will explore to what extent my theurgic approach to liturgical theology finds expression in the reform and liturgies and how it may be used as a critical voice, making a contribution not only to the scholarly field but also to those working with reforms in the various churches.

Though this project does not involve any empirical research of *celebrated* liturgies,[65] and

64 See Balsnes, et al., ed., *Gudstjeneste á la carte*; Hellemo, ed., *Gudstjeneste på ny*. By 'Roman Catholic' I mean all those who are in communion with the *Roman* Pontiff, including Eastern rite Catholics. There is a precedence for this use in two of the encyclicals of pope Pius XII; *Mystici Corporis Christi*, where he states that "[the] true Church of Jesus Christ" is "the One, Holy, Catholic, Apostolic and *Roman* Church" (§13), and *Humani generis*, where he states that "the Mystical Body of Christ and the *Roman* Catholic Church are one and the same thing" (§27, my emphasis in both). The encyclicals are found in *Enchiridion symbolorum*, 3800-3822, 3875-3899, eds. H. Denzinger and P. Hünermann (Denzinger-Hünermann), Latin-English, 43rd ed. (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press 2012). They are directed at all those in communion with the pope. My intention is, then, not to use this as a 'slur' but to point out that the term 'Catholic' is not exclusive to Rome.

65 For some empirical research, see Johnsen, ed., *Gudstjenester med konfirmanter*; Robert Lilleaasen, *Old Paths and New Ways: A Case Study of the Negotiation between Tradition and the Quest for Relevance in Two Worship Practices* (PhD dissertation, MF Norwegian School of Theology, Oslo, 2016); Thomas Quartier,

therefore remain somewhat idealised, it may help us shape better liturgies in the future, it may inform the liturgical practice of our churches, and it may give people a better understanding of why we celebrate liturgy in the first place. Through a theurgic reading of theology and liturgy, grounded in a theology of Incarnation, we may get a better understanding of what liturgical participation entails. In order to obtain a deeper understanding of the liturgical act we also need a deeper understanding of its actor (and actors), and how to relate everything to God, who creates us and sustains us.

"Liturgy Participant's Perspective: Exploring the Attitudes of Participants at Roman Catholic Funerals with Empirical Methods" (*Liturgy* 21:3, 2006), 21-29; Jorunn Raddum, *Variety is the Spice of Life? Forandring fryder? The Church of Norway 2011 liturgical reform: A study of the concept of contextuality in Nord-Gudbrandsdal* (Master's Thesis, MF Norwegian School of Theology, Oslo, 2015); Fraser Watts, "Experiencing Liturgy" (*Liturgy* 21:3, 2006), 3-9; Cas Wepener, "The object and aim of multi-disciplinary liturgical research" (*Scriptura* 93, 2006), 384-397.

CHAPTER ONE

Participation, emanation, and return

1 Introduction

For Thomas Aquinas, the object of theology as a science, a system of knowledge, is always God, as "all things [in theology] are treated of under the aspect of God: either because they are God Himself or because they refer to God as their beginning and end."[1] In his theological system, this finds a particular expression through his distinction between *exitus*, emanating or coming forth from God (God as the beginning of a thing), and *reditus*, turning or returning to God (God as the end or *telos* of a thing). Some have suggested that this *exitus-reditus* scheme represents the structural element of the *Summa*.[2] While that may be overplayed as a structural device, especially if understood in an overly strict and precise manner,[3] it does reveal how for Aquinas, all created things are treated, theologically, in relation to God, and it also brings attention to the Neoplatonic nature of his thought. The notion of emanation and return is a central aspect of Neoplatonism, though expressed in a triadic (rather than binary) manner, as *monos*, *prodos*, and *epistrophe*, "the plenitudinous source, the coming forth, and the return (or 'revision')."[4] The

1 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* (hereafter: *ST*) I, q.1, a.7, corp., cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles* (hereafter: *SCG*) I, c.70:8, 94:3; Liam G. Walsh, "Sacraments," in *The Theology of Thomas Aquinas*, eds., Rik Van Nieuwenhove and Joseph Wawrykow (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), 326. For notes on the Thomistic corpus, see abbreviations, p.4, n1. For a summary of Aquinas's approach to the nature, and the task, of theology, see Bruce D. Marshall, "*Quod Scit Una Uetula*: Aquinas on the Nature of Theology," in *The Theology of Thomas Aquinas*, eds., Van Nieuwenhove and Wawrykow, 1-35.

2 Marie Dominique Chenu, "The Plan of St. Thomas's Summa Theologiae" (*CrossCurrents* 2:2, 1952), 67-79; Wayne J. Hankey, *Aquinas's Neoplatonism in the* Summa Theologiae *om God: A Short Introduction* (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine's Press, 2019), 16, 75-77, 88-92. Unless otherwise noted, whenever I say 'the *Summa*,' I am referring to *ST*, not *SCG*.

3 See Andrew Davison, *Participation in God: A Study in Christian Doctrine and Metaphysics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 64; Brendan Thomas Sammon, "Redeeming Chenu? A Reconsideration of the Neoplatonic Influence on Aquinas's *Summa Theologiae*" (*The Heythrop Journal*, 20 June 2017), 1-17; Rudi A. te Velde, *Aquinas on God: The 'Divine Science' of the Summa Theologiae* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 10-31, esp. 10-18.

4 Davison, *Participation in God*, 64, cf. Sammon, "Redeeming Chenu?," 1, cf. 5-8.

former is central because without it, the latter two are impossible. They participate in it.[5] While Aquinas emphasises *prodos* and *epistrophe*, expressed as *exitus* and *reditus*, Brendan Thomas Sammon argues that he still retains this triadic structure.[6] This is important because it represents both a participatory and a theurgic framework. Aquinas treats God as the plenitudinous source; creation, as it emanates from God, is preserved in Him and returns to Him.

While Aquinas is Neoplatonic, he is also Aristotelian. He is a synthetic thinker, emphasising both participation and substantiality, though giving priority to the participatory framework.[7] His metaphysics is central to his overall philosophical project, dealing with "the most universal principles," i.e. "being (Lt. *ens*) and those things which naturally accompany being, such as unity and plurality, potency and act."[8] 'Being' is here understood as 'being in general' (Lt. *ens commune* or *esse commune*).[9] Although philosophy (which includes both philosophy proper and what is now called 'the sciences' in Anglo-American parlance), is 'the handmaiden of theology,' it has its own independence and integrity, a 'quasi-autonomy,' distinct from revealed faith, and

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5 Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, 2nd ed., reprint, ed., trans., intro., and comm. E.R. Dodds (Oxford: Clarendon, 1971), props. 25-39, cf. 1-13, 23-24.

6 See Sammon, "Redeeming Chenu?," 3-5, 7-15, esp. 9-14, cf. Davison, *Participation in God*, 64; Thomas Aquinas, *Disputed Questions on Truth* (*Quaestiones Disputatae de Veritate*, hereafter: *De ver.*), q.20, a.4.

7 Rudi A. te Velde, *Participation and Substantiality in Thomas Aquinas* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), esp. x-xiv, 3-83, cf. Bernard Blankenhorn, *The Mystery of Union with God: Dionysian Mysticism in Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2015); Edward Booth, "Thomas Aquinas: The 'Aufhebung' of Radical Aristotelian Ontology into a Pseudodionysian-Proclean Ontology of 'Esse'," in Edward Booth, *Aristotelian Aporetic Ontology in Islamic and Christian Thinkers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 205-267; Gilles Emery and Matthew Levering, eds., *Aristotle in Aquinas's Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); Hankey, *Aquinas's Neoplatonism*; Wayne J. Hankey, "Aquinas, Pseudo-Denys, Proclus and Isaiah VI. 6" (*Archives D'histoire Doctrinale Et Littéraire Du Moyen Âge* 64, 1997), 59-93; Andrew Hofer, "Dionysian Elements in Thomas Aquinas's Christology: A Case of the Authority and Ambiguity of Pseudo-Dionysius" (*The Thomist* 72:3, 2008), 409-442; Fran O'Rourke, *Pseudo-Dionysius and the metaphysics of Aquinas* (New ed. Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), esp. 5-50; Adrian Pabst, *Metaphysics: The Creation of Hierarchy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012), 5-53, 445-455; Rudi A. te Velde, "Participation: Aquinas and His Neoplatonic Sources," in *Christian Platonism: A History*, eds., Alexander J. B. Hampton and John Peter Kenney (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 122-139.

8 Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Metaphysics* (hereafter: *In Metaph.*) prol., book 4, lesson 1.

9 Jan A. Aertsen, *Nature and Creature: Thomas Aquinas's Way of Thought* (Leiden: Brill, 1988), esp. 54-91; Davison, *Participation in God*, 143; Simon Oliver, *Creation: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2017), 72; te Velde, *Participation and Substantiality*, 188-194; te Velde, "Participation," 130, n18; John F. Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas: From Finite Being to Uncreated Being* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2000), 44-62, 109-134, 591-592.

it may even inform our understanding of the latter.[10] Following Pseudo-Dionysius, Aquinas notes that God reveals Himself through sensible and intelligible symbols that may be grasped by the mind, through the senses.[11] For Aquinas, nothing comes to the mind except through the senses and divine speech is unintelligible for us without philosophical thought, and the latter may also reveal God as creator, as we see in Romans 1:19-20a: "For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. Ever since the creation of the world his eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through the things he has made." For Aquinas, in order to reach your human *telos*, you do not need to (or rather, you cannot) 'bypass' or 'break with' your corporeal nature. Rational human activity is not internalised but embodied intellection.[12] This quasi-empirical method is partly Aristotelian, partly Pseudo-Dionysian and Neoplatonic,[13] maintaining that we can grasp divine truths through philosophy, which comes first through the senses.

Aquinas emphasises participation, though understood as both derived and real and substantial. As Andrew Davison notes, we can talk of a 'derived solidity,' where both Plato and Aristotle may provide insight.[14] According to Wayne J. Hankey, "Thomas unites Plato and Aristotle, joining causation and participation in the very first article of the questions considering the procession of creatures."[15] In this, he follows Pseudo-Dionysius, to an extent. For the Areopagite,

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10 *ST* I, q.1, a.5, esp. sed contra and ad 2, cf. Hankey, *Aquinas's Neoplatonism*, 51-70. This also mirrors the relationship between nature and grace. The latter does not destroy the former but perfects it (*ST* I, q.1, a.8, ad 2).

11 *De ver.*, q.10, a.12; *ST* I, qq.77-78; II-II, q.167, a.1, ad 3. Following Iamblichus, Aquinas sees a relation between the natural and the supernatural (or the rational and supra-rational), where the former can inform the latter. See Hankey, *Aquinas's Neoplatonism*, 64-66, cf. Crystal Addey, *Divination and Theurgy in Neoplatonism: Oracles of the Gods* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), 188, cf. 29-32, 41-42, 188-189, 273-275, 281-283, 286.

12 See Therese Marie Ignacio Bjørnaas, "*Imago Dei* og kroppsliggjort væren: En funksjonshemmingsteologi i lys av Thomas Aquinas," in *Religiøst medborgerskap: Funksjonshemming, likeverd og menneskesyn*, eds., Inger Marie Lid and Anna Rebecca Solevåg (Oslo: Cappelen Damm Akademisk, 2020), 269-286, esp. 280-281.

13 Davison, *Participation in God*, 141-146, 150-152; Hankey, *Aquinas's Neoplatonism*, 13-21 (cf. 5-12); Hankey, "Aquinas, Pseudo-Denys, Proclus and Isaiah VI. 6," 59-60; Wayne J. Hankey, "*Participatio divini luminis*: Aquinas' doctrine of the Agent Intellect: Our Capacity for Contemplation" (*Dionysius* 22, 2004), 152-157.

14 Davison, *Participation in God*, 65-83.

15 Wayne J. Hankey, *God In Himself: Aquinas' Doctrine of God as Expounded in the Summa Theologiae*

God is 'beyond being' or even 'non-being.'[16] As he notes in his first epistle, God is "highly established above mind, and above essence, by the very fact of His being wholly unknown, and not being, both is super-essentially, and is known above mind."[17] Aquinas agrees that this is true, epistemologically speaking. As human beings and creatures of God, we cannot grasp Him or understand Him like a created object. If being is understood as graspable, then God, being incomprehensible, *is* beyond being.[18] Pseudo-Dionysius can hold that God *is*, in some sense, while maintaining that he is beyond being, while for Aquinas, *ens commune* or *esse commune* is distinct from God as being itself, which is not 'a' being.[19] Both Pseudo-Dionysius and Aquinas, then, have an apophatic approach to God. Despite this agreement, however, there are some differences of emphasis. Unlike Pseudo-Dionysius, who follows a classic Neoplatonic emphasis on the Good (and sees God is 'beyond being' or 'non-being'), Aquinas emphasises that God is *Being itself*.[20] Only He *is* in Himself, only He is the focus of reality. God *is* Being, while we *have* being (by participation). The being of creatures is not identical to God, as Being itself, in a univocal sense, and they do not exist in themselves but only in relation to

(Reprinted ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 138. While Aquinas rejects the Platonic notion that creation simply flows out of the divine automatically, emphasising God's freedom in general and his freedom in the act of creation (*SCG* I, c.81-83, 88), he still uses Platonic language, noting that creation is "the emanation of things from the First Principle" (*ST* I, q.45, prol., cf. Sammon, "Redeeming Chenu?," 8; te Velde, "Participation," 134-138). It should be mentioned, though, that although Aquinas is in many ways Aristotelian, this emphasis on participation represents a break with this tradition. Aristotle rejected this understanding of participation, noting that to "say that the Forms are patterns, and that other things participate in them, is to use empty phrases and poetical metaphors." See *Metaphysics*, trans. Hugh Tredennick, in *Loeb Classical Library*, ed. Jeffrey Henderson, vol. 271 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1933), 991a21-23, cf. 991a19-26. We see, interestingly, in Edward Feser, *Scholastic Metaphysics: A Contemporary Introduction* (Heusenstamm: Editiones Scholasticae, 2014), 117-118, that Feser, a central populariser of Thomistic and Aristotelian thought, downplays the importance of participation in Aquinas, though without rejecting it, by similarly pointing out that Aquinas fuses Platonic and Aristotelian categories.

16 O'Rourke, *Pseudo-Dionysius and the metaphysics of Aquinas*, 65-84, esp. 76-84.

17 Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Letters* (*Epistulae*, hereafter: *Ep.*), I (1065A). For notes on the Pseudo-Dionysian corpus, see abbreviations, p.4, n2.

18 *ST* I, q.12, a.1, ad 3; q.13, a.5, cf. Hankey, *Aquinas's Neoplatonism*, 16; Hankey, *God in Himself*, 44, n30, 86-87.

19 Laurence Paul Hemming, "Nihilism: Heidegger and the grounds of redemption," in *Radical Orthodoxy: A new theology*, eds., John Milbank, Catherine Pickstock, and Graham Ward (London: Routledge, 1999), 94-95, esp. n17.

20 Hankey, *Aquinas's Neoplatonism*, 88-117; Hankey, *God in Himself*; Oliver, *Creation*, 43-53; O'Rourke, *Pseudo-Dionysius and the metaphysics of Aquinas*, 56-58, 85-113.

God: "Likeness of creatures to God is not affirmed on account of agreement in form according to the formality of the same genus or species, but solely according to analogy, inasmuch as God is essential being, whereas other things are beings by participation."[21] Though I use the language of 'participation in God' or 'participation in the divine' throughout this thesis, it needs to be noted that this is a shorthand for participation in the likeness of God, participation 'through similitude.'[22] It does not mean that we participate in the divine essence. As Aquinas notes,[23] the divine essence is uncommunicated, incommunicable, and unparticipated, as God by His very nature cannot be known or participated directly but only by similitude or analogously. According to Wisdom 14:21, cited by Aquinas, idolatrous people "bestowed on objects of stone or wood the incommunicable name."[24] As noted by Davison, citing Gregory T. Doolan,[25] this is also found in Plato, who distinguishes between 'participant' or 'recipient' (Gk. *metéchon*) and 'what is participated in' (Gk. *metechómenon*), while Iamblichus adds another level, distinguishing between 'participant,' 'participated,' and 'unparticipated' (Gk. *améthekton*), allowing him to distinguish between the source and that which comes from it. The *metéchon* and the *metechómenon* are knowable, while the *améthekton* is not.[26] Furthermore, Pseudo-Dionysius, following Iamblichus, distinguishes between 'participant,' 'participation,' and 'principle of participation,' the latter of which can also be called the 'unparticipated,' 'unparticipating,' or 'unshared' (*améthekton*).[27] We, therefore, must participate in God by analogy or similitude.[28]

In this chapter, I argue that when we speak of 'active participation,' such involvement (or

21 *ST* I, q.4, a.3, ad 3, cf. Aertsen, *Nature and Creature*, 79-89 (cf. 54-91).

22 Thomas Aquinas, *Disputed Questions on Spiritual Creatures* (*Quaestiones Disputatae de spiritualibus creaturis*, hereafter: *De spir. creat.*), a.1, corp., cf. *ST* I, q.104, a.1. Also see te Velde, *Participation and Substantiality*, 92-93, n2; te Velde, "Participation," 130, n18, 134-135, n26, 136-138.

23 *ST* I, q.13, a.9, cf. II-II, q.94, a.4; q.97, a.4 ad 3.

24 After *A New English Translation of the Septuagint*, eds. Albert Pietersma and Benjamin Wright (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 709, cf. *ST* I, q.13, a.9, sed contra.

25 Davison, *Participation in God*, 155-164; Gregory T. Doolan, "Aquinas on *esse subsistens* and the Third Mode of Participation" (*The Thomist* 82:4, 2018), 611-642.

26 Cf. Proclus, *Elements*, props. 1-13, 23-24.

27 See Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Divine Names* (*De Divinis Nominibus*, hereafter: *DN*), XI, 6 and XII, 4 (956AB and 972B); *Ep.*, IX, 2 (1065A).

28 See below, pp.40-44.

involvement in any act whatsoever) is only intelligible when understood within such a participatory account of being, as a participation in God's act. Without a fundamental grounding in a metaphysics of participation, we cannot properly understand liturgical participation. What emerges is a theurgic perspective, as we find it in Pseudo-Dinonysius and other Neoplatonic thinkers. Matthew D. Walz notes that we can align "Thomas's thinking with numerous Neoplatonists who regarded their philosophical endeavors to be essentially religious in character, inasmuch as their contemplation of reality was meant to be dispositive toward theurgical action."[29] While it is true that Aquinas, as far as I know, does not treat theurgy as such and only uses the term 'theurgy' (or 'theurgic') once, in principally negative terms, as superstition or 'magic,'[30] he was also highly indebted to Proclus, though read through (or together with) Aristotle and Pseudo-Dionysius.[31] Central to this we find, as noted above, the idea that we come from God and can return to Him (*exitus-reditus* or *monos-prodos-epistrophe*). This is important because it is central to both Aquinas's cosmology and the philosophical framework of theurgic Neoplatonism.[32] The central point of theurgy is not the ritual reenactment itself but the divine act it participates in, which on the Thomistic account of divine simplicity cannot be distinguished from God in Himself,[33] and the union facilitated by participation in this act. As Peter Struck puts it: "Theurgy is a divine act, a *θεῖον ἔργον*, insofar as it is action, established by gods, put into use by humans, whose effect is to bring the material world (including that part of the celebrant which is material) into harmony with the divine order."[34] The argument is not that Aquinas uses the term 'theurgy' to describe his own approach to theology but that if we under-

29 Matthew D. Walz, "Foreword," in Hankey, *Aquinas's Neoplatonism*, xi, cf. ix-xxii.

30 *ST* II-II, q.96, a.1. On why I avoid using the term 'magic,' see introduction, p.11, n12.

31 The latter, whose emphasis is on a theurgic reading of the sacraments, is cited 1,700 times in the *Summa*. See Kevin F. Doherty, "St. Thomas and the Pseudo-Dionysian Symbol of Light" (*The New Scholasticism* 34:2, 1960), 170-189.

32 Proclus, *Elements*, props. 1-13, 23-39; Sammon, "Redeeming Chenu?," cf. Booth, "Thomas Aquinas."

33 *ST* I, q.3.

34 Peter T. Struck, "Pagan and Christian Theurgies: Iamblichus, Pseudo-Dionysius, Religion and Magic in Late Antiquity" (*Ancient World* 32:2, 2001), 30, cf. 31-33, 37-38; Charles M. Stang, *Apophasis and Pseudonymity in Dionysius the Areopagite: "No Longer I"* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 81-152, esp. 106-110.

stand theurgy as a participation in the divine act, rather than a coercive 'manipulation' of God,[35] it fits Aquinas's understanding of our metaphysical participation in God and its manifestation in worship and human work. God's act, His theurgy, particularly the act of Christ, is gifted to us and we are made partakers of it.[36] For Aquinas, however, this harmonisation, this return to God, is only possible through Christ. As Hankey points out, Christ is "uniting the two," divinity and humanity, "and thus perfecting the human movement into its source."[37] Exploring how we might read Aquinas in a theurgic manner, this chapter will be divided in three sections.

First, I will examine Aquinas's doctrine of participation by discussing his basic metaphysics, particularly the nature of being, existence, and essence, and his use of analogical language about God. I will argue that this explains both the contingency of creation and the need for something whose essence is its existence. This is important because how we understand both the relation between essence and existence and language about God, informs how we understand our relation to God, as the giver of life. A thorough understanding of analogy and participation is essential for a proper doctrine of the divine-human union and, consequently, for our understanding of theurgy as a participation of human beings, on behalf of creation as a whole, in the divine act, in God.

Secondly, I will discuss participation and human action, focusing on the relation between primary (divine) and secondary (creaturely) causality and the nature of grace. I will argue that while secondary causality only exists as it participates in primary causality, it is still real and substantial, and that while grace operates like other (accidental) perfections, it differs from them by orientating humans beyond nature, though without destroying it. This is important because

35 Addey, *Divination and Theurgy*, 32-38, 171-213; Stang, *Apophasis and Pseudonymity*, 81-152 (esp. 106-110); Struck, "Pagan and Christian Theurgies," esp. 31-33, 37-38.

36 Thomas Aquinas, *Disputed Questions on the Power of God* (*Quaestiones Disputatae de potentia Dei*, hereafter: *De pot.*), q.3, a.7; *ST* III, qq.60-90.

37 Hankey, *Aquinas's Neoplatonism*, 90. In chapter four, pp.140-146, I argue that in order for this union to be real, and not merely something imposed and extrinsic, it must be grounded in the Incarnation.

it provides a metaphysical framework to understand human participation in the divine act (or in God in Himself) and how our acts can simultaneously be real and derived at the same time.

Thirdly, having discussed the participatory nature of human action in general, I will shift the focus to worship and the sacraments. I will first present an argument for the centrality of the sacraments in general, arguing that our return to God, which is central to theurgic Neoplatonism, comes through Christ and is offered to us in the sacraments and the liturgy of the Church. I will then argue that the centre of this is found in the Eucharist and particularly the real presence of Christ. Discussing the doctrine of transubstantiation, I will argue that this doctrine holds together the spiritual reality of God with nature and culture without downplaying either. In this section we see particularly how Aquinas's sacramental theology is theurgic in nature.

Together, these three sections help us to understand how Aquinas may be understood in theurgic terms and how we might apply his contribution to our contemporary discussion(s) of 'active participation.' This chapter will not deal as explicitly with theurgy as later chapters. Rather, this chapter attempt to establish the central aspects of a participatory metaphysics, and its liturgical and sacramental implications, as this lays the groundwork for a proper understanding of theurgy, as theurgical participation is an aspect of the doctrine of creation.

2 The metaphysics of participation

2.1 Being, essence, and existence

In Aquinas's conception of metaphysics, we find three central terms: 'being,' 'existence,' and 'essence' (Lt. *ens*, *esse*, and *essentia*).[38] These terms are first and foremost related grammatical constructs. *Ens* ('being') is the present participle of *esse* ('to be'), while *essentia* is constructed from *esse* as a translation of the Greek noun *ousía*, which is itself constructed from *ōn* ('being'),

[38] See Thomas Aquinas, *On Being and Essence* (*De ente et essentia*, hereafter: *De ente*), c.1, cf. *In Metaph.*, prol., book 4, lesson 1. For a fairly popularised presentation, see Feser, *Scholastic Metaphysics*, 177-291.

the present participle of *eimí* ('to be'). *Essentia* signifies "that through which something has being as a particular kind of thing,"[39] while *ens*, which is that which possesses existence (*esse*), implies a concrete manifestation of what it is 'to be,' like 'cooking' or 'writing' are concrete manifestations of what it is 'to cook' and 'to write.'[40] The concrete *actus essendi* ('act of being' or 'act of existence') gives existence to an essence, distinguishing the individual from other individuals, making it real. For Aquinas, this is "the actuality of all acts, and therefore the perfection of all perfections."[41] 'Being' (*ens*) indicates something actual, existing "inasmuch as it participates in an act of being [Lt. *actum essendi*]."[42] For Aquinas, then, *ens* is a concrete and composite being, containing a subsistence or subject (who it is), essence (what it is), and act or existence (that it is), where subsistence and act are related by means of the essence, determining them and acting as an 'intermediate.'[43] The central point, however, lies in the fact that for Aquinas, 'actual being' (*esse in actu*) is "the proper effect of the first agent, namely God."[44] Or, as he notes in the the *Summa*: "Now among all effects the most universal is being itself: and hence it must be the proper effect of the first and most universal cause, and that is God."[45] At the heart of this participatory account of created being, we find the distinction between *esse* and *essentia*. We can grasp a thing's being without knowing anything about its concrete existence. We grasp horses as concrete beings but we can also imagine phoenixes, mermaids, dragons, or nifflers. When *esse* and *essentia* are not distinguished, we have a being who is *actus purus*, 'pure act,' and whose essence *is* his existence. Anything else is metaphysically composite.[46]

39 *De ente*, c.1, 4.
40 *SCG* I, c.22:9.
41 *De pot.*, q.7, a.2, ad 9.
42 Thomas Aquinas, *An Exposition of the On the Hebdomads of Boethius* (*Expositio libri Boetii De ebdomadibus*, hereafter: *In De Hebd.*), c.2, 50, cf. *De ente*, c.1; *De pot.*, q.7, a.2, ad 9; *De ver.*, q.1, a.1; *SCG* I, c.22:9, III, c.6:4; *ST* I, q.5, a.1, ad 1; q.45, a.5. Also see te Velde, *Participation and Substantiality*, 76-83, 200-201; Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought*, 33, 34, 99-100, 123.
43 te Velde, *Participation and Substantiality*, 201-202, cf. 201-206. On the subject (Lt. *suppositum*), see *ST* I, q.29, a.2, corp., cf. Feser, *Scholastic Metaphysics*, 267-284.
44 *SCG* III, c.66:4.
45 *ST* I, q.45, a.5, corp.
46 *De ente*, c.4-5; *ST* I, q.4, a.2; q.3, a.2-8; q.9, a.1; q.54, a.1, corp.; q.54, a.3, ad 2, cf. Feser, *Scholastic Metaphysics*, 34-45; Hankey, *God in Himself*, 54-55.

How the distinction between essence and existence is to be understood, however, is a matter of controversy, as we can see by turning to a paragraph in *De spiritualibus creaturis*:

> [E]very thing which exists after the first being, because it is not its own existence, has an existence that is received in something, through which the existence is itself contracted [Lt. *per quod ipsum esse contrahitur*]; and thus in any created object the nature of the thing which participates in existence is one thing, and the participated existence itself is another.[47]

This passage is important here because how we understand the relation between essence and existence informs how we understand our relation to God, as the giver of life, as we can see from a discussion between John F. Wippel and te Velde. Wippel provides an alternative translation of the text, stating that "[e]verything which comes after the first being [*ens*], since it is not its *esse*, has an *esse* which is received in something *by which the* esse *itself is limited*."[48] He maintains that Aquinas, starting with the essence-existence distinction, is saying that the *esse* "is received by a distinct principle which limits that *esse*," i.e. "its nature or essence," and notes, with surprise, that te Velde disagrees with this notion of limitation.[49] Te Velde uses a translation similar to the one cited, but he reads it in light of two other key texts, focusing on a crucial preposition.[50] Where the text from *De spiritualibus creaturis* states that existence is "received in something, *through* which the existence is itself contracted" (Lt. per *quod ipsum esse contrahitur*), the other texts state, respectively, that since a subsisting 'created form' "has being, and yet is not its own being, it follows that its being is received and contracted *to* a determinate nature" (Lt. *ipsum eius esse sit receptum et contractum* ad *determinatam naturam*),[51] and that "the being of every creature is restricted to one in genus and species" (Lt. *esse autem cuiuslibet creaturae est determinatum* ad *unum secundum genus et speciem*).[52] Te Velde notes

47 *De spir. creat.*, a.1, corp.
48 Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought*, 118, emphasis added.
49 Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought*, 118, esp. n63.
50 te Velde, *Participation and Substantiality*, 151-154.
51 *ST* I, q.7, a.2.
52 *ST* I, q.54, a.2.

the significance of this change of preposition:

> The use of *'ad'* emphasizes that a nature is not so much a pre-existing subject which is already determined in itself, but that the specific nature is the determinateness being acquires in that in which it is received. Being is contracted to the being of a horse; 'horse' stands for a nature which has being in a determinate manner. In creatures being is always found contracted or adapted to the being of a horse or a stone, i.e. to a specific nature.[53]

The claim is that we cannot simply reverse the argument for God – that "in God being subsists by itself and is not received in something else" and that "His being is not limited by some determinate nature so that one could say that He is this and not that" – because while *being* "may not be a self-limiting act," it "cannot be limited by something else that is presupposed in its otherness."[54] So while Aquinas does use the preposition *per* ('by' or 'through') in the text from *De spiritualibus creaturis*,[55] this should be read in a strictly formal way, as there "can be no question of a quasi-subject which in a certain sense already "is" before it has received *esse*."[56] If we say that essence limits being, as Wippel does, we are absurdly presupposing the distinction between essence and existence before it exists, saying that essence preexists its own existence: "God, as the first being, is determined in identity with its being," while a creature "must be determined in its being in difference from being itself (as being *this* or being *that*)."[57] I follow te Velde's argument, partly because Aquinas uses the preposition *ad* in the *Summa*, partly because 'contracted' and 'limited' do not necessarily mean the same thing, but primarily because it avoids presupposing the distinction we try to explain, while postulating the contradictory notion of an essence that exists without having existence.[58] If essence 'limits' existence (the way, say, a vase limits water), it seems that we would have to propose something already existent, outside the economy of divine donation, limiting being, precisely because the

53 te Velde, *Participation and Substantiality*, 152.
54 te Velde, *Participation and Substantiality*, 152.
55 *De spir. creat.*, a.1, corp.
56 te Velde, *Participation and Substantiality*, 154, cf. 150-154.
57 te Velde, *Participation and Substantiality*, 154.
58 See te Velde, *Aquinas on God*, 145, n47.

distinction between essence and existence is what characterises created things. We furthermore cannot coherently speak of something *existing* before it receives *existence*, and we must always understand that the power of essence to contract being is itself a gift of God: "God at the same time gives being and produces that which receives being, so that it does not follow that his action requires something already in existence."[59] Nothing exists outside the economy of divine donation and it is hard to see how Wippel's position avoids contradicting *creatio ex nihilo*. Creation is 'radically unilateral,' but in a paradoxical way. God creates both the recipient and his or her response. We are given both being and our ability to give thanks in one 'influx of being,'[60] which, as John Milbank notes, must be understood as divine donation (creation as creation as 'a gift of a gift to a gift'), and which gives rise to the paradoxical notion of the 'unilateral exchange' (or perhaps a 'unilateral reciprocity') which only makes sense if we postulate that God works in us, including in our response.[61] Our response is itself a gift, and therefore this has wide ranging consequences of how we understand liturgy. To participate, in the sense Aquinas uses it here, is to receive something according to a particular nature (which contracts it).[62] This entails a more organic notion of participation, central to Aquinas's notion of creation. For Aquinas, a created thing participates in God, yet also has, through this participation, an intrinsic value that goes beyond mere 'functionality.'[63] Human participation in the divine is not purely extrinsic but involves a certain assimilation into (or similitude with) God, understood analogically. To

59 *De pot.*, q.3, a.1, ad 17, cf. *ST* I, q.45; q.75, a.5, ad 4. Also see Davison, *Participation in God*, 65-83, 143-146, 165-169.

60 Thomas Aquinas, *On Separate Substances* (*De substantiis separatis*, hereafter: *De subst. sep.*), c.9-10.

61 John Milbank, *The Suspended Middle: Henri de Lubac and the Debate concerning the Supernatural* (2nd ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014), 96, 108, cf. *De pot.*, q.3, a.7; Oliver, *Creation*, 143-157; te Velde, "Participation," 137.

62 As Davison, *Participation in God*, 141-146, 150-152 notes, these gifts are received according to the mode of the receiver. This also lies close to the Neoplatonic doctrine, 'borrowed' by Aquinas from *Liber de causis*, that things known are known according to the mode of the knower. See Hankey, *Aquinas's Neoplatonism*, 13 (cf. 13-21); te Velde, "Participation," 131-134. While Aquinas has a 'design argument,' the fifth way (*ST* I, q.2, a.3, corp., cf. *De pot.*, q.3, a.7), grounded in teleology and connected to form and final cause, he does not envision such design in (modern) mechanistic terms. See Edward Feser, *Five Proofs of the Existence of God* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2017), 254, 287-288.

63 *ST* I, q.2, a.3; I, q.5, cf. te Velde, *Participation and Substantiality*, x-xiii.

explore this, we now turn to the question of language and analogy.

2.2 Participation, language, and analogy

Discussing how we speak about God, Aquinas notes that when we do, we use certain words obviously *metaphorically* (e.g. "God is a rock") and some *literally* (e.g. "God is good"). The latter, which we may call 'perfection terms,' tell us something positive about God:

> As regards what is signified by these names, they belong properly to God, and more properly than they belong to creatures, and are applied primarily to Him. But as regards their mode of signification, they do not properly and strictly apply to God; for their mode of signification applies to creatures.[64]

While the names or words themselves do not apply to God in "their mode of signification," they do apply to that which is signified.[65] Aquinas goes on to explain this further, noting that we do not attribute words to God and creatures *purely* univocally or equivocally but *analogously*. They are predicated primarily of God, only secondarily of creatures.[66] This is not an *analogy of proportion*,[67] but an *analogy of attribution*, where things are attributed analogously to a common focus (e.g. *health*).[68] In Aristotle, Aquinas discovered the relation of the many towards the one (Gk. *pròs hèn*). And while Aristotle does not use 'analogy' for this, Aquinas does.[69] Different things can relate to another thing as their common focus and that they share attributes because of (and exclusively through) this relation. Medicine, exercise, food, etc. are 'healthy' but not

64 *ST* I, q.13, a.3, cf. q.1, a.9, ad 3.

65 Cf. *ST* I, q.39, a.4, a.5; *De ver.*, q.23, a.3, corp. Also see Alan Philip Darley, "Predication or Participation? What is the Nature of Aquinas' Doctrine of Analogy?" (*The Heythrop Journal* 57, 2016), 312-324; Brian Davies, *Thomas Aquinas's Summa Theologiae: A Guide and Commentary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 63-67.

66 *ST* I, q.13, a.5, a.6, cf. a.2. Also see Davies, *Summa Theologiae*, 64-67; te Velde, *Participation and Substantiality*, 95-102, 110-111; te Velde, *Aquinas on God*, 97, 109-118; Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought*, 73-93, 543-572.

67 I.e. a measure between two things: *as A is to B so X is to Y* (e.g. *as a good father is to his children so the good King is to his subjects*).

68 *ST* I, q.13, a.6. Aquinas *uses* analogy of attribution (over analogy of proportion) in the *Summa*, but explains why in *The Principles of Nature* (*De principiis naturae*, hereafter: *De princ. nat.*), c.6. See te Velde, *Participation and Substantiality*, 97, n13.

69 Darley, "Predication or Participation?," 315, cf. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. H. Rackham, in *Loeb Classical Library*, ed. Jeffrey Henderson, vol. 73 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1926), 1096b, 14-29; *ST* I, q.13, prol.; *SCG* I, c.34.

in themselves. They are so *in relation* to a person who is healthy *in himself*. This use of analogy shows us that things only share (or are attributed) their attributes *within given relations*. Peanuts may be *healthy* in relation to me but *unhealthy* in relation to someone with an allergy. They do not participate in 'health' outside their relation to concrete persons. And Aquinas, joining this Aristotelian notion of attribution with a Platonic notion of participation, notes that this is how we speak of God and our relation to him. Words like 'good' or 'wise' are predicated primarily of God, only secondarily of us, through participation. God is good and wise *in Himself*; I am only good or wise to the extent that I relate to God. This is not just true for attributes such as goodness or wisdom, but also for *existence*. God, being metaphysically simple, non-composed, and utterly perfect, exists *in Himself*, as 'subsistent being itself.' There is only one focus of reality (God) and everything else exists by participation in Him.[70] We see this also in one of Aquinas's earlier works, his commentary on Boethius's *De Hebdomadibus*, where he provides a kind of 'etymological explanation' of participation: "For 'to participate' is, as it were, 'to grasp a part' [of something]" (Lt. *partem capere*).[71] While *partem capere* might seem to imply pantheism, Aquinas rejects that position and continues to say that we can speak of participation "when something receives in a particular way that which belongs to another in a universal way."[72] Participation is not mechanistic. It concerns the *reception*, in a particular manner, of something universal, something that is greater than the thing which 'takes part' or, rather, is 'assimilated' into it by participating 'through similitude.'[73] According to Aquinas, we participate in a likeness of God, then, analogously.

This analogous view of reality has been dubbed the 'analogy of being' (*analogia entis*), though this is not a 'generic theism' but rooted in the Trinitarian God and connected to rev-

70 *De ente*, c.4; *ST* I, q.3; q.4, a.2; a.3, ad 3; q.44, a.1.
71 *In De Hebd.*, c.2, 70, cf. te Velde, *Participation and Substantiality*, 11; te Velde, "Participation," 126-128; Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought*, 96.
72 *In De Hebd.*, c.2, 70, cf. Davison, *Participation in God*, 135-146, 164-169.
73 *De spir. creat.*, a.1, corp., cf. above, pp.31, 40-44.

elation and to Christ as our mediator.[74] Created beings only exist 'by analogy' (attribution). This, however, is not uncontroversial. Some, led by John Duns Scotus, propose a univocity of being, where 'being' must be understood epistemologically as a semantic concept, not a strictly ontological one, distinct from concepts such as infinite and finite, this thing or that thing.[75] This holds that being is predicated univocally of both God and created entities (though infinitely and finitely, respectively), as it is the principal transcendental and because we can know the existence of God to some extent by this principal transcendental. To explain his position, Scotus invokes the 'formal distinction.'[76] There, 'being,' understood univocally, is a semantic and conceptual tool *formally* distinct from the real being of God and creatures. This, however, proposes that language can be separated from metaphysics, that there are metaphysically independent, 'purely semantic,' concepts. As several thinkers have noted, however, language is the 'grammar of being.'[77] If there are 'purely semantic' concepts, how can these express truth? This argument is not necessarily against Scotus himself but those who take his argument to its logical conclusion, holding to an actual univocity of being, resulting in a deeply problematic view of God and a 'flattening out' of reality.[78] Regardless of Scotus's intentions, the consequence

74 Hans Boersma, *Nouvelle Théologie and Sacramental Ontology: A Return to Mystery* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 121-135 (esp. 131-135); Darley, "Predication or Participation?"; Davison, *Participation in God*, 143, 173-193, 201-216, esp. 205-210; Johannes Hoff, *The Analogical Turn: Rethinking Modernity with Nicholas of Cusa* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013); Oliver, *Creation*, 64-75; Erich Przywara, *Analogia Entis: Metaphysics: Original Structure and Universal Rhythm*, trans. John R. Betz and David Bentley Hart (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014); te Velde, *Aquinas on God*, 97, 109-118.

75 Richard Cross, "Duns Scotus, Univocity, and "Participatory Metaphysics"," in *Syndicate*, 4-25 December 2017; Daniel P. Horan, *Postmodernity and Univocity: A Critical Account of Radical Orthodoxy and John Duns Scotus* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2014), 157-188 (esp. 169-184); Duns Scotus, "Concerning Metaphysics," in John Duns Scotus, *Philosophical Writings*, Latin and English, trans., Allan Wolter (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, 1987), 1-12; Thomas Williams, "John Duns Scotus," 2:3, in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Winter 2016 Edition (ed., Edward N. Zalta). Also see Joshua Kendall Mobley, *Symbolism: A Brief Systematic Theology of the Symbol* (PhD dissertation, Durham University, 2020), 77-96.

76 Horan, *Postmodernity and Univocity*, 176-184, cf. Mobley, *Symbolism*, 59, n6. Scotus's argument for univocity is primarily epistemological, not ontological (Duns Scotus, "Man's Natural Knowledge of God," in Duns Scotus, *Philosophical Writings*, 13-33).

77 Seth Benardete, "The Grammar of Being" (*The Review of Metaphysics* 30:3, 1977), 486-496; Luis Andrés Bredlow, "Parmenides and the Grammar of Being" (*Classical Philology* 106:4, 2011), 283-298; Graham Priest, "Heidegger and the grammar of being," in *Grammar in Early Twentieth-Century Philosophy*, ed., Richard Gaskin (London: Routledge, 2001), 238-251.

78 Catherine Pickstock, *After Writing: On the Liturgical Consummation of Philosophy* (Oxford: Blackwell,

of this univocal conception has been to place God and creation on the same ontological plane, something we see, perhaps accidentally, at the end of Daniel P. Horan's book, discussing radical orthodoxy and Scotus. He admits that Scotus rejects Aquinas's insistence on "participation in or suspension from the divine essence (i.e., *esse* as proper only to God)" and that the implications of Scotus's views "have less to do with *existence* as such and more to do with *relationality*."[79] For Aquinas, however, creaturely existence *is* relational, understood analogously.[80] In his more sympathetic take on Horan's book, Justus H. Hunter finds these concessions troubling because it "is just the sort of thing [the proponents of radical orthodoxy] have argued follows from Scotus all along."[81] They argue that, regardless of Scotus's intentions, an affirmation of univocity entails, logically and actually, the existence of something ('being') which is independent of God (and consequently above Him). His position entails a purely functional or 'semantic' understanding of language, bereft of any metaphysical function. It becomes either arbitrary, purely cultural, or phenomenological,[82] and thus it loses its cosmic connection to the divine *Logos* in which it participates. By contrast, in following Aquinas's participatory metaphysics, we will see that creation exists to praise God. Liturgy is a rational or reasonable ordering of this, which includes the way we speak and communicate. As a work of the Church, it is not just a cultural and immanentist phenomenon; it is cosmological, rooted ontologically in God.[83] We need an understanding of language which moves past 'pure' culture, semantics, or phenomenology (as if these exist). The point, again, is not what any one person holds but what is implied by univocity: that God is both *too transcendent*, becoming unreachable and infinitely far away, as a

1998), 69, 82, 127, 137, 162, cf. Gavin Hyman, *A Short History of Atheism* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2010), 67-80.

79 Horan, *Postmodernity and Univocity*, 186, 187, cf. 185-188. Also see Cross, "Duns Scotus, Univocity, and "Participatory Metaphysics"."

80 *ST* I, q.13, a.3; q.44, a.1.

81 Justus H. Hunter, "Hunter Commentary on Postmodernity and Univocity," in *Syndicate*, 4-25 December 2017.

82 Louis-Marie Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence* (trans. Patrick Madigan and Madeleine Beaumont. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1995), 88-99, 200-204.

83 See chapter three, pp.106-118, cf. Psalm 19; Psalm 66:4; Isaiah 55:12; Romans 12:1; 1 Corinthians 14:26-40; *De pot.*, q.3, a.7; *ST* I, q.1, a.8, ad 2; I-II, q.55, a.4; q.112, a.1; II-II, q.81.

distant object, and *not transcendent enough*, as He is, logically and essentially, on 'our' ontological plane.[84] If we want to deny that God and creatures really (not just semantically) share a 'thing' called 'being,' in favour of an affirmation of the real transcendence of God, which seems to be what Scotus intended, it is not clear how one can do so without affirming something like the *analogia entis*. Words have meanings, implications, and consequences, and Aquinas holds fast to the analogous nature of reality, understood by means of participation, precisely because it allows him to make sense of how we are related to God, how we can be addressed by God, and how we can address God, without at the same time 'collapsing' creation into God.[85] It is within this analogical framework that we need to understand participation, a participation which cannot be reduced to existence but is equally true for all creaturely action (Acts 17:28).

3 Participation and human action

3.1 Primary and secondary causality

For Aquinas, creatures are given their natural powers from God, and through Him, these creatures are preserved in being and applied to operation. Therefore, we can say that God "causes the action of every natural thing."[86] The starting point of this is the question of *form*, and the idea that "nothing in nature is void of purpose":

> Now unless natural things had an action of their own the forms and forces with which they are endowed would be to no purpose; thus if a knife does not cut, its sharpness is useless. It would also be useless to set fire to the coal, if God ignites the coal without fire.[87]

Aquinas furthermore notes that the second cause cannot "by its own power have any influence on the effect of the first cause," as an instrument is only "in a manner the cause of the prin-

84 Hyman, *A Short History of Atheism*, 71.
85 Davison, *Participation in God*, 13-197, esp. 65-83; 171-197.
86 *De pot.*, q.3, a.7, corp. 7, cf. Davison, *Participation in God*, 217-238; *SCG* III, c.67; *ST* I, q.105, a.5; I-II, q.10, a.4; te Velde, *Participation and Substantiality*, 165, cf. 164-183.
87 *De pot.*, q.3, a.7, corp. 2.

cipal cause's effect": "thus the axe is the cause of the craftsman's handiwork not by its own form or power, but by the power of the craftsman who moves it so that it participates in his power."[88] This means that we cannot say that anything other than God creates in the absolute sense. Aquinas thus places himself between two extremes; that God takes over natural actions by absolute power (occasionalism) or that creatures participate so fully in God that they participate in his 'creative action.'[89] The two extremes downplay either God's immanence (by implying some kind of 'competition' between God and creation) or his transcendence (by implying a kind of 'naturalization' of God and a 'divinization' of nature). A thing operates and causes effects not because it has its own power, fundamentally, but because it "*participates* through its movement in the power of the principal cause,"[90] like a chisel causing a sculpture by participating in the agency, power, and ability of the artist. God, analogous to an artist, works in, with, and through the nature of the creature when applying him to operation. He is immanently present, as cause, in the instrument, and the latter participates in God and in doing so is capable of doing that which it could not have done by itself. As Aquinas puts it: "For the higher the cause the greater its scope and efficacity: and the more efficacious the cause, the more deeply does it penetrate into its effect, and the more remote the potentiality from which it brings that effect into act."[91] God and creation are not two causes standing in 'competition,' or even two distinct foci of reality, but different dimensions of causality, where the ultimate cause 'influences' the latter.[92] God gives a creature its power to operate and works, immanently, through the creature. And the creature operates only secondarily, in virtue of God's operation:

> If, then, we consider the subsistent agent, every particular agent is immediate to its effect: but if we consider the power whereby the action is done, then the power of the higher cause is more immediate to the effect than the power of the lower cause; since the power of the lower cause is not coupled

88 *De pot.*, q.3, a.7, corp. 7, cf. te Velde, *Participation and Substantiality*, 163.
89 te Velde, *Participation and Substantiality*, 160-170.
90 te Velde, *Participation and Substantiality*, 165, cf. Oliver, *Creation*, 75-80.
91 *De pot.*, q.3, a.7, corp. 7.
92 *De subst. sep.*, c.9-10.

with its effect save by the power of the higher cause.[93]

Only God is a universal cause. All other causes are so by participating in Him, by His immanent work in creation.[94] The instrument has an intrinsic virtue or power, a *form*, and God moves the being to act in accordance with this. An instrument, notes te Velde, is not "brought to perform an action which is foreign to it" but "to perform its own action," while it "*participates* in the power of the principal cause."[95] What Aquinas tells us is that we cannot do (or be) anything except by participation in God. But in this relation, we are real and substantial beings that have a distinction between two notions of 'act'; the primary (Lt. *actus primus*), 'being-in-act' (the substantial *esse* of a creature, a form) and the secondary (Lt. *actus secundus*), 'being-in-operation.'[96] A creature participates in God primarily by receiving *esse*, contracted to a specific *essence*.[97] The substantial *esse* is the *actus primus* of the concrete being (*ens*), while other acts or operations are 'superadded' to the primary act, as secondary acts. This follows the Thomistic principle that 'action follows being' (Lt. *agere sequitur esse*), in such a way that, while the *actus secundus* is accidental, it can also be called 'secondarily essential' (following from being).[98] We can understand an essence distinct from its virtues and powers but never separate from them, as the *actus secundus* is the thing *through which* the *actus primus* exists and is brought to its end.[99] This means that while secondary acts are, strictly speaking, accidental (it is possible to be, say, a man without being wise or only being wise to an extent), they are not purely and externally accidental. They are "secondary perfections" and they are "all acts that are in accord

93 *De pot.*, q.3, a.7, corp. 8, cf. te Velde, *Participation and Substantiality*, 166-167.
94 te Velde, *Participation and Substantiality*, 169-175.
95 te Velde, *Participation and Substantiality*, 172.
96 te Velde, *Participation and Substantiality*, 42, cf. Davison, *Participation in God*, 65-83; *De pot.*, q.1, a.1, corp., q.2, a.1, ad 6; *De ver.*, q.27, a.3, ad 25; *ST* I, q.13, q.76, a.4, ad 1; q.77, a.1, corp.; q.105, a.5, corp.
97 *ST* I, q.7, a.2; q.54, a.2; *De spir. creat.*, a.1.
98 Feser, *Five Proofs*, 174-176; te Velde, *Aquinas on God*, 69. This cannot be transferred directly or univocally to our relation to God, however. In a deeper sense, created being derives from the divine act. See Michael Hanby, *No God, No Science? Theology, Cosmology, Biology* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 358.
99 *De spir. creat.*, a.11, ad 7, cf. te Velde, *Participation and Substantiality*, 42; John Michael Rziha, *Perfecting Human Actions: St. Thomas Aquinas on Human Participation in Eternal Law* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2009), 54-66.

with the substantial form of the creature," i.e. "accidental forms that perfect a substance with a special emphasis on operations," through which "a creature reaches its particular end, which is its greatest participation in the likeness of God."[100] This points us to the concept of potency and act, where we only have these perfections *potentially* before we get them *actually*.

A thing exists either potentially (in potency) or actually (in act). A can of beer is first potentially cold but becomes actually cold in the fridge, while chips are first potentially fried but becomes actually fried in the fryer. What actualises their potential is something which is already actual (a cold fridge or hot oil), as reducing something from potency to act requires something already actual. This ultimately reduces down to God, as 'pure act,' and we need this to explain change, as something cannot come from nothing.[101] We can only act as secondary causes through the primary causation of God, working in us.[102] This reveals some central differences between Aquinas and Aristotle. Unlike Aristotle, who espoused an immanentist virtue ethics, Aquinas denies that having a virtue is enough in and of itself to account for operation, and that not all virtues are acquired (through immanent means). The completion of beings "in being and in operating … does not belong to created goods according to their essential 'to be' itself, but according to something superadded called their 'virtue'."[103]

For Aquinas, virtue is "what makes its possessor good and renders its work good."[104] And elsewhere he notes that there is such a thing as a 'possibility [Lt. *potestatem*] of being,' *virtus essendi*, but that a finite creature has its virtues or powers in a limited sense and receive them "according to its mode and, maybe, not according to the whole possibility (Lt. *posse*) of [the virtue in question]."[105] As Wippel notes, a virtue is distinct both from the primary act and

100 Rziha, *Perfecting Human Actions*, 54-55, cf. *SCG* III, c.25.

101 *De ente*, c.4, 4-6; c.5, 9; *ST* I, q.9, a.1; q.54, a.1, corp.; q.54, a.3, ad 2, cf. Feser, *Scholastic Metaphysics*, 34-45; Hankey, *God in Himself*, 54-55.

102 *De pot.*, q.3, a.7.

103 *In De Hebd.*, c.4, 70, cf. *De pot.*, q.1, a.1 (esp. ad 11), q.2, a.1, ad 6. See Eleonore Stump, "The Non-Aristotelian Character of Aquinas's Ethics" (*Tópicos* 42, 2012), 27-50.

104 *In De Hebd.*, c.4, 150.

105 *SCG* I, c.28:2, cf. Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought*, 173.

its secondary acts, acting as an intermediary through which the created being can operate.[106] Aquinas elaborates more on this in the *Summa*, where he notes that virtues are 'habits' (Lt. *habitus*), pointing out that a virtue "denotes a certain perfection of a power," that the perfection of a thing is "considered chiefly in regard to its end," and that "the end of power is act" which means that "power is said to be perfect, according as it is determinate to its act."[107] The virtues are chiefly concerned with operation but not in just any way but always aimed towards the Good.[108] Since evil is a defect (or a privation), "the virtue of a thing must be regarded in reference to good" and therefore "human virtue which is an operative habit, is a good habit, productive of good works."[109] Aquinas now proceeds to a more thorough definition of virtue, defending what he calls its traditional definition: "Virtue is a good quality of the mind, by which we live righteously, of which no one can make bad use, which God works in us, without us."[110] According to Aquinas, this definition applies *first and foremost* (but not exclusively) to infused virtues, which are the theological virtues, faith, hope, and charity, and "other habits corresponding, in due proportion, to the theological virtues, which habits are to the theological virtues, what the moral and intellectual virtues are to the natural principles of virtue."[111] The virtues are worked in us by God, "without any action on our part, but not without our consent."[112] Our acts, both our 'being-in-act' and our 'being-in-operation,' are grounded in God's own act, or in God Himself, as 'pure act.'[113] This, therefore, can represent a theurgic perspective, although we have not yet touched upon the nature of ritual. The centre of theurgy is not the ritual in itself but participation in the divine act and divine-human union.[114] The virtues are a gift of God, a

106 Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought*, 288, cf. 173, 278, 493. Also see te Velde, *Participation and Substantiality*, 19, 28, 40-43, 124, n13, 172, 232.
107 *ST* I-II, q.55, a.1, corp., cf. q.55-56.
108 *ST* I-II, q.55, a.2; q.55, a.3, cf. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1094a, 1-3.
109 *ST* I-II, q.55, a.3, corp.
110 *ST* I-II, q.55, a.4, obj. 1.
111 *ST* I-II, q.63, a.3, corp., cf. q.55, a.4, corp.; q.62.
112 *ST* I-II, q.55, a.4, ad 6.
113 *De ente*, c.4, 4-6; c.5, 9; *ST* I, q.9, a.1; q.54, a.1, corp.; q.54, a.3, ad 2.
114 Stang, *Apophasis and Pseudonymity*, 81-152 (esp. 106-110); Struck, "Pagan and Christian Theurgies," 31-33,

grace,[115] but it does not cancel out our created nature. On the contrary, it fulfils it.

3.2 The nature of grace

For Aquinas, "grace does not destroy nature but perfects it."[116] This tells us that grace, as it is given to humans, works in accordance with their nature or form and that it functions as an (accidental) perfection, and therefore we can assume that it functions in a way similar to other secondary perfections, or as a virtue through which "a creature reaches its particular end, which is its greatest participation in the likeness of God."[117] Grace is God "bestowing a partaking of the Divine Nature by a participated likeness."[118] It functions much like other (accidental) perfections, but it is depicted in variance with nature. For Aquinas, "that which is proper to the higher nature cannot be acquired by a lower nature, except through the action of the higher nature to whom it properly belongs."[119] But is this not true for any act? As we have shown, you cannot do anything unless you are moved by God who "applies [your] power to action."[120] Aquinas, however, notes that grace is different in that it goes beyond nature (though not through destruction). Te Velde notes that "by the immanence of the divine power the second cause is enabled to carry out its own non-divine operation."[121] Elsewhere he notes that grace involves a spiritual 're-creation' or 'regeneration' of the soul, a 'divinizing' of the soul by which it becomes "capable of performing the divine act of seeing God in his essence," and are given the gift of being "*regenerated* as children of God," meaning that the recipients of grace can do what they could not have done without it.[122] The difference between grace and other (natural) perfections

37-38. Although the ultimate expression of this union is ritualistic, it cannot be reduced to it.

115 *ST* I-II, qq.109-113; *De ver.*, q.27 (cf. qq.28-29).

116 *ST* I, q.1, a.8, ad 2, cf. *DN*, IV, 33 (733B): "For to destroy nature is not a function of Providence."

117 Rziha, *Perfecting Human Actions*, 55, cf. 54-66. Also see *SCG* III, c.25; te Velde, *Participation and Substantiality*, 42; John P. Yocum, "Aristotle in Aquinas's Sacramental Theology," in *Aristotle in Aquinas's Theology*, eds., Emery and Levering, 229.

118 *ST* I-II, q.112, a.1.

119 *SCG* III, c.52, cf. te Velde, *Aquinas on God*, 160-161.

120 *De pot.*, q.3, a.7, corp. 7.

121 te Velde, *Participation and Substantiality*, 172, cf. 181-183; te Velde, "Participation," 134-135.

122 te Velde, *Aquinas on God*, 161, cf. *ST* I-II, q.112, aa.3-4.

is not that God is the ultimate agent, which is true of both, but that grace points *beyond* nature, by creating communion between God and the human person, giving the latter a new and higher end, so that the person may love God in a 'suprahuman' way.[123] Aquinas writes:

> Charity loves God above all things in a higher way than nature does. For nature loves God above all things inasmuch as He is the beginning and the end of natural good; whereas charity loves Him, as He is the object of beatitude, and inasmuch as man has a spiritual fellowship with God.[124]

For Aquinas, we cannot have 'friendship' with God by nature alone but only by grace: "Now this fellowship of man with God, which consists in a certain familiar colloquy with Him, is begun here, in this life, by grace."[125] By grace we become friends of God, though this is a highly asymmetric relationship, where God initiates, though works with our human freedom, and granting us a share in the divine nature through the theological virtues which are strictly speaking *divine*, not human. God gives grace, which is a created participation of the divine nature by which the soul can possess these divine virtues.[126] Grace is, as noted, an accidental perfection but it gives us not just a Creator-creature but a Father-child relationship to God. Outside grace, God is the transcendent source but not the Heavenly Father.[127] A human creature is not a 'partner of God,' then, by its created nature.[128] But is there a 'pure' ('ungraced') nature? How do we see the relation between grace and nature?

Aquinas notes that "the extrinsic principle moving to good is God, Who both instructs us by means of His Law, and assists us by His Grace."[129] Grace is given by God alone, granting personal union with him: "For it is as necessary that God alone should deify, bestowing a partaking of the Divine Nature by a participated likeness, as it is impossible that anything save fire

123 te Velde, *Aquinas on God*, 161.
124 *ST* I-II, q.109, a.3, ad 1.
125 *ST* I-II, q.65, a.5, corp., cf. te Velde, *Aquinas on God*, 162-164.
126 *ST* I-II, q.110, a.3.
127 *ST* I-II, q.110, a.4, cf. te Velde, *Aquinas on God*, 164-165.
128 Rudi A. te Velde, ""Partnership with God": Thomas Aquinas on Human Desire and God's Grace" (*Nova et vetera* 15:4, 2017), 1155-1158.
129 *ST* I-II, q.90, prol.

should enkindle."[130] *Grace* is here understood as distinct from *nature*, though also closely related, because "grace does not destroy nature but perfects it."[131] Grace, though, is 'superadded' to nature, as an (accidental) perfection, moving us beyond nature. According to Aquinas we are 'capable of God' (Lt. *capax Dei*), but this is only available through grace.[132] Fergus Kerr points out that this is often misunderstood because of our modern linguistic assumptions:

> When Thomas, like Augustine long before, speaks of the human creature's being *capax Dei* it must be remembered that *capasitas* here is understood as a purely passive receptivity, not being 'capable' in the modern sense of having the ability or competence to achieve something but in the pre-modern sense of being open to something one can receive only as a gift.[133]

Nature, then, can desire something that can only be attained by grace, while te Velde notes that while it is true that "[m]ost Thomist interpreters would agree, I suppose, with attributing to Aquinas the notion of a natural desire of human creatures for God, specifically for knowing or seeing God in his essence," we still find in Aquinas "the view that the vision of God is granted only by way of a supernatural gift; seeing God is something that exceeds the natural power (*facultas naturae*) of human beings."[134] *Capax Dei* must be understood as the God-given (even graced) capacity to receive grace whereby we can move beyond nature. He is inclined to disagree with Henri de Lubac's formula, of a 'natural desire for the supernatural,' as it "tends to conceal the aspect of discontinuity in the relationship between nature and grace (supernatural)."[135] But how do we strike a balance? How do we avoid, on the one hand, jeopardising the gratuity of grace, making it mandatory for nature's natural fulfilment, and on the other hand

130 *ST* I-II, q.112, a.1, corp.
131 *ST* I, q.1, a.8, ad 2, cf. te Velde, "Partnership with God," 1158-1164.
132 *ST* III, q.4, a.1, ad 2; q.9, a.2, ad 1.
133 Fergus Kerr, *After Aquinas: Versions of Thomism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 134/231, n2.
134 te Velde, "Partnership with God," 1152.
135 te Velde, "Partnership with God," 1152. See David Grumett, "De Lubac, Grace, and the Pure Nature Debate" (*Modern Theology* 31:1, 2015), 123-146; te Velde, *Aquinas on God*, 155-160. According to te Velde, "Partnership with God," 1155-1156, 1160, 1161, creation is not a work of grace, except in a 'weakened' sense of 'divine generosity,' and cannot be reduced to it, and his point is that not automatically having grace is no 'defect' of nature but just part of its creaturely finiteness.

ending up with a 'two-story model' where salvation becomes arbitrary, as grace is utterly extrinsic, forcing us to invoke the concept of 'pure nature' and a 'purely natural end'? Te Velde notes that we must go beyond the way de Lubac's formulation is often understood, either as "a concrete active tendency of human beings in their natural condition, prior to grace—an innate desire for the beatific vision" or "only a desire for God under a natural respect."[136] As Aquinas states, God's calling to repentance is itself an act of grace, as a participation in the divine nature, initiated fully by God, yet it is still free:

> Man's turning to God is by free-will; and thus man is bidden to turn himself to God. But free-will can only be turned to God, when God turns it, according to Jer. 31:18: *Convert me and I shall be converted, for Thou art the Lord, my God*; and Lam. 5:21: *Convert us, O Lord, to Thee, and we shall be converted*.[137]

Te Velde notes that the standard English translation (including the one I use) "misses the point" because the translators translate *convertemur* (in Lamentations 5:21) "in a passive voice ("we shall be converted"), while Thomas reads it in a medium voice ("God lets me convert myself towards Him")."[138] By God's grace, which remains, and must remain, a gift distinct from creation as such, we are able to freely 'convert ourselves to God.' Aquinas is thus describing the divine-human relationship non-competitively. The question which remains, and which has not been settled fully, it exactly *when* we are graced. I do not think we can answer that fully. We are obviously given grace before conversion, so that we can indeed 'be converted' or be allowed to 'convert ourselves towards God.' And adult converts are graced before baptism. But I do not think that we are capable of answering the exact moment. What we can say, however, is that God gives everyone 'sufficient grace' ("convert me") that can, by their free conversion become 'efficient grace' ("God lets me convert myself towards Him"). With his understanding of grace,

136 te Velde, "Partnership with God," 1164.
137 *ST* I-II, q.109, a.6, ad 1.
138 te Velde, "Partnership with God," 1174, n38.

Aquinas is following the pattern given in his discussion of infused virtues which are "caused in us by God without any action on our part, *but not without our consent*."[139] We are not the cause of the virtues but we can refuse them. But we can cooperate with these infused virtues through acts produced by it, so that it is strengthened.[140] Now, given this, Aquinas holds that this "comprises perfectly the whole essential notion of virtue" because it references all causes of virtue,[141] i.e. the *formal* (the nature of the virtue "as a good quality," or a 'good habit,' where 'good' denotes the species, while 'quality' or 'habit' the genus), the *material* (not "the matter out of which [the virtue] is formed" or the "matter *about which* it is concerned," which would be its object, which is not fitting in a general definition of virtue, but the "matter *in which* it exists," i.e. the subject who possesses the virtue), the *final* (the operation, to 'live righteously'), and the *efficient* (God, who is "the efficient cause of infused virtue"), cf. Aquinas's traditional definition: "Virtue is a good quality of the mind, by which we live righteously, of which no one can make bad use, which God works in us, without us."[142] Aquinas is informed by Aristotle's virtue ethics but read through a Platonic or Neoplatonic emphasis on participation and transcendence, in such a way that he emphasises a 'transcendence in the immanence,' thus noting that you need to be moved to act by something which is itself in act, and which applies your power to action by working in you.[143] This working in creation (providence) is not something 'extra special' that God does on occasion but God's constant working. He created the world *ex nihilo*, and has always governed creation by preserving it in being (i.e. keeping it in existence, *ex nihilo*) and by

139 *ST* I-II, q.55, a.4, ad 6 (emphasis added).
140 *ST* I-II, q.51, a.4, ad 3.
141 *ST* I-II, q.55, a.4, corp.
142 *ST* I-II, q.55, a.4, obj. 1. This reveals clear differences between Aquinas and Aristotle. The latter held that virtues are not infused by God ("without us") but always acquired by works. See Stump, "The Non-Aristotelian Character of Aquinas's Ethics," 34-35; *ST* I-II, q. 63 a. 4, sed contra.
143 te Velde, *Participation and Substantiality*, 164. This interplay of transcendence and immanence is also central for Pseudo-Dionysius, where God is by essence utterly transcendent but where the transcendence does not preclude His immanence. See Kevin Corrigan and L. Michael Harrington, "Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite," 4.2, in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Summer 2019 Edition (ed., Edward N. Zalta); Stang, *Apophasis and Pseudonymity*, 120-135.

causing "the action of every natural thing by moving and applying its power to action."[144] For Aquinas, this is fundamentally a metaphysical question. There is no real distinction between *esse*, essence, or attributes in God,[145] and therefore it follows that as we participate in God, we participate equally in His being, His attributes, and His acts.

4 Participation, worship, and the sacraments

4.1 The sacraments as instruments of Christ

In his theology of worship, Aquinas emphasises first that God gives grace to us through the sacraments and, secondarily, that these sacraments, in their cultic context, are acts of religion,[146] which for Aquinas is a virtue.[147] Aquinas has a focus both on our reception of God's gift and on our response in praise, but always logically in that order. The virtue of religion primarily directs human beings to God and it is a part of justice, as we are paying God his due, in particular by worship (Lt. *latria*). The difference, notes Liam G. Walsh, is that in the *tertia pars*, Aquinas is explicitly treating "the presence in the sacraments of the divine action through Christ in the grace of the Holy Spirit," which shows us that Aquinas understands the "grace-giving movement of sanctification" of the sacraments "as being for the fulfillment of the *ordo ad Deum*, which is realized in human worship."[148] There is a 'double movement,' as sacramental grace is ordained both towards salvation and worship, but the significance of Aquinas's principal emphasis on the movement from above is that he ties together Christology and liturgy, showing that worship is first and foremost a work of God in which we participate, first by receiving it and then by

144 *De pot.*, q.3, a.7, corp. 7, cf. q.3, a.1; *ST* I, q.45, a.1.

145 *ST* I, q.3, aa.3-4, 7, cf. te Velde, *Participation and Substantiality*, 272-279; Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought*, 105 n31, 193, n49, 194.

146 Walsh, "Sacraments," 332, cf. Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 7-21, esp. 11.

147 *ST* II-II, q.81, cf. I-II, q.55, esp. aa.3-4; II-II, q.58, a.3.

148 Walsh, "Sacraments," 332, cf. *ST* III, q.89, prol.; III, q.62, a.5. Also see Matthew Levering, "Aquinas on the Liturgy of the Eucharist," in *Aquinas on Doctrine: A Critical Introduction*, eds., Thomas Weinandy, Daniel Keating, and John Yocum (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 184-187; John P. Yocum, "Sacraments in Aquinas," in *Aquinas on Doctrine*, eds., Weinandy, Keating, and Yocum, 160-164.

offering it *back*, through grace.[149]

Though pagans had the virtue of religion, it seems that Aquinas is pointing out that, at least in the case of baptised Christians, the virtue of religion is *infused*, on account of the grace of God in Christ which does not destroy the virtue but perfects it. The worship towards which we are called includes not just a recognition of God as Creator but a transformative personal communion with the Triune God in which we are made holy, and in which this 'natural worship' is included and transformed.[150] As noted, there is a natural desire for the supernatural and therefore an intrinsic natural orientation to worship which needs to be fulfilled through grace. The virtue of religion is fundamentally a work of God, where we are operating secondarily, just like in any of our actions, though not without our cooperation or consent.[151] The liturgy, and particular the sacraments, is, to borrow Struck's formulation, a divine act, an action established by God in Christ, "put into use by humans, whose effect is to bring the material world (including that part of the celebrant which is material) into harmony with the divine order."[152] And even this offering back, this human element, is rooted in Christ, who, as both human and divine, offers back to God. To quote the prayer of the Cherubic Hymn in the Eastern liturgy: "For you are the one who offers and is offered, who receives and is distributed, Christ our God."[153] Furthermore, this human act, this 'putting into use,' is receptive, by grace, but it is not 'pacifying.' By emphasising *worship*, and by discussing the sacraments in their ritual context, Aquinas emphasises the 'active participation' of those who take part in worship, both in that they are participating in the work of God but also that they are involved in the concrete act, as this participation is both embodied and culturally mediated. Confronted with the idea that

149 *ST* III, q.62, a.5, corp.; a.6; q.64; *De pot.*, q.3, a.7; Walsh, "Sacraments," 347-349, 355-358.
150 *ST* II-II, q.81, a.1, ad 1; a.8, cf. Psalm 19; Psalm 66:4; Isa 55:12.
151 *ST* I-II, q.55, a.4, corp., cf. q.51, a.4, ad 3; q.55, a.4, ad 6; I, q.1, a.8, ad 2.
152 Struck, "Pagan and Christian Theurgies," 30, cf. 31-33, 37-38; Stang, *Apophasis and Pseudonymity*, 81-152 (esp. 106-110).
153 *The Divine Liturgy of our Father among the Saints John Chrysostom*, English and Greek (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 23.

religion does not have 'an external act' (cf. John 4:24), Aquinas argues that we do not worship God because He is in need of anything, but for our own sake, so that we are "subjected to Him" and are thereby perfected. And as humans, we need 'corporeal things' or sensible signs to worship; we should not seek a more 'spiritualising' form.[154] A corporeal religion, centred on the Eucharist, is based on the human *form*, which is corporeal and not 'void of purpose.' This is not a defect, but the way God created us.[155] What we see here is a form of Christianised *theurgy*, where God comes to us, and acts, in concrete things. The difference from someone like Iamblichus is that for Aquinas, this must be rooted in Christ. And this, as Charles M. Stang notes, is also central to the Pseudo-Dionysian tradition, which is highly dependent on St. Paul: "The preeminent "work of God," for Paul, is of course the life, death, and resurrection of Christ, while for Iamblichus it is the created order and the rites revealed in ancient times."[156] Stang notes that one of the central texts for Pseudo-Dionysius is Galatians 2:20a: "It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me." This emphasis, however, does not ignore the created order, nor our own substantiality, but sees it as grounded in Christ, as we can see in the remainder of the verse (emphasis added): "And the life *I* now live in the flesh *I* live by faith in the Son of God, who loved *me* and gave himself for *me*." If Christ lives in you, this does not cancel out your own integrity but fulfils it. To invoke Struck yet again, theurgy is a divine act (an act of the *Logos*), put into use by humans (principally by Christ, the *Logos* incarnate, and secondarily by the Church which participates in Him), through which "the material world" is brought "into harmony with the divine order."[157] As I will argue more thoroughly later,[158] the Incarnation,

154 *ST* II-II, q.81, a.7; III, q.83, a.4; *De pot.*, q.3, a.7, corp., cf. Bjørnaas, "*Imago Dei* og kroppsliggjort væren"; Walsh, "Sacraments," 359.

155 *De pot.*, q.3, a.7; *ST* II-II, q.81, a.7 (esp. ad 2); III, q.61, esp. a.1; q.83, a.4, cf. Yocum, "Sacraments in Aquinas," 165-168; Yocum, "Aristotle in Aquinas," 209-222, esp. 215.

156 Stang, *Apophasis and Pseudonymity*, 114, cf. 81-116, esp. 105-116; John Milbank and Aaron Riches, "Neoplatonic Theurgy and Christian Incarnation," foreword to Gregory Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul: The Neoplatonism of Iamblichus* (2nd ed. Angelico Press/Sophia Perennis, 2014), v-xvii; Struck, "Pagan and Christian Theurgies," 31-33, 37-38.

157 Struck, "Pagan and Christian Theurgies," 30.

158 See chapter four, pp.140-146, 153-162.

precisely because it involves the union of divinity and humanity in one hypostasis, "without confusion, change, division, or separation," means that humanity and divinity have real union, without 'collapsing' into each other.[159] In Christ, this divine consummation of human activity is real and intrinsic,[160] while on a Pagan Neoplatonic conception, the union experienced by the theurgist remains extrinsic, imposed, and temporary.[161]

In Aquinas, we find this expressed particularly through the notion of instrumentality, where the sacraments are instruments which derive their power from Christ's Passion.[162] An instrument can either be *conjoined* (Lt. *coniunctum*, e.g. a hand) or *separate* (Lt. *separatum*, e.g. a knife).[163] For Aquinas, Christ's human nature is a conjoined instrument of His divine nature, acting as its 'organ,' united with the divine person of Christ through the hypostatic union. The sacraments, being separate instruments, have their efficiency as instruments of Christ, deriving saving power from his divinity through his humanity,[164] though, as I will argue below the Eucharist stands apart as being, paradoxically, conjoined and separate, simultaneously. Aquinas notes that "an instrumental cause, if manifest, can be called a sign of a hidden effect, for this reason, that it is not merely a cause but also in a measure an effect in so far as it is moved by

159 *The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon*, trans., introd. and notes, Richard Price and Michael Gaddis (3 vols., Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2005, 2007), II, 204.

160 See Panagiotis G. Pavlos, "Theurgy in Dionysius the Areopagite," in *Platonism and Christian Thought in Late Antiquity*, eds., Panagiotis G. Pavlos et al. (London: Routledge, 2019), 157.

161 Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul*, xxiv-xxv.

162 *ST* III, q.62, a.5, cf. aa.1-5. For some discussions of the notion of instrumentality and causality in sacraments, see Bernard Blankenhorn, "The Instrumental Causality of the Sacraments: Thomas Aquinas and Louis-Marie Chauvet" (*Nova et Vetera*, English Ed., 4:2, 2006), 255-294; Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 7-45; Rik Van Nieuwenhove, "Gadamer, Art, and Contemplation: How to Make Sense of Sacraments in an Allegedly Post-Metaphysical World" (*Louvain Studies* 38:2, 2014), 114-118; Walsh, "Sacraments," esp. 329-332, 334-335, 345-347; Yocum, "Aristotle in Aquinas," 224-230; Yocum, "Sacraments in Aquinas," 169-174, cf. *De ver.*, q.27, a.4, ad 13; q.28 a.2, ad 12; *ST* III, q.62, a.1, ad 1.

163 The translation of the *Summa* that I cite uses 'united' instead of 'conjoined.' While that is an acceptable translation, 'conjoined' captures better the intimate connection between the agent and the instrument (which is best illustrated by the hand, which is conjoined *to* me, rather than united *with* me). 'United' is also more general, while 'conjoined' more particular. I will therefore substitute 'conjoined' (or derivatives) for 'united' when quoting the text.

164 *ST* III, q.62, a.5, corp., cf. III, q.8, a.1, ad 1; q.19, a.1; q.43, a.2; q.48, a.6; q.56, a.1, ad 3; 62, a.5. Also see Walsh, "Sacraments," 343-355 (esp. 343-349); Yocum, "Aristotle in Aquinas," 229-231; Yocum, "Sacraments in Aquinas," 170-174.

the principal agent."[165] Therefore, the Christian sacraments "are both cause and signs," which "effect what they signify."[166] But the signification in question is not exclusively 'sensible.' Aquinas cites Augustine who says that "the word is added to the element and this becomes a sacrament" (Lt. *accedit verbum ad elementum, et fit sacramentum*).[167] The sign is not the sensible element in itself or the intelligible words in themselves, but the whole, the *compound*. The sensible element is crucial but it needs the verbal form to be significant and intelligible.[168] Aquinas is Augustinian here, but his Augustinianism seems to be integrated into a larger Aristotelian and Pseudo-Dionysian framework, with emphasis on the senses.[169] As we have noted above, for Aquinas, sensible signs are not something 'inferior.' God, who works through our *form*, which is not "void of purpose,"[170] makes use of sensible signs because we are embodied creatures. But this Augustinian element helps us understand that on a properly theurgic account of the sacraments, the signs need the word, representing the divine work, in the Holy Spirit. The two belong together. And nowhere is this more evident than in the Eucharist, where the reality of God and nature and culture are held together without downplaying any of them.

4.2 The presence of Christ

Speaking of Christ's presence in relation to the species or accidents of bread and wine, Aquinas states that the body of Christ is in the sacrament "not *merely* in signification or figure, but *also* in very truth," thus highlighting both the signification, in the species, and the reality of Christ's substantial presence.[171] He does so using an Aristotelian distinction between substance and

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165 *ST* III, q.62, a.1, ad 1.

166 Cf. *De ver.*, q.27, a.4, ad 13 (cf. q.28 a.2, ad 12): "[T]he sacraments cause by signifying" (Lt. *sacramenta significando causant*).

167 *ST* III, q.60, a.4, sed contra; q.60, a.6, sed contra.

168 Yocum, "Aristotle in Aquinas's Sacramental Theology," 209-217 for a discussion of sacraments as 'compound signs,' as well as pp.217-222, for a more specific discussion of sacraments as 'sensible signs.' Also see Yocum, "Sacraments in Aquinas," 165-168.

169 Hankey, *Aquinas's Neoplatonism*, 9, cf. 5-12.

170 *De pot.*, q.3, a.7, corp. 2.

171 *ST* III, q.75, a.1, corp. (my emphasis), cf. III, qq.73-83, esp. qq. 74, 75-77.

accident. Yocum notes that this explication of the sacramental action through Aristotelian concepts involves a 'stretching' of these, "applying them to a range of realities that far exceed the bounds of Aristotelian natural philosophy and metaphysics," and he notes that for "an unbelieving Aristotelian philosopher" the idea of transubstantiation, where the accidents remain in the sacrament without a subject, would be "nonsensical."[172] Using these categories to explicate Christ's presence, Aquinas notes that the whole Christ, in his whole dimensive quantity, is present in the sacrament, in both species, in every part. But, notes Aquinas, Christ is not present in this sacrament "as in a place" but rather "after the manner of substance."[173] We cannot move or see Christ in the sacrament. He is substantially present in the sacraments but the species of bread and wine, under which Christ is substantially present, are not species *of* Christ, nor are they anymore the species of the substance of bread and wine. Aquinas highlights both the real presence but also the signification of the remaining accidents. These are important because of what they signify, and because they we instituted by Christ,[174] but the important thing is what this tells us about creation and its participation in God.

The accidents of bread and wine remain in the sacrament without a subject, and thus the sign and thing signified are held together. God can keep an accident in existence by his divine power, since "an effect depends more upon the first cause than on the second" and since God is "the first cause both of substance and accident."[175] But this is also important because the Eucharist becomes a sign of the *telos* of nature. In the Eucharist, we find what constitutes a 'body' in its fullness. The glorified body of Christ is replete, as it does not require any accidental or dimensional qualification. The remaining accidents of bread and wine are thus 'free-floating'

172 Yocum, "Aristotle in Aquinas," 207-208, cf. 206-209; Pickstock, *After Writing*, 259-261. Yocum distinguishes between explication and explanation or justification.

173 Cf. *ST* III, q.75, a.5, aa.6-7, cf. aa.1-4.

174 *ST* III, q.74, a.1, corp. Aquinas also argues here for the fact that any ritual act needs 'corporeal things' or sensible signs. Also see *ST* III, q. 60, a.5, esp. ad 1; III, q. 60, a.7; Yocum, "Sacraments in Aquinas," 167-164.

175 *ST* III, q.77, a.1, corp.

without a subject, being upheld by God through participation. They become signs of creation's *telos*. Through this participation, they are "given the supreme privilege of showing the body and blood of Christ and which, in doing so, are most fully themselves."[176] There is no 'competition' between the spiritual and the concrete and physical, to use an analogy from the divine-human relationship.[177] Through the Eucharist, which is a divine act (an act of the *Logos*), put into use by a human being (Christ, the *Logos* incarnate), and enacted through Christ's body, the Church, creation is embraced by God and reconciled to Him. The substance of bread and wine, are, so to speak, elevated and reveal their (and creation's) *telos*: "God is no longer denied to nature, but sustains the accidents of nature which are thereby most fully realised."[178] The Eucharist, notes Aquinas, is the principal sacrament, 'absolutely speaking,' because Christ is contained there *substantially* and because the other sacraments are 'ordained to' it and ritually 'terminate' in it.[179] Where the waters of baptism, for example, only signifies, and does what it signifies, *in use*, the Eucharistic elements signify the true presence of Christ regardless of the taking of communion, because the sacrament simply *is* Christ.[180] Here we find an important implication of Aquinas's doctrine (which he himself, to my knowledge, does not discuss). The human nature of Christ is a conjoined instrument of his divinity and in the Eucharistic celebration the bread and wine are transubstantiated into his body and blood, into Christ himself who is there, *completely* and *substantially*. It follows from this, and from the fact that the species of the elements remain without a subject as signs, that the Eucharist is, paradoxically and simultaneously, a *conjoined* and a *separate* instrument. What we sense is a separate instrument, the species remaining without a subject, but the substantial reality is Christ Himself. What this means is that

176 Simon Oliver, "The Eucharist before Nature and Culture" (*Modern Theology* 15:3, 1999), 346, cf. 342-350; Simon Oliver, *Philosophy, God and Motion* (London: Routledge, 2013), 131-137.
177 te Velde, *Participation and Substantiality*, 163.
178 Oliver, "The Eucharist before Nature and Culture," 348, cf. Struck, "Pagan and Christian Theurgies," 30.
179 *ST* III, q.65, a.3.
180 *ST* III, q.66, a.1, corp., cf. Walsh, "Sacraments," 339-340, 360-361; Yocum, "Sacraments in Aquinas," 174-176.

the other sacraments of the Church are separate instruments of God's power having their efficacy though the Eucharist, through Christ Himself, which entails that according to Aquinas, the Eucharist signifies the Incarnation itself, the unity of God and humanity, and the transformation of creation and culture.[181] Religion is natural. But in Christ, and through grace, it also extends beyond nature, without destroying it or leaving it behind.[182] Likewise, for Pseudo-Dionysius, Christian sacraments are theurgic principally because they ritually re-enact the Incarnation. God came down, not in a statue, but in a living human being, and we participate in this by our own ritual re-enactment (*hierourgia*, which is also the work of God in us), in which God descends in the Spirit.[183] The worship towards which we are called, includes not just a recognition of God as Creator, as in 'purely natural' worship (if there is actually a thing like 'pure nature'), but a transformative personal communion with the Triune God in which we are made holy, and in which our intrinsic natural orientation to worship is included and transformed, through grace.[184] The natural elements are perfected and transformed by grace and they are no 'reduced' to mere 'technicalities.'[185] For Aquinas, liturgy is not just a human creation but something into which we are incorporated.[186] The natural orientation to worship can only be fulfilled through divine grace. This is, in other words, theurgic, starting with the divine work. It is a graced perfection of a natural *liturgical* orientation to God, rooted in the Incarnation. The importance of grace as a participation in God's nature is not primarily what this enables us to do, though for Aquinas this is important too, but that it establishes us in a new fellowship with God, as his friends and

181 *ST* III, q.60, prol., cf. q.62, a.5; q.75, a.3, q.76, a.1-3, q.77, a.1. Also see Yocum, "Sacraments in Aquinas," 170-176.

182 *ST* I, q.1, a.8, ad 2.

183 Alan Philip Darley, "Ritual as erotic anagogy in Pseudo-Dionysius: a Reformed critique" (*International Journal of Philosophy and Theology* 79:3, 2018), 262-263, 265-267; Struck, "Pagan and Christian Theurgies," 33-36; Sarah Klitenic Wear and John Dillon, *Dionysius the Areopagite and the Neoplatonist Tradition: Despoiling the Hellenes* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 99-115, cf. David J. Kennedy, *Eucharistic Sacramentality in an Ecumenical Context: The Anglican Epiclesis* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008).

184 *ST* II-II, q.81, a.1, ad 1; a.8, cf. Psalm 19; Psalm 66:4; Isa 55:12.

185 Blankenhorn, "Instrumental Causality"; Van Nieuwenhove, "Gadamer, Art, and Contemplation," 114-118; Walsh, "Sacraments," 329-332, 334-335, cf. Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 22-26.

186 *ST* III, qq.60-90, esp. 60-65, 73-83, cf. Thomas F. O'Meara, "Theology of Church," in *The Theology of Thomas Aquinas*, eds., Van Nieuwenhove and Wawrykow, 310-312; Walsh, "Sacraments," 360-361.

children, a fellowship marked most especially by his gratuitous gifts to us and our praise of him in return, a praise that is, ultimately, God's own work in us.

5 Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that created beings only exist through participation in their divine source and that this extends to the whole of their being, including operations. Creatures only have existence, and can only subsequently act, because they have received everything from God. For Aquinas, God is the only focus of reality and creatures participate in Him for their very existence. God is "essential being," while creatures are "beings by participation."[187] Within this framework, Aquinas captures both the intrinsic value of the immanent world and its utter reliance on the transcendent God, through participation. He places himself between the Aristotelians and the Platonists, showing that the metaphysical concepts discussed above are not intelligible within an immanentist framework but presupposes something transcendent in which they participate. For Aquinas participation is not merely extrinsic. It is organic and intrinsic, facilitating growth.[188] He is thus capable both of elevating nature while at the same time underlining the importance of humility, which is even more true when we consider participation in grace. But this participation is not just existential but operational and ritual, theurgic. For Aquinas, we cannot do *anything* outside our participation in God.[189] He pushes this point further by noting that we need grace to be elevated beyond our nature to God, his love or charity, in praise and thanksgiving. Religion, according to Aquinas, is a virtue and in the case of baptised Christians this virtue is infused. Our praise of God is always something we receive and which we return to God. We can only praise God fully, as Christians, through the utterly

187 *ST* I, q.4, a.3, ad 3, cf. Aertsen, *Nature and Creature*, 79-89 (cf. 54-91); Proclus, *Elements*, props. 1-13, 23-24.
188 *SCG* III, c.25:8; *ST* I, q.5.
189 *De pot.*, q.3, a.7.

gratuitous gift of grace given in Christ, as a participation in him, as Christ Himself says, in John 15:4-5:

> Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

In the next chapter I develop this participatory vision further in a more Platonic direction. In critical dialogue with Joseph Ratzinger, I will discuss the nature of beauty in the liturgy and our participation in the Paschal Mystery, as this is central for our understanding of the purpose of liturgy as a participation in Christ's offering. Like Aquinas, Ratzinger emphasises our participation in God and in Christ, particularly in the Eucharistic celebration, but unlike Aquinas, he does so from within a more explicitly Platonic framework and within a tradition which has emphasised the importance of theurgy.[190]

[190] Boersma, *Nouvelle*, 52-62, 121-131, 144-148; Joseph Ratzinger, *Salt of the Earth: The Church at the End of the Millennium. An Interview with Peter Seewald* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1996), 33, 41; Joseph Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, commemorative ed. (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius, 2018), 129-170, 185-191.

CHAPTER TWO

Participatio actuosa and *participatio Dei*

1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I established the central aspects of a participatory metaphysics, and some of its liturgical and sacramental implications. This laid the groundwork for a metaphysics of liturgical participation, as this is expressed in the desire expressed in the Second Vatican Council's constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, that "all the faithful should be led to that fully conscious, and active participation in liturgical celebrations which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy," something which "is their right and duty by reason of their baptism."[1] Some have argued that this participation should be understood principally as the practical involvement of the faithful,[2] while others have made the point that it refers principally to our participation in God and in the divine act.[3] In this chapter, following from my previous discussion of the metaphysics of action, I will argue for the latter approach, in critical dialogue with Joseph Ratzinger's liturgical theology.[4] In *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, Ratzinger notes how the term 'active participation' was "very quickly misunderstood to mean something external, entailing a need for general

1 *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (hereafter: *SC*), 14. On Vatican II documents, see abbreviations, p.5, n4.

2 See Anscar J. Chupungco, "The Implementation of Sacrosanctum Concilium," in *T&T Clark Companion to Liturgy*, ed. Alcuin Reid (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016), 279-295; Anscar J. Chupungco, "The Vision of the Constitution on the Liturgy," in *T&T Clark Companion to Liturgy*, ed., Reid, 261-277.

3 Joseph Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, commemorative ed. (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius, 2018), 185-191; Joseph Ratzinger, *Theology of the Liturgy: The Sacramental Foundation of Christian Existence* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius, 2014), 541-557; Alcuin Reid, "In Pursuit of Participation—Liturgy and Liturgists in Early Modern and Post Enlightenment Catholicism," in *T&T Clark Companion to Liturgy*, ed., Reid, 133-151; Richard J. Schuler, "Participation" (*Sacred Music* 114:4, 1987), 7-10.

4 Joseph Ratzinger, *The Feast Of Faith: Approaches to a Theology of the Liturgy*, trans. Graham Harrison (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius, 1986); Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*; Ratzinger, *Theology of the Liturgy*, cf. Thomas G. Dalzell, "Eucharist, Communion, and Orthopraxis in the Theology of Joseph Ratzinger" (*Irish Theological Quarterly* 78:2, 2013), 103-122; Kjetil Kringlebotten, *«Do this in remembrance of me…» The Sacrificial Aspect of the Eucharist in the Systematic Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg and Joseph Ratzinger* (Master's thesis, NLA University College, Bergen, 2013), 37-63; Roland Millare, "The Sacred Is Still Beautiful: The Liturgical and Theological Aesthetics of Pope Benedict XVI" (*Logos* 16:1, 2013), 101-125; Tracey Rowland, *Ratzinger's Faith: The Theology of Pope Benedict XVI* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 123-143.

activity, as if as many people as possible, as often as possible, should be visibly engaged in action."[5] Ratzinger is critical of this because it shifts the focus of the liturgy away from the one in whom we participate towards us, as 'practitioners.' For Ratzinger, participation does not principally mean involvement in this or that activity but sharing in a 'principal action' (Lt. *actio*) of God which finds its principal expression in the Eucharistic prayer, the Canon, or the *oratio*. Through this, God has inaugurated a new 'Sacrifice of the Word' (as opposed to the slaughter of animals) in which we can participate because God has made it possible by gifting it to us. Human action makes way for the real, divine, action. Therefore, God is the one who acts; we act only insofar as he enables us to do so through participation:

> 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.[6]

Ratzinger's point in his analysis of *participatio actuosa* is not that we should ignore the practical involvement of the faithful in liturgical celebration (through processions, readings, songs, prayers, postures, assistance, or more), or that these elements are not a real expression of what the Constitution calls 'active participation,'[7] but that with regards to this participation, the practical involvement of the faithful must be understood as secondary to their fundamental meta-

5 Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 185, cf. 185-191; Ratzinger, *Theology of the Liturgy*, 541-557, 574-588. For Ratzinger's interpretation of the Constitution, and Vatican II (often associated with the term 'reform of the reform'), see Benedict XVI, "A Proper Hermeneutic for the Second Vatican Council," in *Vatican II: Renewal within Tradition*, eds., Matthew L. Lamb and Matthew Levering (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), ix-xv; Ratzinger, *Theology of the Liturgy*, 358-364, cf. Stephen M. Fields, "Introduction: Benedict XVI and Conciliar Hermeneutics" (*Nova et vetera* 15:3, 2017), 705-727; Thomas Kocik, "A Reform of the Reform?," in *T&T Clark Companion to Liturgy*, ed., Reid, 317-338; Matthew J. Ramage, "Benedict XVI's Hermeneutic of Reform: Towards a Rapprochement of the Magisterium and Modern Biblical Criticism" (*Nova et vetera* 14:3, 2016), 879-917 (esp. 900-903); Matthew J. Ramage, "*Extra Ecclesiam Nulla Salus* and the Substance of Catholic Doctrine: Towards a Realization of Benedict XVI's "Hermeneutic of Reform"" (*Nova et vetera* 14:1, 2016), 295-330 (esp. 295-300). For a critique of this approach, see Massimo Faggioli, *Vatican II: The Battle for Meaning* (New York, NY / Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2012), esp. 102-105.

6 Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 187, cf. Maximillian Heinrich Heim, *Joseph Ratzinger: Life in the Church and Living Theology: Fundamentals of Ecclesiology with Reference to Lumen Gentium* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2007), 521-523.

7 Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 76-98, 191-238.

physical (and personal) participation in God and in the action of God and Christ. If we focus too much on these secondary elements, we might end up overshadowing this primary sense of participation. While the Constitution emphasises involvement, it also defines the liturgy principally as "an action of Christ the priest and of His Body which is the Church."[8] For Ratzinger, this Christological perspective is the central interpretive key for liturgical participation. The incarnate *Logos* is the principal actor; we can act insofar as we participate in Him: "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 logiziced (*logisiert*), conformed to the Logos, and so be made the true Body of Christ."[9] We are made one with Christ in a fundamental way, and through this unification and transformation we see, as Ratzinger tells us, that the "difference between the *actio Christi* and our own action is done away with," as we become partakers of Christ's one action: "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."[10] Elsewhere, Ratzinger notes that there is in God an inner relationship of mutual recognition and communication and that this trinitarian relationship is the foundation of our very being and of our response to God, particularly in prayer and liturgy, allowing for our active participation. He states that "the Logos in God is the ontological foundation for prayer" and that since "there is relationship within God himself, there can also be a participation in this relationship."[11] This emphasis on the divine *Logos* denotes both the eternal rationality or creative reason of God and the core of Christology, and also of Pneumatology.

8 *SC*, 7.

9 Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 187 (translation altered). In the original translation, 'may be logiziced (*logisiert*)' was rendered 'may be transformed into the Logos (*logisiert*).' This somewhat looser translation may be more accessible, though it may also create the impression that we are absorbed into the *Logos* in an identical manner. While we will be formed after (or conformed to) His image (Romans 8:29), and displaced in Him (Galatians 2:20), we will remain retain our distinct createdness and subjectivity. See more in chapter four, pp.153-162.

10 Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 188.

11 Ratzinger, *Feast Of Faith*, 25, cf. 25-32; Joseph Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, new ed. (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius, 2004), 59-60.

We are made participants in the divine *Logos*, the second person of the Trinity that became flesh in Christ. This participation also makes us participants in the divine intercommunication, in the *dia-logos*, as we experience "the God who conducts a dialogue, … the God who is not only *logos* but also *dia-logos*, not only idea and meaning but speech and word in the reciprocal exchanges of partners in conversation."[12] The divine persons communicate and we are drawn into this communication. We are able to communicate with God because He is himself speech, word, *logos*, and we are formed after (or conformed to) his image, in the Spirit, who prays in and through us.[13] By pointing out that *logos* has a wider usage than the second person of the Trinity, Ratzinger may seem to overemphasise the second person, perhaps especially over against the Spirit.[14] But as we can see elsewhere, Ratzinger's Christology is meaningless without Pneumatology. Ratzinger notes, as Pope Benedict XVI,[15] that "it is in Christ, dead and risen, and in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, given without measure (cf. *Jn* 3:34), that we have become sharers of God's inmost life," that the "Spirit invoked by the celebrant upon the gifts of bread and wine placed on the altar is the same Spirit who gathers the faithful "into one body" and makes of them a spiritual offering pleasing to the Father," and that "the eucharistic liturgy is essentially an *actio Dei* which draws us into Christ through the Holy Spirit."[16] And in reference to that, he quotes one of the propositions that was offered to him before he wrote his exhortation:

> This eucharistic encounter takes place in the Holy Spirit, who transforms and sanctifies us. He re-awakens in the disciple the firm desire to proclaim boldly to others all that he has heard and

[12] Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, 183, cf. 180-190. Also see David G. Bonagura, "*Logos* to Son in the Christology of Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI" (*New Blackfriars* 93:1046, 2012), 475-488; Pablo Blanco Sarto, "*Logos* and *Dia-Logos*: Faith, Reason, (and Love) According to Joseph Ratzinger" (*Anglican Theological Review* 92:3, 2010), 499-509.

[13] Cf. Romans 8, esp. vv.15-16, 26-30.

[14] See Bonagura, "*Logos* to Son." While this article is a good resource for Ratzinger's *Logos* Christology, it is oddly lacking in Pneumatology. It does not mention the Spirit at all.

[15] In this chapter I will sometimes refer to Ratzinger as Ratzinger and sometimes as Benedict or Pope Benedict, without further elaboration.

[16] Benedict XVI, *Sacramentum Caritatis*, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2007), 8, 13, 37, cf. 12, 15-17, 36, 76-78, 94, 97. For a more thorough discussion, see Peter John McGregor, *Heart to Heart: The Spiritual Christology of Joseph Ratzinger* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2016).

> experienced, to bring them to the same encounter with Christ. Thus the disciple, sent forth by the Church, becomes open to a mission without frontiers.[17]

The Spirit is absolutely central for Ratzinger, then, and it is precisely in the Spirit, through Christ, that we are allowed to participate in the divine life. Ratzinger's approach is Trinitarian, rather than exclusively pneumatological. His double usage of *logos* is both a direct embrace of divine simplicity and a rejection of interpretations bordering on tritheism (such as so-called 'social trinitarianism').[18] In this chapter, I will explore Ratzinger's understanding of our participation in theurgic terms. While he does not directly refer to his view as 'theurgic,' I argue that his approach may indeed be understood this way.

In addition to defining liturgical participation as participation in divine action, in the *actio divina* or the *actio Christi*,[19] Ratzinger embraces the Platonic tradition, though in a transformed or 'baptised' manner,[20] and he understands himself as a *ressourcement* theologian, though in a different (second generation and German) context.[21] According to the *ressourcement* tradition, liturgy is not principally our work of praise but God's own work that we might participate in and offer back, in an imitative manner. Yves Congar, for example, holds that our worship of God is first God's self-worship and that the 'downward' mediation is always prior to our (upwards) response: "Before being latreutic,[22] and in order to be latreutic, the Christian sacramental cult

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17 *Propositio* 42, quoted in Benedict XVI, *Sacramentum Caritatis*, 13, n29. The propositions are not published but only offered to the Roman Pontiff. See http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/documents/rc_synod_doc_20051022_final-propositions_en.html, accessed 14 April 2020.

18 For critiques of this latter approach, only held together by a vague sense of 'perichoresis' or 'interpenetration,' analogies which are fine if used properly but which can end up with a univocal misunderstanding of divine personhood which have been projected from us to God and then back, see Karen Kilby, "Perichoresis and Projection: Problems with Social Doctrines of the Trinity" (*New Blackfriars* 81:957, 2000), 432-445; Simon Oliver, "The Holy Trinity and the Liturgical Subject," in *The Liturgical Subject: Subject, Subjectivity and the Human Person in Contemporary Discussion and Critique*, ed., James G. Leachman (London: SCM Press, 2008), 229-240.

19 Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 185-191.

20 Joseph Ratzinger, *Salt of the Earth: The Church at the End of the Millennium. An Interview with Peter Seewald* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1996), 33, 41; Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 129-170.

21 Lewis Ayres, Patricia Kelly, and Thomas Humphries, "Benedict XVI: A *Ressourcement* Theologian?," in *Ressourcement: A Movement for Renewal in Twentieth-Century Catholic Theology*, eds., Gabriel Flynn and Paul D. Murray (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 423-439.

22 I.e. a service or an act of praise rendered unto God.

is theurgic and soteriological: it does not consist at first in offering, in making something rise up from us to God, but in receiving the effective gift of God."[23] *Ressourcement* theologians, including Congar and Ratzinger, follow this theurgic and Pseudo-Dionysian approach, focusing principally on God's own work, and his gifts to us, and only secondarily on our praise of God, understood as flowing from God's work.[24] Borrowing a formulation from Lothar Lies, Ratzinger, for instance, calls Christ 'the auto-eulogia of God.'[25] What we participate in, is the divine inner-Trinitarian self-worship, a divine self-address, in which we may be made participants, most particularly through the liturgy. In the following, I will explore Ratzinger's view of this participation in two ways.

First, I will discuss Ratzinger's approach to participation in the metaphysical sense by examining his view of beauty, especially in liturgy. I will argue that Ratzinger's (Christianised) Platonic vision of this, which is highly indebted to Hans Urs von Balthasar's theology,[26] must be understood in theurgic terms, not as replacing Christian theology with Platonic philosophy but as its Christian consummation. This is central because for the Pseudo-Dionysian tradition, beauty is absolutely central. From Beauty itself, notes Pseudo-Dionysius, "(comes) being to all existing things,—that each is beautiful in its own proper order."[27]

Secondly, I will discuss the sacrifice of Christ and our participation in it, arguing that Ratzinger's claim that Christ and the Paschal mystery is at the centre of theology must also be understood in theurgic terms. This comes to expression as a *rational* (or *Logos*-centred) cult

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23 Yves Congar, "Le sacerdoce du Nouveau Testament: mission et culte," in *Les Prêtres*, eds., Jean Frisque and Yves Congar (Paris: Cerf, 1968), 254, quoted (and translated) in Guy Mansini and Lawrence J. Welch, "The Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests, *Presbyterorum Ordinis*," in *Vatican II*, eds., Lamb and Levering, 222, n19, 224, n45, cf. 208, 212.

24 Hans Boersma, *Nouvelle Théologie and Sacramental Ontology: A Return to Mystery* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 52-62, 121-131, 144-148.

25 Ratzinger, *Feast Of Faith*, 50.

26 Millare, "The Sacred Is Still Beautiful," 103-105.

27 Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Divine Names* (*De Divinis Nominibus*, hereafter: *DN*) IV, 7 (704A), cf. Benedict XVI, *Sacramentum Caritatis*, 35; Millare, "The Sacred Is Still Beautiful"; Ratzinger, *Feast Of Faith*, 97-126; Ratzinger, *Salt of the Earth*, 33, 41; Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 129-170. For notes on the Pseudo-Dionysian corpus, see abbreviations, p.4, n2.

(cf. Romans 12:1), where Christ is the 'master theurgist,' and believers are partakers of Him, *theourgikoi*, co-workers with God or initiates in the divine work, to cite Pseudo-Dionysius.[28]

My contribution to Ratzinger's argument is to develop further his argument for active participation not only as involvement in external acts, but as a participation in "the action of God himself."[29] While Ratzinger is already Platonic,[30] I will show that his position can and should be read more directly within a theurgic Neoplatonist context, which is central to *ressourcement* theology.[31] This will provide us with the metaphysical tools to ground our acts and to show that while the main focus should not be on us, as 'actors,' but on God, our acts are still real and substantial.

2 Participation, beauty, and liturgy

In a book length interview with Vittorio Messori, Ratzinger notes that the "only really effective apologia for Christianity comes down to two arguments, namely, the *saints* the Church has produced and the *art* which has grown in her womb":

> Better witness is borne to the Lord by the splendor of holiness and art which have arisen in the community of believers than by the clever excuses which apologetics has come up with to justify the dark sides which, sadly, are so frequent in the Church's human history. If the Church is to continue to transform and humanize the world, how can she dispense with beauty in her liturgies, that beauty which is so closely linked with love and with the radiance of the Resurrection? No. Christians must not be too easily satisfied. They must make their Church into a place where beauty—and hence truth—is at home. Without this the world will become the first circle of hell.[32]

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28 Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* (*De Ecclesiastica Hierarchia*, hereafter: *EH*) I, 1 (372B), cf. Joseph Ratzinger, *God Is Near Us: The Eucharist, the Heart of Life* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius, 2003), 27-55; Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 3 vols. (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2007, 2011, 2012), II, 76-277; Joseph Ratzinger, *Behold The Pierced One: An Approach to a Spiritual Christology* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius, 1986), 13-69; Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 67-75; Peter T. Struck, "Pagan and Christian Theurgies: Iamblichus, Pseudo-Dionysius, Religion and Magic in Late Antiquity" (*Ancient World* 32:2, 2001), 25-38; Ratzinger, *Theology of the Liturgy*, 207-217, 337-346, 349-351, 541-557.

29 Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 187.

30 Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 140-141.

31 Boersma, *Nouvelle*, 52-62, 121-131, 144-148.

32 Joseph Ratzinger and Vittorio Messori, *The Ratzinger Report: An Exclusive Interview on the State of the Church* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius, 1985), 129-130.

With these striking words, we see the essence of Ratzinger's approach to beauty. He is highly critical of what he deems a banal focus on 'utility.' For him, artistic standards are of great importance, and much of his theological career has been devoted to this question. He is adamant that liturgy must be beautiful but for him this is not a superficial aesthetic.[33] This approach to beauty, however, is not something he has conjured up himself. As Roland Millare shows, he is deeply indebted to Hans Urs von Balthasar (and with him, to Aquinas).[34] Balthasar notes that beauty "is the last thing which the thinking intellect dares to approach, since only it dances as an uncontained splendour around the double constellation of the true and the good and their inseparable relation to one another":

> No longer loved or fostered by religion, beauty is lifted from its face as a mask, and its absence exposes features on that face which threaten to become incomprehensible to man. We no longer dare to believe in beauty and we make of it a mere appearance in order the more easily to dispose of it. … We can be sure that whoever sneers at her name as if she were the ornament of a bourgeois past—whether he admits it or not—can no longer pray and soon will no longer be able to love.[35]

For Balthasar, modernity has reduced beauty to mere appearance. It has forgotten that, like truth and goodness, beauty is a transcendental.[36] Its ties to the other two have been cut (e.g. "beauty is in the eye of the beholder").[37] Balthasar is not interested in aesthetics for its own sake but approaches the question in an essentially Thomistic manner. He affirms a "transcendental beauty" and his focus is on the fact that beauty is "objectively located at the intersection of two

33 Ratzinger, *Feast Of Faith*, 97-126, cf. John Jang, *Beauty as a transcendental in the thought of Joseph Ratzinger* (Master's thesis, the University of Notre Dame Australia, 2015).

34 Millare, "The Sacred Is Still Beautiful," 103-105.

35 Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics*, 7 vols., eds. Joseph Fessio, Brian McNeil, and John Riches (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1982-1991), I, 18, cf. 17-127. Also see Aidan Nichols, *Redeeming Beauty: Soundings in Sacral Aesthetics* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 53-69; Aidan Nichols, *The Word Has Been Abroad: A Guide Through Balthasar's Aesthetics* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998).

36 Nichols, *Redeeming Beauty*, 56-59; Nichols, *The Word Has Been Abroad*, 1-8, cf. Jan A. Aertsen, *Nature and Creature: Thomas Aquinas's Way of Thought* (Leiden: Brill, 1988), 144-147, 338-342, 367, 391-392; Jan A. Aertsen, "Truth as transcendental in Thomas Aquinas" (*Topoi* 11:2, 1992), 159-171; Thomas Aquinas, *Disputed Questions on Truth* (*Quaestiones Disputatae de Veritate*, hereafter: *De ver.*), q.1, a.1; Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* (hereafter: *ST*) I, q.5, a.4, esp. ad 1; I-II, q.27, a.1. For notes on the Thomistic corpus, see abbreviations, p.4, n1.

37 See Robert P. Mills, "Beauty, the Beholder, and the Believer" (*Theology Matters* 15:5, 2009), 1-16.

moments which Thomas calls *species* and *lumen* ('form' and 'splendour')."[38] While we can *distinguish* between the two, they cannot be *separated*:

> The beautiful is above all a *form*, and the light does not fall on this form from above and from outside, rather it breaks forth from the form's interior. *Species* and *lumen* in beauty are one, if the *species* truly merits that name (which does not designate any form whatever, but pleasing, radiant form). Visible form not only 'points' to an invisible, unfathomable mystery; form is the apparition of this mystery, and reveals it while, naturally, at the same time protecting and veiling it. Both natural and artistic form has an exterior which appears and an interior depth, both of which, however, are not separable in the form itself. The content (*Gehalt*) does not lie behind the form (*Gestalt*), but within it. Whoever is not capable of seeing and 'reading' the form will, by the same token, fail to perceive the content. Whoever is not illumined by the form will see no light in the content either.[39]

This interplay between 'form' and 'splendour' is important. Splendour has connotations of beauty and intelligence; of brilliance, heraldry, magnificence, majesty, brightness, even pomp. But it also has connotations of revelation, naming, manifestation, or expression.[40] Beauty is that which is revealed, at the same time as it is the *form* of revelation (though the two are never confused). And this makes sense only if we assume a participatory metaphysic. In the *Divine Names*, Pseudo-Dionysius notes that what we perceive as beautiful is so because it participates in Beauty:

> For, with regard to all created things, by dividing them into participations and participants, we call beautiful that which participates in Beauty; but beauty, the participation of the beautifying Cause of all the beautiful things. But, the supraessential (Gk. *hyperoúsion*)[41] Beautiful is called Beauty, on account of the beauty communicated from Itself to all beautiful things, in a manner appropriate to each, and as Cause of the good harmony and brightness of all things which flashes like light to

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38 von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord*, I, 10, 70, cf. 9-11, 18-19, 22-23, 38-41, 69-79, 156-158.

39 von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord*, I, 151, cf. 19-23, 141-155.

40 See 'splendour, *n.*,' in *Oxford English Dictionary Online* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), and 'splendeō,' in Michiel de Vaan, *Etymological Dictionary of Latin and the other Italic Languages* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 581.

41 The translation used for Dionysius, *The Works of Dionysius the Areopagite*, 2 vols., trans. John Parker (London: James Parker and Co., 1897, 1899), uses the suffix 'super-' at different times. While this now denotes something being intensified, Parker uses it in in its classic meaning, 'above' or 'beyond.' For Pseudo-Dionysius, God is 'beyond being.' See Fran O'Rourke, *Pseudo-Dionysius and the metaphysics of Aquinas*, new ed. (Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), 65-84. I have therefore chosen to change the suffix to 'supra.'

> all the beautifying distributions of its fontal ray, and as calling (*καλοῦν*) all things to Itself (whence also it is called Beauty) (*κάλλος*), and as collecting all in all to Itself.[42]

Or, as Aquinas phrases it, in his commentary on the *Divine Names*: "We call something 'beautiful' because it is a participant in beauty. Beauty, however, is a participation in the first cause, which makes all things beautiful. So that the beauty of creatures is simply a likeness of the divine beauty in which things participate."[43] The difference between Plato's view and the views of Pseudo-Dionysius and Aquinas is that while the latter two assumes a Neoplatonic understanding of participation (as I will discuss more below), they are not envisioning participation in a distinct realm of (Platonic) forms but in the divine (or a likeness to the divine).[44] Created beauty cannot be identified completely with the divine, as it only participates in it analogously, but it also cannot be separated from it and it cannot exist without participating in it.

But while beauty manifests, in a majestic and magnificent manner, the very nature of truth, as well as goodness, it remains hard to define, while also reminding us of the centrality of the concrete. While truth, goodness, and beauty are all participatory, and thus retain an experiential dimension,[45] it seems that we recognise this more intuitively when it comes to beauty. While we can at least *imagine* truth and goodness as abstractions, beauty remains unavoidably concrete and it thus reminds us of the concreteness of reality. Neither truth, goodness, nor beauty are abstract, but are rooted in God and particularly in the *Logos* (cf. John 14:6; 1 Peter 2:3). Beauty, however, has an immediacy that allows it, more so than truth and goodness, to assert itself, to bypass our skepticism, and to reveal God to us. We find this Balthasarian approach particularly

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42 *DN* IV, 7 (701C).

43 Thomas Aquinas, *Expositio super Dionysium De divinis nominibus*, IV, 5, translated by Umberto Eco, *The Aesthetics of Thomas Aquinas* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), 27. See abbreviations, p.4, n1 for notes on the Latin text.

44 Andrew Davison, *Participation in God: A Study in Christian Doctrine and Metaphysics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 91-108 (cf. 84-112); Rudi A. te Velde, "Participation: Aquinas and His Neoplatonic Sources," in *Christian Platonism: A History*, eds., Alexander J. B. Hampton and John Peter Kenney (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 130, n18, 134-135, n26. See chapter one, pp. 32, 40-44.

45 Cf. von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord*, I, 237; Davison, *Participation in God*, 303-366; John Milbank and Catherine Pickstock, *Truth in Aquinas*, ebook version (London: Routledge, 2005), 1-16.

in *Sacramentum Caritatis*, where Pope Benedict notes that the liturgy, as the rest of Christian revelation, is "inherently linked to beauty," that it is *veritatis splendor*, 'the splendour of truth,' i.e. something which not only looks pretty but which reveals and makes present the transcendent beauty of God.[46] He notes that liturgy "is a radiant expression of the paschal mystery, in which Christ draws us to himself and calls us to communion" and that "in Jesus we contemplate beauty and splendour at their source." God draws us in by delighting us, thus working through our form (as Aquinas would say), and in complete freedom. He goes on to note that "God allows himself to be glimpsed first in creation, in the beauty and harmony of the cosmos (cf. *Wis* 13:5; *Rom* 1:19-20)" and that "Christ is the full manifestation of the glory of God. In the glorification of the Son, the Father's glory shines forth and is communicated (cf. *Jn* 1:14; 8:54; 12:28; 17:1)." Beauty here is not understood in any superficial manner but as something which actually reveals something of God and his purposes, most particularly in the liturgy:

> Beauty, then, is not mere decoration, but rather an essential element of the liturgical action, since it is an attribute of God himself and his revelation. These considerations should make us realize the care which is needed, if the liturgical action is to reflect its innate splendour.

For Ratzinger revelation is essentially God's mediation of himself to us as a community, particularly in Scripture and in the liturgy (which is Scripture's proper *sitz im Leben*).[47] This does not reduce to mere appearances, then, but is a participation in the divine. What we see in Ratzinger and Balthasar, as well as in Pseudo-Dionysius and Aquinas, is the notion that beauty is not a superficial characteristic of things, not just as outer ceremony or pomp, but an inner reality which expresses itself and ultimately points to that which is truly beautiful: God himself. There is an inherent link between beauty and harmony. In this, Ratzinger is deeply indebted to Balthasar,

46 Benedict XVI, *Sacramentum Caritatis*, 35.

47 See Joseph Ratzinger, *The Theology of History in St. Bonaventure* (Chicago, IL: Franciscan Herald Press, 1989), esp. 71-75. Also see Matthew Levering, *Engaging the Doctrine of Revelation: The Mediation of the Gospel through Church and Scripture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014), 80-84, cf. 59-85.

who was himself, as other *ressourcement* theologians, indebted to Pseudo-Dionysius.[48] Unlike Balthasar, however, Ratzinger understands this more explicitly within a Platonic framework (though consummated in a Christian, particularly Pseudo-Dionysian, manner).[49] Following Paul Evdokimov, Ratzinger notes that in the West, there was an almost exclusive emphasis on "the pedagogical function of the image," and that this came to expression in the turn from the *Romanesque* style (which, like its Byzantine counterpart, had focused on the risen Christ and on the *Pantocrator*, even on the Cross) to the *Gothic* style (with its more realistic imagery of the crucified Lord).[50] A part was played, here, by the turn from a Platonic to an Aristotelian framework in the 13th century. Where a Platonic conception embraces the concept of ideas and archetypes, which may be imitated in a diminished and non-identical manner, an Aristotelian one emphasises that a thing exists in its own right and that instead of grasping essences through *seeing*, we may grasp them through abstraction. Ratzinger noes that beauty is definitive for Plato and that it coincides with the good, and ultimately with God. And this Platonic notion of beauty, writes Ratzinger, has "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."[51]

Elsewhere Ratzinger notes that while he is "a decided Augustinian," he is also a Christianised Platonist: "To a certain extent I am a Platonist. I think that a kind of memory, of recollection of God, is, as it were, etched in man, though it needs to be awakened. Man doesn't simply know what he is supposed to know, nor is he simply there, but is a man, a being on the

48 Boersma, *Nouvelle*, 121-131, cf. 135-136, 138-148.

49 Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 129-170, esp. 139-141, cf. Nichols, *Redeeming Beauty*, 63.

50 Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 139, cf. 137-141.

51 Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 140-141, cf. Benedict XVI, "Meeting with artists" (address given at the Sistine Chapel, General Audience, Saturday, 21 November 2009). Also see von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord*, I, 272-273. For a critical assessment of Ratzinger's Platonic influences, see Dalzell, "Eucharist, Communion, and Orthopraxis." Dalzell attempts to argue that Ratzinger was not a Platonist but fails because he ignores Ratzinger's own explicit admission of Platonism.

way."[52] Ratzinger affirms a (Christologically transformed) Platonic notion of recollection, of contact with the Forms, also informed by a Thomistic notion that transcendent beauty itself is something more than just this or that beautiful thing. It is a transcendental in which particulars may participate.[53] Elsewhere, Ratzinger notes that the Platonic vision has been "transformed by the new Christian experience," and that beauty wounds us with "beautiful wounds" through which Christ "summons man to his final destiny."[54] For Ratzinger, beauty reminds us that the world is fallen, that there is something amiss, and that there is something more, something beyond the mundane.[55]

Beauty, when it is in its rightful place, understood as an objective value aligned with truth and goodness, speaks to something deep inside us, drawing us in. This conception of beauty focuses both on the transcendent nature of beauty and on our participation in it. It is decidedly Platonic, but consummated in a Christian way. Beauty is something which may draw us in but it must always be understood in light of Christ, aiming at Him. This involves a transformed notion of a Platonic doctrine of participation. In Plato, 'participation' concerns the relation between universals and particulars.[56] Commenting on this doctrine, Aristotle notes that Plato's main interest was in 'ideas,' and that he "held that all sensible things are named after them and in virtue of their relation to them; for the plurality of things which bear the same name as

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52 Ratzinger, *Salt of the Earth*, 33, 41, cf. Rowland, *Ratzinger's Faith*, 3, 4. For an argument against such 'baptisms,' see James K. A. Smith, *Speech and Theology: Language and the logic of incarnation* (London: Routledge, 2002), 170-176.

53 Plato, *Phaedo*, trans. Chris Emlyn-Jones and William Preddy, in *Loeb Classical Library*, ed. Jeffrey Henderson, vol. 36 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017), 64-66, 72-78, 95a-107b. For a discussion of Plato's concept of forms or ideas, see Russell M. Dancy, *Plato's Introduction of Forms* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), esp. 245-315, cf. *DN* IV, 7 (701CD, 704ABC).

54 Joseph Ratzinger, "The Feeling of Things, the Contemplation of Beauty," message to the Communion and Liberation (CL) meeting at Rimini (24-30 August 2002) (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2002).

55 In his translation of Pseudo-Dionysius, John Parker uses the word 'supermundane' to express this, for example in *EH* III:III, 11 (441BC), translating *huperkósmion* (*The Works of Dionysius the Areopagite*, vol. 2, 105). In modern parlance this would indicate something extremely mundane and boring, while in Parker's older usage, it means the opposite, that which transcends the mundane or earthly and goes 'above' or 'beyond' it. I therefore suggest using 'supramundane' instead, as we see in *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, trans. Colm Luibheid, in collaboration with Paul Rorem (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1987), 221.

56 Dancy, *Plato's Introduction of Forms*, 187-206.

the Forms exist by participation in them."[57] For Aristotle, there was no substantial difference between this and earlier Pythagorean concepts, as he continues in the same paragraph: "[F]or whereas the Pythagoreans say that things exist by imitation of numbers, Plato says that they exist by participation—merely a change of term. As to what this "participation" or "imitation" may be, they left this an open question."[58] Ratzinger also notes this Pythagorean thread, pointing to Augustine's use of the Pythagorean theory of music in his early work *De musica*. For Pythagoras, Ratzinger notes, the cosmos is mathematical, orderly. "For the Pythagoreans," writes Ratzinger, "this mathematical order of the universe ("cosmos" means "order"!) was identical with the essence of beauty itself. Beauty comes from meaningful inner order."[59] Augustine adopted, and transformed, this concept, seeing it principally as a participation in God. And this is at the centre of Ratzinger's view:

> 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.[60]

As Pope, Ratzinger also finds this cosmic vision of liturgy in Pseudo-Dionysius, noting how he transforms the Proclean "polytheistic universe into a cosmos created by God, into the harmony

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57 Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, trans. Hugh Tredennick, in *Loeb Classical Library*, ed. Jeffrey Henderson, vol. 271 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1933), 987b, cf. Plato, *Phaedo*, 104d-108.

58 There is a certain ambiguity between 'participation' (Gk. *méthexis*) and 'imitation' (Gk. *mímēsis*) in the Platonic tradition, where some use them interchangeably. See George F. McLean, *Plenitude and Participation: The Life of God in Man* (Washington, D.C.: Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2004), 49. I think, however, that we ought to make a distinction between them. See chapter three, pp.124-125.

59 Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 166, cf. 166-168. We see a clear Pythagorean influence in the later Neoplatonic works of Iamblichus. See Ilinca Tanaseanu-Döbler, *Theurgy in Late Antiquity: The Invention of a Ritual Tradition* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013), 111-135.

60 Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 167-168. We find this focus on order also in Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1078a36, though in a more immanent fashion, focusing on arrangement, proportion, and definiteness, and emphasising mathematics.

of God's cosmos, where every force is praise of God, and to show this great harmony, this symphony of the cosmos that goes from the Seraphim to the Angels and Archangels, to man and to all the creatures which, together, reflect God's beauty and are praise of God."[61] Through this, notes Benedict, we "discover the essential characteristics of his thought":

> first and foremost, it is cosmic praise. All Creation speaks of God and is praise of God. Since the creature is praise of God, Pseudo-Dionysius' theology became a liturgical theology: God is found above all in praising him, not only in reflection; and the liturgy is not something made by us, something invented in order to have a religious experience for a certain period of time; it is singing with the choir of creatures and entering into cosmic reality itself. And in this very way the liturgy, apparently only ecclesiastical, becomes expansive and great, it becomes our union with the language of all creatures. He says: God cannot be spoken of in an abstract way; speaking of God is always - he says using a Greek word - a *"hymnein"*, singing for God with the great hymn of the creatures which is reflected and made concrete in liturgical praise.[62]

Liturgy, as a participation in God through Christ, is structured by creation and is an expression of it. When, for example, we celebrate Easter, we do not merely do so as an 'anniversary' of the Paschal mystery but as a participation in the divinely given order of creation. Easter, in the western tradition, at least, is on the first Sunday after the first full moon after the Spring Equinox, when days becomes longer and brighter, and when new life springs forth. This way, creation reminds us of how life and light becomes victorious over darkness and death. The dating of Easter, then, is cosmic because the cosmos itself is liturgical.[63] The beauty of the liturgy expresses the beauty and order of the cosmos, but this is always rooted in transcendent or absolute beauty, as Plato (or Socrates) tells us: "You see it appears to me if some other thing is beautiful besides the beautiful by itself, it's beautiful for no other reason than that it has a share (Gk. *metéxei*) in that beauty. And indeed, I say everything is like this."[64] Beauty, then,

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61 Benedict XVI, *Pseudo-Dionysius, the Areopagite*, general audience (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2008).

62 Benedict XVI, *Pseudo-Dionysius*.

63 It should be noted, however, that Christianity understands this cosmology differently from how it is understood in Pagan Neoplatonism. See chapter four, pp.140-146, 149-153.

64 Plato, *Phaedo*, 100c.

has a certain order and proportion, though it cannot be reduced to that either. The parades in Nuremberg in Nazi Germany were obviously ordered, but they were not *beautiful*. Beauty is a transcendental which draws us in and aligns us with truth and goodness and it can never be cut off from the other transcendentals. All three may be sought for their own sake. We believe *p* because it is true, we want *x* because it is good, and we look at *y* because it is beautiful.[65] But beauty is more than just order, elegance, and 'prettiness.' It is the very brilliance or splendour of truth and goodness, their revelation.[66] But what, exactly, can beauty tell us about the nature of participation? As noted, beauty may be enjoyed for its own sake, though in relation to the good and the true. What characterises this enjoyment above all else is *contemplation*, which is characterised by a receptive participation, as Hans Georg Gadamer notes at two different places in *Truth and Method*:

> [T]heoria is not to be conceived primarily as subjective conduct, as a self-determination of the subject, but in terms of what it is contemplating. Theoria is a true participation, not something active but something passive (pathos), namely being totally involved in and carried away by what one sees. … Obviously what distinguishes the beautiful from the good is that the beautiful of itself presents itself, that its being is such that it makes itself immediately evident (einleuchtend). … The idea of the beautiful is truly present, whole and undivided, in what is beautiful.[67]

Beauty draws us into *itself*, letting us enjoy it for its own sake. More than anything, beauty reminds us that our participation is principally receptive, that we are characterised most of all as recipients of God's gifts and that the ultimate gift, our *telos*, is to contemplate God in the

65 Roger Scruton, *Beauty* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 2-5, cf. 1-33. He argues that there can exist a sinister and subversive beauty, cut off from truth and goodness, such as the Nuremberg parades or villainous and beautiful Queens (my examples, not his). This, however, conflates beauty as such with the (superficially) charming, elegant, or 'pretty.' Scruton seems also to treat beauty in a fairly extrinsic and 'high cultured' manner. Also see his program on *BBC2*, "Why Beauty Matters" (28 November 2009). Beauty, however, is not reducible to that, and cannot be cut off from the other transcendentals. It exists as much in a small village church as it does in a Wagner opera, sometimes even more.

66 Benedict XVI, *Sacramentum Caritatis*, 35, cf. von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord*, I, 18-24, 57-70, 115-127, 435-439, 447-462.

67 Hans Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Truth and Method*, trans. and rev. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 127, 497, cf. Rik Van Nieuwenhove, "Gadamer, Art, and Contemplation: How to Make Sense of Sacraments in an Allegedly Post-Metaphysical World" (*Louvain Studies* 38:2, 2014), 111-125; Jack Williams, "Playing church: understanding ritual and religious experience resourced by Gadamer's concept of play" (*International Journal of Philosophy and Theology* 79:3, 2018), 323-336.

beatific vision.[68] While this is also the case for truth and goodness, we have a much more immediate and intuitive grasp of beauty. As Ratzinger notes, beauty is "an essential element of the liturgical action, since it is an attribute of God himself and his revelation."[69] Beauty reminds us of this, then, not principally by pointing to something else but by drawing us into itself, in a mediate and experiential manner, through our contemplative participation in it. For Ratzinger this happens principally through the liturgy. The reason for this is partly *metaphysical*, rooted in an analogous conception of being and in the fact that God is always mediated,[70] and partly *historical*, rooted in God's actions in history, particularly Christ's institution of concrete ritual by which to draw us into His communion:

> 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.[71]

The liturgy is beautiful not principally because it pleases us or because it is (superficially) charming, elegant, or 'pretty,' but because it participates in, reveals to us, and draws us into the inner splendour of Christ and His works. This reveals liturgy as a divine work, a *theurgy*, in which we may participate. And it is precisely this theurgic thread, transformed in a Christian context, which is picked up by *ressourcement* theologians in the 20th century, understood principally as

68 Van Nieuwenhove, "Gadamer, Art, and Contemplation," 121-124.

69 Benedict XVI, *Sacramentum Caritatis*, 35.

70 Joseph Ratzinger, *Dogma and Preaching: Applying Christian Doctrine to Daily Life*, first unabridged edition (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius, 2011), 260-271.

71 Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 35-36, cf. 27-37. Also see von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord*, I, 527-604, esp. 571-583.

a divine work offered *for* us.[72] Yves Congar holds that our worship of God is first God's self-worship and that the 'downward' mediation is always prior to our (upwards) response: "Before being latreutic, and in order to be latreutic, the Christian sacramental cult is theurgic and soteriological: it does not consist at first in offering, in making something rise up from us to God, but in receiving the effective gift of God."[73] And Balthasar, discussing the beauty of God's favour, notes that "[s]uch beauty is the blazing forth of the primal, protological, and eschatological splendour of creation even in this age of death, in which redeemed man is admitted to participation in God's act of praising himself in his creation."[74] And as I have noted, Ratzinger sees the core of liturgy as a participation in the *actio divina* or *actio Christi*.[75] The principal emphasis of Balthasar, Congar, and Ratzinger (and other *ressourcement* theologians) is God's own work, and his gifts to us, as a participation in His splendour. Only secondarily do they emphasise our return gift, flowing from God, as we participate in divine self-worship, through Christ, as 'the auto-eulogia of God.'[76] God himself, in human flesh, enters into the old covenant blessings and transforms them, in the Spirit. As I will discuss later, the Incarnation is absolutely central here and it is also here we find the main difference from Pagan theurgy. Christ is not just another man with a 'special connection' to the divine. In Christ, the divine and human are fully united in one single *suppositum*, while remaining distinct.[77] By participating in Christ, and in

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72 Boersma, *Nouvelle*, 52-62, 121-131, 144-148, cf. Crystal Addey, *Divination and Theurgy in Neoplatonism: Oracles of the Gods* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016); Alan Philip Darley, "Ritual as erotic anagogy in Pseudo-Dionysius: a Reformed critique" (*International Journal of Philosophy and Theology* 79:3, 2018), 261-278; Anne Sheppard, "Theurgy," in *Oxford Classical Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); Charles M. Stang, *Apophasis and Pseudonymity in Dionysius the Areopagite: "No Longer I"* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Struck, "Pagan and Christian Theurgies"; Tanaseanu-Döbler, *Theurgy in Late Antiquity*; Gregory Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul: The Neoplatonism of Iamblichus*, 2nd ed. (Angelico Press/Sophia Perennis, 2014); Algis Uždavinys, *Philosophy and Theurgy in Late Antiquity* (Kettering: Angelico Press/Sophia Perennis, 2014), 204-228; Sarah Klitenic Wear and John Dillon, *Dionysius the Areopagite and the Neoplatonist Tradition: Despoiling the Hellenes* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007).

73 Congar, "Le sacerdoce," 254, quoted (and translated) in Mansini and Welch, "The Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests," 222, n19, 224, n45, cf. 208, 212.

74 von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord*, I, 68.

75 Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 185-191.

76 Ratzinger, *Feast Of Faith*, 50.

77 See chapter four, pp.140-146, cf. *The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon*, trans., introd. and notes, Richard Price and Michael Gaddis (3 vols., Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2005, 2007), II, 203-205; Michael

His act, we become blessed, as we enter into this divine self-praise. Furthermore, when we say that the Christian sacramental cult is *first* theurgic, this is not primarily a sequential assertion. The latreutic response is not just secondary in time (nor necessarily so), nor is it separated from the first, but it is *logically secondary*, and always reliant on God's work, as it participates in it. Through the liturgical ritual, the Church participates in God because it is first and foremost the work of Christ and because we participate in Him, as St. Paul notes: "For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have come to fullness in him, who is the head of every ruler and authority" (Colossians 2:9-10).[78]

With Ratzinger's Christian appropriation and transformation of a Platonic idea of beauty and participation, then, we see a parallel to Pseudo-Dionysius's Christian consummation of Neoplatonic theurgy. Indeed, what emerges *is* a Christian theurgic approach to liturgy, emphasising that God comes down to us and that we may participate in his work and give it back as praise. Though Ratzinger never uses strict theurgic language himself, he does emphasise liturgical and sacramental initiation, noting that the liturgy provides a hope "which initiates us into authentic life—the life of freedom, of intimate union with God, of pure openness to our fellowman,"[79] and he notes that in Christ, we "gain access to reality" through sacramental symbols.[80] Hans Boersma notes a clear connection between *ressourcement* theology and a broadly Christian Platonic metaphysics, indicating that "[c]reated objects derive their value from sacramental participation in their transcendent ground," holding that "historical realities of the created order served as divinely ordained, sacramental means leading to eternal divine mysteries" and that theology needs to "return to mystery."[81] Created reality is symbolic in that it not only points

J. Gorman, *Aquinas on the Metaphysics of the Hypostatic Union* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 73-125.

78 For arguments for this, both the sense in which we participate and our union with God through Christ, see chapters three and four, pp.106-118, 153-162.

79 Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 28.

80 Ratzinger, *Theology of the Liturgy*, 169, cf. 169-184.

81 Boersma, *Nouvelle*, 16-17, 289, cf. 126, 148, 289-294. This historic approach is also central to Ratzinger. See Ratzinger, *The Theology of History in St. Bonaventure*.

towards something beyond itself, to God and to other hidden realities, but also, and perhaps more importantly, that it *participates* in this. The sign (Lt. *signum*) both points to and participates in a greater reality, 'the thing' (Lt. *res*) or 'the thing signified' (Lt. *res significata*).[82] This entails a participatory metaphysics, emphasing the Christian cult and especially the sacraments, as rooted in the divine *Logos*, which for Ratzinger must be understood not just in light of the Old Testament but also the Hellenistic culture that helped spread Christianity.[83] Central to this conception, and to Ratzinger's theology in general, is the relation between Creator and creation, seen in light of the analogy of being, *analogia entis*. In his (in)famous Regensburg Lecture, Pope Benedict notes that in the Middle Ages, we see the rise of a voluntarist notion of God, where "God's transcendence and otherness are so exalted that our reason, our sense of the true and good, are no longer an authentic mirror of God, whose deepest possibilities remain eternally unattainable and hidden behind his actual decisions,"[84] in opposition to Augustine and Aquinas's so-called intellectualism:

> As opposed to this, the faith of the Church has always insisted that between God and us, between his eternal Creator Spirit and our created reason there exists a real analogy, in which – as the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 stated – unlikeness remains infinitely greater than likeness, yet not to the point of abolishing analogy and its language. God does not become more divine when we push him away from us in a sheer, impenetrable voluntarism; rather, the truly divine God is the God who has revealed himself as *logos* and, as *logos*, has acted and continues to act lovingly on our behalf. Certainly, love, as Saint Paul says, "transcends" knowledge and is thereby capable of perceiving more than thought alone (cf. Eph 3:19); nonetheless it continues to be love of the God who is *Logos*. Consequently, Christian worship is, again to quote Paul – *"λογικη λατρεία"*, worship in harmony with the eternal Word and with our reason (cf. *Rom* 12:1).[85]

Ratzinger rejects univocity as an adequate way to speak of the relation between Creator and

[82] For a recent discussion of this, see Joshua Kendall Mobley, *Symbolism: A Brief Systematic Theology of the Symbol* (PhD dissertation, Durham University, 2020), esp. 23-96.

[83] Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, 116-122, 138, 151-158, 213-214; Ratzinger, *Jesus*, II, 92.

[84] Benedict XVI, *The Regensburg Lecture*, §26, cf. §§25-26. For the text, see James V. Schall, *The Regensburg Lecture* (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine's Press, 2007), 130-148. Also see Emery de Gaál, *The Theology of Pope Benedict XVI: The Christocentric Shift* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 269-273.

[85] Benedict XVI, *Regensburg Lecture*, §§27-28, cf. Jang, *Beauty as a transcendental*, 25-27.

creation because it reduces God to a distant object to which we have to be 'transported' through a downplaying, even a rejection, of createdness, corporeality, and finitude.[86] Furthermore, at the centre of the *analogia entis*, lies the fact that we only grasp God in a mediated, non-direct, fashion, through symbols, images, and analogies, and that he does so here and now, not by 'whisking us away.' As Andrew Davison notes, a "participatory spirituality … is comfortable with mediation" and "[o]ur options are not between an unmediated encounter with God, or none at all."[87] God always comes to us mediated, in his works of creation (Romans 1) but principally (or in a fuller way) in His word and in His sacraments. And these mediated encounters are *real*. Ratzinger writes:

> Scripture is obviously very much aware of the impossibility of a direct, conceptually adequate representation of realities in the end times. All human knowing is accomplished with reference to and within this world. Consequently, if human knowing is to make a statement about something that is not "world", it can do so only with the materials of this world; it cannot grasp that something in its proper being, as it is in itself, but only by means of approximations and similarities that exist within worldly being, therefore "analogously" in comparisons and images.[88]

This is precisely where beauty becomes important. We contemplate it for its own sake and it is always mediated to us in symbols through which we "gain access to reality."[89] When *we* perform beautiful acts or create beautiful works, liturgies, prayers, or more, these always participate in that which is beautiful in itself.[90] But even so, *we* actually and truly perform these acts. Our active participation is *real*.[91] This relies on a solid doctrine of participation and on mediation, as God is only available to us analogously and mediated.[92] This is a theurgical perspective in the-

86 Which we can see from his critique of Calvin in Ratzinger, *Theology of the Liturgy*, 221-224. For my critique of Calvin, see chapter five, pp.188-196.

87 Davison, *Participation in God*, 342, cf. 328-331, 341-347.

88 Ratzinger, *Dogma and Preaching*, 262, cf. 260-271.

89 Ratzinger, *Theology of the Liturgy*, 169, cf. 169-184; Davison, *Participation in God*, 327-347; Van Nieuwenhove, "Gadamer, Art, and Contemplation"; Williams, "Playing church."

90 Plato, *Phaedo*, 100c.

91 Davison, *Participation in God*, 65-83.

92 While absolute beauty for Plato is the *Form* or *Idea* of beauty, Christian thinkers, particularly Aquinas, recognised that these forms were divine ideas that ultimately refer to God Himself. See Davison, *Participation in*

ology, on our participation in God, our initiation into his life, understood through an analogical and participatory metaphysic. It is rooted in the act of Christ, most particularly His sacrifice, to which I will soon turn, and it comes to expression in our praise of him and in the works we do for our neighbours. This ought to be expressed in beautiful ways because, as Ratzinger notes, the "only really effective apologia for Christianity comes down to two arguments, namely, the *saints* the Church has produced and the *art* which has grown in her womb."[93]

3 Christ and the Paschal Mystery

"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."[94] For Ratzinger, theology is centred on the Incarnation, and particularly the Passion, which includes the whole Paschal Triduum, to use liturgical language, while not being reducible to these historical events, as it exists, eternally, in Christ's person. These elements, the historical – the 'once for all' and unrepeatable sacrifice of Christ, where He was crucified, died, and rose from the dead (cf. Hebrews 7:27) – and the personal – Christ's self-giving on our behalf – cannot be understood in isolation from one another.[95] Because of Christ's self-giving, the Paschal mystery is a present reality into which we may be drawn:

> 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*.

God, 84-112, esp. 91-101. Commenting on the notion of *noeta* in Pseudo-Dionysius, Alexander Golitzin, "*Pseudo-Dionysius: A Commentary on the Texts and an Introduction to Their Influence* by Paul Rorem" (*Mystics Quarterly* 21:1, 1995), 31 notes that "[w]hile the pagan Neoplatonists, Proclus and company, … proceed to postulate an intelligible universe featuring a descending chain of eternal causes (read gods), Dionysius breaks this chain … in order to affirm the *noeta* as referring exclusively either to the powers or activities of the one God at work in creation, or else to the world of created spirits, the angels."

93 Ratzinger and Messori, *The Ratzinger Report*, 129.

94 Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 71, cf. 67-75.

95 Ratzinger, *Behold The Pierced One*, 13-69; Ratzinger, *God Is Near Us*, 27-55; Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 67-75; Ratzinger, *Theology of the Liturgy*, 207-217, 337-346, 349-351, 541-557. Also see Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale: The Mystery of Easter* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1990); Kringlebotten, *«Do this in remembrance of me…»*, 43-50.

> 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 *logike 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.[96]

For Ratzinger, sacrifices do not 'do' anything to God, nor do they 'satisfy' Him. Sacrifices are there, ultimately, for *us*.[97] By offering Himself, as our representative, Christ reconciles us to God by drawing us into His communion: "And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself" (John 12:32). The Paschal mystery is historical, but it was, so to speak, 'reinterpreted' by Christ in the Upper Room. Without the suffering and death, Christ's words of self-offering in the Upper Room become empty words, while Christ's death, without His 'reinterpretation' becomes a meaningless execution. Together, however, they have meaning as an act of rational, self-sacrificial love.[98] According to Ratzinger, through the institution of the Eucharist and His high-priestly prayer (John 17), Christ transforms His death into prayer. He renews the cult and introduces the *logikē latreía* (Romans 12), what the Church Fathers called *thysía logikē*, 'spiritual/reasonable sacrifices.'[99] Ratzinger traces this emphasis not only to Scripture but to the ancient Greek cultures and their influence on the Hebrew tradition, particularly in the later tradition of 'the sacrifice of praise.' Israel grasped that what pleases God is not burnt-offerings but prayer and praise from a broken and contrite heart (Psalm 51:15-17). And from this, and the Hellenistic influences, there evolved an idea of a 'sacrifice of the word':

> Israel was beginning to grasp that the sacrifice pleasing to God is a man pleasing to God and that prayer, the grateful praise of God, is thus the true sacrifice in which we give ourselves back to him,

96 Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 71-72.
97 Ratzinger, *Jesus*, II, 202-277, cf. 76-144. Also see Kringlebotten, *«Do this in remembrance of me…»*, 43-47.
98 Ratzinger, *God Is Near Us*, 29-30.
99 Cf. Ratzinger, *Jesus*, II, 76-277.

> thereby renewing ourselves and the world. The heart of Israel's worship had always been what we express in the Latin word *memoriale*: *remembrance*. … The religion of Israel was at one here with the new religious outlook of the pagan world, in which the idea was emerging that the true sacrifice was the word or, rather, the man who in thanksgiving gave a spiritual dimension both to things and to himself, purified them, and thereby rendered them fit for God.[100]

This finds its roots in later Hellenstic conceptions of worship, continuing into the later Neoplatonic tradition. R. M. van den Berg notes that 'the Ancients' generally "worshipped the gods in the belief that divinities, if they felt neglected, could cause a lot of harm, whereas worship in the form of offerings, hymns and the like could put them in a favourable mood."[101] The philosophers, "from the Presocratics onwards," however, "were strongly opposed to this (in their opinion) blasphemous portrayal of the divine." The gods did not need flattery, nor any gifts or greasy smoke. "All the same," notes van den Berg, "the worship of the gods was considered to be an honourable thing. Not because the divine needs it, but because their majesty inspires us to do so."[102] He notes that having reflected on this, the Neoplatonist "redefined the essence of worship in accordance with the goal of their ethics: becoming like god as far as possible," and we see that for Proclus, our "hymn to the Father (ὕμνος τοῦ Πατρός) does not consist in words, nor in rites, but in becoming like him (τὴν εἰς αὐτὸν ἐξομοίωσιν)."[103] We worship the gods, according to Proclus, by reverting to them, by seeking them out and becoming like them. What we see in the history of Israel, is a similar return. This, however, does not reject words or rites in worship, but, as Ratzinger points out, it entails a transformation of ritual, in all its concrete physicality, in the recognition, as I have noted elsewhere, that what

100 Ratzinger, *God Is Near Us*, 48-49, cf. 42-55.

101 R. M. van den Berg, *Proclus' Hymns: Essays, Translations, Commentary* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 18, cf. 18-22, 75-85.

102 van den Berg, *Proclus' Hymns*, 18.

103 van den Berg, *Proclus' Hymns*, 18, 19, cf. Plato, *Republic*, trans. Chris Emlyn-Jones and William Preddy, in *Loeb Classical Library*, ed. Jeffrey Henderson, vol. 237, 276 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), 613b1; Plato, *Timaeus*, trans. R. G. Bury, in *Loeb Classical Library*, ed. Jeffrey Henderson, vol. 234 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1929), 90d; Plato, *Theaetetus*, trans. Harold North Fowler, in *Loeb Classical Library*, ed. Jeffrey Henderson, vol. 123 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1921), 176bc.

God desires is not our (dead) animals but our (living) selves.[104] We do not see a replacement of the Hebrew mindset with Hellenism, but the Hebrew consummation of Hellenistic philosophy, where the essential physical nature of liturgy is maintained and transformed. This is centred, for Ratzinger, on the entire Paschal Mystery.[105] Through Christ, we, and particularly our words, are being drawn by the words of the Word, "into God's inner dialogue, into his reason and his love," not in an abstract manner but concretely and physically, since the *Logos* became flesh and offered up himself not just spiritually but physically: "his body offered up, his blood poured out."[106] Later, Ratzinger notes that the early Fathers saw in Christ's act what modern scholars have called 'corporate personality,' that Christ offers Himself on our behalf, as the Head.[107] The Church's liturgy centres around the Paschal mystery, both to celebrate it and to be drawn into it and into Christ. There is, for Ratzinger, an intrinsic link between Christ's offering of Himself, both in the institution of the Eucharist and in his high-priestly prayer, and our worship. This worship, notes Ratzinger, is the worship of the Word, introduced specifically through this self-offering. What is new in Christianity is that we no longer need the slaughter of animals because God in Christ has inaugurated a new 'Sacrifice of the Word,' as Ratzinger notes elsewhere, commenting on the notion of active participation: "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," which means that our worship is "being addressed to God in full awareness that it comes from him and is made possible by him."[108] We are made capable of worship, of addressing God, because we participate in the divine self-address, in the fount of all rationality

104 Kjetil Kringlebotten, ""Do this in remembrance of me…" A Lutheran defence of the sacrifice of the mass" (*Studia Theologica – Nordic Journal of Theology* 71:2, 2017), 134, cf. Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 49-53.

105 Ratzinger, *Jesus*, II, 202-277, cf. 76-144. Also see Ratzinger, *Behold The Pierced One*, 13-69; Ratzinger, *God Is Near Us*, 27-55; Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 67-75, cf. von Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale*; Kringlebotten, *«Do this in remembrance of me…»*, 41-50.

106 Ratzinger, *Jesus*, II, 80.

107 Ratzinger, *Jesus*, II, 204-206, 213-216.

108 Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 186.

and all communication, the coming of the Son from the Father and the self-giving of the Son to the Father, in the Spirit: "Since there is relationship within God himself, there can also be a participation in this relationship."[109] God himself, in human flesh, enters into the old covenant blessings and transforms them, in the Spirit, allowing us to participate, particularly through the liturgical ritual. It starts with celebration of Christ's work, particularly His Passion. In celebration, in praise and thanksgiving, we are drawn into Christ and receive His gifts. He notes that, through our participation in Christ, we participate in the "eternal exchange and eternal dialogue" of the Triune God, become "adoptive sons," and receive deification: "Receiving the Holy Spirit, the Christian glorifies the Father and really shares in the Trinitarian life of God."[110] By seeing liturgy principally as a divine work and our worship as an imitation of Christ's own worship, Ratzinger is providing a theurgic perspective, where the whole world participates in God, which also reveals some central differences between Paganism and Christianity:

> The cult rooted in biblical faith is not an imitation of the course of the world in miniature—as is the case for the basic form of all cults of nature. It is an imitation of God himself and therefore a preliminary exercise in the world to come. Only in this way does one correctly understand the singularity of the biblical creation account. The pagan creation accounts on which the biblical story is in part based end without exception in the establishment of a cult, but the cult in this case is situated in the cycle of *do ut des*. The gods create men in order to be fed by them; men need the gods to keep the course of the world in order. As I have already said, the biblical creation account, too, must definitely be seen, at least in a certain sense, as the establishment of a cult. But here cult means the liberation of men through their participation in the freedom of God and thus the liberation of creation itself, its release into the freedom of the children of God.[111]

We imitate Christ through participation. He is 'the auto-eulogia of God,' and in imitation of Him we also become true worshippers of God. Here, though, I must disagree partly with Ratzinger. He notes that our cultic imitation "is not an imitation of the course of the world in miniature—

109 Ratzinger, *Feast Of Faith*, 25.

110 Joseph Ratzinger, *Orationis formas*, letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on some aspects of Christian Meditation (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1989), 15, cf. 13-15.

111 Ratzinger, *Theology of the Liturgy*, 199, cf. 187-206, esp. 197-199.

as is the case for the basic form of all cults of nature." Rather, it is "an imitation of God himself."[112] Both, however, are true, as this imitation takes into itself the created order. Grace does not destroy nature, it perfects it, and in Scripture creation itself is expressed through cult and worship.[113] Our imitation of God, however, is non-identical. We are not simply 'copying' Christ, or pretending to be Him, but we are, somehow, being made one with Him as we participate in His works. And this Christian vision also contains, to a certain extent, a cycle of gift and counter-gift. Even if it is non-identical and derived or participated, it is still *real*. As Ratzinger notes:

> God gives that we may give. This is the essence of the Eucharistic Sacrifice, of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ; from the earliest times, the Roman Canon has expressed it thus: "De tuis donis ac datis offerimus tibi" – from your gifts and offerings we offer you.[114]

We are enabled to offer, and this offering is real, though derived or participated. We may, as John Milbank, talk of creation (and the new creation in Christ) as 'a gift of a gift to a gift' and we may, paradoxically, talk of a 'unilateral exchange' (or perhaps a 'unilateral reciprocity').[115] Ratzinger understands such participation in terms of deification or theosis,[116] but his focus is not particularly on its 'inner mechanics,' what this actually entails ontologically, but on what we are saved *for*. Through this incorporation, Christians are enabled to live 'in Christ,' and most particularly to worship.[117] This worship is at the centre of Ratzinger's Christology and soteriology. While the Cross and the Resurrection were both central, they were so because Christ

112 Ratzinger, *Theology of the Liturgy*, 199.

113 Simon Oliver, *Creation: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2017), 14-21. But as we have noted above, pp.77-78, Ratzinger seems to disagree with himself when he discusses the cosmic nature of Pseudo-Dionysius's liturgical theology (Benedict XVI, *Pseudo-Dionysius*).

114 Ratzinger, *God Is Near Us*, 47, cf. 42-55.

115 John Milbank, *The Suspended Middle: Henri de Lubac and the Debate concerning the Supernatural* (2nd ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014), 96, 108, cf. Davison, *Participation in God*, 65-83; Oliver, *Creation*, 143-157.

116 Ratzinger, *Orationis formas*, 15; Ratzinger, *Theology of the Liturgy*, 199.

117 Romans 3:24; 6:8; 6:11; 8:1; 8:39; 12:5; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 1:30; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 2:17; 2:20; Ephesians 1:3; Colossians 1:4. For my discussion of deification and participation in Christ, see chapter four, pp.153-162.

had transformed them into *prayer*. He did not fail in death because he had already given Himself as a gift in his high-priestly prayer and in the institution of the Eucharist. In the Eucharistic words, in the words of institution, notes Ratzinger, "*Jesus transforms death into the spiritual act of affirmation, into the act of self-sharing love*; into the act of adoration, which is offered to God, then from God is made available to men."[118] Through the Passion, the self-offering of Christ in the Upper Room is consummated. Our participation in this, then, is concrete, bodily, rational, articulate, and meaningful, as captured in St. Paul's call for a rational or spiritual worship: "I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service [Gk. *logikē latreía*]" (Romans 12:1). This concept is at the heart of Ratzinger's theology of the liturgy, and it has some important implications: When we worship, we do so *in* the *Logos*, as a participation in Him, in harmony with Him.[119] And this worship, and all our liturgical acts, should be not only spiritual but reasonable or rational, and ordered (cf. 1 Corinthians 14). This is "worship shaped by the word, structured on reason (Rom 12:1)."[120] Ratzinger notes that the phrase *logikē latreía* is almost impossible to translate. At one place he calls it "worship characterized by logos," noting that it "had developed in the sphere of the encounter of Jewish with Greek religion at around the time of Christ," and elsewhere 'worship in accord with the Logos' (Ger. *Logosgemäßer Gottesdienst*).[121] Ratzinger is critical of those strands of philosophy which look back to the old pagan cults. But rather than abolishing philosophy, he argues for its Christian consummation by presenting us with a *rational* cult (or a 'reasonable service') able to answer the challenges of the world and provide a rational grounding.[122] He

118 Ratzinger, *God Is Near Us*, 29, cf. 27-55 (emphasis in original). Also see Ratzinger, *Jesus*, II, 76-144; Kringlebotten, *«Do this in remembrance of me…»*, 43; Ratzinger, *Behold The Pierced One*, 13-69, esp. 22-32.

119 Cf. Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 58-75, 162-170; Ratzinger, *Theology of the Liturgy*, 452-455, 549-557.

120 Ratzinger, *Jesus*, II, 80.

121 Ratzinger, *Theology of the Liturgy*, 349, 452, cf. 187-206, 349-351, 371-387, 443-460, 461-479, 494-511.

122 Cf. Ayres, Kelly, and Humphries, "Benedict XVI," 425-430, 436-439.

follows Pseudo-Dionysius's approach, with Christ at the centre as the 'master theurgist.'[123] The point of theurgy is not first to do a work for God but to be drawn into the divine work, and to be enabled thereby to perform. This comes to expression as a *rational* (or *Logos*-centred) cult, and this may be understood in theurgic terms where we, as partakers of Christ, become *theourgikoì*, co-workers with God or initiates in the divine work.[124] This entails that the central sacrifice is that of Christ and that our worship is a participation in His worship, the worship of the Word. This is a 'marriage' of Greek and Jewish notions, in this case the Greek emphasis on being and rationality (*logos* as *ratio*) and the Jewish emphasis on the Word (*logos* as *verbum*). These two come together in Christ the high priest (cf. John 17):

> We ask that the Logos, Christ, who *is* the true sacrifice, may himself draw us into his act of sacrifice, may "logify" us, make us "more consistent with the word", "more truly rational", so that his sacrifice may become ours and may be accepted by God as ours, may be able to be accounted as ours. We pray that his presence might pick us up, so that we become "one body and one spirit" with him.[125]

For Ratzinger, the Christian ritual is rational and coherent, precisely because it is rooted in the *Logos*, who is the root of all rationality. He is "true light, which enlightens everyone" (John 1:9) and he is "the way, and the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). For Ratzinger, our worship of God, which is rational and conformed to the *Logos*, cannot be separated from God's self-worship in Christ, though they can be distinguished. Using Struck's formulation, Christ is the 'master theurgist,' the one who offers the acceptable cult and who draws us into it.[126] We are back, yet again, to the fact that Christ transforms the old rituals into *prayer*, renewing the cult and introducing the *logikē latreía*.[127] And our reasonable sacrifice, our return gift to God and our liturgical enactments of the sacraments, are of course non-identical. When we celebrate the

123 Struck, "Pagan and Christian Theurgies," cf. Charles M. Stang, "Dionysius, Paul and the Significance of the Pseudonym" (*Modern Theology* 24:4, 2008), 544-545.
124 *EH* I, 1 (372B).
125 Ratzinger, *Theology of the Liturgy*, 350, cf. Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, 188-190; Ratzinger, *Jesus*, II, 103-277 (esp. 76-102).
126 Struck, "Pagan and Christian Theurgies," 31-33, 37-38.
127 Cf. Ratzinger, *Jesus*, II, 76-277.

Eucharist, or the Eucharistic sacrifice, we are not just mimicking (or doing a re-enactment of) the Last Supper, or primarily engaging in a meal, but receiving the gifts of God in Christ and offering them back as thanks and praise, something which again returns back to us as the blessing of God, to us and to the world (cf. 1 Timothy 4:4-5).[128] And that, according to Ratzinger, is the essence of the Eucharistic celebration, of the new Passover of Christ, our giving of thanks for our deliverance, our exodus, in Christ, as expressed in Psalm 22:27: "All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord; and all the families of the nations shall worship before him."[129] But what is interesting is that while Ratzinger is focusing on the fact that our Eucharistic celebrations are not simple 're-enactments' of the Last Supper, this is equally true of Jewish celebrations of the Passover, at least after the destruction of the Temple. We find no mention of the four cups of wine in Exodus 12, and subsequent celebrations would also be different just from the fact that only the first was celebrated in Egypt, on the eve of escape. Ritual always retains a level of 'traditional innovation.' We thus repeat Christ's Passover, or "keep the feast," to quote 1 Corinthians 5:8, not by simply re-enacting or identically copying Christ's Last Supper with his disciples, but by celebrating the Eucharist according to the many rites that have developed over the centuries, focusing specifically on the thanks and praise of Christ in which we are made partakers.[130] These concrete rituals are grounded in God, and particularly in the person of Christ, as the 'centre piece' of the Eucharistic celebration, and in the work of the Holy Spirit.[131] Ratzinger is adamant that the Church is not 'mechanically' reciting words to God in the liturgy but truly participating in God or in God through Christ,

128 This point also gave rise to a very definitive shift, as indicated by Ratzinger's choice of title for a in Ratzinger, *Jesus*, II, 138-144: "From the Last Supper to the Sunday Morning Eucharist." This change tells us that while the institution of the Eucharist is central, its fulfilment is found in the Resurrection. The early Church celebrated the Eucharist (principally) on the first day of the week, on Sunday morning or 'the Lord's day,' with emphasis on our encounter with Christ resurrected.

129 Cf. Ratzinger, *Jesus*, II, 204-205.

130 Cf. Gregory Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy*, 3rd ed. (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2005), 718-719.

131 Benedict XVI, *Sacramentum Caritatis*, 8, 12-13, 15-16, 36-37, 48, 73, 76, 78, 94, 97; Ratzinger, *Jesus*, II, 104.

celebrating His deeds. This has deep roots in the Christian theurgic tradition, as highlighted by Pseudo-Dionysius (probably describing what we call the post-communion prayer):

> Meanwhile, the whole order of the Priests having been collected together in hierarchical order, and communicated in the most Divine mysteries, finishes with a holy thanksgiving, after having recognized and sung the favours [Gk. *cháritas*] of the works of God [Gk. *tō̃n theourgiṓn*], according to their degree. So that those, who have not partaken and are ignorant of things Divine, would not attain to thanksgiving, although the most Divine gifts are, in their essential nature, worthy of thanksgiving. But, as I said, not having wished even to look at the Divine gifts, from their inclination to things inferior, they have remained throughout ungracious towards the boundless graces of the works of God. "Taste and see," say the Oracles, for, by the sacred initiation of things Divine, the initiated [Gk. *tṓn theíōn muḗsei*] recognize their munificent graces, and, by gazing with utmost reverence upon their most Divine height and breadth in the participation, they will sing the supercelestial beneficent works of the Godhead with gracious thanksgiving.[132]

In celebration, in praise and thanksgiving, we are drawn into Christ and receive His gifts. We become imitators of Him, participants in Him. And through this participation in the master theurgist, we are "caught up and made contemporary with the Paschal Mystery of Christ."[133] The point of the sacrifice, then, is not principally to appease God or to give Him His 'pound of flesh' but to make His salvation available to us and to draw us into Christ. It is not principally about what we do but about what is done *for* us and, more importantly, *with* us. Ratzinger sees any external actions on our part as secondary to the *actio* of God:

> *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. … [O]ne 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.[134]

We are drawn into the Paschal mystery and this sacrifice transforms us, not because God has been appeased by his 'pound of flesh' but because we become one with God through Christ, the

132 *EH* III:3, 15 (445BC), cf. Struck, "Pagan and Christian Theurgies," 34.
133 Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 71, cf. 67-75; Ratzinger, *Theology of the Liturgy*, 197-199.
134 Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 188, 189.

God-man. As Ratzinger notes, in a lecture on *Sacrosanctum Concilium* and the theology of the liturgy, sacrifice consists "in a process of transformation, in the conforming of man to God, in his θείωσις (*theōsis*, in English "theosis"), as the Fathers would say."[135] Sacrifice principally concerns the transformation of those for whom the sacrifice is performed, not the appeasement of the one to whom the sacrifice is offered (though in Scripture we do see that God is being appeased precisely when we are transformed and when we do good).[136]

Ratzinger follows Iamblicheus's and Pseudo-Dionysius' logic, emphasising that this principally concerns a divine work into which we are drawn, and that Christ is the principle agent. Though we do not call down the Holy Spirit in statues, we do call Him down onto bread and wine, on the promise of Christ, "so that they may become for us the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ."[137] We participate in *Christ's own prayer*, praying in and with him, in "God's gift of himself in his Son's self-emptying love."[138] Christ is the 'master theurgist' and by participating in Him we are drawn into his life. We become co-workers with God or initiates in the divine work and this union with Christ is our ultimate end. We are to become one with the divine *Logos* in such a way that we are transformed into Him. As Christ sanctifies himself, we are thereby sanctified through participation, as Christ Himself notes: "Sanctify them in the truth; thy word is truth" (John 17:17) and "I consecrate myself" (John 17:19). Ratzinger notes that this concept, of being sanctified or consecrated, carries within itself a paradox: the one who is sanctified or consecrated is set apart *from* the world, but through this he exists *for* the

135 Ratzinger, *Theology of the Liturgy*, 551, cf. 541-557.

136 Psalm 50:8-14; Psalm 51:16-17; Psalm 119:108; Hosea 6:6; Matt 9:13; 12:7; Mark 12:28-34; Romans 12:1-2; Hebrews 10:4-10.

137 Eucharistic prayer II in *The Roman Missal*, third typical edition (Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2011), 101, cf. *Missale Romanum*, Editio Typica Tertia (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2008), 101. If not otherwise noted, citations from *Missale Romanum* and *Roman Missal* use paragraph numbers (which are identical in the two), not page numbers. Also see Benedict XVI, *Sacramentum Caritatis*, 12-13, cf. 8, 15-16, 36-37, 48, 73, 76, 78, 94, 97. We are not dynamically being transported away to some 'spiritual realm' but the Spirit comes to us and brings Christ to us. See Ratzinger, *Theology of the Liturgy*, 221-224, cf. Simon Oliver, "The Eucharist before Nature and Culture" (*Modern Theology* 15:3, 1999), 342-350.

138 Ratzinger, *Jesus*, II, 128, cf. 125-130. Also see Ayres, Kelly, and Humphries, "Benedict XVI," 427-428.

world. Israel was set apart so that it could be there for all, through the Messiah, 'the Holy One of God.'[139] The Son is sent from the Father to carry out his will in order to liberate humankind from bondage to sin. So, when Christ says, "I consecrate myself," He is offering Himself up as sacrifice, *for* us, precisely because he is setting himself apart. The *Logos*, the Word, is the high priest and He was made flesh "for the life of the world" (John 6:51). Our deliverance, then, is not purely extrinsic but also intrinsic and transformative, as we are made one with Christ.

4 Conclusion

For Ratzinger, the *Logos*, Christ, is at the centre of theology, though always understood in a Trinitarian manner. When we participate in God's work, or Christ's work, we partake of the inner life of the Trinity, the 'inter-communication' of God, through the Spirit. As active participants in the liturgy, especially in baptism and in the celebration of the Eucharist, we are drawn in to this life, not by 'leaving behind' our createdness and culture, but in and through it. This comes to expression particularly in all that is beautiful, as this not only delights us but draws us into the ultimate Beauty in which all beautiful things participate. This beauty is not principally external but internal. When Ratzinger introduces his interpretation of *participatio actuosa*, he is not ignoring practical involvement or outwards expression but he is saying that this must be understood as secondary to the 'inner' or personal participation in the action of God, the action of Christ, which, through the hypostatic union, also become the embodied action of humanity. If we have too much of a focus on these secondary elements, we might end up overshadowing the primary sense of participation. And we find this, expressed through the language of beauty, in 1 Peter 3:3-4: "Do not adorn yourselves outwardly by braiding your hair, and by wearing gold ornaments or fine clothing; rather, let your adornment be the inner self

[139] Ratzinger, *Jesus*, II, 85-90.

with the lasting beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in God's sight."

Though he does not use this language himself, Ratzinger's approach is deeply theurgic. We are made co-workers with God but the work we perform, or participate in, is not first and foremost our own but God's. It is the *actio divina* or the *actio Christi*, though precisely through participation it becomes, really and genuinely, our work. Through this act, this work of the divine-human 'liturgist' (Hebrews 8:2), this theurgy, we are equipped not just to praise God in the Church on a Sunday morning, or whenever we celebrate the Eucharist, but to praise God in all of creation, and in our everyday lives, as we practice the true religion. In Ratzinger's understanding of 'active participation,' liturgical participation is first and foremost metaphysical and internal, which does not mean 'intellectual' or 'non-bodily,' but *personal*. We enter into a personal – and indeed interpersonal – communion with the Triune God and with His Church. For Ratzinger, liturgy is always expressed in concrete ritual but cannot be reducible to this or that rite, or this or that concrete external activity. It must always refer back to its foundation in God, in the divine *Logos* in whom we are made partakers. We are oriented towards the Father, through Christ, in the Spirit. Our glorification of God is first and foremost a response to God's original address, a response that is in many ways God's own response *in us*, and it expresses itself in rational ways. And this, Christ's own work, his theurgy, his praise of God, finds its ultimate expression in the liturgy, particularly in the Eucharistic celebration.

In the next chapter, in critical dialogue with Catherine Pickstock,[140] I develop this further, in a more explicitly theurgic direction, discussing how the liturgy, as a rational participation in the order of God Himself, orients us to God, finding its consummation in the Eucharist. Like Ratzinger, Pickstock's (and radical orthodoxy's) approach is Platonic but more explicitly Neoplatonic and theurgic.

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[140] Catherine Pickstock, *Repetition and Identity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 171-188; Catherine Pickstock, "Ritual. An introduction" (*International Journal of Philosophy and Theology* 79:3, 2018), 217-221.

CHAPTER THREE

Participation, ritual, and philosophy

1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, through a thorough engagement of Joseph Ratzinger's liturgical theology, I established that when we speak of 'active participation' in the liturgy, this participation should be understood metaphysically and in theurgic terms. Theurgy gives primacy to the divine act but allows us to participate in it, making us *theourgikoì*, co-workers of the divine work.[1] This chapter explores the philosophical side of this, arguing that because we find in the divine the ultimate consummation and union of thought and action, theurgy is neither the opposite nor the destruction of philosophy or reason, but its ritual consummation.

Assuming a participatory metaphysics and the analogy of being, which allows us to maintain that while God cannot fully be grasped, we may still participate in Him and imitate Him through this participation,[2] I will argue that this finds its grounding in the incarnate *Logos*, the ground of rationality, and comes to expression most fully in the liturgy, where the acts of Christ, most particularly His sacrifice on the Cross, is offered to the Church in the Eucharist and repeated there, non-identically, as an active participation in, and a contemplation of, the inner life of God.[3] What I attempt here is not simply to 'appropriate' philosophical traditions, particularly

1 Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* (*De Ecclesiastica Hierarchia*, hereafter: *EH*) I, 1 (372B); Joseph Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, commemorative ed. (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius, 2018), 129-170, 185-191. For notes on the Pseudo-Dionysian corpus, see abbreviations, p.4, n2.

2 See Alan Philip Darley, "Predication or Participation? What is the Nature of Aquinas' Doctrine of Analogy?" (*The Heythrop Journal* 57, 2016), 312-324; Johannes Hoff, *The Analogical Turn: Rethinking Modernity with Nicholas of Cusa* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013); Simon Oliver, *Creation: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2017), 64-75; Erich Przywara, *Analogia Entis: Metaphysics: Original Structure and Universal Rhythm*, trans. John R. Betz and David Bentley Hart (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014), cf. Daniel P. Horan, *Postmodernity and Univocity: A Critical Account of Radical Orthodoxy and John Duns Scotus* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2014), esp. 157-188.

3 Rik Van Nieuwenhove, "Gadamer, Art, and Contemplation: How to Make Sense of Sacraments in an Allegedly Post-Metaphysical World" (*Louvain Studies* 38:2, 2014), 111-125; Catherine Pickstock, *After Writing: On the Liturgical Consummation of Philosophy* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 176-273, esp. 223-228, 238-266; Catherine Pickstock, *Repetition and Identity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 171-197.

Platonic ones, as a substitute for Christian theology, but to 'baptise' them, taking them up into something larger to transform or consummate them, analogously to the way grace transforms nature.[4] My goal is not to 'overcome' or 'cancel' Neoplatonic philosophy but to integrate it into a larger Christian context and re-interpret it. As we saw in chapter two, Ratzinger notes that in Christian theology, "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."[5] Arguing for a theurgical, liturgical, and ritual approach to theology, this chapter focuses on the nature of philosophy and participation. Participation, though, can be either be understood as fundamental, the way we participate in something that gives us being and direction (conveyed by the Greek term *méthexis*) or as non-identical and imitative, the way in which we live out of the fundamental mode (conveyed by the Greek term *mímēsis*).[6] The absolutely fundamental aspect of participation is grounded first and foremost in God. As we read in Isaiah 45:5-7:

> I am the Lord, and there is no other; besides me there is no god. I arm you, though you do not know me, so that they may know, from the rising of the sun and from the west, that there is no one besides me; I am the Lord, and there is no other. I form light and create darkness, I make weal and create woe; I the Lord do all these things.

But even though there is no other besides God, we find that paradoxically, all created things, as participants in God, having no existence in themselves apart from this participation, are still real and have their own integrity, a 'derived solidity.'[7] This participation accounts both for our existence and for our acts. As Andrew Davison notes, "*be-ing* is the innermost, and most

4 Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* (hereafter: *ST*) I, q.1, a.8, ad 2. For notes on the Thomistic corpus, see abbreviations, p.4, n1.

5 Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 140-141, cf. Pickstock, *After Writing*, 3-46, 169-273.

6 Andrew Davison, *Participation in God: A Study in Christian Doctrine and Metaphysics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 296-300; John Milbank and Catherine Pickstock, *Truth in Aquinas*, ebook version (London: Routledge, 2005), 86-93; Plato, *Phaedo*, trans. Chris Emlyn-Jones and William Preddy, in *Loeb Classical Library*, ed. Jeffrey Henderson, vol. 36 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017), 100bc.

7 Davison, *Participation in God*, 65-83.

significant, of all actions."[8] And later in the book he adds that thinking about "participation in action" is not to "step away from" the topic of "participation in being," precisely because being is already an act (of 'be-ing'): "Participation in being therefore already is participation in act, participation in agency."[9] One tradition which has a particular focus on participation is radical orthodoxy (RO).[10] RO notes that creation has its existence through participation in the triune God and that we cannot act except by participation in the *actus essendi*. In one of the 'founding texts' of RO it is said that through this theological approach, "one is led to articulate a more incarnate, more participatory, more aesthetic, more erotic, more socialised, even 'more Platonic' Christianity":

> The central theological framework of radical orthodoxy is 'participation' as developed by Plato and reworked by Christianity, because any alternative configuration perforce reserves a territory independent of God. The latter can lead only to nihilism (though in different guises). Participation, however, refuses any reserve of created territory, while allowing finite things their own integrity.[11]

This participatory approach entails that "every discipline must be framed by a theological per-

8 Davison, *Participation in God*, 33, n80, cf. *ST* I, q.8, a.1.

9 Davison, *Participation in God*, 217, 218, cf. 68-79, 217-235.

10 Daniel Haynes, "The Metaphysics of Christian Ethics: Radical Orthodoxy and Theosis" (*The Heythrop Journal* 52, 2011), 659-671; John Milbank, Catherine Pickstock, and Graham Ward, eds., *Radical Orthodoxy: A new theology* (London: Routledge, 1999), esp. 1-20; Adrian Pabst, *Metaphysics: The Creation of Hierarchy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012); James K. A. Smith, *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy: Mapping a Post-secular Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004), 185-229. For some central writings in RO, see John Milbank, "Postmodern Critical Augustinianism: A Short Summa in Forty Two Responses to Unasked Questions" (*Modern Theology* 7:3, 1991), 225-237; John Milbank, "Radical Orthodoxy and Protestantism Today: John Milbank in Conversation" (*Acta Theologica*, Supplement, 25, 2017), 43-72; Simon Oliver, "Henri de Lubac and Radical Orthodoxy," in *T&T Clark Companion to Henri de Lubac*, ed., Jordan Hillebert (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2017), 393-418; Simon Oliver and John Milbank, eds., *The Radical Orthodoxy Reader* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2009); Adrian Pabst and Christoph Schneider, *Encounter Between Eastern Orthodoxy and Radical Orthodoxy: Transfiguring the World Through the Word* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009); Graham Ward, "In the Economy of the Divine: A Response to James K. A. Smith" (*PNEUMA* 25:1, 2003), 115-120; Graham Ward, "Radical Orthodoxy: Its ecumenical vision" (*Acta Theologica*, Supplement, 25, 2017), 29-42. For critical engagements with RO, see Wayne J. Hankey and Douglas Hedley, eds., *Deconstructing Radical Orthodoxy: Postmodern Theology, Rhetoric and Truth* (London: Routledge, 2005); Horan, *Postmodernity and Univocity*; Lisa Isherwood and Marko Zlomislić, eds., *The Poverty of Radical Orthodoxy* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2012); Hyeongkwon Lim, *John Milbank and the Mystery of the Supernatural: His Postmodern Engagement with Henri de Lubac* (PhD dissertation, Université de Strasbourg, 2013); Smith, *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy*; James K.A. Smith and James H. Olthuis, eds. *Radical Orthodoxy and the Reformed Tradition: Creation, Covenant, and Participation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005).

11 Milbank, Pickstock, and Ward, eds., *Radical Orthodoxy*, 3, cf. 1-20.

spective," and that any attempt to understand creation as self-standing would be incoherent and nihilistic, as it would create "a zone apart from God, grounded literally in nothing."[12] This notion of participation is, for RO, both Christological and cultural. John Milbank makes the point that *méthexis* traditionally "concerned a sharing of being and knowledge in the Divine" and that "[t]hose who still espouse this perspective tend to play down the importance of language, culture, time and historicity as encouraging a relativism incompatible with any vision of a metaphysical order."[13] Milbank, however, has "always tried to suggest that participation can be extended also to language, history and culture: the whole realm of human *making*" because "being and knowledge" is not the only thing that "participate[s] in a God who is and who comprehends; also human making participates in a God who is infinite poetic utterance: the second person of the Trinity."[14] For Milbank, then, Christ, as God and man, is the one who makes our rituals *liturgical*, in the theological sense, when they are assumed into him.

To explore this participatory approach, in liturgical and theurgic terms, I will engage the philosophical theology of Catherine Pickstock, who has been central to the recovery of participatory metaphysics, Christian Platonism, and the consummation of philosophy in doxology.[15] She maintains that liturgy, with the Eucharistic celebration as its centre, is the consummation of philosophy and that "language exists primarily, and in the end only has meaning as, the praise of the divine."[16] Arguing against a modernistic 'flattening out' of reality, in modern and postmod-

12 Milbank, Pickstock, and Ward, eds., *Radical Orthodoxy*, 3. RO points out that modernity presupposes the existence of the secular without acknowledging that it is actually *theological*, ending up creating a 'perverse theology' with its own liturgies, traditions, and narratives (over and against Christian theology and liturgy). See John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason*, 2nd. ed (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 24, 68; Milbank, Pickstock, and Ward, eds., *Radical Orthodoxy*, i.

13 John Milbank, *Being Reconciled: Ontology and Pardon* (London: Routledge, 2003), ix.

14 Milbank, *Being Reconciled*, ix, cf. Graham Ward, *Cities of God* (London: Routledge, 2000).

15 See Milbank, Pickstock, and Ward, eds., *Radical Orthodoxy*; Smith, *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy*, 30-122. For some engagements with Pickstock, see John F. Baldovin, *Reforming the Liturgy: A Response to the Critics* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2008), 13-32; Jose Isidro Belleza, *Lex Loquendi, Lex Orandi: Pickstock, Aquinas, and the Reform of the Roman Offertoria* (Master's Thesis, the University of Berkeley, 2019); Dora Bernhardt, *The Problem of Orality and Literacy: An Inquiry through the Voice of Catherine Pickstock* (PhD dissertation, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, 2019); Julie Gittoes, *Anamnesis and the Eucharist: Contemporary Anglican Approaches* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 73-99.

16 Pickstock, *After Writing*, xiii, cf. 167-273.

ern philosophy but also in liturgical reforms,[17] she argues for a liturgical and ritual worldview, where created reality find meaning as it partakes of divinity. This, however, is not an abstract but a practical life, understood in imitative or emulative terms, rooted in a more fundamental concept of metaphysical participation:

> Liturgy is therefore not a constative representation now and then of what is praise-worthy, but constitutes a whole way of life. To give praise to what is praise-worthy by definition involves participation in it, just as emulation (Socratic mimesis) of the transcendent good must perforce involve *methexis* in the good.[18]

Earlier in the book, citing Plato, she notes that "the measure of good ethical practice is as much, or more, determined by its orientation towards liturgical praise of the divine as by the ideal of rational contemplation."[19] And elsewhere, she notes that throughout history, humankind has lived in a ritual or sacramental cosmos, making sense of the world through religion and ritual. Ritual is not only an important and essential component of human history and human culture. No, it is its defining characteristic.[20] Pointing to certain archaeological findings, she maintains that that these "imply the primacy of ritual over material and economic factors in the development of society."[21] She maintain that to understand humanity, we need to understand ritual, and we need to understand it in a holistic manner, as material and spiritual, practical and intellective, helping to shape life as a whole. It is a grounded and all-encompassing engagement with

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17 Pickstock, *After Writing*, 3-100, 169-266; Catherine Pickstock, "A Short Essay on the Reform of the Liturgy" (*New Blackfriars* 78:912, 1997), 56-65.

18 Pickstock, *After Writing*, 39.

19 Pickstock, *After Writing*, 4, cf. 3-4, 135-140, 169-266.

20 Catherine Pickstock, "The Ritual Birth of Sense" (*Telos* 162, 2013), 29-55, cf. Crystal Addey, *Divination and Theurgy in Neoplatonism: Oracles of the Gods* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), 171-291; Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, 1400–1580*, 2nd ed. (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 2005); Sigurd Hareide, "*Messuskýringar*: Old Norse Expositions of the Latin Mass and the Ritual Participation of the People," in *Intellectual Culture in Medieval Scandinavia, c. 1100–1350*, ed., Stefka Georgieva Eriksen (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2016), 337-371; Catherine Pickstock, "Ritual. An introduction" (*International Journal of Philosophy and Theology* 79:3, 2018), 217-221; Roy A. Rappaport, *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 17-129, esp. 19-27, 39-110; Barry Stephenson, *Ritual: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 1-4, 21-37.

21 Pickstock, "The Ritual Birth of Sense," 29.

reality, seeking to "re-align inner motive and outer shape via the formation of virtues through the exercise of certain disciplines that are embedded within, and constitutive of, a way of life":

> Indeed, rather than appending ritual activity to the normative instrumental activity of the everyday, it is implied that, if anything, it is the other way around. Far from being an aberrant or secondary species of action, ritual can be seen as a typical or defining mode characteristic of all action.[22]

For Pickstock, then, ritual does not 'overcome' or 'escape' rational contemplation but consummates it. As Barry Stephenson puts it: "Ritual is a way of thinking and knowing."[23] Her approach is Platonic but also Proclean and, more importantly, Pseudo-Dionysian and Thomistic.[24] Like Ratzinger, she consummates Plato in a Christian way, maintaining that he is a forerunner of her doxological approach to philosophy. She attempts to read Platonic philosophy in a Christian context, not by 'overcoming' it but by perfecting it and leading it to its rightful place, noting that "the Plotinian psychic and ascending interpretation of Plato needs to be complemented by a Proclean doxological ('theurgic') and descending interpretation."[25] Seeing a profound link between ritual and rationality, holding that ritual expression *is* intellectual apprehension, she maintains that her approach is Platonic, Christian, and theurgic,[26] though some critics find is-

22 Pickstock, "The Ritual Birth of Sense," 31, cf. 31-35; Armand Leon van Ommen, "Ritual repetition: Creating safe havens for sufferers or boring experiences?" (*Yearbook for Ritual and Liturgical Studies* 32, 2016), 125-141. Ritual, however, although it has innovative elements, is always something received, something we are initiated into. See Stephenson, *Ritual*, 51, 54-69, 101, 108-110, esp. 56-62.

23 Stephenson, *Ritual*, 3, cf. Addey, *Divination and Theurgy*, 171-213, esp. 183-189, 191-213.

24 Pickstock, *After Writing*, esp. 1-46; Catherine Pickstock, "Duns Scotus: His Historical and Contemporary Significance" (*Modern Theology* 21:4, 2005), 543-574 (esp. 549, 556-558, 562-563, 567-568); Catherine Pickstock, "Epochs of Modernity: The Implications for Modernity and Post-modernity of Univocity" (*Distinktion: Scandinavian Journal of Social Theory* 6:1, 2005), 65-86 (esp. 73-84); Catherine Pickstock, "Justice and Prudence: Principles of Order in the Platonic City" (*The Heythrop Journal* 42, 2001), 269-282 (esp. 270); Catherine Pickstock, "The Late Arrival of Language: Word, Nature and the Divine in Plato's *Cratylus*" (*Modern Theology* 27:2, 2011), 238-262; Pickstock, *Repetition and Identity*, 55, 173-178; Pickstock, "Ritual," 218-220; Pickstock, "The Ritual Birth of Sense"; Catherine Pickstock, "The Sacred Polis: Language as Synactic Event" (*Literature and Theology* 8:4, 1994), 367-383.

25 Pickstock, "Justice and Prudence," 270, cf. Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 140-141. For a more nuanced discussion of the Plotinian attitude towards theurgy and ritual, see Addey, *Divination and Theurgy*, 173-180, 199-211. While Pickstock frames her theological project explicitly in theurgic terms, this element of her thought, and of other RO theologians, has not been researched in great detail.

26 Pickstock, *After Writing*, 4, 135-140, 223-228, 247, 254, 265; Pickstock, "Justice and Prudence," 276-281; Pickstock, *Repetition and Identity*, 62, 78, 147, 178-179, 183, 185; Pickstock, "Ritual," 219-220; Pickstock, "The Ritual Birth of Sense."

sue with this, particularly her use of Plato.[27] Engaging her theology, this chapter argues that theurgy is a mode of philosophy consummated in Christ and offered non-identically in the Eucharist. To argue this, I will divide the chapter in two sections.

First, engaging Crystal Addey's work on theurgy as a rational endeavour, as well as Pickstock's theology, and discussing the philosophical dimension of our ritual participation in the divine, and particularly St. Paul's treatment of order in the liturgy, I argue that ritual is a defining characteristic of humanity, that there is no contradiction between ritual and rationality, and that philosophy, ideology, and language find their consummation, their *telos*, in ritual, particularly in worship, as a participation in the divine order or an orientation to God in Christ. This is significant because it provides us with a non-Cartesian understanding of rationality and of humanity, showing us how action and ritual can be an expression of rationality, that ritual expression *is* intellectual apprehension.[28] Ritual, rather than being irrational, is the ultimate expression of rationality, because it is a holistic and ordered participation in the ground of rationality.

Secondly, discussing Pickstock's account of transubstantiation as 'the condition of possibility for all meaning,'[29] I will argue that a Christian account of theurgy, as a mode of philosophy,

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27 Eli Diamond, "Catherine Pickstock, Plato and the Unity of Divinity and Humanity," in *Deconstructing Radical Orthodoxy*, eds. Hankey and Hedley, 1-16; Wayne J. Hankey, "Philosophical religion and the Neoplatonic turn to the subject," in *Deconstructing Radical Orthodoxy*, eds. Hankey and Hedley, 17-30; Wayne J. Hankey, "*Theoria versus Poesis*: Neoplatonism and Trinitarian Difference in Aquinas, John Milbank, Jean-Luc Marion and John Zizioulas" (*Modern Theology* 15:4, 1999), 387-415; Smith, *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy*, 87-122, esp. 103-108; James K. A. Smith, *Speech and Theology: Language and the logic of incarnation* (London: Routledge, 2002), 170-176; James K. A. Smith, "Will the real Plato Please Stand Up? Participation versus Incarnation," in *Radical Orthodoxy and the Reformed Tradition*, eds., Smith and Olthuis, 61-72. For some more sympathetic takes on this trend in RO, see Michael Northcott, "The Metaphysics of Hope and the Transfiguration of Making in the Market Empire," in *Encounter Between Eastern Orthodoxy and Radical Orthodoxy*, eds., Pabst and Schneider, 93-107; Gregory Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul: The Neoplatonism of Iamblichus*, 2nd ed. (Angelico Press/Sophia Perennis, 2014), xix-xxxiv.

28 Addey, *Divination and Theurgy*, 1-42, 171-213, 273-275; Pickstock, "The Ritual Birth of Sense," cf. Therese Marie Ignacio Bjørnaas, "*Imago Dei* og kroppsliggjort væren: En funksjonshemmingsteologi i lys av Thomas Aquinas," in *Religiøst medborgerskap: Funksjonshemming, likeverd og menneskesyn*, eds., Inger Marie Lid and Anna Rebecca Solevåg (Oslo: Cappelen Damm Akademisk, 2020), 269-286; Naomi Irit Richman, "What does it *feel* like to be post-secular? Ritual expressions of religious affects in contemporary renewal movements" (*International Journal of Philosophy and Theology* 79:3, 2018), 295-310; Daniel G. W. Smith, "Rituals of knowing: rejection and relation in disability theology and Meister Eckhart" (*International Journal of Philosophy and Theology* 79:3, 2018), 279-294; Stephenson, *Ritual*, 51, 54-69, 101, 108-110.

29 Pickstock, *After Writing*, xv, 261-264.

finds its culmination in the Eucharistic celebration. Transubstantiation points to Christ's redemptive act, made present for us, but it also reveals the true nature of creation as participating in God and in His act. Discussing the doctrine of transubstantiation in light of Platonic philosophy (particularly theurgic Neoplatonism), I will argue that this is rooted in a metaphysics of participation and analogy. I will examine particularly the distinct modes of participation, focusing on the relationship between *méthexis* and *mímēsis*, as we can only understand the latter in relation to the former.[30] While this distinction may not be self-evident in Platonic scholarship,[31] I will argue that it highlights the difference between our fundamental participation in God, whereby we are both kept in existence from moment to moment and enabled to act (which includes our being as Christians, participating in Christ), and the non-identical and imitative ways in which we may give expression to this participation, the apex of which is found in the celebration of the Eucharist, which is both given to us as a gift and offered back, non-identically, in thanksgiving.[32] But while these are distinct, they are not separable, as human agency participates in divine agency.

Together, these two sections help us to grasp both that liturgy needs a proper grounding, philosophically and metaphysically, and that this grounding is not separable from its ritual expression but that this expression is its heart or consummation, centred on the Eucharist as "the fount and apex of the whole Christian life," to use the language of the Second Vatican Coun-

30 Milbank and Pickstock, *Truth in Aquinas*, 86-93; Pickstock, *After Writing*, 14, 20, 34, 38-40, 45, 59, 76, 208-213; van Ommen, "Ritual repetition"; Catherine Pickstock, "Liturgy, Art and Politics" (*Modern Theology* 16:2, 2000), 159-180; Catherine Pickstock, "Matter and Mattering: The Metaphysics of Rowan Williams" (*Modern Theology* 31:4, 2015), 599-617; Pickstock, "Ritual," 219-220; Pickstock, "Sacred Polis," 377-381.

31 Commenting on Plato's *Parmenides*, George F. McLean, *Plenitude and Participation: The Life of God in Man* (Washington, D.C.: Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2004), 49 sees them as equivalents, noting that "the relation of participation (*mimesis* or *methexis*) is not added to the multiple beings after they have been constituted; it is constitutive of them: their reality is precisely to image." Aristotle likewise likens the Pythagorean notion of imitation to Platonic participation, saying that "whereas the Pythagoreans say that things exist by imitation of numbers, Plato says that they exist by participation—merely a change of term." See *Metaphysics*, trans. Hugh Tredennick, in *Loeb Classical Library*, ed. Jeffrey Henderson, vol. 271 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1933), 987b (cf. 987ab, 988a).

32 See Arne Melberg, *Theories of mimesis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 10-50; David Torevell, *Liturgy and the Beauty of the Unknown: Another Place* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 161-182.

cil's Dogmatic Constitution on the Church.[33] My contribution to Pickstock's argument is both to place this within a Pauline theology of worship, clarifying why ritual orders us to God, and relating it more directly to a theurgic Neoplatonist context, not just in Iamblichus and Proclus, but also Pseudo-Dionysius.[34]

2 Participation, ritual, and rationality

In her work on the oracular tradition in Neoplatonic (particularly Iamblichean) theurgy, Crystal Addey notes that there is anachronistic tendency, in Platonic scholarship, of assuming a contradiction between philosophy and ritual, particularly theurgy, labelling the latter as 'superstitious' and 'irrational,' based on a very limited (and quite frankly Cartesian and logical positivist) understanding of rationality and ritual.[35] There is an assumption that for Plato and later Platonists, rationality must be understood conceptually and that any attempt to counteract this is irrational. A classic example is Eric R. Dodds's assessment of Iamblichus's *De mysteriis* as "a manifesto of irrationalism, an assertion that the road to salvation is found not in reason but in ritual."[36] Iamblichus notes that "it is not pure thought (Gk. *theōrētikōs philosophoũntas*) that

33 *Lumen Gentium*, 11. On Vatican II documents, see abbreviations, p.5, n4.

34 *EH*; Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Celestial (or heavenly) Hierarchy* (*De coelesti hierarchia*, hereafter: *CH*), cf. Iamblichus, *De mysteriis*, Greek and English, intro. and trans. Emma C. Clarke, John M. Dillon, and Jackson P. Hershbell (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003, hereafter: *DM*); Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, 2nd ed., reprint, ed., trans., intro., and comm. E.R. Dodds (Oxford: Clarendon, 1971). Pickstock situates herself within a theurgic, particularly Proclean, context, but she does not engage directly with the scholarship on theurgy over the last decades.

35 Addey, *Divination and Theurgy*, 1-42, 171-213, 273-275 (esp. 32-38, 171-180, 212-213), cf. Knut Alfsvåg, *What No Mind Has Conceived: On the Significance of Christological Apophaticism* (Leuven: Peeters, 2010), 21-31; Pickstock, "The Ritual Birth of Sense"; Peter T. Struck, "Pagan and Christian Theurgies: Iamblichus, Pseudo-Dionysius, Religion and Magic in Late Antiquity" (*Ancient World* 32:2, 2001), 25-38 (esp. 27-30). For some discussions on the role of ritual in Plato, see Edward Goodwin Ballard, "On Ritual and Persuasion in Plato" (*Southern Journal of Philosophy* 2:2, 1964), 49-55; Edward Goodwin Ballard, "On Ritual and Rhetoric in Plato," in Ballard, *Philosophy and the Liberal Arts* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1989), 66-79; William H. Desmonde, "The Ritual Origin of Plato's Dialogues: A Study of Argumentation and Conversation among Intellectuals" (*American Imago* 17:4, 1960), 389-406.

36 Eric R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1951), 287, cf. 283-299; Eric R. Dodds, "Theurgy and its Relationship to Neoplatonism" (*The Journal of Roman Studies* 37:1-2, 1947), 55-69; Anne Sheppard, "Proclus' Attitude to Theurgy" (*The Classical Quarterly* 31:1, 1982), 212, n1. Also see John Dillon, "Iamblichus' Defence of Theurgy: Some Reflections" (*The International Journal of the Platonic Tradition* 1:1, 2007), 30-41.

unites theurgists to the gods," as "it is the accomplishment of acts not to be divulged and beyond all conception, and the power of the unutterable symbols, understood solely by the gods, which establishes theurgic union."[37] Dodds cites this passage, but *theōrētikōs philosophoũntas* is rendered 'thought,' rather than 'pure thought' (or 'theoretical philosophising'), thereby creating a dichotomy between ritual and rationality. Another example may be found in Eli Diamond's critique of Pickstock's use of Plato. Arguing for a more 'intellectual' and 'conceptual' understanding of Plato, he notes that one of the reasons that "[t]he liturgical mediation appeals to Pickstock" is that "the liturgical union is felt rather than thought."[38] For Addey and Pickstock, however, as well as for Iamblichus, there is no contradiction; liturgical and ritual expression *is* intellectual apprehension. Pickstock maintains that humans make sense of the world principally through religion and ritual and that ritual is "a typical or defining mode characteristic of all action."[39] Rather than overcoming rational contemplation, ritual consummates it. And for both Pickstock and Addey, as well as for Iamblichus, doxology has primacy over theoretical philosophy, something Diamond even agrees is the case in Plato:

> If praise and abasement before the divine is recognizing that the true natures of things are not originally produced in the human subject, but were produced by the Divine Maker who establishes an order to be discovered by the philosopher, then Plato's theory of language can be thought to be doxological.[40]

But why is this the case? The central thing we ought to note from this quotation is that at the centre of Platonic philosophy we find the discovery of divine order and our participation in it. In the *Republic*, Plato (or Socrates) states: "The philosopher who allies himself with the divine and orderly becomes divine and orderly, as far as is possible for a human being."[41] The phrase, 'as

37 *DM*, II, 11.
38 Diamond, "Catherine Pickstock, Plato and the Unity of Divinity and Humanity," 6.
39 Pickstock, "The Ritual Birth of Sense," 31, cf. 31-34.
40 Diamond, "Catherine Pickstock, Plato and the Unity of Divinity and Humanity," 8, cf. 7-8.
41 Plato, *Republic*, trans. Chris Emlyn-Jones and William Preddy, in *Loeb Classical Library*, ed. Jeffrey Henderson, vol. 237, 276 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), 500d.

far as is possible,' indicates participation or assimilation, and we find similar phrasing elsewhere in Plato,[42] in Aquinas,[43] and in Pseudo-Dionysius.[44] For St. Paul, this notion of order is central for his theology of worship, as we see from his call for orderly worship in 1 Corinthians 14:26-40. While it might appear, from his emphasis on the orderly use of gifts, that this is principally about making sure that worship does not 'get out of hand,' there is something deeper going on, as St. Paul grounds this order in the very nature of God: "For God is a God not of disorder but of peace" (1 Corinthians 14:33).[45] God is absolutely simple and perfectly 'ordered.' And because our worship participates in Him, and reveals Him, as the ground of reason, it is ordered and rational. This Pauline notion of order is perhaps even clearer in Romans 12:1-2. In v.1, St. Paul calls us "to present [our] bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is [our] reasonable service" (Gk. *logikē latreía*). This indicates that our sacrificial service should be rational but it can also mean that it participates in, and is in accord with, the (incarnate) *Logos*.[46] In v.2, St. Paul notes that we should "not be conformed to this world." This, it seems, follows the notion of order in 1 Corinthians 14. We should not ignore the world but we should also not be conformed, ordered to, or oriented towards it, but to God (Colossians 3:1-4; 1 Peter 1:13-16). And through this orientation, towards the One who grounds rationality, we are rational. As Christ reminds us, when we are ordered towards God, we also achieve the world: "But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given

42 Plato, *Theaetetus*, trans. Harold North Fowler, in *Loeb Classical Library*, ed. Jeffrey Henderson, vol. 123 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1921), 176ab.

43 *ST* I, q.103, a.2, ad 2; Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles* (hereafter: *SCG*) I, c.96:3.

44 *CH* III, 2 (165ABC); VII, 2 (205B); VIII, 2 (241CD); XII, 3 (293B); XIII, 3 (301C); *EH* I, 1 (372AB); III:III, 11 (441BC); III:III, 13 (444CD); *The Divine Names* (*De Divinis Nominibus*, hereafter: *DN*) XIII, 3 (981B).

45 For a discussion of order (Gk. *táxis*), from the perspective of Pseudo-Dionysian theology, see Charles M. Stang, *Apophasis and Pseudonymity in Dionysius the Areopagite: "No Longer I"* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 83-89. While St. Paul does not cite Plato, it is not unreasonable to assume that his audience, in Corinth, would have understood his arguments within a broader Hellenistic framework. And, as shown in Joseph Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, new ed. (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius, 2004), 188-190 and Joseph Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 3 vols. (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2007, 2011, 2012), II, 80, this was also central to the Jewish and Christian *Lebenswelt*.

46 Joseph Ratzinger, *Theology of the Liturgy: The Sacramental Foundation of Christian Existence* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius, 2014), 349, 452.

to you as well" (Matthew 6:33).

The primary point, then, is not the ordered structure of the liturgy but its anchoring in God and its orientation to Him, a perspective which is strengthened by the fact that even though churches may have a structured and defined *ordo* of worship,[47] this is not identical everywhere.[48] The order is not understood in a superficial sense and if we examine the liturgies throughout history, we see that they are, in fact, not ordered quite so strictly and rigidly, although, as Pickstock points out, modern liturgies tend towards such strict order. While older liturgies, such as the older Roman rite and the Eastern liturgies,[49] are full of beginnings and re-beginnings, non-identical repetitions, and 'liturgical stammer,' which help remind us that we cannot fully grasp liturgy and that the order should be understood principally as participation in God, there is a tendency in newer reforms to flatten out the staccato like performance which is typical of these older rites.[50] Modern reforms, particularly in the Roman Catholic Church, sought to simplify the liturgy in a superficial way. In the words of the Second Vatican Council's constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, they sought a "noble simplicity" and an end to "useless repetitions," so that they could get a liturgy that is "within the people's powers of comprehension" and which "normally should not require much explanation."[51] This, however, seems to reverse the order, focusing on the concrete structure or *ordo* of the liturgy before its orientation to God, and they

47 For example *Common Worship: Services and Prayers for the Church of England* (London: Church House, 2000, hereafter: *CW*), 157-266; *Gudsteneste med rettleiingar* (Stavanger: Eide, 2020, hereafter: *GDNK 2020*), 151-271; *Missale Romanum*, Editio Typica Tertia (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2008), 1-146; *The Roman Missal*, third typical edition (Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2011), 1-146. If not otherwise noted, citations from *Roman Missal* and *Missale Romanum* use paragraph numbers (which are identical in the two), not page numbers.

48 Gregory Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy*, 3rd ed. (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2005), 699-734, esp. 718-719.

49 *The Divine Liturgy of our Father among the Saints John Chrysostom*, English and Greek (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995); *Messeboken – Missale Romanum*, Latin and Norwegian (Oslo: Oslo katolske bispedømme, 1961); *Missale Romanum*, Editio Typica (Vatican City: Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1962).

50 Pickstock, *After Writing*, 170-176; Pickstock, "A Short Essay," cf. Nathan Mitchell, *Real Presence: The Work of Eucharist*, new and expanded ed. (Chicago, IL: Liturgy Training Publications, 2001), 135-138; David Torevell, *Losing the Sacred: Ritual, Modernity, and Liturgical Reform* (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 146-169.

51 *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (hereafter: *SC*), 34, cf. *T&T Clark Companion to Liturgy*, ed., Alcuin Reid (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016), 534.

thus end up with an immanent rigidity and the idea that we can fully comprehend what happens in worship. The fact, however, is that throughout history (and across churches) the liturgies, while being ordered, have also had certain elements of superficial 'disorder,' which indicates that the Church did not see the order spoken of by St. Paul in such a rigid fashion but principally as a participation in the order of God Himself, which can take on numerous forms.[52]

This sense of order is central not just to Christian theology but also to theurgic Neoplatonism, which, contra modernity, neither understands philosophy as an abstract inquiry into knowledge, nor sees rationality as a hypothetico-deductive enterprise, accompanied by a rejection of ritual as irrational and an imposition of (anachronistic) dichotomies between thought and action, mind and body, immaterial and material.[53] Rather, it understands both as participating in a truth which comes to us, as indicated by Plotinus's attitude towards prayer: "The gods ought to come to me, not I to them."[54] John Dillon notes that this ought not be read as "the expression of an impious or arrogant attitude to the gods" but "merely a properly Platonist one," as it notes that "our relations with the gods should be based, not on our going out of our way to solicit them for favours which we have not made an effort to deserve, but rather on our making ourselves ready, by the practice of spiritual exercises, to receive their power."[55] In this tradition, prayer is not separated from philosophy but seen as an expression of it. There has been a return, though, to a more holistic and instrumental and teleological understanding, where

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52 Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy*, 718-719. We might also apply Aquinas's words about creaturely participation in God on our imitative participation in the liturgy: "Now, since God's goodness is infinite, it can be participated in an infinite number of ways, and in other ways besides those in which it is participated by those creatures which now are" (*SCG* I, c.81:4).

53 Addey, *Divination and Theurgy*, 183-189, cf. 171-180 where Addey notes that modernistic philosophy has introduced an anachronistic contrast between philosophical contemplation (*theōría*) and *theourgía*, alongside a problematic misapplication of the terms 'sorcery' and 'magic' (Gk. *goēteía* and *mageía*) to the latter. On why I avoid using the term 'magic,' see introduction, p.11, n12.

54 *Life of Plotinus* (*Vita Plot.*), 10, quoted in John Dillon, "The Platonic Philosopher at Prayer," in *Platonic Theories of Prayer*, eds., John Dillon and Andrei Timotin (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 9.

55 Dillon, "The Platonic Philosopher at Prayer," 10, cf. R. M. van den Berg, "Plotinus' Attitude to Traditional Cult: A Note on Porphyry VP c. 10" (*Ancient Philosophy* 19, 1999), 345-360. Of course, as a Christian, I would point out that no one deserves this and that even the preparation is a gift, a grace, given first (or more fully) in Baptism. See more in chapter one, pp.49-54.

rationality "involves pursuing ends that are coherent, and employing means that are appropriate to those ends."[56] Understood this way, rationality does not principally concern belief in an abstract list of propositions but the orientation towards and participation in a given goal, in the case of worship in that which grounds reason and sustains it. There is no contradiction, on this view, between worship and reason. By worshipping the divine, a human person *is* intellectual, because he or she participates by this act of worship in the *Logos*. Addey notes that "the division between 'rationality' and 'irrationality' seems somewhat anachronistic, given that Iamblichus characterises theurgic ritual as *supra-rational*, in the sense that it transcends rationality, rather than lacks it."[57] Supra-rationality concerns that which transcends reason and grounds it and participating in it means embracing reason, though its achievement is also dependent on divine will. Supra-rationality "paradoxically marks the simultaneous culmination *and* transcendence of rationality."[58] As Iamblichus notes, while theurgy and philosophy are not necessarily identical, they are two mutually interdependent sides of the same coin. They must be seen on a continuum, the one consummating the other:

> Hence it is not even chiefly through our intellection that divine causes are called into actuality; but it is necessary for these and all the best conditions of the soul and our ritual purity to pre-exist as auxiliary causes; but the things which properly arouse the divine will are the actual divine symbols. And so the attention of the gods is awakened by themselves, receiving from no inferior being any principle for themselves of their characteristic activity.[59]

'Supra-rationality' is not a *deus ex machina* employed by Iamblichus and other theurgic thinkers to fend off charges of irrationality. It is, rather, an example of the participatory and analogical framework which permeates Neoplatonic philosophy and which has been central to the Christian

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56 Robert M. Berchman, "Rationality and Ritual in Plotinus and Porphyry" (*Incognita* 2, 1991), 185, quoted in Addey, *Divination and Theurgy*, 184 (cf. 171-213, esp. 183-189).

57 Addey, *Divination and Theurgy*, 188, cf. 29-32, 41-42, 188-189, 273-275, 281, 283, 286.

58 Addey, *Divination and Theurgy*, 189, cf. 188-189.

59 *DM* II, 11, cf. Riccardo Chiaradonna and Adrien Lecerf, "Iamblichus," 2.3, 3.1-2, in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Fall 2019 Edition (ed., Edward N. Zalta); Algis Uždavinys, *Philosophy and Theurgy in Late Antiquity* (Kettering: Angelico Press/Sophia Perennis, 2014), 229-249.

tradition.[60] The intention of rituals in theurgic Neoplatonism is the pursuit of mutually coherent ends and the theurgist claims to employs means designed to pursue these ends. Theurgy is rational, then, on an instrumental and teleological understanding, because it involves a coherent and rationally explicable participation in the divine ground of reason. This, of course, presupposes divinely instituted (and revealed) means of ritual communication, which affirm, contra modernistic philosophy, a central aspect of both Neoplatonic and Christian thought, that truth is *revealed* and discovered.[61] If we are called, as St. Paul notes, to "discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect" (Romans 12:2), or to partake of beauty, truth, and goodness, to use more traditional philosophical language, we should understand, then, that these are not our own creations but gifts of God which have been revealed to us and that we can avail ourselves of (or rather, God Himself received in us according to our mode).[62] In this sense, ritual can be seen as the way we bid the gift and receive it, though it is dependent on revelation, and thus it is as much a historical question as it is a logical one.

But why a specifically physical liturgy? Why not adopt a Plotinian 'spiritualistic' emphasis on 'inner ritual'? First, Christ instituted physical rites and bid us to participate in them (1 Corinthians 11:23-27). Secondly, contra Plotinus, in congruence with a Iamblichean attitude to the material, Christian doctrine emphasises that we are not 'spirits' or 'pure intellects,' nor

60 *DM* I, 8; *DN* IV, 7 (701C-704C); Milbank, Pickstock, and Ward, eds., *Radical Orthodoxy*, 3-11, 19; Proclus, *Elements*, props. 1-13, 23-24. Aquinas, for instance, describes revelation in supra-rational terms, noting that "those things which are of faith surpass human reason, hence they do not come to man's knowledge, unless God reveal them" (*ST* II-II, q.6, a.1). For Aquinas, God's revelation to us is not something we have coerced but a gift of grace which, coincidentally, does not destroy nature, including human reason, but perfects it (*ST* I, q.1, a.8, ad 2).

61 Knut Alfsvåg, "Gudsåpenbaring og virkelighetsforståelse: Kristen åpenbaringsteologi i dag" (*Dansk Tidsskrift for Teologi og Kirke* 42:3, 2015), 204-206; Mark L. McPherran, "Socratic Religion," in *The Cambridge Companion to Socrates*, ed., Donald R. Morrison (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 111-137, esp. 122-127. For a Christian perspective on the revealed and given nature of ritual, see Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 27-37. For a Iamblichean perspective, see *DM* I, 21; II, 11.

62 *SCG* I, c.43:5, cf. Davison, *Participation in God*, 141-146, 150-152; Wayne J. Hankey, *Aquinas's Neoplatonism in the* Summa Theologiae *om God: A Short Introduction* (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine's Press, 2019), 13 (cf. 13-21); Rudi A. te Velde, "Participation: Aquinas and His Neoplatonic Sources," in *Christian Platonism: A History*, eds., Alexander J. B. Hampton and John Peter Kenney (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 131-134.

'semi-divine' creatures whose souls are (partly) unfallen but essentially embodied creatures of God.[63] As Pseudo-Dionysius points out, everything, even rationality, is *mediated* to us from above and always in a sensible manner, because we are embodied creatures.[64] And, as Aquinas shows us, "nothing in nature is void of purpose."[65] Thirdly, because of the Incarnation, this created materiality has been lifted up, in its concrete materiality, and given new value (Colossians 2:9-10).[66] Arguments for the 'irrational' or 'superstitious' nature of rituals seem, however, to beg the question in favour of a Cartesian dualism between *res cogitans* and *res extensa*,[67] disallowing any non-occasionalist connection between the two. As bodily creatures, however, our orientation towards God must be embodied. While we take part in the Angelic praise of God, as noted in the Eucharistic preface,[68] we take part *as humans*. Ritual, more than anything else, gives expression to reason, because it is ordered, in a double sense, by being structured and having a defined *ordo*, though this is expressed or repeated non-identically,[69] and, more

63 Bjørnaas, "*Imago Dei* og kroppsliggjort væren," 280-281; *ST* I, q.84, esp. aa.6-8. Addey, *Divination and Theurgy*, 173-180, 199-211, notes that Plotinus's concept of contemplation shares significant structural similarities with Iamblichus's emphasis on rituals and can only be said to be in conflict with a ritualistic perspective if we first impose the dichotomy between thought and action onto him. See Zeke Mazur, "*Unio Magica*: Part II: Plotinus, Theurgy, and the Question of Ritual" (*Dionysius* 22, 2004), 44: "In certain cases, these techniques are accompanied by corresponding physical acts, but given this new definition, inner ritual would need no overt physical expression for it to be considered "ritual."." The point is not that there are no differences between the two approaches, as they do have significantly different views on the nature of matter and the descent of the soul, but that both are essentially ritualistic, as interior acts remain *acts*. It should be noted though, as we will return to below, that while Iamblichus holds matter in high regard, noting that it is not "excluded from participation in its betters" (*DM*, V, 23), he still sees the ultimate end of theurgy to be a purely intellectual union (*DM* VI, 6). See van den Berg, "Plotinus' Attitude to Traditional Cult," 358-359; Eyjólfur Kjalar Emilsson, "Plotinus' doctrine of badness as matter in *Ennead* I.8 [51]," in *Platonism and Christian Thought in Late Antiquity*, eds., Panagiotis G. Pavlos et al. (London: Routledge, 2019), 78-99; Wayne J. Hankey, *God In Himself: Aquinas' Doctrine of God as Expounded in the Summa Theologiae*, reprinted ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 48-49; Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul*, 26, 34-35, 104, 108-109, 126, 154, 173-182, 232-233, 267.

64 *CH*, I, 2 (121B), cf. *ST* I, q.1, a.9.

65 Thomas Aquinas, *Disputed Questions on the Power of God* (*Quaestiones Disputatae de potentia Dei*, hereafter: *De pot.*), q.3, a.7, corp. 2.

66 I argue this point in chapter four, pp.140-146.

67 See Richard B. Carter, *Descartes' Medical Philosophy: The Organic Solution to the Mind-Body Problem* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983), 22, 29-95, 98, 145, 172, 174 219, 221/n8, 226, 233, 267, 270, cf. Hans Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. and rev. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 59, 548; Michael Hanby, *Augustine and Modernity* (London: Routledge, 2003), 134-177; Milbank and Pickstock, *Truth in Aquinas*, 49/111-112, n142.

68 *CW*, 188; *GDNK 2020*, 172; *Roman Missal*, 33, cf. Pickstock, *After Writing*, 186-190, 209-213, 233-238.

69 Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy*, 699-734, esp. 718-719.

importantly, by participating in and being ordered to the *Logos*, according to our nature.

In Neoplatonic thought, such ordering is expressed particularly through the notion of recollection, something which is only possible because we are prompted to it from the outside. Understood properly, Platonic recollection is not reduced to an inner re-experience of forgotten prior knowledge. It is something which comes from without, extrinsically, though not in an extrinsicist manner. It comes from without yet does not remain there. The soul has to be *triggered* by something outside of it.[70] This presupposes that there is something in the soul that can be triggered, but this is not a 'given,' a brute fact, but a gift of God. In a Catholic understanding, this 'triggering' is seen as a principally liturgical and ritual truth. In the Lutheran tradition, for instance,[71] God, who may communicate with us in whichever way He pleases, is still said to have promised to communicate with us, or rather communicate Himself to us, in concrete and recognisable rituals that are, nonetheless, repeated non-identically.[72] There is, though, some central differences between Pagan and Christian understandings of the nature of ritual. Where Iamblichus saw theurgy as potentially a-historical, though within a tradition of ancient revealed rites, particularly those of Greco-Roman Egypt,[73] Pseudo-Dionysius refers to the sacramental life of the Church, yes, but principally to Christ's own works (which grounds this sacramental life).[74] He finds a basis for this in St. Paul's use of *érgon* in Romans 14:20, as Charles M. Stang

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70 Pabst, *Metaphysics*, 40, 57; Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul*, 26-27, cf. Pickstock, *After Writing*, 267-273; Pickstock, *Repetition and Identity*, 158-159.

71 I use 'the Lutheran tradition' in the same way I would use 'the Anglican tradition' or 'the Byzantine tradition.' Not all Lutherans are in communion with one another and the tradition manifests itself in very different, at times contradictory ways, just like Russian Orthodox and Maronite theologians are all 'Byzantines,' despite having very different views on, say, the Papacy or Purgatory. And, as noted, by 'Catholic' I do not mean the Roman Catholic Church exclusively.

72 *Confessio Augustana* V-XIII (hereafter: *CA*), cf. Andrew Davison, *Why Sacraments?* (London: SPCK, 2013), 1-12. For notes on the Lutheran confessions, see abbreviations, p.5, n3. If not otherwise noted, quotations from *CA* follow the translation of the Latin text.

73 Dennis C. Clark, "Iamblichus' Egyptian Neoplatonic Theology in *De Mysteriis*" (*The International Journal of the Platonic Tradition* 2:2, 2008), 164-205.

74 In fact, he makes a distinction between the divine act (theurgy) and the ecclesial enactment of this divine act (hierurgy). See Sarah Klitenic Wear and John Dillon, *Dionysius the Areopagite and the Neoplatonist Tradition: Despoiling the Hellenes* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 99-115. For my discussion of this, see chapter five, pp.168-173.

notes:

> This single phrase allows Dionysius to infer that Paul was a theurgist, and was reminding the Greeks of the true meaning of theurgy, which they had no doubt forgotten or corrupted. For Dionysius, traces of the true meaning of theurgy are to be found in Iamblichus, but he has mistaken ancient pagan rituals for the liturgy of the Church, the work of the gods for the true work of God, who is none other than Christ.[75]

Furthermore, for Pagans, unlike Christianity, theurgy is, as noted, understood in elitist terms.[76] They distinguish between 'the theurgists' (Gk. *hoi theourgoí*), who are privy to a certain hidden knowledge, and 'the herd' (Gk. *hē agélē*) or 'the mass of men' (Gk. *tò plēthos tō̃n anthrṓpōn*), who are 'subject to Destiny' and who are not privy to this knowledge.[77] For Iamblichus (who also introduces a middle category between 'the theurgists' and 'the mass of men'), this manifests itself in different approaches to worship, from a 'crude' materialistic kind to a 'sophisticated' spiritual kind, i.e. "an intellectual and incorporeal rule of sacred procedure."[78] For Pagan theurgic thinkers, then, theurgic rituals have elitist and individualistic connotations. Theurgic union with the divine is grounded specifically in the relation between the gods and the individual theurgist and it is only available for those who are both able to, and who actually do, perform the theurgic acts. The ultimate goal is to be freed from the human bond. For Iamblichus, the

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75 Charles M. Stang, "Dionysius, Paul and the Significance of the Pseudonym" (*Modern Theology* 24:4, 2008), 545.

76 See introduction, pp.15-17.

77 Ruth Majercik, *The Chaldean Oracles: Text, Translation, and Commentary* (Leiden: Brill, 1989, hereafter: *TCO*), frag. 153-154, 194, cf. pp.20, 198, 212. This, however, does not necessarily make them Gnostics, as they did not regard matter as necessarily evil (Majercik, *The Chaldean Oracles*, 30-46, 199-200). For notes on the *Chaldean Oracles*, see abbreviations, p.5, n5. For Pickstock's discussion of the difference between Gnostics and theurgic Neoplatonists (principally Iamblicheans and Procleans), and the Christian contrast to (and similarity with) both, see Pickstock, *Repetition and Identity*, 171-188.

78 *DM* V, 18. The latter corresponds to the Hellenistic notion of the 'spiritual' or 'logical' sacrifice. See R. M. van den Berg, *Proclus' Hymns: Essays, Translations, Commentary* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 18-22, 75-85. This was later consummated by Jewish and Christian traditions. See Ratzinger, *Jesus*, II, 202-277; Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 49-53. The Iamblichean focus on the ultimate *telos* of the human elite as something purely spiritual finds an equivalent in the modern distinction between spirit and matter. The crucial difference, though, is that the positive role of matter and the Neoplatonic notion of participation has been abandoned in favour of a univocal metaphysical framework. See Knut Alfsvåg, "*Explicatio* and *Complicatio*: On the Understanding of the Relationship between God and the World in the Work of Nicholas Cusanus" (*International Journal of Systematic Theology* 14:3, 2012), 295-309, esp. 296-300; Alfsvåg, "Gudsåpenbaring og virkelighetsforståelse," 206-210; Knut Alfsvåg, "Luthersk spiritualitet: Om lære og liv i den éne, kristne kirke" (*Dansk Tidsskrift for Teologi og Kirke* 40:1, 2013), 42-56.

theurgist loses, in a sense, his humanity in the theurgic act, if only temporarily:

> The theurgist, through the power of arcane symbols, commands cosmic entities no longer as a human being or employing a human soul but, existing above them in the order of the gods, uses threats greater than are consistent with his own proper essence—not, however, with the implication that he would perform that which he asserts, but using such words to instruct them how much, how great and what sort of power he holds through his unification with the gods, which he gains through knowledge of the ineffable symbols.[79]

For Christians, however, Christ is the one true theurgist in whom we participate. He subverts the Pagan perspective by assuming flesh so that humanity is not destroyed but lifted it up, in all its concrete creatureliness, by allowing all to partake of His theurgic act, regardless of age, capability, or anything else, and by emphasising the community, the Church. As Mark A. McIntosh notes, "a Neoplatonic itinerary has been re-contextualized in the sacramental life of the community."[80] This subversion and re-contextualisation, however, does *not* negate the distinction between elite and non-elite. Rather, it is consummated in Christ. Instead of distinguishing between 'the herd' or 'the mass of men' on the hand and the elite of the few 'theurgists' on the other, it distinguishes between Christ on the one hand and all of creation, including humans, on the other, equally subject to sin and fallenness.[81] Christ, however, does not keep this to Himself. He allows us to participate in it through Him, by means of the sacrament of Baptism, which is open to anyone, in the celebration of the Eucharist, and in our daily non-identical imitations of Him.[82] In one sense, then, a Christian conception of theurgy is *more* elitist than a Pagan one,

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79 *DM* VI, 6.

80 Mark A. McIntosh, *Mystical Theology: The Integrity of Spirituality and Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 45, cf. 44-56. Also see Panagiotis G. Pavlos, "Theurgy in Dionysius the Areopagite," in *Platonism and Christian Thought in Late Antiquity*, eds., Pavlos et al., 157-158; Pickstock, *After Writing*, 121-166 (esp. 158-166); Pickstock, "The Ritual Birth of Sense," 34-36, as well as chapters four and six, pp.140-153, 224-231.

81 Roman 3:9-31; 5:12-21; 8:19-23, cf. chapter four, pp.146-153. This is not contrary to the Catholic doctrine of the immaculate conception which holds that the Virgin Mary was "redeemed, in a more exalted fashion, by reason of the merits of her Son." See *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 482, cf. 490-493, issued by Pope John Paul II (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1992, revised 1994).

82 Cf. 1 Corinthians 4:16; 11:1; Galatians 2:19-20; Ephesians 5:1-2; Philippians 3:17; 1 Thessalonians 1:6-7; 1 Peter 1:13-25; 2:21-25.

as there is only *one* true master theurgist, but in another sense it is *less* elitist, as the master theurgist allows all to participate in Him.[83] Or, it is a *proper* elitism, not between different 'classes' of humans but between God and creation. These differences, however, do not negate the similarities between Pagan and Christian conceptions of theurgy.

Commenting on the nature of prayer, Stang notes that the Iamblichean notion of prayer is "an almost perfect match" with St. Paul's account of the Spirit praying in us,[84] in Romans 8:16; 8:26; and Galatians 4:6 and, I would add, the account of worship offered in Psalm 40:3: "He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God." Iamblichus states:

> And if one were to consider also how the hieratic prayer-formulae have been sent down to mortals by the gods themselves, and that they are the symbols of the gods themselves, and not known to anyone but them, and that in a way they possess the same power as the gods themselves, how could one any longer justly believe that such supplication is derived from the senseworld, and is not divine and intellectual? Or how could any element of passion be reasonably insinuated into this activity, seeing that not even a virtuous human character can easily be brought to the requisite level of purity?[85]

As Gregory Shaw notes, theurgic prayer is "not an address to the gods but a way of entering the power of *their* voice and awakening a corresponding voice in one's soul."[86] Pagan Neoplatonists, then, hold that the divine descends to work through us. This human desire for union with the divine, however, finds its consummation in Christ, through the Holy Spirit. Prayer is first offered to us as a divine act and only secondarily may we participate in it and offer it back. It is a kind of 'ritual effacement,' akin to St. Paul's point in Galatians 2:20: "It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me." This, however, does not cancel us out and absorb

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83 Christ also notes that the goal is not to be as elitist as possible but to have a childlike trust in God (Matthew 18:1-5, cf. Mark 10:13-16). This, however, does not mean to become stupid, but to be trustful. As Christ notes earlier: "See, I am sending you out like sheep into the midst of wolves; so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves" (Matthew 10:16).

84 Stang, *Apophasis and Pseudonymity*, 115.

85 *DM* I, 15.

86 Gregory Shaw, "Neoplatonic Theurgy and Dionysius the Areopagite" (*Journal of Early Christian Studies* 7:4, 1999), 589, cited in Stang, *Apophasis and Pseudonymity*, 111, 115. Also see Luc Brisson, "Prayer in Neoplatonism and the *Chaldaean Oracles*: Porphyry, Iamblichus, Proclus," in *Platonic Theories of Prayer*, eds., Dillon and Timotin, 108-133; José Manuel Redondo, "The Transmission of Fire: Proclus' Theurgical Prayers," in *Platonic Theories of Prayer*, eds., Dillon and Timotin, 164-191.

us into nothingness. For St. Paul continues (emphasis added): "And the life *I* now live in the flesh *I* live by faith in the Son of God, who loved *me* and gave himself for *me*."[87] As rational and embodied creatures, participating in God, we achieve this union with God through concrete rituals, particularly the word and the sacraments, grounded not in us but in the Incarnate *Logos*, and ordered towards the nature of God. "For God is a God not of disorder but of peace" (1 Corinthians 14:33). Through the Incarnate *Logos*, we can *embody* the liturgy we receive from Him and offer it back, in a rational and ordered manner. And, as we see in the synoptic Gospels and in St. Paul, the central liturgy that we have received from Him is the Eucharist, through which He comes to dwell with us, induct us into His covenant, and feed us with His gift of new life.[88] I will, therefore, now discuss the nature of this sacrament.

3 Metaphysics, participation, and the Eucharist

> To begin with, the holy council teaches and openly and straightforwardly professes that in the Blessed Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, after the consecration of the bread and wine, our Lord Jesus Christ, true God and man, is truly, really and substantially contained under the appearances of those realities [*can. 1*]. For, there is no contradiction in the fact that our Savior always sits at the right hand of the Father in heaven according to his natural way of existing and that, nevertheless, in his substance he is sacramentally present to us in many other places. We can hardly find words to express this way of existing: but our reason, enlightened through faith, can nevertheless recognize it as possible for God [*cf. Mt 19:26; Lk 18:27*], and we must always believe it unhesitatingly.[89]

With these words, the Council of Trent put into words the central truths of the doctrine of transubstantiation. This doctrine is fundamental to Roman Catholic theology, but belief in the real presence of Christ is not exclusive to Rome. According to Lutheran teaching, "the true body and blood of Christ are truly present under the form [Ger. *Gestalt*] of bread and wine in the

87 Cf. Stang, *Apophasis and Pseudonymity*, 183-185.
88 Matthew 26:26-30; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:14-23; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26.
89 *Enchiridion symbolorum*, 1636, eds. H. Denzinger and P. Hünermann (Denzinger-Hünermann), Latin-English, 43rd ed. (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press 2012).

Lord's Supper and are distributed and received there."[90] According to the same confession, the sacraments are absolutely central, as they are the only means through which God acts for us (or at least the only means of which we can be sure): "Through these [the Word and the sacraments], as through means, he gives the Holy Spirit who produces faith, where and when he wills, in those who hear the gospel."[91] The Catholic tradition, in its various alterations, sees the sacraments as signs which really participate in and mediate God's salvation and God's presence, as expressed, for instance, in Romans 10:17 ("faith comes from what is heard") or 1 Peter 3:21 ("baptism … now saves you").[92] These are seen first as God's gifts in Christ, which is particularly true for the Eucharist: "This is my body that is for you" (1 Corinthians 11:24a). But at the same time they can represent our return of God's gifts as praise and service: "Do this in remembrance of me" (1 Corinthians 11:24b).[93] And for the Eucharist, the centre is found in the real presence, where there are major disagreements, centred around the doctrine of transubstantiation.[94] As we have seen above, Aquinas, teaches that Christ's body (and blood) is in the sacrament "not merely in signification or figure, but also in very truth."[95] For him, the

90 *CA* X (German text).

91 *CA* X (German text).

92 See Alfsvåg, "Luthersk spiritualitet," 49-53; Davison, *Why Sacraments?*, 1-12, 23-29, 148-151; Ratzinger, *Theology of the Liturgy*, 153-184; Alexander Schmemann, *For the Life of the World: Sacraments and Orthodoxy*, 2nd ed. (Crestwood, NY: SVS Press, 1997), 23-46, 67-79, 135-151.

93 Kjetil Kringlebotten, ""Do this in remembrance of me…" A Lutheran defence of the sacrifice of the mass" (*Studia Theologica – Nordic Journal of Theology* 71:2, 2017), 127-147, esp. 130-139.

94 Brett Salkeld, *Transubstantiation: Theology, History, and Christian Unity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2019), 1-137 (esp. 1-55, 86-133). Some later Lutheran confessions directly reject this doctrine, such as Luther's *Smalcald Articles* III, 6 or the *Epitome* and *Solid Declaration* of the *Formula of Concord* VII. Again, for notes on the Lutheran confessions, see abbreviations, p.5, n3. But unlike these confessions, *CA* is, at least, open to it. According to *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, eds. Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2000), 44, n61, *Gestalt*, the noun used in the German version of *CA* X, is used there "as the German equivalent for the Latin *species*, which already was associated with the doctrine of transubstantiation at the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215." *CA* was not principally intended as a declaration of what made Lutherans unique but an expression of the universal or Catholic faith of the Lutheran churches (Alfsvåg, "Luthersk spiritualitet," 43-46). And unlike *CA*, however, the other confessions do not have confessional status in all Lutheran churches, including the Church of Norway. See Arve Brunvoll and Kjell Olav Sannes, *Vedkjenningsskriftene til Den norske kyrkja* (Oslo: Lunde, 2017), 7-9.

95 *ST* III, q.75, a.1, corp., cf. qq.73-83 (esp. 75-77); Salkeld, *Transubstantiation*, 57-127 (esp. 86-133). Also see chapter one, pp.58-62. While the Roman Catholic Church is the only ecclesial body which, as whole, teaches this doctrine, it is not exclusively Roman. See Pickstock, *After Writing*, 253-266.

Eucharistic species of bread and wine are more than extrinsic signs (though they do not cease to be so). The fundamental part of this doctrine, which we see highlighted in both *Confessio Augustana* (*CA*) and in the decree from the Council of Trent, is that Christ's body (and blood) is present "in very truth." We ought, however, also to emphasise the first part of Aquinas's saying, that Christ's body (and blood) is present "in signification or figure." Christ is not just substantially present, although that is the bedrock of the doctrine, but He is also present symbolically in the species or accidents of bread and wine, which remain (and which on the level of physics is indistinguishable from normal bread and wine). These accidents function as symbols of Christ, of our spiritual feeding, but they also become symbols of (and actual instances of) creation's participation in God. Pickstock notes that they participate "in and essential symbolization of the Body,"[96] which indicates that it is appropriate to use the Aristotelian categories of substance and accident. Aquinas sees these distinctions as useful, but by employing the notion of transubstantiation, where the substance is changed but the accidents remain, he questions their ultimacy and points us to a more fundamental analogical participation in the divine. John P. Yocum notes that for "an unbelieving Aristotelian philosopher," the idea of transubstantiation, where the accidents remain in the sacrament without a subject, would be "nonsensical,"[97] and Pickstock notes that "the way in which the bread is not physically evacuated in order to make room for the Body pushes these Aristotelian categories to breaking point."[98] Where accidents are normally substantial in other respects, this is not the case for the Eucharistic species, according to this doctrine. The substance of the bread and wine are not destroyed but changed and transubstantiated, though not in a natural manner but a supernatural manner, by God's power.[99] And likewise, the accidents continue to exist, paradoxically, by a direct participation in the *esse*

96 Pickstock, *After Writing*, 259.
97 John P. Yocum, "Aristotle in Aquinas's Sacramental Theology," in *Aristotle in Aquinas's Theology*, eds., Gilles Emery and Matthew Levering (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 208 (cf. 206-209).
98 Pickstock, *After Writing*, 259.
99 *ST* III, q.75, a.3, ad 1; a.4, corp.

of Christ's divinely transfigured body, and are thus, in a sense, 'free-floating.'[100] This may push the Aristotelian categories 'to breaking point,' but this participatory account is held together by a more fundamental (Neoplatonic) distinction between *esse* and *essentia*. Transubstantiation is an extreme case of contingent reality as such because creation is always 'accidental' in relation to God. The bread and wine anticipate, here and now, what we are all called to. As Ratzinger puts it:

> This action of God,[101] 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.[102]

The accidents of bread and wine become signs of the divine in which they participate, as Christ (being God), does not fall under any category that transubstantiation would contradict, as Christ's divinely transfigured body, unlike our bodies, is replete.[103] As Aquinas notes, at two different places:

> When we say, *God*, or *the divine essence is the Father*, the predication is one of identity, and not of the lower in regard to a higher species: because in God there is no universal and singular.[104]
>
> Christ's body is not in this sacrament in the same way as a body is in a place, which by its dimensions is commensurate with the place; but in a special manner which is proper to this sacrament. Hence we say that Christ's body is upon many altars, not as in different places, but *sacramentally*: and thereby we do not understand that Christ is there only as in a sign, although a sacrament is a kind of sign; but that Christ's body is here after a fashion proper to this sacrament.[105]

Transubstantiation, then, is not a rejection of nature but, so to speak, an elevating of nature to its *telos*: "God is no longer denied to nature, but sustains the accidents of nature which are

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100 *ST* III, q.77, a.1, corp., cf. Simon Oliver, *Philosophy, God and Motion* (London: Routledge, 2013), 131-137; Salkeld, *Transubstantiation*, 114-119.

101 I.e. the Eucharistic action as it comes to expression in the Eucharistic prayer.

102 Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 187.

103 Oliver, *Philosophy, God and Motion*, 135; Pickstock, *After Writing*, 260.

104 *ST* I, q.39, a.6, ad 2.

105 *ST* III, q.75, a.1, ad 3.

thereby most fully realised."[106] The remaining accidents become signs of our own ultimate end and reveal that creation can be understood in liturgical terms, as ordered to worship of the divine,[107] something which finds its end in the Church. For Pickstock, the eucharistic elements participate "in and essential symbolization of the Body, *including* not only the sacramental Body, but also the historical body of Jesus and the ecclesial body."[108] Following trends in *ressourcement* theology, and particularly Henri de Lubac, she points to the essential connection between these three bodies which are, in a mysterious way, one, without collapsing into each other.[109] She notes that the ecclesial body is *mystical*, as theologians of later centuries have emphasised, but it is so only because it participates in the Eucharist, which is the mystical body, being both the true body of Christ and veiled in the sacrament. Citing St. Ildephonsus of Toledo, de Lubac notes that "in order to remain in this body of Christ, which is the holy Church, we must achieve true participation, through the sacrament, in the first body of Christ."[110] The Church, partaking of the body of Christ, is constituted as the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 10:16-17; 1 Corinthians 12:12-31). Though Pickstock does not use these words herself, she is advocating for a eucharistic ecclesiology.[111] We participate in Christ through the sacrament and are thereby constituted as the body of Christ. And as the body of Christ, as partakers of Christ and receivers of His gifts, we are enabled to offer back the divine work. Precisely because the Eucharist is ordered in a particular way towards God, and reveals the *telos* of creation as

106 Simon Oliver, "The Eucharist before Nature and Culture" (*Modern Theology* 15:3, 1999), 348, cf. 342-350. Oliver critiques Calvin, who sees the Eucharistic signs as mere non-essential and non-participatory illustrations of the body and blood of Christ. For my critique of Calvin, see chapter five, pp.188-196.

107 Oliver, *Creation*, 14-21.

108 Pickstock, *After Writing*, 259.

109 Pickstock, *After Writing*, 158-166, 259-261, cf. Henri de Lubac, *Corpus Mysticum: The Eucharist and the Church in the Middle Ages*, 2nd ed., trans. Gemma Simmonds with Richard Price and Christopher Stephens (London: SCM Press, 2006), esp. 13-119, 248-262. For the use of de Lubac in RO, see Oliver, "Henri de Lubac and Radical Orthodoxy."

110 de Lubac, *Corpus Mysticum*, 14.

111 Cf. Hans Boersma, *Nouvelle Théologie and Sacramental Ontology: A Return to Mystery* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 242-287; Hans Boersma, "Sacramental Ontology: Nature and the Supernatural in the Ecclesiology of Henri de Lubac" (*New Blackfriars* 88:1015, 2007), 242-273; Gemma Simmonds, "The Mystical Body: Ecclesiology and Sacramental Theology," in *T&T Clark Companion to Henri de Lubac*, ed., Hillebert, 159-179.

participating in this order, it is the definite expression of the Pauline understanding of ordered worship. Transubstantiation holds together sign, action, and reality and becomes, in Pickstock's words, 'the condition of possibility for all meaning.'[112] For if, as Pickstock holds, liturgy is the consummation of philosophy, this consummation finds its centre in the Eucharistic celebration, which is the centre not just of the liturgical life but "the fount and apex of the whole Christian life."[113] This sacrament is unique in that, being Christ, it is at once Creator and creature, given to us to consume. And it becomes symbolic precisely because it participates in that which it symbolises and expresses it in act. The Eucharist underlines language and gives it meaning, since it points to that which makes language, and all signage, possible in the first place:

> Transubstantiation saves the meaning of the sign (and our "common-sense" that there *is* meaning) because the element of uncertainty remains and yet this becomes identical with a corporeal presence which, as infinite, does not arrive in the manner of an object's transferral from one place to another, but rather arrives in and through its positive supplementations, which effect a return of the sign.[114]

The distinction, then, between 'thing' and 'sign' becomes untenable, as all things are ultimately signs that point to the divine. In the ritual, the bread and wine, as material gifts, become signs not just of Christ but of the *telos* of creation. Like the accidents of bread and wine in the Eucharist, creation itself is a 'free-floating accident,' existing only because it participates in the divine *esse*. We see, then, that the ultimate symbol of our dependence on God is found in the Eucharistic celebration, a ritual action established by Christ, by the incarnate *Logos*, "put into use by humans," by the Church, "whose effect is to bring the material world (including that part of the celebrant which is material) into harmony with the divine order," to use Peter Struck's definition of theurgy.[115]

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112 Pickstock, *After Writing*, 261-264, cf. xv.

113 *Lumen Gentium*, 11.

114 Pickstock, *After Writing*, 263-264. While someone like Derrida taught that all signs are empty, this presupposes that they are not suspended from that which transcends creation. Inside this participation, however, signs and language retain meaning. Instead of the Eucharist being "something extra-linguistic which *makes up* or compensates for the deathliness of language," we see that "the Eucharist situates us more inside language than ever" (Pickstock, *After Writing*, 262, cf. 261-266).

115 Struck, "Pagan and Christian Theurgies," 30.

With Pickstock and de Lubac, I affirm a eucharistic ecclesiology, where we, as the body of Christ, are given the divine work as a gift and enabled to offer it back or 'put it into use,' as highlighted in *SC*, 7. The Eucharist, which holds together sign, action, and reality, is, therefore, essentially theurgic. For the action in question is not first and foremost your acts, my acts, or the acts of the Church, but the acts of Christ, put into use, in an imitative and non-identical way, in the Church.[116] In theurgic Neoplatonism, such 'putting into use' (and the resulting harmonisation) is rooted in a participatory account of being:

> [E]ven as they [the superior beings, the gods] are not contained by anything, so they contain everything within themselves; and earthly things, possessing their being in virtue of the totalities of the gods, whenever they come to be ready for participation in the divine, straight away find the gods pre-existing in it prior to their own proper essence.[117]

We need, however, to distinguish between different modes of participation, between *méthexis*, our ultimate participation in God, whereby we are both kept in existence from moment to moment and enabled to act, and *mímēsis*, the non-identical and imitative ways in which we may give expression to this participation.[118] Pickstock points to these two levels, arguing that "the narrative logic of imitation in the liturgy is underpinned by a metaphysical logic of participation" and that "the culmination of the Mass in the transformation and reception of the elements displays the fusion of these two levels."[119] While we could say that our participation in God is imitative, in an analogous sense, by distinguishing between *méthexis* and *mímēsis*, we avoid confusing God (and his gifts) with us, and our enactments, though they are closely connected in the Eucharist. For, as noted, the celebration represents both our reception of God's gift – "This is

116 Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy*, 48-78; Kringlebotten, "Do this…," 130-132.

117 *DM* I, 8, cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 987ab, 988a; McLean, *Plenitude and Participation*, 49.

118 Melberg, *Theories of mimesis*, 10-50; Torevell, *Liturgy and the Beauty of the Unknown*, 161-182. This distinction, between *méthexis* and *mímēsis*, is not universal in the Platonic tradition. The two terms are at times used interchangeably. See Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 987ab, 988a; McLean, *Plenitude and Participation*, 49. But it is still useful, as ontological participation is more fundamental than our active imitation. The latter, however, is based on the former.

119 Milbank and Pickstock, *Truth in Aquinas*, 87, cf. 1-51, 76-95 (esp. 86-93). For a basic critique of the Milbank and Pickstock's use of Aquinas, see Wayne J. Hankey, "*Participatio divini luminis*: Aquinas' doctrine of the Agent Intellect: Our Capacity for Contemplation" (*Dionysius* 22, 2004), 149-157.

my body that is for you" (1 Corinthians 11:24a) – and our return of this gift as praise and service – "Do this in remembrance of me" (1 Corinthians 11:24b). These represent, respectively, our ultimate participation in God through Christ and our imitative (and active) participation in this gift.[120] The gift of the Eucharist is the sacrifice of Christ, started in the upper Room, completed on the Cross and in the Resurrection.[121] And this sacrifice makes us "partners [Gk. *métochoi*] of Christ" (Hebrews 3:14) and "participants in the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4). And on this basis, we are called to imitate God and Christ: "Therefore be imitators of God [Gk. *mimētaì toũ theoũ*], as beloved children, and live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God" (Ephesians 5:1-2). This imitative participation, where we offer back what has been gifted to us, will, however, always remain diminished and non-identical. We can never do liturgy fully, at least not in this life. As Pickstock puts it, liturgy will always remain 'impossible' and its performance will always be an imperfect copying or reproducing of the heavenly liturgy, of God's own operation by means of our gratuitous participation in Him.[122] This, however, is possible, paradoxically, because God has descended, incarnationally, to us, and so the earthly liturgy becomes a real (though non-identical and eschatological) anticipation of what is to come, in the full descent of God (cf. Revelation 21:1-5). The centre, therefore, is in the historical acts of God in Christ. While theurgy can potentially (and in its Iamblichean incarnation is) envisioned a-historically, this is not possible for Christians. For the acts we celebrate is not just the acts of the divine here and now, but God's concrete acts in history, particularly the creation and the acts of Christ.[123]

If we examine Christian liturgies, we see that they are filled with constant reminders (and

120 Kringlebotten, "Do this…," 130-139.
121 Matthew 26:27b-28; John 19:30; Romans 4:25.
122 Pickstock, *After Writing*, 169-219 (esp. 176-192).
123 Both the Old and the New Testament is filled with examples of praising God (and Christ) for his works. For example 1 Chronicles 16:8-36; Psalm 34; Psalm 40; Psalm 105; Psalm 111; Matthew 15:29-31; Luke 1:46-55; Luke 1:68-79; Luke 2:29-32; and Luke 18:35-43.

celebrations) of God's acts in history, from Scripture readings to collects and Eucharistic prayers. At the centre of this we find Baptism and the Eucharist, which are liturgical and ritual, yes, but also concretely historical. For Pickstock, this comes to expression through the notion of 'liturgical drama,' which represents a fusion of a historical and ritual approach. She writes: "Theurgically to instigate the divine re-descent in baptism and the Eucharist, just as Mary instigated the theurgic descent of God become Man, is to repeat a drama which is both heavenly and historical."[124] If we are called, as I noted above, to "discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect" (Romans 12:2), or to partake of beauty, truth, and goodness, ritual can be seen as the way we bid the gift and receive it. And the Eucharist is, perhaps, where this is most evident. Not only do we pray that God should be with us spiritually but that Christ, in the Spirit, comes down to us in the Eucharistic elements in a substantial manner, so that "the true body and blood of Christ" may be "truly present under the form of bread and wine in the Lord's Supper" and "distributed and received there."[125] In the words of the Eastern Epiclesis:

> Also we offer you this spiritual worship, without shedding of blood, and we ask, pray and implore you: send down your Holy Spirit upon us, and upon these gifts here set forth, and make this bread the precious Body of your Christ, and what is in this Cup the precious Blood of your Christ, changing them by your Holy Spirit, so that those who partake of them may obtain vigilance of soul, forgiveness of sins, communion of your Holy Spirit, fulness of the Kingdom of heaven, freedom to speak in your presence, not judgement or condemnation.[126]

The Epiclesis, more than anything else in Christian liturgy, puts into words its essentially theurgic nature. It is not a manipulative charm by which the Spirit can be coerced to come down, because "the wind blows where it chooses" (John 3:8). No, it is first and foremost a divine work that we have put into use, in order for us to be brought "into harmony with the divine order."[127] As we see from the words of the Epiclesis, the Eucharist ritually performs or (re-)enacts the

124 Pickstock, *Repetition and Identity*, 177-178, cf. 176-188.
125 *CA* X (German text).
126 *The Divine Liturgy*, 33-34.
127 Struck, "Pagan and Christian Theurgies," 30.

divine descent and the communion given in the sacrament enacts our ascent, though this ascent is not an ascent away from here, both because it is an ascent to the God who descended here in the flesh (John 1) and because God's transcendence is immanent or ubiquitous.[128] This is rooted in a participatory account of being and the relation between *méthexis* and *mímēsis*, where the latter flows from the former and comes to expression most fully in doxology.[129] We thus highlight both the centrality of history, particularly the history of God's interaction with us, and the importance of a ritualised faith, that our contact with the divine does not occur through an abandonment of the body but precisely through it, and that faith expresses itself principally through praise. John Milbank summarises this union of ritual and historicity by noting that the Christian religion, "at its liturgical and sacramental heart," focuses both on local rituals, which have often been included in its liturgical practice, and on "a heightened enchantment able to charm down even the absolute (though by and through his ordaining of such cultic means)."[130] This 'charming down,' however, is not in any way 'coercive,' as if God could be coerced. No, it is first and foremost a work of God Himself, in Christ or, more accurately, the work of the God-man. The Eucharistic liturgy (as all liturgy), is principally a divine work, particularly the work of the incarnate *Logos* in the Holy Spirit, offering to the Father, and we participate in this through a non-identical repetition of the divine descent in the Incarnation. As God descends to creation and becomes flesh, He descends, in a similar way, to the Eucharistic elements and to the Eucharistic ritual (thus shattering the dichotomy between sign and action). Pickstock notes that we repeat a heavenly and historical drama by theurgically instigating "the divine re-descent in baptism and the Eucharist, just as Mary instigated the theurgic descent of God become Man," something which "has validity if it is perpetuated as a real repetition in lives of charity, which

128 Rudi A. te Velde, *Participation and Substantiality in Thomas Aquinas* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 160-164.

129 Diamond, "Catherine Pickstock, Plato and the Unity of Divinity and Humanity," 8; Milbank and Pickstock, *Truth in Aquinas*, 86-93; Pickstock, *After Writing*, 39, 220-252.

130 John Milbank, *Beyond Secular Order: The Representation of Being and the Representation of the People* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 17.

continuously begin to restore the face of the earth."[131] The rituals of the Church, and particularly the Eucharist, reveal to us the acts of God and our participation in Him. In the celebration, creation becomes a partaker of the divine act, the theurgy, and is transformed and lifted up to its *telos*. To quote Ratzinger again, 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."[132] This is an icon of the creation's goal, to partake of the fulness of God.

4 Conclusion

In this chapter, taking a starting point in Pickstock's understanding of the nature of the liturgy, as a non-identical repetition of the work of God, and relating it more directly to a theurgic Neoplatonist context, I have argued that ritual is a, if not the, defining characteristic of humanity, that there is no contradiction between ritual and rationality, and that philosophy, ideology, and language find their consummation, their *telos*, in worship and most particularly in the Eucharistic celebration.

Discussing a Pauline theology of worship, where order is understood to participate first and foremost in the orderly nature of God (1 Corinthians 14:26-40), I have shown that ritual, through this participation, can be understood as a rational endeavour and as theurgic, as participation in the divine act. This notion of rationality is not principally a hypothetico-deductive one, which is typical of modernistic philosophy, but a more instrumental notion, where rationality "involves pursuing ends that are coherent, and employing means that are appropriate to those ends."[133]

131 Pickstock, *Repetition and Identity*, 177-178, cf. Pickstock, *After Writing*, 39, 176-192, 253-273. Also see David Cayley, "Radical Orthodoxy," podcast at *CBC Radio One*, 00:49:55-00:50:14; van Ommen, "Ritual repetition"; Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 19-27, 39-110.

132 Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 187.

133 Berchman, "Rationality and Ritual in Plotinus and Porphyry," 185, quoted in Addey, *Divination and Theurgy*, 184 (cf. 183-189).

Rationality, understood this way, is not principally concerned with belief in an abstract list of propositions but the orientation towards (and participation in) a given goal. And liturgy is, as St. Paul notes, an orientation towards God, where we participate in His divine order and are allowed to "present [our] bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is [our] reasonable service" (Romans 12:1, cf. 1 Corinthians 14:26-40). This excludes an improper, and immanentist, fixation on the human agent, while at the same time allowing us to make it our own. The words and gestures of the liturgy are not primarily grounded in the human self but in God, in the one in whom the liturgical self participates and acts, but they are expressed in conformity with our form as creatures, and in the case of humans as intentional and rational. What we see from this is that liturgical participation, which is the consummation of philosophy, is not something tacked on as a bonus but a genuine participation in Christ and consequently a non-identical repetition of his life, by grace, through faith.

If, as Pickstock holds, liturgy is the consummation of philosophy, this consummation finds its centre in the Eucharistic celebration, which is the centre of the liturgical life, holding together sign, action, and reality.[134] In the Eucharistic signs, Christ is offered to us, both in a symbolic sense, signifying nature's participation in the the divine *esse*, and in a substantial way, by giving us a gift through which we become "partners of Christ" (Hebrews 3:14) and "participants in the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4). This indicates our fundamental participation in God, as expressed trough the notion of *méthexis*. At the same time, however, this gift enables us to live in imitation of God, as expressed trough the notion of *mímēsis*. As we read in the Second Vatican Council's Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, the Eucharist is the centre not just of the liturgy. It is "the fount and apex of the whole Christian life."[135] Through the Eucharist, we participate in what is, essentially, the work of the transcendent God, His theurgy, and through it we are formed by

134 Pickstock, *After Writing*, 261-264.
135 *Lumen Gentium*, 11.

and ordered to Him.

In the next chapter, I focus specifically on the Christological nature of Christian theurgy. I will provide an argument for why the Incarnation is what makes Christian theurgy possible, by arguing (1) that the hypostatic union denotes not just a loose 'partnership' between divinity and humanity but a real *metaphysical* union-in-distinction, informed by Aquinas's doctrine of one *esse* and one *suppositum* in Christ, (2) that this finds its centre in the Paschal mystery, consummating all aspects of Christ's ministry, particularly his baptism and the Eucharist, and providing the inner core and logic of the Church's sacramental life, and (3) that we are ordered to God, developing further the argument made in this chapter, arguing that Christology provides the basis for this participation, as Christ becomes the exemplar in which we participate.

CHAPTER FOUR

Christ the 'Master Theurgist'

1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I argued, in critical dialogue with Catherine Pickstock, that liturgy, as a rational participation in the order of God Himself, orients us to God and finds its consummation in the Eucharist. In this chapter, focusing on the Christological nature of Christian theurgy, I will develop this further, arguing that what makes Christian theurgy possible is the incarnation or the hypostatic union, which unites us with God on a metaphysical level, though "without confusion, change, division, or separation."[1] And while the sacrifice of Christ is consummated on the cross, as I will argue below, it involves His whole life and its goal is not just atonement but union with God, which is deification or theosis.[2] This emphasis is also central in theurgic Neoplatonism. In *De Mysteriis*, Iamblichus maintains that "the final purpose of sacrifice" is "that it brings us into contact with the demiurge, since it renders us akin to the gods through acts."[3] For him, theurgy is a participation of creatures in divine work. It is 'demiurgy,' understood within the framework of non-dualistic Platonism, where the material cosmos manifests the Creator.[4] In Pagan Neoplatonic philosophy, the Demiurge is one of the gods, while neither he nor any of the other 'lesser gods' is the highest God, 'the One.' He created the cosmos in which we participate and for Pagan theurgic Neoplatonists, theurgy is a participation in the cosmos as a morally

1 *The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon*, trans., introd. and notes, Richard Price and Michael Gaddis (3 vols., Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2005, 2007), II, 204.

2 Joseph Ratzinger, *Theology of the Liturgy: The Sacramental Foundation of Christian Existence* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius, 2014), 551 (cf. 541-557); Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* (hereafter: *ST*) III, q.22, a.2, corp. For notes on the Thomistic corpus, see abbreviations, p.4, n1.

3 Iamblichus, *De mysteriis*, Greek and English, intro. and trans. Emma C. Clarke, John M. Dillon, and Jackson P. Hershbell (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003, hereafter: *DM*) V, 26, cf. VIII, 3, 6.

4 Gregory Shaw, "Taking the Shape of the Gods: A Theurgic Reading of Hermetic Rebirth" (*Aries – Journal for the Study of Western Esotericism* 15:1, 2015), 136-169; Gregory Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul: The Neoplatonism of Iamblichus*, 2nd ed. (Angelico Press/Sophia Perennis, 2014), 50-64; Ilinca Tanaseanu-Döbler, *Theurgy in Late Antiquity: The Invention of a Ritual Tradition* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013), 243-251.

unfallen "*agalma*, a shrine of the Demiurge (*Timaeus* 37c)" which "reveals the presence of gods."[5] This participation is understood as imitation of the Demiurge in particular, as well as the other gods, through which the theurgist can participate in their order and attain communion with them (and through them, with the One), without the human element being removed, because "the whole of theurgy presents a double aspect":

> On the one hand, it is performed by men, and as such observes our natural rank in the universe; but on the other, it controls divine symbols, and in virtue of them is raised up to union with the higher powers, and directs itself harmoniously in accordance with their dispensation, which enables it quite properly to assume the mantle of the gods.[6] It is in virtue of this distinction, then, that the art both naturally invokes the powers from the universe as superiors, inasmuch as the invoker is a man, and yet on the other hand gives them orders, since it invests itself, by virtue of the ineffable symbols, with the hieratic role of the gods.[7]

Since theurgy, then, is most particularly a participation in the creator of the universe, the universe or cosmos is central.[8] As participants in the creator, creatures are secondary causes or agents, in case of rational beings. This participatory metaphysics, which is central both to Neoplatonic and Christian thought, understands such causality as real and substantial, but at the same time participated or derived.[9] In theurgy, the focus is principally on participation in the divine works, where the end goal is divine-human communion. As Peter Struck puts it: "Theurgy is a divine act, a *θεῖον ἔργον*, insofar as it is action, established by gods, put into use by humans, whose effect is to bring the material world (including that part of the celebrant

5 Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul*, xxiv, cf. xxiv-xxv; Jan Opsomer, "Proclus on Demiurgy and Procession: A Neoplatonic Reading of the *Timaeus*," in *Reason and Necessity: Essays on Plato's Timaeus*, ed., M. R. Wright (London: Duckworth/Classical Press of Wales, 2000), 113-143; Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, 2nd ed., reprint, ed., trans., intro., and comm. E.R. Dodds (Oxford: Clarendon, 1971), props. 20-22; Sarah Klitenic Wear and John Dillon, *Dionysius the Areopagite and the Neoplatonist Tradition: Despoiling the Hellenes* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 56-58, 75, 108; Donald Zeyl and Barbara Sattler, "Plato's *Timaeus*," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Summer 2019 Edition (ed., Edward N. Zalta).

6 Or: 'taking the shape of the Gods' (Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul*, 57).

7 *DM* IV, 2, cf. I, 21; Crystal Addey, *Divination and Theurgy in Neoplatonism: Oracles of the Gods* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), 171-282; Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul*, 31-40, 50-64.

8 As I argued in chapter two, pp.77-78, this is also central to Christianity. The cosmos is liturgical. But, as I will argue below, pp.148-153, for Christians, the cosmos is fallen.

9 Andrew Davison, *Participation in God: A Study in Christian Doctrine and Metaphysics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 65-83; Proclus, *Elements of Theology*, props. 9-12 (cf. props. 1-39).

which is material) into harmony with the divine order."[10] But in what way can this perspective become Christian?

As noted, some scholars contrast Iamblichean and Christian (predominately Pseudo-Dionysian) theurgy to the point of downplaying (even denying) the latter's Neoplatonic roots and some argue, from both Pagan and Christian perspectives, that theurgy, in any guise, is inherently non-Christian.[11] Some, however, see Christian usages of theurgy not as the 'replacement' of Christian theology with Pagan philosophy, but as the Christian consummation of Neoplatonic thought, providing Christian theology with a philosophical framework through which we can understand human participation in, and ritual celebration of, the divine work.[12] From this perspective, Neoplatonic and Christian conceptions of theurgy are both seen as ways to achieve union by participating in divine work. There are differences but these do not concern the principle itself but its context and content. Where Iamblichus saw theurgy as related to ancient revealed rites, particularly those of Greco-Roman Egypt,[13] Pseudo-Dionysius refers principally to Christ's own works and the communal-sacramental life of the Church.[14] But Pseudo-Dionysius still found it useful to deploy the term 'theurgy,' finding a grounding for this in St. Paul's use of 'work' (Gk. *érgon*) in Romans 14:20, holding that Pagans had "mistaken ancient pagan rit-

10 Peter T. Struck, "Pagan and Christian Theurgies: Iamblichus, Pseudo-Dionysius, Religion and Magic in Late Antiquity" (*Ancient World* 32:2, 2001), 30.

11 See introduction, pp.13-15, esp. nn22-24.

12 See introduction, pp.15-18, esp. n29, cf. Thomas Richard Plant, *Dualism and nondualism in the thought of Dionysius the Areopagite and Shinran Shōnin* (PhD dissertation, University of Cambridge, 2013); Charles M. Stang, *Apophasis and Pseudonymity in Dionysius the Areopagite: "No Longer I"* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Charles M. Stang, "Dionysius, Paul and the Significance of the Pseudonym" (*Modern Theology* 24:4, 2008), 541-555; Struck, "Pagan and Christian Theurgies"; Wear and Dillon, *Dionysius the Areopagite and the Neoplatonist Tradition*. In his study of Pseudo-Dionysius's philosophy, Eric Perl, *Theophany: The Neoplatonic Philosophy of Dionysius the Areopagite* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2007), sees no contradiction between Christian and Neoplatonic thought. He therefore does not give particular emphasis on "Dionysius' background in earlier Christian thought," not because "is unreal or unimportant, but because it does not contribute to the specifically philosophical understanding of Dionysius" (p.115, n2). While I agree with much of Perl's points, Pseudo-Dionysian thought is a critical Christian and *theological* consummation of Neoplatonic philosophy. He does not separate these aspect and neither should we. And, as I will show below, there are significant differences between Neoplatonic and Pseudo-Dionysian views on Incarnation, cosmology, and anthropology.

13 *DM* VII, cf. Dennis C. Clark, "Iamblichus' Egyptian Neoplatonic Theology in *De Mysteriis*" (*The International Journal of the Platonic Tradition* 2:2, 2008), 164-205.

14 Wear and Dillon, *Dionysius the Areopagite and the Neoplatonist Tradition*, 99-115.

uals for the liturgy of the Church, the work of the gods for the true work of God, who is none other than Christ."[15] Following this tradition, I will argue for a Christian conception of theurgy, consummated in Christ, the Incarnate Word or *Logos*, in which all things cohere (John 1:1-18; Colossians 1:15-20). Where earlier actors, rituals, and philosophies where shadows, Christ is the fulfilment. And in Him, the material world is reconciled to God, and the divine order, in an utterly radical way.[16] The standard orthodox position on the relation between divinity and humanity in Christ is that Christ is one (divine) person, with two natures; divine and human.[17] On this view, the Incarnation does not mean that Christ merely has a particularly acute way of being one with God. No, in Him, divinity and humanity are fully united in one single person (or *suppositum*, to use Aquinas's language), while remaining distinct.[18] On this view, we are, made capable of unity with God through Christ, as St. Paul notes: "For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have come to fullness in him, who is the head of every ruler and authority" (Colossians 2:9-10). Without the Incarnation, any act remains on the mimetic stage, as the divine remains extrinsic to humanity. But with the Incarnation we see the divine consummation of human activity in one single person. Although it is hard to pinpoint Pseudo-Dionysius's Christology,[19] as he has tendencies towards both monophysitism and Chalcedonianism, with

15 Stang, "Dionysius, Paul and the Significance of the Pseudonym," 545.

16 Colossians 2:16-17; Hebrews 8-10, esp. Hebrews 8:1-7; 10:1-4, cf. Joseph Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, commemorative ed. (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius, 2018), 129-170, 186-189; Struck, "Pagan and Christian Theurgies," 30-38.

17 Michael J. Gorman, *Aquinas on the Metaphysics of the Hypostatic Union* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 14-52; Timothy J. Pawl, *The Incarnation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 3-27.

18 *The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon*, II, 203-205, cf. Gorman, *Aquinas on the Metaphysics of the Hypostatic Union*, 73-125; *ST* III, qq.1-59 (esp. qq.1-17).

19 See Aloys Grillmeier and Theresia Hainthaler, *Christ in Christian Tradition: From the Council of Chalcedon (451) to Gregory the Great (590-604)*, vol. II:3, trans. Marianne Ehrhardt (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 298-342; Andrew Louth, *Denys the Areopagite* (London: Continuum, 1989), 14, 64, 74-75, 76, n15, 114-115; István Perczel, "The Christology of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite: The *Fourth Letter* in its Indirect and Direct Text Traditions" (*Le Muséon* 117:3-4, 2004), 409-446; Vasilije Vranic, "The Christology of the Fourth Letter of Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagite: Chalcedonian or Monophysite?" (*Open Theology: A Theological Quarterly* 5, 2008), 1-12; Wear and Dillon, *Dionysius the Areopagite and the Neoplatonist Tradition*, 4-6. Vranic's article is only available from his academia.edu page, as the original journal seems to be gone from the web.

an Antiochian and Neoplatonic emphasis, I argue that Pseudo-Dionysius's Christology is compatible with an orthodox Chalcedonian theology. The text most often cited to argue that he is a monophysite, is his fourth epistle. At the end of the epistle, Pseudo-Dionysius's states that Christ did not do "things Divine as God, nor things human as man, but exercising for us a certain new God-incarnate energy (Gk. *theandrikē̆n enérgeian*) of God having become man."[20] Taken by itself, this might seem to indicate monophysitism. It may seem that there has been a kind of 'mixture' of the natures, perhaps where the human nature has been absorbed into the divine. Wear and Dillon note these tendencies, arguing that there "is no question here of two natures, since the human body is simply an instrument with which he unites in order to do his work as Jesus Christ."[21] This, however, presupposes that the human body, for the Areopagite, should be understood in distinction, even separation, from its nature and that the instrumentality in question should be understood as *separate* rather than conjoined (with Christ's divine nature).[22] More importantly, as Vasilije Vranic has noted,[23] the text lacks any of the 'code words' of the fifth century Christological controversies (like *hypóstasis*, *phúsis*, or *prósōpon*). Furthermore, at the beginning of the epistle, Pseudo-Dionysius notes that Christ is "in absolute whole essence truly man."[24] There is no indication, here, that His human nature is abolished or diminished. And, as we see from history, Pseudo-Dionysius was not rejected but embraced as orthodox by the neo-Chalcedonians, who did not shy away from accusing whole churches (often wrongly) of being monophysites.[25] This indicates at least that they thought his theology was compatible with their own. Charles M. Stang notes that John of Scythopolis, a neo-Chalcedonian bishop,

20 Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Letters/Epistles* (*Epistulae*, hereafter: *Ep.*) IV (1072C). For notes on the Pseudo-Dionysian corpus, see abbreviations, p.4, n2.

21 Wear and Dillon, *Dionysius the Areopagite and the Neoplatonist Tradition*, 5, cf. 4-6; *Ep.* IV.

22 Cf. *ST* III, q.62, a.5; Rowan Williams, *Christ the Heart of Creation* (London, Bloomsbury Continuum, 2018), 31-40.

23 Vranic, "The Christology of the Fourth Letter," 2.

24 *Ep.* IV (1072A).

25 Vranic, "The Christology of the Fourth Letter," 1-2, cf. Niall Finneran, "Beyond Byzantium: the Non-Chalcedonian Churches," in *A Companion to Byzantium*, ed., Liz James (Oxford: Blackwell, 2010), 199-223.

commented on Pseudo-Dionysius's use of the phrase 'the human theurgies,' and how the Incarnation itself was (and is) "a human theurgy, in which God while in the flesh did divine things."[26] Through this pairing of words, 'theurgy' and 'human,' we see that Christ is both divine and human. I argue that when Pseudo-Dionysius speaks of "a certain new God-incarnate energy of God having become man,"[27] he is, rather, arguing for the what we call the *communicatio idiomatum*, 'the communication of idioms or properties.' This has its background in the Chalcedonian definition, that Christ should be "acknowledged in two natures without confusion, change, division, or separation."[28] Because of the Hypostatic Union, there is a communication between divinity and humanity and we can, therefore, say that "the Word became flesh" (John 1:14) or that "rulers of this age … crucified the Lord of glory" (1 Corinthians 2:8).[29] And, as Stang notes, Pseudo-Dionysius, should rather be seen as a Pauline theologian, which is natural, as he uses the pseudonym of one of Paul's disciples (Acts 17:32-34):

> Contrary to the claims of so many modern scholars, then, there is a robust Dionysian Christology and that Christology is deeply Pauline. Jesus is both our only "access" to the work of God (*θεουργία*), the loving activity (*ἐνέργεια*) of the hierarchies, and also simultaneously that very work and activity.[30]

Apart from the charges of monophysitism, we also have the idea, expressed by Wear and Dillon, that Pseudo-Dionysius's Christology is just plainly Neoplatonic. They compare the divine-human relationship in Christ with Porphyry's theory of the union of body and soul as "a union without contamination on the part of the soul," where "there is no question of the body having a conscious 'nature' of its own. It is merely an instrument which the soul vivifies and controls."[31] This, however, seems to boil down to a question of compatibility. Is a Christian (Chalcedonian) conception of the Incarnation compatible with a Neoplatonic metaphysics? In some sense, they

26 Stang, *Apophasis and Pseudonymity*, 112.
27 *Ep.* IV (1072C).
28 *The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon*, II, 204, cf. Pawl, *The Incarnation*, 24-26; *ST* III, q.16.
29 For some argument for this, see Johann Anselm Steiger, "The *communicatio idiomatum* as the Axle and Motor of Luther's Theology" (*Lutheran Quarterly* 14, 2000), 125-158.
30 Stang, *Apophasis and Pseudonymity*, 101, cf. 92-102.
31 Wear and Dillon, *Dionysius the Areopagite and the Neoplatonist Tradition*, 5.

are not. Proclus, for example, assumes a chain of being, with a multitude of gods,[32] and the ultimate goal of theurgy, as understood by Iamblichus, is to be freed from the human bond.[33] Pseudo-Dionysius, however, is not uncritically assuming this. He is correctively consummating it in Christ. He does invoke a conception of hierarchy but this is rooted in Scripture and it distinguishes sharply between God, who is 'beyond being' (or even 'non-being'), and the created beings in the hierarchy, with angels, humans, and other creatures.[34] And in describing theurgy, he roots it specifically in Christ, thus removing the spiritualist and elitist connotations of Iamblichean (and Chalcedonian) theurgy.[35] I argue, therefore, that Pseudo-Dionysius's Christology was orthodox and Chalcedonian.

My intention in this chapter, however, is not just to demonstrate that orthodox Christology is compatible with a Christian conception of theurgy but that it is its foundation. A Christian theurgic approach to theology is, and must be, Christologically grounded. Alongside the doctrine of the Trinity, the doctrine of the Incarnation is that which above all makes a theology *Christian*.[36] The principal focus should be on Christ, as the Head, while the Church, as His body, is enabled to offer through Him. Discussing the Christological and Trinitarian core of liturgy, as participation in a divine act, I will argue that Christ is the true theurgist, the 'master theurgist,' and that His work is the transformative foundation of our acts, but that this does not entail that these acts are any less real.[37] If the doctrine of the Incarnation, and the Trinity, makes

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32 See Radek Chlup, *Proclus: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 112-136, esp. the illustrations on pp. 121 and 123.

33 *DM* VI, 6.

34 Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Celestial (or heavenly) Hierarchy* (*De coelesti hierarchia*, hereafter: *CH*), esp. I-III, cf. Fran O'Rourke, *Pseudo-Dionysius and the metaphysics of Aquinas*, new ed. (Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), 65-84, esp. 76-84.

35 *DM* V, 18; VI, 6; Ruth Majercik, *The Chaldean Oracles: Text, Translation, and Commentary* (Leiden: Brill, 1989, hereafter: *TCO*), frag. 153-154, 194, cf. pp.20, 198, 212. For notes on the *Chaldean Oracles*, see abbreviations, p.5, n5.

36 Knut Alfsvåg, "The centrality of Christology: On the relation between Nicholas Cusanus and Martin Luther" (*Studia Theologica – Nordic Journal of Theology* 70:1, 2016), 22-38; Knut Alfsvåg, "Unknowability and Incarnation: Creation and Christology as Philosophy of Science in the Work of Nicholas Cusanus" (*International Journal of Systematic Theology* 21:2, 2019), 141-156.

37 Davison, *Participation in God*, 65-83.

the radical difference for Christian theology, then, accordingly, it should also be the deciding difference in Christian accounts of theurgy. I will argue this in three ways.

First, I will present a conception of the metaphysics of Christology and the hypostatic union, starting with a critique of Shaw's comparison of the Incarnation and the Iamblichean notion of theurgic union with the divine.[38] I will argue that this notion makes the Incarnation into an extrinsic and voluntarist partnership with God, while Aquinas's doctrine of one *esse* and one *suppositum* in Christ gives us a coherent notion of theurgy, where we have real union with God, something which reveals central differences between the Christian and Pagan views.[39] This shows us how in Christ we find the divine consummation of human activity, real union between God and the world, "without confusion, change, division, or separation."[40] In Him, we do not merely have an extrinsic and imposed voluntarist union, a 'contract' between God and humankind, but a real *metaphysical* union-in-distinction.[41]

Secondly, I will argue that this finds its most central expression in Christ's high priestly *acts*. As the high priest, the master theurgist, Christ gave Himself for us so that He could bring the fallen world "into harmony with the divine order."[42] This finds its centre in the Paschal mystery, the "once for all" sacrifice (Hebrews 7:27), which consummates all aspects of Christ's ministry, particularly his baptism and the Eucharist, and which provides the inner core and logic of the Church's sacramental life.

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38 Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul*, xxiii-xxxiv; 53-57.

39 Gorman, *Aquinas on the Metaphysics of the Hypostatic Union*, 35-52, 73-157. As noted in the introduction and in chapter one, pp.20-21, 32-34, I am here moving beyond Aquinas. I am not arguing that he defines his approach in theurgic terms, or that he was not critical of the term (cf. *ST* II-II, q.96, a.1), but that if we understand theurgy as a participation in the divine act, rather than a coercive 'manipulation' of God, it is compatible with Aquinas's understanding of our metaphysical participation in God and its manifestation in worship and human work. See Thomas Aquinas, *Disputed Questions on the Power of God* (*Quaestiones Disputatae de potentia Dei*, hereafter: *De pot.*), q.3, a.7; *ST* III, qq.60-90, cf. Addey, *Divination and Theurgy*, 32-38, 171-213; Stang, *Apophasis and Pseudonymity*, 81-152 (esp. 106-110); Struck, "Pagan and Christian Theurgies," esp. 31-33, 37-38.

40 *The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon*, II, 204.

41 Paul M. Blowers, *Maximus the Confessor: Jesus Christ and the Transfiguration of the World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 144, 154; Marie-Odile Boulnois, *The Theology of St. Cyril of Alexandria: A Critical Appreciation* (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 84-111.

42 Struck, "Pagan and Christian Theurgies," 30, cf. 30-33.

Thirdly, I will argue that a proper theurgic and incarnatory approach shows us how we may participate in the divine in and through Christ. I will argue that this was necessary in order for us to be able to participate in God through Christ so that we could not just be saved from sin but saved to a new life where we can offer true worship to God, a true act of theurgy, rooted in the ultimate act of theurgy, the divine-human worship offered by Christ, in which we are invited to participate,[43] though how this participation comes to be expressed will always remain non-identical, as God, who is immeasurable, cannot be exhausted. Continuing the argument made in the previous chapter, that we participate in the divine order (cf. 1 Corinthians 14:26-40),[44] and engaging Knut Alfsvåg's use of Luther and Pseudo-Dionysius,[45] I will develop it further in a specifically Christological direction, arguing that we find union with God particularly by being incorporated into Christ, who is the common focus of the divine-human union, through the Holy Spirit. As the exemplar of the *telos* of human life, ordered to God, Christ allows us to participate in Him and through this find union with God.

All of this helps us better ground our liturgical participation in the divine act and to make sense of how we can become united with God, and how this allows our acts to have their own integrity, as it does not involve a competition between God and creation. Because Christ is the God-man, we find in Him the resolution of the tension between reception of the divine gift and the return of the gift by humans, on behalf of creation as a whole. We may offer ourselves and be deified or sanctified only because we participate in or imitate Him.

Others have also argued for a similar approach to the hypostatic union, focusing on Aquinas's

43 Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* (*De Ecclesiastica Hierarchia*, hereafter: *EH*) III:3, 15 (445BC).

44 See chapter three, pp.106-118.

45 Knut Alfsvåg, "Luther as a reader of Dionysius the Areopagite" (*Studia Theologica – Nordic Journal of Theology* 65:2, 2011), 101-114, esp. 104-105.

approach,[46] the centrality of Christ, and the Paschal mystery,[47] and our union with God, often called deification or theosis.[48] In this chapter, however, I take this a step further, arguing that these elements ought to be explicated theurgically, not by 'replacing' Christianity with Neoplatonic philosophy, but by consummating the latter in Christ. This consummation, however, utterly radicalises what we mean by participation or what we mean when we say that theurgy, as a divine act re-enacted by humans, and particularly by Christ, reconciles the world, in all its concrete materiality, to God.

2 Christology, theurgy, and metaphysics

Commenting on the differences and similarities between Pagan and Christian conceptions of theurgy, Gregory Shaw notes that for Iamblichus, the theurgist "was simultaneously man and god" by virtue of his union with the divine powers and that he "became an icon and *sunthema* in precisely the same way as the other pure receptacles described by Iamblichus," and that through the "appropriate rites the theurgist … became a *theios aner*, universal and divine yet particular and mortal."[49] In the preface to the second edition of the same book, Shaw maintains that this is comparable to the Christian notion of the Incarnation:

> The theurgist remains human yet takes the shape of the gods. The language of Chalcedon is remarkably similar. Christ is described as possessing two natures, divine and human, that remain unmixed

46 Gorman, *Aquinas on the Metaphysics of the Hypostatic Union*, esp. 53-125; Thomas Joseph White, *The Incarnate Lord: A Thomistic Study in Christology* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2015), 73-125; Williams, *Christ the Heart of Creation*, esp. xi-xvi, 1-40.

47 Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale: The Mystery of Easter*, trans. and intro. Aidan Nichols (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1990); Sergiĭ Bulgakov, *The Lamb of God*, trans. Boris Jakim (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), esp. 321-441; James W. Farwell, *This Is the Night: Suffering, Salvation, and the Liturgies of Holy Week* (London: T&T Clark International, 2005); White, *The Incarnate Lord*, 277-464, esp. 340-379.

48 Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson, eds. *Union with Christ: The New Finnish Interpretation of Luther* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998); Michael J. Christensen and Jeffery A. Wittung, eds., *Partakers of the Divine Nature: The History and Development of Deification in the Christian Traditions* (Madison/Teaneck, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2007); Kurt Marquart, "Luther and Theosis" (*Concordia Theological Quarterly* 64:3, 2000), 182-205; Norman Russell, *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); A. N. Williams, *The Ground of Union: Deification in Aquinas and Palamas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

49 Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul*, 57, cf. 53-57.

> despite their "union" in the person of Christ. The theurgist also possesses two natures, divine and human, that remain distinct while being embodied by the theurgist.[50]

This, however, is not what Christian theology understands by the Incarnation and it reveals some central differences between Christian and Pagan conceptions. According to the Chalcedonian definition, Christ is "acknowledged in two natures without confusion, change, division, or separation."[51] This formula insists that there is a communication between divinity and humanity in Christ, yet they are not confused. In Shaw's understanding, this remains extrinsic to (and imposed on) humanity, and thus he presupposes some kind of Nestorian or Adoptionist-Apollinarian Christology. As I will show, Shaw ends up either with Christ being a person, however important, who has a 'close connection' to God, or with a kind of 'replacement theology,' where a human person and human *esse* gets 'replaced,' i.e. destroyed, upon being 'adopted.'

In the first instance, which is essentially Nestorian,[52] Christ's 'close connection' to God remains extrinsic and thus any of His acts, and the acts we perform through Him (1 Peter 2:5), are pure mimicry.[53] We could not on this account say that "the Word became flesh and lived among us" (John 1:14), precisely because it would not entail the assumption of flesh at all but a kind of partnership. In the second instance, if we opt for a 'replacement theology,' this would amount to the destruction of a human being in order for the *Logos* to then assume its nature (which would essentially be a revised Adoptionist-Apollinarian hybrid).[54] This would disrupt one of the main

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50 Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul*, xxxii, cf. xxiii-xxxiv. It seems that Shaw compares the Iamblichean use of *sunthēma* with the Pauline use of Christ as the 'icon' (Gk. *eikṓn*) of God, where we are said to be transformed in His image. See 2 Corinthians 4:4; Colossians 1:15, cf. Romans 8:29; 2 Corinthians 3:18.

51 *The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon*, II, 204, cf. 183-205.

52 See Aloys Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition: From the Apostolic Age to Chalcedon (451)*, vol. I, trans. J. S. Bowden (London: A. R. Mowbray & Co., 1965), 369-417.

53 On both a Pagan Neoplatonic and a Christian account, when we act, we do so because we participate in divine agency (Acts 17:28), but these acts are imitative. Otherwise, we would just *be* 'gods.' See George F. McLean, *Plenitude and Participation: The Life of God in Man* (Washington, D.C.: Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2004), 49.

54 See Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition* I, 6-7, 23, 64-65, 79, 92-93, 121, 123, 220-233. For a contemporary defence of neo-Apollinarian Christology, see J.P. Moreland and William Lane Craig, *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic/InterVarsity Press, 2003), 597-614 (esp. 598-602, 608-610).

theses of Christian theology, that grace does not destroy nature but perfects it. Furthermore, if we follow Aquinas (and Boethius) in defining a person as 'an individual substance of a rational nature,'[55] this would not only entail the destruction of the individual but its nature as well, thus implying a kind of Docetism, where the *Logos* only appears to be human.[56] Shaw's claim, that the divine-human relation of the Pagan theurgist is comparable to the hypostatic union is only true, then, if we understand this union in an extrinsic, imposed, and traditionally heretical manner. This would entail the rejection of crucial metaphysical assumptions and it would not entail that "the Word became flesh," precisely because the assumed flesh would either be utterly extrinsic or be destroyed upon assumption. In Christ, however, we do not see a human person with a 'special connection' to the divine or the 'replacement' of the human person with the *Logos*. In the following I will present my understanding of the hypostatic union, arguing that Aquinas's doctrine of one *esse* and one *suppositum* in Christ gives us a coherent conception of Christology which is compatible with a theurgic conception of theology, while also being radically different from aspects of the Pagan traditions.

As noted, on the standard orthodox position, Christ is one (divine) person, with two natures, divine and human.[57] Now, when speaking of individual substances, particularly ones that are personal, Aquinas prefers to use the term *suppositum*. This denotes that the substance in question is a primary substance, something which subsists and which can act as the subject or the 'organising principle' of a thing. And discussing the Incarnation, he argues that there is but one *suppositum* in Christ and, consequently, only one *esse* (where *esse* is understood as unqualified or substantial existence). If it had two, we would have two persons.[58] The *Logos* is that which

55 *ST* I, q.34, a.3, ad 1; q.40, a.3, cf. Gorman, *Aquinas on the Metaphysics of the Hypostatic Union*, 36, n6, 73-100, esp. 93-99.

56 Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition* I, 34, 76-78, 82, 92-94.

57 Gorman, *Aquinas on the Metaphysics of the Hypostatic Union*, 14-52; Pawl, *The Incarnation*, 3-27.

58 Gorman, *Aquinas on the Metaphysics of the Hypostatic Union*, 73-100. On *esse* and *actus essendi*, see chapter one, pp.35-40, cf. *De pot.*, q.7, a.2, ad 9; *ST* I, q.45, a.5, corp.; Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles* (hereafter: *SCG*) I, c.22:9; III, c.66:4.

holds all things together as its Creator and sustainer (John 1:1-18; Colossians 1:15-20), while simultaneously offering internal coherence to Christ's humanity, as its subject. The union of the Incarnate Word takes place in the person and this divine person communicates Himself to us through His humanity, the latter being a conjoined instrument of the divine nature.[59] Christ, as a divine person in human flesh, embodies the divine in a finite creation, thus opening up for us to participate in this. And this is, arguably, the metaphysical centrepiece of Aquinas's Christology.[60] The point of the Incarnation is deification or theosis, the divine consummation of human activity (2 Corinthians 8:9; 2 Peter 1:4). But where Pagan notions of incarnation are understood in extrinsic terms, denoting a mere extrinsic union of partnership,[61] the Christian understanding utterly radicalises the concept of the divine-human union. "For in him," writes St. Paul, "the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have come to fullness in him, who is the head of every ruler and authority" (Colossians 2:9-10). In Christ, divinity and humanity are fully united in one single person or *suppositum*, while remaining distinct.[62] While an Iamblichean conception of Incarnation, as presented by Shaw, introduces a competitive (and metaphysically destructive) conception of the divine-human union, a Christian conception rejects any notion of 'competition' between God and humanity in Christ (as elsewhere in creation). Divinity and humanity are not competing causes but different dimensions of causality, the latter participating, as a second cause, in God, as the first cause which 'influences' created substances, through the 'influx of being.'[63] On this conception, the relationship between divinity and humanity in

59 *ST* III, q.8, a.1, ad 1; q.19, a.1; q.43, a.2; q.48, a.6; q.56, a.1, ad 3; q.62, a.5. For a further discussion of how Christ is mediated to us, see chapter five, pp.176-188.

60 Williams, *Christ the Heart of Creation*, 1-40 (esp. 31-40); Gorman, *Aquinas on the Metaphysics of the Hypostatic Union*, 16-19, 73-125; *ST* III, q.2, aa.2-3; q.17. For a critique of Aquinas's approach, which argues that it has monophysitist tendencies, see Richard Cross, *The Metaphysics of the Incarnation: Thomas Aquinas to Duns Scotus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), esp. 250-253, 311-324 (cf. 128-133).

61 Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul*, xxiii-xxxiv; 53-57.

62 *The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon*, II, 203-205.

63 Thomas Aquinas, *On Separate Substances* (*De substantiis separatis*, hereafter: *De subst. sep.*), c.9, 46 (cf. c.9-10). Also see Simon Oliver, *Creation: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2017), 143-157; Rudi A. te Velde, "Participation: Aquinas and His Neoplatonic Sources," in *Christian Platonism: A History*, eds., Alexander J. B. Hampton and John Peter Kenney (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 137; Williams, *Christ the Heart of Creation*, xii-xiii, 11-12, 32, 36-37, 40, 64, 82, 119-122, 155,

Christ is not understood univocally. The natures are not natures in the exact same way, but only analogously, as God is metaphysically simple.[64]

But what is significant with God becoming human? Some might say that God could perhaps have chosen other ways to achieve this, as did the nominalists and their successors,[65] but He chose Incarnation and Passion. Aquinas, however, notes that the Incarnation was both *fitting* (Lt. *conveniens*), as an expression of God, because it "belongs to the essence of the highest good to communicate itself in the highest manner to the creature," which is chiefly brought about by the hypostatic union,[66] and *necessary* (Lt. *necessarium*), not in an absolutist manner, but with regards to the end, our salvation.[67] And the reason the Incarnation as such was necessary is that salvation is not just a restoration to a prelapsarian state but a real union with God which moves beyond that. Scripture teaches that we are made "partners of Christ" (Hebrews 3:14) and "participants in the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4). Without the Incarnation, any union with God will remain extrinsic, voluntary, and contractual, rather than metaphysical. We find this tendency in Iamblichus, who holds that the theurgist loses, in a sense, if only temporarily, his humanity, in the theurgic act. Panagiotis G. Pavlos notes that the Pagan theurgist "receives a power belonging to gods, which renders him nothing other than a divine agent," while "such a person remains a man, a human being, after the *temporary* theurgic deifying process is completed."[68] To point

235, 248.

64 Gorman, *Aquinas on the Metaphysics of the Hypostatic Union*, 53-72; *ST* I, qq.3-5; Rudi A. te Velde, *Aquinas on God: The 'Divine Science' of the Summa Theologiae* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 77-90.

65 Late medieval nominalism saw the Incarnation solely in extrinsicist terms, holding that God could have saved us with the flick of a finger or, even, as William of Ockham states, by becoming incarnate as a donkey or an ox. See Richard Cross, "Nominalism and the Christology of William of Ockham" (*Recherches De Théologie Ancienne Et Médiévale* 58, 1991), 126-156; Stanley J. Grenz, *The Named God and the Question of Being: A Trinitarian Theo-Ontology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 2005), 58-59; Eugene K. McGee, "Cranmer and Nominalism" (*The Harvard Theological Review* 57:3, 1964), 189-216; Roland Millare, "The Nominalist Justification for Luther's Sacramental Theology" (*Antiphon: A Journal for Liturgical Renewal* 17:2, 2013), 168-190. If the Incarnation is extrinsic, Christ as a human (where 'human' is either a mere concept or just a convenient label), becomes someone we can imitate (or in all practicality only someone to look up to), not someone we can truly participate in.

66 *ST* III, q.1, a.1, corp., cf. Adrian J. Walker, "'Rejoice always': How Everyday Joy Responds to the Problem of Evil" (*Communio* 31:2, 2004), 219, n25.

67 *ST* III, q.1, a.2, corp., cf. John Milbank and Catherine Pickstock, *Truth in Aquinas*, ebook version (London: Routledge, 2005), 52.

68 Panagiotis G. Pavlos, "Theurgy in Dionysius the Areopagite," in *Platonism and Christian Thought in Late*

back to Shaw's comparison of Pagan and Christian notions of the Incarnation, this would imply, if temporarily, the 'destruction' or the 'suspension' of the human person.[69] In Christ, however, as emphasised by Pseudo-Dionysius, we do not see "a temporary theurgic effect taking place on the theurgist" but "the permanent novel theandric activity of God having become man."[70] What is central to note here is that Christian theology holds that we do not just have an extrinsic 'partnership' with God but a real and intrinsic divine-human union. The Incarnation, understood in a Christian manner, is precisely what makes that possible. While it may not be 'necessary' in an absolutist way,[71] it is still necessary as an expression of God's will to save (1 Timothy 2:4). God, the *Logos*, saves us by becoming a human being (without losing His divinity in any way), and thus opening up to real union and not just a retreat to a prelapsarian state. As it says in the collect for the First Sunday of Christmas in *Common Worship*:

> Almighty God, who wonderfully created us in your own image and yet *more wonderfully* restored us through your Son Jesus Christ: grant that, as he came to share in our humanity, so we may share the life of his divinity; who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.[72]

The Incarnation does not just mean that Christ has a particularly acute way of being one with God. No, in Him, divinity and humanity are fully united, *metaphysically*, not just voluntarily, in one single *suppositum*, while remaining distinct. In Christ, we find the *telos* of creation, as participation in, and union with, God and we can only achieve this through Him.[73] As I have noted, the goal of theurgy is to reconcile the world to God and make humans capable of

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Antiquity, eds., Panagiotis G. Pavlos et al. (London: Routledge, 2019), 157, cf. *DM* VI, 6.

69 Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul*, xxiii-xxxiv, 53-57.

70 Pavlos, "Theurgy in Dionysius the Areopagite," 157, cf. *Ep.* IV (1072C).

71 *ST* III, q.46, esp. a.1.

72 *Common Worship: Services and Prayers for the Church of England* (London: Church House, 2000, hereafter: *CW*), 381, emphasis added.

73 As Hans Urs von Balthasar notes, Christ is the 'concrete *analogia entis*,' because in Him the ultimate union of divinity and humanity is found, without invoking any competition between the two. See Peter Casarella, "Hans Urs von Balthasar, Erich Przywara's *Analogia Entis*, an the Problem of a Catholic *Denkform*," in *The Analogy of Being: Invention of the Antichrist or the Wisdom of God?*, ed., Thomas Joseph White (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011), 199-205.

worship and service through participation in Him.[74] The Incarnation utterly radicalises what we mean by this participation. We see the divine consummation of human activity in one single person, enabling a real union between divinity and humanity, not merely an extrinsic, mimetic, and imposed one. And now, having discussed the metaphysics of the Incarnation, and how that makes possible "a certain new God-incarnate energy (Gk. *theandrikḗn enérgeian*) of God having become man,"[75] I turn to the actual activity in question, focusing principally on Christ's sacrifice, the Paschal mystery, as this "once for all" sacrifice (Hebrews 7:27) consummates all aspects of Christ's ministry, particularly his baptism and the Eucharist, and because the Church's sacramental life is principally a participation in this.

3 Theurgy, act, and reconciliation

According to Matthew 3:13-17, Christ was baptised by a reluctant John the Baptist "to fulfil all righteousness" (3:15). This fulfilment is connected specifically to death. In Romans 6, St. Paul notes that those who "have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death" and that they "have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so [they] too might walk in newness of life" (vv.3-4). By allowing Himself to be baptised with a baptism of a sinner, Christ obediently took upon Himself the mission that would lead to the Cross (Philippians 2:7b-8), and thus he 'fulfilled all righteousness.' It is significant, I think, that after the baptism, St. John the Baptist declares, when seeing Christ: "Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29) And through our Baptism, we participate in His death (Romans 6). Likewise, when Christ instituted the Eucharist, this was a ritual enactment of his impending Passion, being

[74] See introduction, p.18, cf. the Second Vatican Council's constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (hereafter: *SC*), 7; Struck, "Pagan and Christian Theurgies," 30. On Vatican II documents, see abbreviations, p.5, n4.

[75] *Ep.* IV (1072C).

consummated by it. This started in the Upper Room, both through Christ's high priestly prayer (John 17) and the institution of the Eucharist.[76] When Christ instituted the Eucharist, he said "this is my body, which is given for you" (Luke 22:19) and "this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins" (Matthew 26:28). The institution of the Eucharist is oriented towards, and participates in, the Cross. And when we celebrate the Eucharist, we participate in Christ's institution, in His 'once for all' sacrifice, and in His eternal celebration.[77] At the centre of these acts we find the Cross, the 'once for all' sacrifice in which all other (theurgic) sacrifices participate. As St. Paul writes: "When I came to you, brothers and sisters, I did not come proclaiming the mystery of God to you in lofty words or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:1-2). This key act, whereby Christ laid down his life freely as an act of self-sacrifice on our behalf, is a ritual, priestly, and sacrificial act, "a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God" (Ephesians 5:2).[78] Christ taught the people like a rabbi and healed them like a physician but His salvific and redeeming act is first and foremost the act of a priest. Christ's transforms His death into an offering and allows us to partake of it, through the Eucharist. The ultimate offering, the Paschal mystery, which is the "once for all" sacrifice (Hebrews 7:27), consummates and grounds all aspects of Christ's ministry, particularly his baptism and the Eucharist.

This is also significant for my argument because within a Christian theurgic tradition, theurgy principally denotes the acts of God in history, and particularly the acts of Christ. Pseudo-Dionysius talks of 'the human theurgies of Jesus' (Gk. *tás ándrikás Iēsoú theourgías*), quite literally the human-divine works of Jesus,[79] through which he 'sacramentalises,' 'ritualises,' or

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76 Joseph Ratzinger, *God Is Near Us: The Eucharist, the Heart of Life* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius, 2003), 27-41; Joseph Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth* (3 vols. San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2007, 2011, 2012) II, 76-144.

77 Kjetil Kringlebotten, ""Do this in remembrance of me…" A Lutheran defence of the sacrifice of the mass" (*Studia Theologica – Nordic Journal of Theology* 71:2, 2017), 127-147 (esp. 130-136).

78 Cf. John 10:18, 19:11.30.

79 *EH* III:3, 4 (429c), trans. in Struck, "Pagan and Christian Theurgies," 31. Also see *CH* IV, 4 (181B).

'theurgises' the life and works of God incarnate. As Peter Struck notes, for Pseudo-Dionysius, through this ritualisation, Christ "appears as master theurgist."[80] The Incarnation itself is the ultimate act of theurgy, by which the fallen world, with humanity at its centre, is reconciled with God through Christ, the high priest (2 Corinthians 5:17-21; Hebrews 7). Discussing the nature of Christ's priesthood, Aquinas notes that it was fitting for Christ to be a priest because the ultimate act of a priest is to act as a mediator between God and humanity, reconciling the two and bestowing sacred things upon the latter (hence the Latin term *sacerdos* for priest):

> He reconciled the human race to God, according to Col. 1:19, 20: *In Him* (i.e., Christ) *it hath well pleased (the Father) that all fullness should dwell, and through Him to reconcile all things unto Himself.* Therefore it is most fitting that Christ should be a priest.[81]

Aquinas understands this in terms of an Anselmian view of satisfaction, rejecting any notion that this entails God 'punishing' Christ as if He was guilty, as we see in the predominately Calvinist doctrine of 'penal substitutionary atonement' (PSA).[82] Defining sacrifice, Aquinas notes that "whatever is offered to God in order to raise man's spirit to Him, may be called a sacrifice."[83] Aquinas adds that sacrifices are offered to atone for sins, preserve humans in a state of grace,

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80 Struck, "Pagan and Christian Theurgies," 33, cf. cf. 31-38. Such ritualisation permeates Scripture. The creation accounts are saturated by ritual imagery, God decrees the ritual celebration of His works, and key events are marked specifically in a liturgical or ritual manner. See Genesis 1; Exodus 12; Exodus 24; Leveticus 1-9, 16; Numbers 28; 1 Chronicles 23:31; Isaiah 66:23; Matthew 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 1-2; Luke 3:21-22; 1 Corinthians 10-11. Also see Oliver, *Creation*, 14-21; Brant Pitre, *Jesus and the Last Supper* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015), 53-147, esp. 90-95, 108-114.

81 *ST* III, q.22, a.1, corp., cf. aa.1-6.

82 Gerald O'Collins and Michael Jones, "Aquinas on Christ's Priesthood," in O'Collins and Jones, *Jesus Our Priest: A Christian Approach to the Priesthood of Christ* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 105-127 (esp. 110-121), cf. Gerald Bray, ed., *1–2 Corinthians* (Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, New York, NY: Routledge, 2012), 247-253 (esp. 251-253). In PSA, an Anselmian notion of atonement is re-interpreted as Christ 'taking our place' and as a 'transfer of penalty.' For a sympathetic take on this doctrine, see Jason B. Hood, "The Cross in the New Testament: Two Theses in Conversation with Recent Literature (2000–2007)" (*Westminster Theological Journal* 71, 2009), 281-295. For additional critiques, see J. Patout Burns, "The Concept of Satisfaction in Medieval Redemption Theory" (*Theological Studies* 36:2, 1975), 286-289; Paul Fiddes, *Past Event and Present Salvation: The Christian Idea of Atonement* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1989), 83-111; John D. Hannah, "Anselm on the Doctrine of Atonement" (*Bibliotheca Sacra* 135, 1978), 333-344; Kringlebotten, "Do this…," 132-136; Paul J. LaChance, "Understanding Christ's Satisfaction Today" (*The Saint Anselm Journal* 2:1, 2004), 60-66; Andrew Sutherland, "From Satisfaction to Penal Substitution: Debt as a Determinative Concept for Atonement Theology in Anselm and Charles Hodge" (*The Saint Anselm Journal* 13:1, 2017), 98-108.

83 *ST* III, q.22, a.2, corp.

and unite the human spirit perfectly to God. Following (and modifying) Anselm, he argues that in Christ, God embraces the world, and particularly humanity, in order to reconcile it with Himself and achieve real metaphysical unity.[84] St. Paul notes that God sent "his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and to deal with sin, he condemned sin in the flesh" (Romans 8:3).[85] Christ needed to be fully human to reconcile humanity to God (in the metaphysical sense argued above), which included experiencing death, which is the conclusion of life.[86] As St. Gregory of Nazianzus phrased it: "What has not been assumed has not been healed."[87] This notion of sacrifice can be understood in theurgic terms, as the goal of theurgy is to raise man to union with the divine. As Iamblichus maintains, "the final purpose of sacrifice" is "that it brings us into contact with the demiurge, since it renders us akin to the gods through acts."[88] But while I have argued that there are central similarities between Pagan and Christian conceptions of theurgy, particularly the divine descent, this focus on reconciliation also reveals some crucial cosmological and anthropological differences (in addition to the metaphysical ones, rooted in the hypostatic union). While both traditions hold that the effect of the theurgy, the divine work, is to reconcile the world, in all its materiality, to the divine order,[89] they understand this in radically different ways, though these differences are intertwined with similarities.

Commenting on Iamblichus's cosmology, Shaw distinguishes his view, which he calls 'locative,' with what he calls a 'utopian' view. The former sees the created cosmos as the icon or revelation of the higher divine order, a properly formed human society as a microcosm of this cosmos, and the work of priests and kings to attune us to this divine world, while the latter disregards the world, reversing 'Platonic taxonomy' and denying, as a consequence, "the value

84 *ST* III, q.22, a.3, cf. O'Collins and Jones, "Aquinas on Christ's Priesthood," 112-113, 118-119.

85 As noted by Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology* (3 vols. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991, 1994, 1998) II, 421-429 (cf. 397-437), God was not in need of reconciliation but the world was. See Catherine Pickstock, *Repetition and Identity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 171-192.

86 von Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale*, 13-14.

87 Brian E. Daley, *Gregory of Nazianzus* (London: Routledge, 2006), 14.

88 *DM* V, 26.

89 Romans 5:12-21; 1 Corinthians 15; 2 Corinthians 5:11-21; Struck, "Pagan and Christian Theurgies," 30.

of religious rituals tied to the rhythms of the sensible world."[90] On the locative view, contact with the divine, and recollection, is always given through physical creation and through the body.[91] The Iamblichean Neoplatonists saw theurgy first and foremost as a ritual and embodied enactment or participation in a work that was already divine (which was also adopted by Christians, though in a transformed manner), and not as a 'manipulation' of divine forces.[92] As Peter Struck puts it, theurgy is "a divine act, a *θεῖον ἔργον*, insofar as it is action, established by gods, put into use by humans."[93] For Iamblichus, however, this is understood within a specific cosmology. For him, the cosmos stands above humanity and it is not fallen, even if humans are. Shaw writes:

> Milbank and Riches also point to a difference, the *key* difference, between the theurgy of Iamblichus and Christian theurgy. It is this: in Neoplatonic theurgy the material cosmos is an *agalma*, a shrine of the Demiurge (*Timaeus* 37c); the cosmos itself reveals the presence of gods. That is, the natural world for Iamblichean Platonists is a theophany. Far from being "fallen," nature itself is the face and living symbol of the divine: nature is the *incarnation* of divine realities *ab ovo*. From this perspective, the Incarnational theology of the Church enters this theophanic current *downstream*

90 Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul*, 13, cf. 10-14. In the book, Shaw attributes the former to Iamblichus and the latter to Plotinus, though he later admits that while Plotinus looks unfavourably on the nature of materiality (and holds that the highest part of the soul remains undescended), he is not 'utopian.' See Gregory Shaw, "Eros and Arithmos: Pythagorean Theurgy in Iamblichus and Plotinus" (*Ancient Philosophy* 19, 1999), 121-143 (esp. 124-134), cf. R. M. van den Berg, "Plotinus' Attitude to Traditional Cult: A Note on Porphyry VP c. 10" (*Ancient Philosophy* 19, 1999), 352-359. I would note, though, that there is a difference. Whereas Iamblichus sees human society as a microcosm of the cosmic order which reveals the gods, aiming to become one with the gods through theurgic ritual, which does include spiritual ascent (*DM* VI, 6), Plotinus holds that prior to any such ritual, we (or the highest, undescended, part of our souls) "are not just a microcosmos of that divine society, we are a part of it" (van den Berg, "Plotinus' Attitude to Traditional Cult," 353).

91 It should be noted, though, that while the Iamblichean tradition rejects any notion of matter as evil and holds that it is crucial for union with the divine, Iamblichus still regards the body as less noble than the soul (and sees the latter as in some sense divine). The goal, for those who are able, is to transcend matter, though not because it is evil. See Addey, *Divination and Theurgy*, 79-80, 98-102, 252-255; Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul*, 26, 34-35, 104, 108-109, 126, 154, 173-182, 232-233, 267. Crystal Addey notes the Plotinian doctrine, however, is not 'anti-ritualistic.' While Plotinus holds that the soul is not fully descended, he still values ritual as an inner concept. Arguments to the contrary, she argues, are based on a modern dichotomy between thought and action (Addey, *Divination and Theurgy*, 173-180, 199-211).

92 Stang, "Dionysius, Paul and the Significance of the Pseudonym," 544, cf. Majercik, *The Chaldean Oracles*, 199-200.

93 Struck, "Pagan and Christian Theurgies," 30, cf. Addey, *Divination and Theurgy*, 79-80, 98-102, 171-290; Alan Philip Darley, "Ritual as erotic anagogy in Pseudo-Dionysius: a Reformed critique" (*International Journal of Philosophy and Theology* 79:3, 2018), 261-278; Andrew Louth, "Pagan Theurgy and Christian Sacramentalism" (*The Journal of Theological Studies*, new series, 27:2, 1986), 432-438; Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul*, 23-40, 121-133, 147-211, 259-272; Stang, *Apophasis and Pseudonymity*; Algis Uždavinys, *Philosophy and Theurgy in Late Antiquity* (Kettering: Angelico Press/Sophia Perennis, 2014), 204-228.

> and embraces theurgic realities that had already been spelled out by Platonists and in a manner significantly different from Christian theology.[94]

For Iamblichus, the ultimate goal of theurgy is full intellectual union with the divine and the ascent of the soul which is, now, fully descended (contra Plotinus). But the cosmos itself remains the unfallen centre of creation. For him, then, the cosmos takes the place of Christ, as the revelation of divine presence and "the *incarnation* of divine realities."[95]

In Christian theology, however, the cosmos as a whole is fallen and God descended to redeem the entirety of creation (Romans 5:12-14; 8; 2 Corinthians 5:19). This follows from Christianity's emphasis on humanity as the centre of creation. This does not mean that humanity is the most important or highest part of creation, but that humanity, as its microcosm, uniquely incorporates all its aspects, visible and invisible. Humanity is, in the words of the Psalmist, made "little lower than God" (Psalm 8:5). Or, in the words of St. John of Kronstadt, humanity is "the crown of creation."[96] As I will discuss more in the next chapter, we do not reject that the world or the cosmos is, in some sense, theophanic, that creation bears witness to its Creator (Job 12:7-8; Psalm 19:1; Romans 1:20). But this is rooted in humanity as the microcosmic centre of creation, whose priestly task it is to offer the world back to God.[97] When the first Adam fell and failed his priestly task, the world fell with him and reconciliation is only possible through Christ, 'the last Adam' (1 Corinthians 15:45), who has reunited the cosmos with God through the hypostatic union, as the true high priest.[98] For Christians, then, the divine order into which

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94 Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul*, xxiv, cf. xxiv-xxv. Also see John Milbank and Aaron Riches, "Neoplatonic Theurgy and Christian Incarnation" (foreword to Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul*, v-xvii).

95 Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul*, xxiv, cf. 67-77; Gregory Shaw, "Neoplatonic Theurgy and Dionysius the Areopagite" (*Journal of Early Christian Studies* 7:4, 1999), 582-583, 595.

96 St. John of Kronstadt, *My life in Christ*, trans. E. E. Goulaeff (London: Cassell and Company, Limited, 1897), 230.

97 See Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Cosmic Liturgy: The Universe According to Maximus the Confessor*, trans. Brian E. Daley (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2003), 173-177, 207-275; Catherine Pickstock, "The Ritual Birth of Sense" (*Telos* 162, 2013), 33; Alexander Schmemann, *For the Life of the World: Sacraments and Orthodoxy*, 2nd ed. (Crestwood, NY: SVS Press, 1997), 16-18, 32-36, 91-94.

98 Romans 5:12-21; 1 Corinthians 15:20-23, 42-49; Hebrews 7, cf. Joseph Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, new ed. (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius, 2004), 234-243.

the material world is brought into harmony, is rooted in the *Logos* Incarnate, through whom "all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible" (Colossians 1:16), in whom "all things hold together" (Colossians 1:17), and in whom "the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily" (Colossians 2:9).[99] The zenith of His work of reconciliation was His death on the Cross, the "once for all" sacrifice in which all other (theurgic) sacrifices participate (Hebrews 7:27).[100] The sacrifice on the Cross consummates other aspects of Christ's mission and draws them together, particularly the Baptism and the institution of the Eucharist, as they are all oriented towards the Passion. As Thomas Plant notes, when Pseudo-Dionysius speaks of the completion of the divine theurgy in Christ, this cannot be reduced to something written but is grounded in the actual death on the Cross:

> [T]he word ἐτέλεσε has unmistakable connotations for the Greek-speaking Christian, who cannot help recalling Jesus' last word on the Cross: the τετέλεσται of Jn 19.30, itself an echo of the same word in Jn 19.28, which refers to the fulfilment of the old scriptures. The New Testament is completed on the Cross, not on paper.[101]

In Christ, God becomes the human head of creation by taking "sinful flesh" (Romans 8:3) and healing it, and creation with it. This sacrifice is not just *a* theurgic act. It is *the* theurgic act *par excellence*, reconciling the world to God and making possible the theurgic life of the Church. Christ's sacrifice, then, was necessary for our redemption.[102] Some have argued that while God could have saved us in any way He pleased, He chose Incarnation and Passion. He chose to descend into His own fallen creation, not because He was out for his 'pound of flesh,' but because fallenness and death had entered the world and because Christ redeemed it by assuming it all and transforming it from the inside. While these elements are undoubtedly true, they are phrased in voluntarist language, and do not adequately express the utterly radical nature of the

99 Cf. Colossians 1:15-20; 2:6-19.
100 Cf. 2 Corinthians 5:17-21; Galatians 3:13-14; Colossians 1:21-23.
101 Plant, *Dualism and nondualism*, 104, cf. 101-110, esp. 103-108.
102 *ST* III, q.62, a.5, corp.

Incarnation. The Incarnation is not just a handy choice. Without the real *metaphysical* union-in-distinction of the hypostatic union, we can only have an extrinsic union with God. We cannot really participate in the atonement, even passively, by being "crucified with Christ" (Galatians 2:19), unless this union is real. In Christ, divinity and humanity are fully united in one single *suppositum*, while remaining distinct.[103] We see the divine consummation of human activity in one single person, enabling real divine-human union, finding its apex on the Cross and in the Resurrection, whereby Christ takes all of human experience, up to and including death, and transforms it from the inside.

4 Theurgy, Incarnation, and participation in Christ

In an article on Pseudo-Dionysius, Andrew Louth notes that when the Areopagite uses the adjective *theourgikōs*, "its primary meaning is 'deifying' … or as conveying divine activity (which comes to the same thing for Denys)."[104] This perspective, often called deification or theosis, has been especially emphasised in Eastern theology, but it also finds its rightful place in Western theology.[105] At the centre of this tradition, we find the notion that we are made "participants in the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4). Following the Chalcedonian definition, that Christ should be "acknowledged in two natures without confusion, change, division, or separation,"[106] both Eastern and Western theologians focus on the *communicatio idiomatum*, that there is a communication between divinity and humanity, because of the Hypostatic Union.[107] We may partici-

[103] Colossians 1:19; 2:9-10; John 1:1-18, cf. *The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon*, II, 203-205.

[104] Louth, "Pagan Theurgy and Christian Sacramentalism," 437. Louth, and others, sees a clear difference between Iamblichean and Pseudo-Dionysian theurgy (see introduction p.14, 24). I think that even though the differences really matter, most particularly when it comes to the Incarnation, the differences are exaggerated and they end up obscuring the Neoplatonic influences in Christian theurgy and particularly Pseudo-Dionysius.

[105] Braaten and Jenson, eds. *Union with Christ*; Christensen and Wittung, eds., *Partakers of the Divine Nature*; Marquart, "Luther and Theosis"; Russell, *The Doctrine of Deification*; Williams, *The Ground of Union*.

[106] *The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon*, II, 204.

[107] Philip Kariatlis, "A credible presentation of Redemption today" (lecture delivered at St Andrew's Theological College, Sydney College of Divinity, 2004); Pawl, *The Incarnation*, 24-26; *ST* III, q.16; Steiger, "The *communicatio idiomatum*."

pate in the *Logos* precisely because He became a human being. For St. Paul, this is expressed through the notion of exchange: "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich" (2 Corinthians 8:9). Or, in the words of St. Athanasius, "He, indeed, assumed humanity that we might become God."[108] In Christ, we are made one with God and active participants in His work, which comes to expression most fully in the liturgy.[109] What is significant is that unlike any other, Christ is a true theurgist because in Him, divinity and humanity are forever united, without confusion. And He invites us to be participants in Him, and in His work, as we see in Galatians 2:19-20:

> For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

The goal of theurgy is the divine consummation of human activity. It is, a kind of 'displacement' in Christ, as we are made partakers in Him. Charles M. Stang notes that this displacement is at the heart of theurgy, whether Pagan or Christian: "[F]or both Iamblichus and Dionysius, deification consists in our consenting to have the "work of God" (*ἐργὸν θεοῦ*)—or "theurgy" (*θεουργία*)—displace us, so that we become ciphers or conduits of divine activity."[110] But how do we understand this displacement? As I have argued in the previous chapter,[111] we are ordered to God (1 Corinthians 14:26-40). While St. Paul's argument seems, on a surface level, to be concerned principally with the structure of the worship service, he grounds this order in the very nature of God: "For God is a God not of disorder but of peace" (1 Corinthians 14:33). The centre of this orientation towards God, however, is found in Christ, where we find a real

[108] Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*, new revised edition, trans., a religious of C. S. M. V., intr., C. S. Lewis (Crestwood, N.Y.: SVS Press, 1996), 93.
[109] I have discussed this in the previous chapter and I will explore this more thoroughly in the next.
[110] Stang, *Apophasis and Pseudonymity*, 39.
[111] See chapter three, pp.106-118.

metaphysical union-in-distinction between divinity and humanity.[112] To be orientated fully to God, as understood by St. Paul in 1 Corinthians 14, then, we must participate in Christ, be incorporated into Christ.

Citing Pseudo-Dionysius and Luther, Knut Alfsvåg states: "True human existence is established through participation in Christ as the exemplar of what it is to be human."[113] This is rooted in the Pseudo-Dionysian idea of exemplarism, "according to which the principles of the phenomena pre-exist as entities in God."[114] For Pseudo-Dionysius, an exemplar is not just an extrinsic notion that we imitate, in a mimetic fashion, but something we can participate in (*méthexis*), which then opens up for our imitative participation in act (*mímēsis*). Because of the hypostatic union, Christ, as the exemplar of human life, ordered to God, is the focal point of the divine-human union. This is not merely the union between Creator and creature, which will at some level always remain external. It is not an extrinsic and imposed voluntarist union, a 'contract' between God and humankind, but a real metaphysical union-in-distinction, something, I argue, should be understood in analogical and participatory terms. To use Aquinas's Aristotelian-Neoplatonic language of analogy, in Christ we see the relation of the many towards the one (Gk. *pròs hèn*). Just like different things can be considered healthy by reference to a person who is healthy in himself, different persons can share in the divine, by reference to Christ, who is the common focus of the divine-human union.[115] By being incorporated into

112 Blowers, *Maximus the Confessor*, 144, 154; Boulnois, *The Theology of St. Cyril of Alexandria*, 84-111.

113 Alfsvåg, "Luther as a reader of Dionysius the Areopagite," 104.

114 Alfsvåg, "Luther as a reader of Dionysius the Areopagite," 104, cf. Knut Alfsvåg, *What No Mind Has Conceived: On the Significance of Christological Apophaticism* (Leuven: Peeters, 2010), 136-137; Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Divine Names* (*De Divinis Nominibus*, hereafter: *DN.*) V, 8-9 (821C-825A). We see this also in *ST* I-II, prol., were Aquinas distinguishes between God, as exemplar, and humans, as creatures in God's image. See te Velde, *Aquinas on God*, 16; Rudi A. te Velde, *Participation and Substantiality in Thomas Aquinas* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 108-116. Furthermore, in *ST* II-II, q.45, a6, corp., Aquinas notes that humans "are called the children of God insofar as they participate in the likeness of the only-begotten and natural Son of God, according to Rom. 8:29."

115 *SCG* I, c.34; *ST* I, q.13, prol., cf. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. H. Rackham, in *Loeb Classical Library*, ed. Jeffrey Henderson, vol. 73 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1926), 1096b, 14-29; Alan Philip Darley, "Predication or Participation? What is the Nature of Aquinas' Doctrine of Analogy?" (*The Heythrop Journal* 57, 2016), 315.

Christ and becoming "partners [Gk. *métochoi*] of Christ" (Hebrews 3:14), we relate to God, analogously, and become "participants in the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4), precisely because of the hypostatic union. And in Scripture, such incorporation is understood ontologically, communally and sacramentally. In John 15, Christ distinguishes between Himself as the true vine and us as the branches: "I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing."[116] This is ontological, as Christ is the condition for our actions, at least as converted believers, and communal, as we all relate to Christ, as branches, and therefore also to one another. And in Scripture, our incorporation or initiation into Christ is understood in sacramental terms. St. Paul notes that "when [we] were buried with [Christ] in baptism, [we] were also raised with him through faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead."[117] And in John 6:53-56, we also find the eucharistic ground for this incorporation:

> Very truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day; for my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them.

Our incorporation into Christ, through which we relate not just to God but to all who believe in Christ, comes through concrete rituals. In the words of the Emmaus wanderers, Christ is "made known to [us] in the breaking of the bread" (Luke 24:35).[118] This incorporation, in turn, opens up to a life in Christ, where He is present in us, working through us, allowing us to imitate Him (Galatians 2:19-20; Ephesians 5:1-2; 1 Peter 1:13-25; 2:21-25). Alfsvåg notes that for both Pseudo-Dionysius and Luther, "one may be lifted into a contemplation of the essential work of God beyond the rationally definable," through which "Christ will make himself known in the

116 John 15:5, cf. vv.1-17; Romans 8:1-11; Ephesians 4:17-24.
117 Colossians 2:12, cf. vv.6-15; Romans 6:1-14; Galatians 3:27-28.
118 For my discussion of this with regards to mediation, see chapter five, pp.183-188.

believer as the exemplar of true human existence."[119] We are allowed to partake of the divine work, the theurgy, and when we act, we do so through Christ, in imitation of Him.

How this imitation comes to expression, though, is a case for debate. As this deals with our participation in Christ's redemptive work, as we are "crucified with Christ," some have argued that this must (also liturgically) be understood in a completely passive manner, because the atonement is, supposedly, 'pure gift.' Oswald Bayer states, for instance, that "[t]he worship service is first and last the service of God to us, his sacrifice that has taken place for us once-and-for-all, which in the Lord's Supper is ministered, promised and communicated by the word of giving, in, with and under the bread and wine."[120] In one sense, this is true. We do not perform the work that Christ offered "once for all" (Hebrews 7:27). Bayer, however, goes on to state that the service of God to us "is misjudged, when—as Luther emphasizes with his sharp distinction between "sacrament" and "sacrifice"—we want to give to God, as a work, as an *actio hominis*, that which we are granted to receive and accept as his pure gift."[121] While Bayer is correct in seeing human beings principally defined by passivity and reception, as creation is "a gift of a gift to a gift,"[122] this ought to be understood as middle voiced, as an 'active passivity' or an 'active reception.'[123] Catherine Pickstock notes that the term 'middle voice' indicates "the mediation of divine by human action."[124] Though this usually expresses reciprocity or reflexivity, e.g. "John and Jacob *hug each other*" or "I *cooked myself* dinner,"[125] Pickstock notes that, overcoming the dichotomy between 'active' and 'passive,' it can denote "the way

119 Alfsvåg, "Luther as a reader of Dionysius the Areopagite," 105.

120 Oswald Bayer, "The Ethics of Gift" (*Lutheran Quarterly* 24, 2010), 453, cf. Joshua C. Miller, *Hanging by a Promise: The Hidden God in the Theology of Oswald Bayer* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2015), 118-123, 136-145; John T. Pless, "Can We Participate Liturgically in the Atonement?" (*Logia: A Journal of Lutheran Theology* 19, 2010), 39-47.

121 Bayer, "The Ethics of Gift," 453.

122 John Milbank, *The Suspended Middle: Henri de Lubac and the Debate concerning the Supernatural*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014), 96, cf. Oliver, *Creation*, 143-157.

123 See Kringlebotten, "Do this…," 132-136.

124 Catherine Pickstock, "Liturgy, Art and Politics" (*Modern Theology* 16:2, 2000), 180, n8.

125 For a discussion of the grammatical category of the middle voice, see Suzanne Kemmer, *The middle Voice* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1993).

in which God can act in and through a subject but without denying the subject its freedom, and to describe the way in which action under grace is neither active nor passive in voice."[126] And the reason is that everything that is not God, including our own works, is in the mode of gift. In Scripture we see that when we offer a sacrifice of praise, something Bayer calls an *actio hominis*, we do so because God "put a new song in [our] mouth[s], a song of praise to our God" (Psalm 40:3). And when we do good works, we do so because "we are what [God] has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life" (Ephesians 2:10). God works through us, in the deeds we do and the prayers and sacrifices we offer, but this is equally considered a work that *we* do. When we are displaced, when we "become ciphers or conduits of divine activity,"[127] this displacement, the divine consummation of human activity, is perfective, not destructive. St. Paul states that it "is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me" (Galatians 2:20a). But he follows this up by pointing out that the self is not obliterated but perfected and fulfilled: "And the life *I* now live in the flesh *I* live by faith in the Son of God, who loved *me* and gave himself for *me*" (Galatians 2:20b, emphasis added).[128] If we separate the *actio hominis* and the *actio divina*, we make human acts too autonomous and we obscure the fact that in Christ, we see the perfection of the human act. The divine consummation of human activity finds its ultimate expression precisely in the human acts of Christ or 'the human theurgies of Jesus' (Gk. *tás ándrikás Iēsoú theourgías*).[129] For Pseudo-Dionysius this displacement is divine, as we participate in a work which remains, principally, a *divine* work. But at the same time, this includes us.[130] In this, Pseudo-Dionysius is close to Iamblichus's use of theurgy,[131] though grounded in Christ to whom we are ordered.

126 Catherine Pickstock, *After Writing: On the Liturgical Consummation of Philosophy* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 105, n8, cf. 35-36, 112, 145, 157.
127 Stang, *Apophasis and Pseudonymity*, 39, cf. 187-194 (192-194).
128 Cf. Stang, *Apophasis and Pseudonymity*, 183-185.
129 *EH* III:3, 4 (429c), cf. *CH* IV, 4 (181B); Shaw, "Neoplatonic Theurgy and Dionysius the Areopagite," 590; Stang, *Apophasis and Pseudonymity*, 112; Struck, "Pagan and Christian Theurgies," 31.
130 Stang, *Apophasis and Pseudonymity*, 167.
131 Cf. *DM* I, 12-13; I, 18; II, 9; III, 3; 17; 20, 25; V, 23; VII, 5; X, 5-8.

As Stang notes, St. Paul is, so to speak, a 'theurgist,'[132] because even though he does not use the word 'theurgy,' he does speak of our participation in the work of God or the work of Christ in which we participate. The radical difference between this and Pagan notions is that it is grounded in Christ as master theurgist (rather than in the cosmos and the pantheon of gods). We become partakers of this, *theourgikoì*, "participants of the work, co-workers of the work," only through Him.[133] Christian practices are always grounded in Christ and in His presence and it is always in accordance with our natures, in the middle voice.[134]

Bayer agrees that human activity must be understood in this manner (although he does not use that particular phrasing), but he sees Christ's redemptive work as an exemption. This, however, introduces the possibility of 'purely human' acts and introduces a competitive conception of the divine-human relationship, and the nature of Christ's act, into our theology of the atonement. Christ is the master theurgist, yes, but not in a way that 'excludes' our participation in His act. Christ's mission on our behalf, furthermore, is the human act *par excellence*, precisely because it was, at the same time, the divine act.[135] In a way we can say that Christ's activity, as the God-man, is the perfection of human work, as we also find in Bayer's theology. Even with his flaws, he has some real insights. He rejects any occasionalistic views on liturgy or God's commands, and he emphasises the centrality of the liturgy and God's gift. But more importantly, discussing the "absurd desire of humans to become self-creators," Bayer insists that human dignity and freedom lies in this receptivity.[136] Our dignity lies in the fact that we *receive*

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132 Stang, *Apophasis and Pseudonymity*, 114-116, cf. Struck, "Pagan and Christian Theurgies"; Wear and Dillon, *Dionysius the Areopagite and the Neoplatonist Tradition*, 99-115. See Romans 14:20; 1 Corinthians 3:9; 15:58; 16:10; Ephesians 1:18-21; Ephesians 3:7; Philippians 2:29-30; Colossians 1:29; 2:12; 1 Thessalonians 3:2.

133 Wear and Dillon, *Dionysius the Areopagite and the Neoplatonist Tradition*, 100, cf. *EH* I, 1 (372B).

134 *De pot.*, q.3, a.7; Bård Norheim, *Practicing Baptism: A Theological Investigation of the Presence of Christ in Christian Practices in the Context of Youth Ministry* (PhD dissertation, MF Norwegian School of Theology, Oslo, 2011), 76-81, 89-90, 98-123.

135 Kringlebotten, "Do this…," 132-137.

136 Oswald Bayer, "Self-creation? On the Dignity of Human Beings" (*Modern Theology* 20:2, 2004), 275, 282, cf. Oswald Bayer, "Categorical Imperative or Categorical Gift?," in Bayer, *Freedom in Response: Lutheran Ethics: Sources and Controversies*, trans. Jeffrey F. Cayzer (Oxford Studies in Theological Ethics. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 13-20; Bayer, "The Ethics of Gift," 448, 453-454, 457-458; Oswald Bayer,

our being and our ability to act in freedom. Though Bayer is critical of Thomistic theology, his emphasis still seems to be compatible with the Thomistic focus on participation, where we are able to act in freedom, as secondary causes, participating in God as the primary agent: "But every application of power to operation is originally and primarily made by God. … Therefore; every operation should be attributed to God, as to a first and principal agent."[137] Aquinas is, in a broadly theurgic manner, making use of a Proclean emphasis on the relationship between Creator and creature, saying that any act we do is only possible through participation in God's own act.[138] Indeed, it *is* a participation in God's own act. As creatures, we participate in God, and this finds its complete fulfilment in Christ, where participation moves beyond our mimetic participation in God to a complete union, though "without confusion, change, division, or separation."[139] And this is why this act is the ultimate act of theurgy. Precisely because of God's ultimate act, in Christ, through which we are granted a fundamental participation in God (Gk. *méthexis*), we can imitate the divine life (Gk. *mímēsis*), grounded in Christ's act, in a manner that is not extrinsic and imposed: "Therefore be imitators of God [Gk. *mimētaì toũ theoũ*], as beloved children, and live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God."[140] I am, then, distinguishing between, but not separating or equivocating on two related but allegedly separate notions of participation (*méthexis* and *mímēsis*). They are not identical, but they are closely related. We participate in God and he keeps us in being, in act, from moment to moment. Our being is an act, expressing itself in actions. But

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Martin Luther's Theology: A Contemporary Interpretation, trans. Oswald Bayer (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 37-39, 53-54; Oswald Bayer, *Theology the Lutheran Way*, ed. and trans. Jeffrey G. Silcock and Mark C. Mattis (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), 17-18, 83-98; Oswald Bayer, "Worship and Theology," in *Worship and Ethics: Lutherans and Anglicans in Dialogue*, eds., Oswald Bayer and Alan Suggate (Berlin/New York, NY: Walter de Gruyter, 1996), 148-161. Also see Knut Alfsvåg, "Luthersk spiritualitet: Om lære og liv i den éne, kristne kirke" (*Dansk Tidsskrift for Teologi og Kirke* 40:1, 2013), 42-56; Miller, *Hanging by a Promise*, 4, 116-172 (cf. 1-12, for an introduction to Bayer).

137 *SCG* III, c.67:4, cf. Bayer, *Martin Luther's Theology*, 37; Bayer, *Theology*, 29, 34, 76-77, 97-98, 203-205, 263, n145.

138 Davison, *Participation in God*, 218, n4.

139 *The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon*, II, 204.

140 Ephesians 5:1-2, cf. 1 Corinthians 4:16; 11:1; Philippians 3:17; 1 Thessalonians 1:6-7; 1 Peter 1:13-25; 2:21-25.

even though created things are grounded in (or suspended from) the divine, this participation is nonetheless *real*, not illusory:

> All things are good, inasmuch as they have being. But they are not called beings through the divine being, but through their own being; therefore all things are not good by the divine goodness, but by their own goodness. … And because good is convertible with being, as one is also; he called God the absolute good, from whom all things are called good by way of participation. … Hence from the first being, essentially such, and good, everything can be called good and a being, inasmuch as it participates in it by way of a certain assimilation which is far removed and defective.[141]

Andrew Davison comments that "*be-ing* is the innermost, and most significant, of all actions."[142] And later he adds that thinking about "participation in action" is not to "step away from" the topic of "participation in being," precisely because being is already an act (of 'be-ing'): "Participation in being therefore already is participation in act, participation in agency."[143] We are *actual performers* of our acts and this is real and derived at the same time. The point is not that participation in God is involvement in concrete practices but that involvement in concrete practices *is* grounded in *méthexis*, in that we are perfected, and that it comes to expression (non-identically) as *mímēsis*, in that we also bring about perfection.[144] Being involved in practices which realise human goods (ethical, ritual, cultural, or otherwise) is a participation in the being and agency of God and it is the proper form of human life.[145] We have being because of God, who is pure act, and our actions flow from our being, as participating in this act of God, or in God himself. Existence and action are both constitutive parts of what it means *to be*: "The less perfect is always for the sake of the more perfect: and consequently as the matter is for the sake

141 *ST* I, q.6, a.4, sed contra and corp.

142 Davison, *Participation in God*, 33, n80, cf. *ST* I, q.8, a.1.

143 Davison, *Participation in God*, 217, 218, cf. 68-79, 217-235.

144 *EH* I, 1 (372B).

145 See Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 3rd ed. (London: Duckworth, 2007), 181-225; James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 17-129, esp. 19-27, 39-110. MacIntyre notes (p.187) that the goal of any practice, "any coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity," is that through these practices certain "goods internal to that form of activity are realized in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence."

of the form, so the form which is the first act, is for the sake of its operation, which is the second act; and thus operation is the end of the creature."[146] But through the Incarnation, this is utterly radicalised and intensified.

God became a human being who lived, died, and was resurrected for us, and He gave us the sacramental gifts so that we may participate concretely in this. Through our ontological participation in Christ, through our incorporation into Him, we are called to participate in or imitate the Incarnation. Not only do we participate in Christ ontologically but this also manifests itself in action, not only for ourselves but for all the Church. Without their historical rooting in the acts of Christ, the gifts are nothing. But likewise these acts are just historical acts unless we are given the gift to participate in them and to imitate their gifts non-identically. As St. Paul puts it, rather strikingly: "I am now rejoicing in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am completing what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church" (Colossians 1:24). What is 'lacking in Christ's afflictions' is not His perfect and eternal 'once for all' sacrifice, but our participation in Him, as His body (Galatians 2:19-20). Being blessed by Christ, first and foremost through the sacraments (as we will discuss more in the next chapter), we are made co-workers of the theurgy and are called to be formed in Christ or conformed to Him (Romans 8:29), as Christ is "the exemplar of what it is to be human."[147] This is at the heart of what we mean by 'active participation.' Human union with God finds its ultimate (and exclusive) expression in the life of Christ, where divinity and humanity are forever united "without confusion, change, division, or separation."[148]

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146 *ST* I, q.105, a.5, corp., cf. *SCG* III, c.113:1; Fergus Kerr, *After Aquinas: Versions of Thomism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 48-49.

147 Alfsvåg, "Luther as a reader of Dionysius the Areopagite," 104, cf. *EH* I, 1 (372B); Kringlebotten, "Do this…," 132-136.

148 *The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon*, II, 204.

5 Conclusion

In the introduction to this thesis I asked: How is it even possible to speak of human agency in the context of the liturgy as a participation in the divine act, and why is it even necessary? In this chapter I have attempted to answer this question by interpreting liturgy, and theology as a whole, through the lens of theurgy and by centring it on Christ. I have argued that this must be rooted in Christ, in His person and His act, most particularly in the Passion, in the ultimate act of theurgy. According to the Pagan theurgists, the human community, finding its apex in the theurgic rituals, is an imitation or a participation in the divine community. As Peter Struck puts it, commenting on the Iamblichean notion of theurgy: "Theurgy is a divine act, a *θεῖον ἔργον*, insofar as it is action, established by gods, put into use by humans, whose effect is to bring the material world (including that part of the celebrant which is material) into harmony with the divine order."[149] For Iamblichus, this should be understood in mainly cosmological and polytheistic terms as a participation in the cosmos as a morally unfallen "*agalma*, a shrine of the Demiurge (*Timaeus* 37c)" which "reveals the presence of gods,"[150] and it is principally open to anyone. This, however, is subverted in Christianity. Christian theology maintains that there is One true God and that there is likewise only One true 'master theurgist,' Jesus Christ, who redeemed not only individuals but the world itself (2 Corinthians 5:17-21). Through Christ's central theurgic act of vicarious penal suffering, He shared our fallen condition, suffering on our behalf, and transformed this condition from the inside, allowing us to become participants in this. This does not mean that Christ was punished as if He was guilty, through a crude 'transfer of penalty,' but that He redeemed the world by participating in it and transforming it, not just in its physicality but in its fallenness, to open up to new life.[151]

149 Struck, "Pagan and Christian Theurgies," 30.

150 Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul*, xxiv, cf. xxiv-xxv; Zeyl and Sattler, "Plato's *Timaeus*."

151 Romans 8:1-8, cf. Fiddes, *Past Event*, 89-104; Kringlebotten, "Do this…," 132-136; Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology* II, 421-429; Sutherland, "From Satisfaction to Penal Substitution," 103-108.

With the Pagan theurgists, we affirm that theurgy is a divine act, enacted by humans to reconcile the world to God. But we note that without the Incarnation, such bringing into harmony remains shadowy and extrinsic. The ultimate divine-human union is established through Christ. God is no longer just external to us, as Christ unites humanity with God in an utterly radical way, in one single *suppositum*, "without confusion, change, division, or separation,"[152] Christ elevates creation, as creation, and makes real union with God possible. As St. Paul notes: "For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have come to fullness in him, who is the head of every ruler and authority" (Colossians 2:9-10). Through participation in His act of redemption, through being 'crucified with Christ,' we may live out the Christian life in Him (Galatians 2:19-20; Ephesians 5:1-2; 1 Peter 2:5). Through Him, particularly through the Church's liturgy, and principally through baptism, we are granted participation in the divine and we are given the dignity of active participation in the liturgy. Through the grace given there, which moves us beyond our participation as creatures, we are perfected in a non-destructive manner. Grace transforms us, and gives us the dignity to participate in the divine work, while still remaining fully human.

In the next chapter, I focus specifically on the nature of sacramentality by first providing an account of the metaphysics of worship, arguing that God is always revealed to us as mediated, something which presupposes that creation, while fallen, still participates in the divine, as creation and, more particularly, in Christ, through whom all things were made and through whom the sacraments become channels of divine grace, and second by arguing that the fullest expression of this is found in the Eucharist and in a doctrine of transubstantiation which both provides a coherent account of real presence, divine act, and an analogical understanding of reality, but which also preserves the place of nature, *as nature*, in a concrete cultural context.

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152 *The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon*, II, 204, cf. Gorman, *Aquinas on the Metaphysics of the Hypostatic Union*, 73-125.

CHAPTER FIVE

Theurgy, liturgy, and sacramentality

1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I argued that what makes Christian theurgy possible is the incarnation or the hypostatic union, which unites us with God on a metaphysical level, though "without confusion, change, division, or separation."[1] Through Christ, as the God-man, we are deified and are enabled to offer ourselves and celebrate the liturgy. In this chapter, I will explore the specifically liturgical and sacramental nature of this, arguing that God is never disclosed to creation in a direct or unmediated manner, but that this is not necessarily 'unreal,' if we assume a participatory and analogical metaphysic.[2] This participatory approach is a perspective that Christian theology shares with its Pagan Neoplatonic counterparts. For Iamblichus this comes to expression particularly through symbols, where the theurgic cult, which "imitates the order of the gods, both the intelligible and that in the heavens, … possesses eternal measures of what truly exists and wondrous tokens, such as have been sent down hither by the creator and father of all."[3] For Iamblichus, matter is not "excluded from participation in its betters," and "since it was proper not even for terrestrial things to be utterly deprived of participation in the divine, earth also has received from it a share in divinity, such as is sufficient for it to be able to receive

1 *The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon*, trans., introd. and notes, Richard Price and Michael Gaddis (3 vols., Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2005, 2007), II, 204.

2 Andrew Davison, *Participation in God: A Study in Christian Doctrine and Metaphysics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 65-83, 341-343, cf. Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Celestial Hierarchy* (*De coelesti hierarchia*, hereafter: *CH*), I, 2 (121B); Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* (hereafter: *ST*) I, q.1, a.9. For notes on the Thomistic and Pseudo-Dionysian corpora, see abbreviations, p.4, nn1-2.

3 Iamblichus, *De mysteriis*, Greek and English, intro. and trans. Emma C. Clarke, John M. Dillon, and Jackson P. Hershbell (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003, hereafter: *DM*), I, 21, cf. I, 8, II, 11, VII, 1; John Milbank, Catherine Pickstock, and Graham Ward, eds., *Radical Orthodoxy: A new theology* (London: Routledge, 1999), 3-11, 19; Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, 2nd ed., reprint, ed., trans., intro., and comm. E.R. Dodds (Oxford: Clarendon, 1971), props. 1-13, 23-24; Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Divine Names* (*De Divinis Nominibus*, hereafter: *DN*), IV, 7 (701CD, 704C); Algis Uždavinys, *Philosophy and Theurgy in Late Antiquity* (Kettering: Angelico Press/Sophia Perennis, 2014), 204-228.

the gods."[4] He holds that the human intellect cannot fully grasp the divine, and terrestrial things may function as mediations, as we cannot experience God directly. For him, therefore, theurgy is not a purely intellectual pursuit and theurgic rituals cannot be grasped fully by the human mind. But, as I have argued above,[5] this does not necessarily make them irrational. Rituals can be an expression of rationality because they are ordered by, ordered to, and expressive of divine order. They are both rational and supra-rational, as they move beyond philosophy without rejecting it. Iamblichus distinguishes between philosophy, theology, and theurgy, but never separates them. Furthermore, his theurgic arguments presuppose his arguments from philosophy and metaphysics.[6] The Iamblichean tradition holds createdness, corporeality, and finitude in high esteem and denies the Plotinian notion that the soul is not fully descended. Yet, it still holds that the ultimate goal of theurgy for humans is the exclusively intellectual and spiritual ascent to, and union with, the gods, granted only to those who have the ability to achieve it:

> A certain few individuals … employing an intellectual power which is beyond the natural, have disengaged themselves from nature, and turned towards the transcendent and pure intellect, at the same time rendering themselves superior to natural forces. … Those … who conduct their lives in accordance with intellect alone and the life according to intellect, and who have been freed from the bonds of nature, practise an intellectual and incorporeal rule of sacred procedure in respect of all the departments of theurgy.[7]
>
> The theurgist, through the power of arcane symbols, commands cosmic entities no longer as a human being or employing a human soul but, existing above them in the order of the gods.[8]

The ultimate goal, then, is is to be freed from the body and to climb the hierarchy, though for

4 *DM* V, 23.

5 Chapter three, pp.106-118.

6 Crystal Addey, *Divination and Theurgy in Neoplatonism: Oracles of the Gods* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), 29-32, 41-42, 171-213, 273-275, 281, 283, 286; Riccardo Chiaradonna and Adrien Lecerf, "Iamblichus," 2.3, 3.1-2, in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Fall 2019 Edition (ed., Edward N. Zalta).

7 *DM* V, 18.

8 *DM* VI, 6, cf. Ruth Majercik, *The Chaldean Oracles: Text, Translation, and Commentary* (Leiden: Brill, 1989, hereafter: *TCO*), frag. 153-154, 194 (cf. pp.20, 198, 212). Also see Uždavinys, *Philosophy and Theurgy*, 18-21. For notes on the *Chaldean Oracles*, see abbreviations, p.5, n5.

Iamblichus, the theurgist paradoxically achieves ascent through rituals and a further kenotic descent into matter, in and through the body.[9]

In this chapter, like the previous one, I argue for a Christian consummation of these ideas. Here, however, I focus particularly on the sacramental aspect. Like Iamblichus, Pseudo-Dionysius emphasises the divine act and ritual performance, while rejecting the adequateness of 'pure thought' (though without rejecting thought and philosophy).[10] He emphasises that "theurgy is the consummation of theology,"[11] and rejects any notion that theurgy is either 'magic' or 'irrational,' where 'magic' is understood as manipulation.[12] For him, all of creation reveals the work of God, from the largest galaxy to the most insignificant ant, in all its concrete physicality, understood within a hierarchy. This, however, reveals some crucial differences between Pagan and Christian conceptions of theurgy. Both have understandings of hierarchy (a term coined by Pseudo-Dionysius), though for the Areopagite, the point is not to 'escape' or lose one's humanity (if only temporarily), or even to 'ascend' the hierarchy.[13] He does not see God (univocally) as a distant monarch on the top but as equally present to all 'strands.' Rather than

9 Gregory Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul: The Neoplatonism of Iamblichus*, 2nd ed. (Angelico Press/Sophia Perennis, 2014), xxviii, cf. John Milbank and Aaron Riches, "Neoplatonic Theurgy and Christian Incarnation" (foreword to Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul*), xiv-xvi.

10 See Kevin Corrigan and L. Michael Harrington, "Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite," 4.2, in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Summer 2019 Edition (ed., Edward N. Zalta); Ernesto Sergio Mainoldi, "The Transfiguration of Proclus' Legacy: Pseudo-Dionysius and the Late Neoplatonic School of Athens," in *Proclus and his Legacy*, eds., David D. Butorac and Danielle A. Layne (Berlin/Boston, MS: de Gruyter, 2017), 199-217. As noted in Thomas Richard Plant, *Dualism and nondualism in the thought of Dionysius the Areopagite and Shinran Shōnin* (PhD dissertation, University of Cambridge, 2013), 110-117 (cf. 101-110), this rejection of pure speculation as capable of facilitating divine-human union is particularly evident in *DM* X, *DN*, and in *Proclus's Commentary on Plato's Parmenides*, trans. Glenn R. Morrow and John M. Dillon (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987).

11 Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* (*De Ecclesiastica Hierarchia*, hereafter: *EH*) III:3, 5 (432B), Gk. *ésti tēs theologías hē theourgía sugkephalaiōsis*. In *The Works of Dionysius the Areopagite*, 2 vols., trans. John Parker (London: James Parker and Co., 1897, 1899), II, 95, this is translated 'the work of God is a consummation of the Word of God,' while in *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, trans. Colm Luibheid, in collaboration with Paul Rorem (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1987), 214, it is translated 'the divine works are the consummation of the divine words.' For a discussion of why these renditions are problematic, see Plant, *Dualism and nondualism*, 101-110.

12 On why I avoid using the term 'magic,' see introduction, p.11, n12.

13 *CH*, esp. I-III (120A-168B), cf. Dimitrios A. Vasilakis, "On the meaning of hierarchy in Dionysius the Areopagite," in *Platonism and Christian Thought in Late Antiquity*, eds., Panagiotis G. Pavlos et al. (London: Routledge, 2019), 181-200.

ascending 'up' the hierarchy we can perhaps say that in Christ we ascend more fully into it. In Christ, God moves through the hierarchy to displace us and make us vessels for the divine work, *as human beings*, while we remain at our place in the hierarchy.[14] As I have argued,[15] displacement means to be ordered to God in Christ, to be incorporated into Christ in a way that does not destroy but complete us, so that we become one with Him (Galatians 2:20). We are, as creatures, already part of the hierarchy but in Christ we get access to it in a way that we may become our true selves. The point, then, is that the world, in all its createdness, corporeality, and finitude, remains the place where we encounter God and receive His gifts. We do not hope to be freed from the body, to become 'more spiritual' or 'less human,' as in Chaldean and Iamblichean theurgy,[16] but to become more fully human and embodied in Christ, who grants anyone access to his sacraments (1 Corinthians 15).[17] But even with these absolutely crucial differences between Pagan and Christian conceptions of theurgy, my argument presupposes a great deal of agreement between these traditions and that the differences can often be taken too far. Panagiotis G. Pavlos, for example, maintains that the "only possible correspondence between" Iamblichean and Pseudo-Dionysian theurgy is that "what Iamblichus postulates with his θεουργία is nothing other than the Dionysian activity of hierurgy."[18] Pseudo-Dionysius distinguishes between the divine work (*theourgía*) and our (ecclesial) works of praise, the rites, the ritual re-enactment or celebration of the divine work (hierurgy, Gk. *hierourgia*). Sarah Klitenic Wear and John Dillon suggests that this distinction is introduced by the Areopagite to claim that the Christian tradition is superior to the Pagan Platonist one. Where Pagans focus primarily on

14 Andrew Louth, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition: From Plato to Denys*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 166, cf. 160-169; Charles M. Stang, *Apophasis and Pseudonymity in Dionysius the Areopagite: "No Longer I"* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 98-116 (esp. 115-116).

15 See chapter four, pp.153-162.

16 *DM* V, 18; VI, 6; *TCO*, frag. 153-154, 194, cf. Majercik, *The Chaldean Oracles*, 20, 198, 212.

17 Stang, *Apophasis and Pseudonymity*, 86-88, 98-102, 109-116, cf. the discussion in chapter three, pp.115-117.

18 Panagiotis G. Pavlos, "Theurgy in Dionysius the Areopagite," in *Platonism and Christian Thought in Late Antiquity*, eds., Pavlos et al., 163, cf. 162-164.

the human participation in the divine work, Christians focus primarily on the divine works.[19] For Pseudo-Dionysius, theurgy is used specifically for the divine works, particularly the works of Christ. Wear and Dillon note that there is a danger of overlooking the connection between *theourgía* and *hierourgia* (but also to overemphasise it). The primary meaning of theurgy for Pseudo-Dionysius is the Incarnation, while we are called to participate in this. They write:

> When Dionysius speaks of *theourgia*, he specifically means the work of God, the incarnation of Christ. However, when we enact this work, through *hierourgia*, we become *theourgikoi*: participants of the work, co-workers of the work. Thus, Rorem and Louth correctly assert that *theourgia* pertains only to divine works, while Shaw rightly points out that the principle of theurgy does, as propounded by Iamblichus and Proclus, indeed exist in Dionysian thought.[20]

Hierurgy, then, is the human (ecclesial) participation in the divine work. When Peter Struck defines theurgy, then, as "a *θεῖον ἔργον*, insofar as it is action, established by gods, put into use by humans, whose effect is to bring the material world (including that part of the celebrant which is material) into harmony with the divine order,"[21] Pseudo-Dionysius would say that this participation, this 'putting into use,' is hierurgy. Pavlos, however, while agreeing that hierurgy is a participation in the divine work, dismisses Wear and Dillon's arguments that this is still within a broadly Neoplatonic framework. They write:

> Dionysian (and Eastern Church, for that matter) sacramental theology is … fundamentally similar to Hellenic *theourgia* in that both use material *symbola* to harness divine *energeia*, but there is a subtle shift in terminology as between Dionysius and his Neoplatonic predecessors.[22]

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19 Sarah Klitenic Wear and John Dillon, *Dionysius the Areopagite and the Neoplatonist Tradition: Despoiling the Hellenes* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 12.

20 Wear and Dillon, *Dionysius the Areopagite and the Neoplatonist Tradition*, 100, cf. 99-115. Also see Andrew Louth, "Pagan Theurgy and Christian Sacramentalism" (*The Journal of Theological Studies*, new series, 27:2, 1986), 432-438; Pavlos, "Theurgy in Dionysius the Areopagite," 158-161; Paul E. Rorem, "Iamblichus and the Anagogical Method in Pseudo-Dionysian Liturgical Theology," in *Studia Patristica*, vol. XVIII (part one), ed., Elizabeth A. Livingstone (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1982), 453-460; Gregory Shaw, "Neoplatonic Theurgy and Dionysius the Areopagite" (*Journal of Early Christian Studies* 7:4, 1999), 573-599 (esp. 599), cf. Alan Philip Darley, "Ritual as erotic anagogy in Pseudo-Dionysius: a Reformed critique" (*International Journal of Philosophy and Theology* 79:3, 2018), 261-278 (esp. 262-263, 265-267); Peter T. Struck, "Pagan and Christian Theurgies: Iamblichus, Pseudo-Dionysius, Religion and Magic in Late Antiquity" (*Ancient World* 32:2, 2001), 25-38.

21 Struck, "Pagan and Christian Theurgies," 30.

22 Wear and Dillon, *Dionysius the Areopagite and the Neoplatonist Tradition*, 102, cf. Pavlos, "Theurgy in Dionysius the Areopagite," 164.

Pavlos maintains that we do not use symbols because they have 'theurgic properties,' as was the case with the Pagan theurgists, but because of Christ's institution. He even notes that Iamblichus's symbolism shares similarities with Protestant notions of 'pure symbolism' and that Pseudo-Dionysius sees theurgy as a prerequisite of hierurgy, in contrast to Iamblichus. I, however, propose a different approach, though I must note that Pavlos is correct when he points out that in Christian theology, "man is the mediator between God and His cosmos,"[23] which finds its centre in Christ.[24]

First, for Iamblichus, symbols are divine gifts with a real ontological connection to that which they signify. He emphasises that the theurgic cult was "established by law at the beginning intellectually, according to the ordinances of the gods," that it "imitates the order of the gods, both the intelligible and that in the heavens," and that it "possesses eternal measures of what truly exists and wondrous tokens, such as have been sent down hither by the creator and father of all."[25] And we can assume that he follows the Chaldeans in holding that "the Paternal Intellect has sown symbols throughout the cosmos."[26] This is not Christianity but also not 'pure' or 'mere' symbolism. It is an ontological understanding of signs as actual partakers of that which they symbolise. While symbols are inferior to that which they mediate or communicate, they remain essential for such communication. An object, a person, or an animal may manifest the divine (without exhausting it), due to a 'sympathy' between things.[27] For Pagan theurgists, it is precisely through these symbols, by which the divine theurgy may be accessed

23 Pavlos, "Theurgy in Dionysius the Areopagite," 168, cf. 166-168. Here, Pavlos notes some critical remarks towards those who claim that Iamblichus's position is often caricatured, which would include me.

24 As I have noted, this does reveal a clear difference between Pseudo-Dionysian and Iamblichean cosmology, as the latter emphasises that man is below the (unfallen) cosmos and not its centre. See chapter four, pp.148-153, cf. Shaw, "Neoplatonic Theurgy and Dionysius the Areopagite," 582-583, 595; Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul*, xxiv-xxv, 67-77.

25 *DM* I, 21.

26 *TCO*, frag. 108, cf. *DM* I, 1-2; III, 31; VI, 7; IX, 4; Majercik, *The Chaldean Oracles*, 182; Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul*, 53-57.

27 *DM* III, 17; X, 6; Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul*, 25-30, 50-57; Peter T. Struck, *Birth of the Symbol: Ancient Readers at the Limits of Their Texts* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 189-192, 246-248. Pseudo-Dionysius invokes a similar concept to this 'sympathy,' emphasising the bond of love (Gk. *ágápē*). See *DN*, IV, 7 (701CD, 704C), cf. Struck, *Birth of the Symbol*, 262.

through ritual re-enactment, that "the material world (including that part of the celebrant which is material)" is brought "into harmony with the divine order."[28] Furthermore, the very separation of the sign from that which is signified, which permeates this 'pure' or 'mere' symbolism, is also a modern (and often Protestant) invention.[29] While Scripture does not use the word 'symbol' for this, it teaches that God reveals Himself through creation (Job 12:7-8; Psalm 19:1; Romans 1:20).[30]

Secondly, although Iamblichus does not distinguish between theurgy and hierurgy, like Pseudo-Dionysius, he sees the divine work as a prerequisite of our ritual participation. He distinguishes between 'the theurgical' (Gk. *tēs theourgikēs*) and 'the technical' (Gk. *tēs technikēs*), noting that the theurgic ritual is a supernatural and divine gift, rather than a technical manipulation.[31] We cannot perform theurgy, according to Iamblichus, without first receiving it as a divine gift. Wear and Dillion, therefore, note that the distinction between *theourgía* and *hierourgia* could have been useful for Iamblichus, as he indeed distinguished between the divine work and its human participation, re-enactment or 'putting into use,' and as he argues, against Porphyry, that the latter does not compel the divine but participates in an already divine work.[32] In Iamblichus's defence, however, I argue that while the distinction itself is useful and prudent, it can be taken too far. It might fool us into thinking that our hierurgies are completely autonomous. But, as Wear and Dillon note, "when we enact this work," the Incarnation, the theurgy, "through *hierourgia*, we become *theourgikoi*: participants of the work, co-workers of the work."[33] Our ritual re-enactment *is* the work of God, both through the gift given and through

28 Struck, "Pagan and Christian Theurgies," 30.

29 See Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, 1400–1580*, 2nd ed. (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 2005), 439, cf. 424-447.

30 For a recent discussion of such notions of symbol, see Joshua Kendall Mobley, *Symbolism: A Brief Systematic Theology of the Symbol* (PhD dissertation, Durham University, 2020), 23-96.

31 *DM* IX, 1, III, 20; III, 31. Also see Emma C. Clarke, *Iamblichus' De Mysteriis: A manifesto of the miraculous* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), 21-22; Struck, "Pagan and Christian Theurgies," 35-36.

32 Wear and Dillon, *Dionysius the Areopagite and the Neoplatonist Tradition*, 100-101.

33 Wear and Dillon, *Dionysius the Areopagite and the Neoplatonist Tradition*, 100, cf. *EH* I, 1 (372B); Struck, "Pagan and Christian Theurgies," 34-36, 37-38.

our imitative enactment. Shaw likewise notes that some (in his case, Andrew Louth) draw "too firm a line between the historical acts of Jesus and their expression in the liturgy":

> For, if the purpose of the liturgy is to deify its members, this would require direct participation in the theurgies, and this could hardly be effected by simply recalling (or interpreting) the acts of the historical Jesus. While Dionysian theurgy is distinctively Christian—with Christ as the "principle and essence of every theurgy" (*EH* 372A)—Dionysius understood that Jesus' transmission of "theurgic mysteries" (*ta theourga musteria*) in the Eucharist required the hierarch, in performing these rites, to be assimilated to these theurgies and communicate their deifying power to others. Louth's insistence that theurgies be confined to the activities of Jesus "recalled" in the liturgy, simply cannot account for this deifying activity nor for the diversity of other evidence.[34]

Thirdly, while Pavlos is correct in arguing for a basis in the act of Christ's institution, he seems to argue for this in a way that opens us to a kind of arbitrary 'liturgical occasionalism.' Aquinas argues that "these visible elements [the sacraments] effect spiritual well-being not by any property of their nature, but by Christ's institution, from which they derive their instrumental efficacy."[35] For Aquinas, the elements receive their instrumentality by Christ's institution. This perspective, however, is also found in Iamblichus. He holds that the elements used in theurgy have 'theurgic properties' not by their own nature but as participants in the divine work:

> [N]othing hinders the superior beings from being able to illuminate their inferiors, nor yet, by consequence, is matter excluded from participation in its betters, so that such of it as is perfect and pure and of good type is not unfitted to receive the gods; for since it was proper not even for terrestrial things to be utterly deprived of participation in the divine, earth also has received from it a share in divinity, such as is sufficient for it to be able to receive the gods.[36]

Charles M. Stang notes that theurgy, for both Iamblichus and Pseudo-Dionysius is about the divine work displacing us, "so that we become ciphers or conduits of divine activity."[37] Or, in

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34 Shaw, "Neoplatonic Theurgy and Dionysius the Areopagite," 592-593, cf. *EH* V (500C-516C). This, however, must be distinguished from Donatism. It does not mean that the priest must be morally perfect, lest the sacraments he administers be 'faulty,' but that he enacts them through the gift given to him by the laying on of his ordaining bishop's hands (cf. Romans 15:15; 1 Timothy 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6). For a Lutheran perspective on this, see Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology* (3 vols. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991, 1994, 1998) III, 393-397, cf. 370-431.

35 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles* (hereafter: *SCG*) IV, 56:7.

36 *DM* V, 23.

37 Stang, *Apophasis and Pseudonymity*, 39, cf. 187-194 (esp. 192-194).

Aquinas's terminology, *instruments*. Furthermore, was Christ's institution arbitrary? Aquinas argues that, no, the choice was deliberate, that it was fitting that Christ should use bread and wine as the matter of His sacrament.[38] The bread and wine signify spiritual feeding and the health or salvation of both body and soul, their separation signifies the separation of soul and body in Christ's death, and the bread, composed of multiple grains, and the wine, made from multiple grapes, signify the unity of the Church (1 Corinthians 10:17). For Aquinas, we use the elements because Christ instituted them, but His institution was not 'arbitrary.' He used them for the reasons noted but also, more generally, because we, as humans, need 'corporeal things' or sensible signs.[39] Also, can we even speak of arbitrariness or convention when it comes to the divine? And if so, would this not presuppose that all created things, including the laws of nature, are arbitrary or conventional? Further, the role of Christ is central here. Not only does creation reveal God as Creator, in a symbolic manner, it is precisely because of Christ that we can say that created things have 'theurgic properties,' not by their own nature or through 'manipulation,' but because of the Incarnation. Because God became a concrete created substance, all created substances participate in (and have become united to) God, and His act, in a new and radical way. This is where we find the central difference between a Pagan and Christian conception of theurgy, not in the nature of symbols or nature, but in the specific and unique role of Christ.

Christ is the only one who *can* hold divinity and humanity together, because He, as the God-man, is "acknowledged in two natures without confusion, change, division, or separation."[40] The Incarnation is something entirely new. It rejects the destruction, or the temporary suspension, of our createdness, corporeality, and finitude and allows us to participate in God, beyond

38 *ST* III, q.74, a.1, cf. II-II, q.81, a.7.

39 *ST* II-II, q.81, a.7 (esp. ad 2); III, q.61, esp. a.1; q.83, a.4, cf. I, q.1, a.9; *CH*, I, 2 (121B); John P. Yocum, "Aristotle in Aquinas's Sacramental Theology," in *Aristotle in Aquinas's Theology*, eds., Gilles Emery and Matthew Levering (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 209-222 (esp. 215); John P. Yocum, "Sacraments in Aquinas," in *Aquinas on Doctrine*, eds., Weinandy, Keating, and Yocum, 165-168.

40 *The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon*, II, 204.

external mimicry. Where pre-Christian (and non-Christian) rituals remain on the mimetic stage, as the divine remains extrinsic to humanity, through the presence of the Incarnate *Logos*, Christian rituals participate in an utterly radical way in the divine.[41] We need the Incarnation to have real intrinsic union with God. In Christ, divinity and humanity, while remaining distinct, are fully united in one single *suppositum* to whom we can relate, analogously.[42] As I have argued in the previous chapter, Christ is the true liturgist, the master theurgist, who enables us to praise and to live out lives of virtue, in Him. This represents a clear difference between Pagan and Christian notions of theurgy. The difference, however, does not constitute destruction but perfection. As I have already noted, the emphasis on Christ does not ignore the created order, which also the Pagans held to, nor our own substantiality, but sees it as grounded in Christ (Galatians 2:20). Christ does not cancel out your own integrity but fulfils it.[43] While Christian theology may explain why we need the incarnation to make sure that the ritual constitutes real union between God and humanity (and through humanity with creation as a whole), theurgy still provides us with a philosophical framework through which we can understand human participation in the divine work and its ritual celebration. We are physical, social, and political beings who make sense of reality precisely through our senses and particularly through ritual. As creatures created in the image of God we have an intrinsic natural orientation to worship.[44] Consummated

41 Colossians 2:16-17; Hebrews 8-10, esp. 8:1-7; 10:1-4, cf. chapter four, pp. 140-146; Michael J. Gorman, *Aquinas on the Metaphysics of the Hypostatic Union* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 73-125; Pavlos, "Theurgy in Dionysius the Areopagite," 157-158.

42 See Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory* (5 vols. San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1988) III, esp. 202-259, cf. Hans Boersma, *Nouvelle Théologie and Sacramental Ontology: A Return to Mystery* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 121-135; Davison, *Participation in God*, 143, 173-193; Johannes Hoff, *The Analogical Turn: Rethinking Modernity with Nicholas of Cusa* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013). Also see Duns Scotus, "Concerning Metaphysics," in John Duns Scotus, *Philosophical Writings*, Latin and English, trans., Allan Wolter (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, 1987), 1-12; Daniel P. Horan, *Postmodernity and Univocity: A Critical Account of Radical Orthodoxy and John Duns Scotus* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2014), esp. 157-188; Thomas Williams, "John Duns Scotus," 2:3, in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Winter 2016 Edition (ed., Edward N. Zalta).

43 Stang, *Apophasis and Pseudonymity*, 183-185.

44 See Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*; Scott W. Hahn, "Worship in the Word: Toward a Liturgical Hermeneutic" (*Letter & Spirit* 1, 2005), 106; Sigurd Hareide, "*Messuskýringar*: Old Norse Expositions of the Latin Mass and the Ritual Participation of the People," in *Intellectual Culture in Medieval Scandinavia, c. 1100–1350*, ed., Stefka Georgieva Eriksen (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2016), 337-371; Catherine Pickstock,

in Christ, theurgy does not introduce the idea that humans can celebrate God ritually or that they have the potential to be spiritual, but that God became flesh, that God became matter, and that we may have real communion with Him through material creation, because materiality as such participates in the divine in a radically new way and is brought "into harmony with the divine order."[45] As St. John Damascene put it, in his defence of icons:

> In other ages God had not been represented in images, being incorporate and faceless. But since God has now been seen in the flesh, and lived among men, I represent that part of God which is visible. I do not venerate matter, but the Creator of matter, who became matter for my sake and deigned to live in matter and bring about my salvation through matter.[46]

In this chapter, I will explore the implications of the Incarnation for liturgy and spirituality, within a theurgic framework. Theurgy, consummated in Christ, is the graced perfection of our natural *liturgical* orientation to God, rooted in our 'natural desire for the supernatural,' which cannot be fulfilled without divine grace.[47] I will argue that the central expression of our participation in Christ comes through praise, principally in the public worship of the Church but also beyond it. I will argue this in two ways.

First, I will provide an account of the metaphysics of worship. With critical reference to Charles S. Peirce's explanation of the nature of the sign,[48] I will argue that to ground communication and knowledge, which requires mediation, we need a participatory and analogical conception of being, where the world participates in God, yet retain its own integrity.[49] I will

"The Ritual Birth of Sense" (*Telos* 162, 2013), 29-55; Roy A. Rappaport, *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Alexander Schmemann, *For the Life of the World: Sacraments and Orthodoxy*, 2nd ed. (Crestwood, NY: SVS Press, 1997), 118; James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 17-129 (esp. 19-27, 39-110); Barry Stephenson, *Ritual: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

45 Struck, "Pagan and Christian Theurgies," 30.

46 Quoted in Benedict XVI, *John Damascene*, general audience (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2009).

47 *ST* II-II, qq.81-91; III, qq.60-90, cf. David Grumett, "De Lubac, Grace, and the Pure Nature Debate" (*Modern Theology* 31:1, 2015), 123-146; Rudi A. te Velde, *Aquinas on God: The 'Divine Science' of the Summa Theologiae* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 155-160; Rudi A. te Velde, ""Partnership with God": Thomas Aquinas on Human Desire and God's Grace" (*Nova et vetera* 15:4, 2017), 1155-1175.

48 Thomas Lloyd Short, *Peirce's Theory of Signs* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 207-234, cf. 2, 27.

49 Davison, *Participation in God*, 65-83; Milbank, Pickstock, and Ward, eds., *Radical Orthodoxy*, 1-20.

argue that God, even Christ, as the God-man, is never revealed to us unmediated but that this is not a problem on this account. We can reach beyond symbols to that which they symbolise or signify, but we do so precisely by not losing sight of them. Symbols always point beyond themselves but never away from themselves. This symbolic nature of reality, which unites a Christian and a Neoplatonic account, captures the inherent value of physicality and thus why a theurgic, symbolic, and mediatory approach is essential for a theology that seeks to affirm the transcendence of God, creation's participation in Him, the uniqueness of Christ, and creation's inherent value. Creation reveals God precisely not by shifting our focus away from itself but by mediating Him (Job 12:7-8; Psalm 19:1; Romans 1:20).

Secondly, having argued for a Christian sacramental view of liturgical-symbolic mediation, I will argue that while this may be expressed in many ways, its fullest expression is in the celebration of the Eucharist. Continuing from my discussions of transubstantiation in chapters one and three,[50] in critique of John Calvin's downplaying of physical creation's place in liturgy,[51] I will argue that such a doctrine not only provides the most coherent way of holding together real presence, divine act, and an analogical understanding of reality, but that it also preserves the place of nature, *as nature*, in a concrete cultural context, and that liturgy is a real ontological participation in the divine, and a real presence of the divine, made manifest in the gifts of creation.

2 Symbolism, mediation, and analogy

In his book on participation in God, Andrew Davison notes that a participatory spirituality emphasises mediation, that we cannot have a direct, unmediated encounter with God, no more so than with a number, but that this does not indicate that mediation is 'unreal': "We have *me-*

[50] See pp.58-62, 118-128.

[51] Cf. Simon Oliver, "The Eucharist before Nature and Culture" (*Modern Theology* 15:3, 1999), 331-353, esp. 342-350.

diated encounters with the number 2 every day, and our encounters are no less real for that. In fact, the way in which I encounter the number 2 in my pieces of toast each morning, or in my two hands, might not be a bad analogy for how I ineluctably encounter God in every encounter."[52] Everything we have, everything we are, exists only insofar as God has given it to us and keeps it, and us, in existence (Acts 17:28; Romans 11:33-36). And everything points to God: "The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork."[53] For Christian theology, however, this is now centred on Christ, as the "one mediator between God and humankind."[54] Across the board, from Anglo-Catholics and Orthodox to Baptists and Reformed, sacraments are understood as signs of Him, though with very different interpretations.[55] We cannot experience anything except through mediation. But if we want to affirm the possibility of true knowledge, and reject pure skepticism and even solipsism,[56] we need a way to account for how we can have true knowledge. Contesting the modernistic notion that we cannot truly know something unless it is completely exhaustible,[57] I propose here that in order to account for knowledge of the inexhaustible, we must assume an analogical and participatory metaphysics. Even if created reality remains mysterious and inexhaustible, and even if we cannot meet God independent of 'outer symbols' (because of the ontological difference between God and creation), this is not 'unreal.' In this section I will argue for a comprehensive and Catholic understanding of symbolism and mediation,[58] where symbols or signs are not just

52 Davison, *Participation in God*, 342, cf. 341-343. There is, of course, a significant difference between God and the number 2. While we cannot have an unmediated ('direct') relation to either, we *can* have a *personal* relation to God.

53 Psalm 19:1, cf. Job 12:7-8; Romans 1:20.

54 1 Timothy 2:5, cf. Galatians 3:19; Galatians 3:20; Hebrews 8:6; Hebrews 9:15.

55 Andrew Davison, *Why Sacraments?* (London: SPCK, 2013), 55-65; Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 988-1002; Schmemann, *For the Life of the World*, 135-151; Michael Welker, *What Happens in Holy Communion?*, trans., John F. Hoffmeyer (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000).

56 This is a danger in Cartesian thought. See Anita Avramides, "Other Minds," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Winter 2020 Edition (ed., Edward N. Zalta); Stephen P. Thornton, "Solipsism and the Problem of Other Minds," in *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

57 See Catherine Pickstock, *After Writing: On the Liturgical Consummation of Philosophy* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 47-70, 103-110, 135-140, 264-273.

58 To reiterate, by 'Catholic' I do not mean 'Roman Catholic' (exclusively).

pedagogical functions or mere illustrations of something utterly beyond themselves, but tings which participate in, reveal, and provide that which they signify, though without exhausting it. While a sign or a symbol mediates or communicates something beyond itself and greater than itself, it is still utterly essential for the communication to happen. To borrow a phrase from C. S. Lewis, while we do not simply look *at* symbols (qua symbols), we do not look *away* from them either. Rather, we look *along* them.[59] But what do we mean by signs?

Charles S. Peirce notes that in modern semiotics, the term is used in three ways: (1) an *icon*, a likeness imitating or resembling that which it signifies, but which does not necessarily have any direct connections to reality, (2) a *symbol*, which has a conventional relation to that which it signifies, and (3) an *index*, which has a real connection to that which it signifies.[60] While these distinctions can be useful, as they allow us to distinguish between different aspects of the symbolic, and different understandings of it, to separate these from one another is problematic, especially when we apply it to text written with a different (and pre-modern) metaphysic in mind. Christ, for instance, is called 'the icon of God' (Gk. *eikὸn toũ theoũ*).[61] That, however, does not mean that He merely 'resembles' God. That we should separate the indexical, iconic, and symbolic or conventional aspects of the sign, which often happens in modern semiotics, is not self-evident. The first flowers of spring, for example, signify spring in a visual manner but in springing forth, they also participate in it and bring it about. And despite the connotations of 'symbol' in modern English, for ancient thinkers symbols had a deep ontological connection to that which they symbolised. The classic example is a piece of pottery that has been split in two. The point in this scenario is not that the pieces just happens to relate or that one of

[59] C. S. Lewis, "Meditation in a Toolshed," in Lewis, *God in the Dock: Essays on Theology and Ethics*, reprint ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014), 230-236.

[60] Short, *Peirce's Theory of Signs*, 207-234 (esp. 214-225), cf. Harald Hegstad, *Dåpen: En nådens kilde* (Oslo: Verbum akademisk, 2019), 34-36.

[61] 2 Corinthians 4:4; Colossians 1:15 (my translation). If not otherwise noted, I use *Novum Testamentum Graece*, 28th ed., eds. Eberhard Nestle and Kurt Aland (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2012).

them 'resembles' the other, but that they have a real connection. They fit together. It is, in other words, 'indexical.' But it is equally 'iconic' or 'symbolic/conventional.'[62] Baptism, for instance, as understood in Catholic theology, is a sign and a symbol of salvation, in an ontological or indexical manner, by participating in salvation and bringing it about. But it is so also in a conventional manner, through the institution of Christ, and in an iconic manner, as it resembles cleansing figuring our spiritual cleansing, our being rescued from peril, and our dying to sin (though the latter symbolism is often better preserved in Orthodox, Baptist, and Pentecostal traditions).[63] A comprehensive understanding must include all three aspects of symbolism but the central part must remain the 'indexical.'

In the Catholic tradition, the sacraments are understood as concrete signs of creation's participation in God through Christ. We participate in this through matter, most particularly in the sacraments where God promises to be for us in concrete things that we can see, hear, smell, taste, and feel. They are signs which really participate in and mediate God's salvation and God's presence, as expressed, for instance, in Romans 10:17 ("faith comes from what is heard") or 1 Peter 3:21 ("baptism … now saves you").[64] To borrow Peter Struck's phrase again, in the sacrament, in the act of theurgy and through Christ, "the material world (including that part of the celebrant which is material)" is brought "into harmony with the divine order."[65] We can,

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62 Struck, *Birth of the Symbol*, 1-20, 78-84, 162-277, cf. Mobley, *Symbolism*, 23-96. In the following, if not otherwise noted, I will use the word 'symbol' in this wider (classical) sense. For some more discussions of symbols, from philosophical, sociological, theological, and ethnographical perspectives, see Rubem A. Alves, "The Hermeneutics of the Symbol" (*Theology Today* 29:1, 1972), 46-53; Ian Hodder, "Symbolism and the Origins of Agriculture in the Near East," review article on *The Birth of the Gods and the Origins of Agriculture* by Jacques Cauvin (*Cambridge Archaeological Journal* 11:1, 2001), 107-112; C. Behan McCullagh, "The relations between symbols and what they symbolize" (*Social Science Information* 27:2, 1988), 293-305; Mobley, *Symbolism*; Paul Willis, "*Sým-bolon*: Symbol–action–context" (*Ethnography* 11:1, 2010), 3-23.

63 Davison, *Why Sacraments?*, 13-22; Hegstad, *Dåpen*, 34-90, cf. Matthew 28:16-20; Mark 16:16; John 3:3-5; Acts 2:38-41; Romans 6; Galatians 3:23-27; Ephesians 5:25-26; Colossians 2:6-15; Titus 3:1-7; 1 Peter 3:18-22.

64 See the Second Vatican Council's Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, 9-29, as well as the Lutheran *Confessio Augustana* (hereafter: *CA*), V-XIII, cf. Davison, *Why Sacraments?*, 142-147; Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, III, 336-369; Schmemann, *For the Life of the World*, 28, 43-46, 55, 67-79. On Vatican II documents, see abbreviations, p.5, n4. For notes on the Lutheran confessions, see abbreviations, p.5, n3. If not otherwise noted, quotations from *CA* follow the translation of the Latin text.

65 Struck, "Pagan and Christian Theurgies," 30. Also see Struck, *Birth of the Symbol*, 262, where he, citing

perhaps, speak of a 'sacramental assurance,' where our assurance of God's promise is not rooted just intellectually in our own ability to 'remember' (or even 'demonstrate' with works), but in concrete gifts: in a baptismal act, through which we were buried and risen with Christ, in the Eucharistic elements, in which we are given the body and blood of Christ in order to have a deeper share in His life, or in audible words of absolution spoken by a physical priest, whereby we are given a concrete way to return to the baptismal grace, all of which is or was given to us at specific and concrete moments in time. As I have argued above,[66] God is communicated or mediated to us in concrete and physical ways because we are physical human beings. And, as I have noted elsewhere, we find an instance (or a precursor) to this in Leviticus 6:14-18, regarding the grain-offering.[67] In v.18, it states that the male descendants of Aaron shall eat of the offering and that "anything that touches them shall become holy." Holiness, then, can be communicated or mediated in a concrete and corporeal manner. The divine is, so to speak, incorporated into the body, expressing itself in and through it. We find an allusion to this in Luke 8:43-48, where a woman suffering from haemorrhages is healed by touching the fringe of Christ's clothes. She was healed and became holy through touch. Perhaps this is a veiled argument for Christ as the high priest.

Understood this way, the sacraments function as icons of God or of Christ, of the divine-creaturely union, where physical elements may mediate the divine, but also of the sacramental character of creation.[68] The heart of the liturgical conception I am developing here is this par-

CH, II, 4 (144B), notes that Pseudo-Dionysius holds that "even brute matter bears divine traces and is able to raise us up to the divinity."

66 Chapter three, pp.112-114.

67 Kjetil Kringlebotten, "Liturgi og kropp" (*Lære og liv* 37:2, 2010), 54-57, esp. 55. Some bibles, including Norwegian ones, follow the Hebrew Masoretic numbering, where Leviticus 6:14-18 is Leviticus 6:7-11 (and Leviticus 6:1-7 is Leviticus 5:20-26). The edition I use follows the Septuagint.

68 Simon Oliver, "Episcopacy, Priesthood, and the Priesthood of the Church" (The Michael Ramsey Lecture, Delivered at Little St. Mary's, Cambridge, 6 November 2017): "The key point is that we know creation as sacramental because we have sacraments, we know the Church as priestly because we have priests with the bishop as the fount of the Church's priestly ministry." See John Milbank and Catherine Pickstock, *Truth in Aquinas*, ebook version (London: Routledge, 2005), 52-75; Alexander Schmemann, *The Eucharist: Sacrament of the Kingdom*, trans. Paul Kachur (Crestwood, NY: SVS Press, 2003), 27-48.

ticipation in Christ, made manifest principally through the divine liturgy and the praise of the Church. According to Pseudo-Dionysius, we attain union with God "only by the love and the religious performance of the most worshipful Commandments" or "the religious performance of the most august commandments," i.e. through the hierourgical acts of liturgy and lives lived out in charity.[69] But these sacred acts or religious performances are not completely autonomous. Their source, notes Pseudo-Dionysius, is Baptism or divine regeneration. They are human re-enactments or non-identical repetitions of the divine work in Christ, the theurgy, where Christ works in us.[70] *Theourgía* is principally a subjective genitive ('a work *of* the divine'). But, as Stang notes, "the subjective genitive includes and subsumes the objective,"[71] because through our ontological participation (Gk. *méthexis*) in Christ, which creates a real act of imitation (Gk. *mímēsis*), it may become an objective genitive ('a work *addressed to* the divine'). In Christ, our works are real and yet derived. To invoke Aquinas's understanding of conversion, God lets us convert ourselves to Him, through His work, in a non-competitive manner.[72] As creatures, participating in God, we are made capable of action, not in a principally active sense, not even passively, but in the 'middle voice,' which indicates "the mediation of divine by human action."[73] What marks this is its anchoring in the transcendent, and its rejection of any 'competition' between divine and human agency. Our praise is not utterly self-reliant. It constantly reminds us that without grounding in God, through Christ, liturgy is impossible (cf.

69 *EH* II:1 (392A), cf. Catherine Pickstock, "Ritual. An introduction" (*International Journal of Philosophy and Theology* 79:3, 2018), 217-221, esp. 218-220.

70 *EH* II:3, 1-8 (392A-404D, esp. 397A-404D), cf. Titus 3:3-5; Darley, "Ritual as erotic anagogy," 268 (cf. 262-263, 264-268, 265/272, n80); Stang, *Apophasis and Pseudonymity*, 98-102. Also see Louth, "Pagan Theurgy and Christian Sacramentalism"; Rorem, "Iamblichus and the Anagogical Method," 456; Wear and Dillon, *Dionysius the Areopagite and the Neoplatonist Tradition*, 99-115.

71 Stang, *Apophasis and Pseudonymity*, 111, cf. Shaw, "Neoplatonic Theurgy and Dionysius the Areopagite," 590; Charles M. Stang, "Dionysius, Paul and the Significance of the Pseudonym" (*Modern Theology* 24:4, 2008), 554, n15; Struck, "Pagan and Christian Theurgies," 26-30; Wear and Dillon, *Dionysius the Areopagite and the Neoplatonist Tradition*, 101.

72 *ST* I-II, q.109, a.6, ad 1, cf. te Velde, "Partnership with God," 1174, n38. See chapter one, pp.52-54.

73 Catherine Pickstock, "Liturgy, Art and Politics" (*Modern Theology* 16:2, 2000), 180, n8, cf. 161; Pickstock, *After Writing*, 35-36, 105, n8; 112, 145, 157; Catherine Pickstock, *Repetition and Identity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 180-181.

John 15:5). It can never be adequately celebrated here in this world: "In the Roman Rite …, the worshipping "I" is both designated and realized by self-dispossessing acts of doxological impersonation which displace any sense of enclosed autonomy in the subject in favour of that which is impersonated."[74] The priest, on behalf of the congregation, boldly starts the celebration of Mass with the ultimate 'impersonation': "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." Our praise is only possible because God already praises, or glorifies, Himself. As Pickstock formulates it: "The human being is in the image of God as God's worshipper, a sharer in his Trinitarian self-praise."[75] But this imitation or impersonation, Pickstock notes, is impossible except through Christ: "[W]e are able to receive God in the middle voice, since, in Christ, God is ineffably both divine and human, active and passive."[76] And we can also see this by analysing the Greek word *leitourgía*.

While this word, formed from *laós* ('people') and *érgon* ('work'), is often translated as 'the work of the people,' that is only partly accurate. Yes, when we worship, *we* worship. Our acts are real and we are not 'competing' with God.[77] But even so, the liturgy is only 'the work *of* the people' in a derivative and secondary sense, as an imitation grounded in our ontological participation in God through Christ. We can also translate *leitourgía* as 'the work *for* the people' (which also captures the way the word was actually used in the ancient Greek city states). A 'liturgy' was a public service rendered unto the city state by its wealthiest citizens, who financed

74 Pickstock, *After Writing*, 208, cf. 180-192, 208-213; Nathan Mitchell, *Real Presence: The Work of Eucharist*, new and expanded ed. (Chicago, IL: Liturgy Training Publications, 2001), 142-144. Also see Jose Isidro Belleza, *Lex Loquendi, Lex Orandi: Pickstock, Aquinas, and the Reform of the Roman Offertoria* (Master's Thesis, the University of Berkeley, 2019).

75 Pickstock, "Ritual," 220, cf. Milbank and Pickstock, *Truth in Aquinas*, 1-16. We impersonate God but also the Angels (Pickstock, *After Writing*, 188-189, 202-213). Also see Pseudo-Dionysius's treatment of the celestial hierarchy, and our participation it it, in *CH* I-III (120A-168B); *EH* I (369A-377B).

76 Pickstock, *After Writing*, 157.

77 Davison, *Participation in God*, 65-83; Milbank and Riches, "Neoplatonic Theurgy and Christian Incarnation," viii. The pagan Neoplatonists also understood theurgy partly as a human work, but they also highlighted that it was principally divine. As I will come back to in chapter six, pp.216-224, there is a focus on the human 'part' of this in many of the modern liturgical reforms. We often see that certain parts of the liturgy, especially the prayers and the praise, are regarded as the Church's responses and as human works that are subject to change.

the city state, more or less voluntarily.[78] A 'minister' or 'liturgist' (Gk. *leitourgós*) could pay for roads, soldiers (when needed), gymnasiums, choir members, actors, and more. The point of the liturgy offered by the liturgist was to enable the citizens to live out their lives, religiously, culturally, or otherwise. The liturgist was an *enabler* who worked *for* the people to make possible the work *of* the people. This understanding of liturgy might help us better understand what is meant by the word in the New Testament. When Hebrews 8:2 calls Christ "a minister (Gk. *leitourgós*) in the sanctuary," this indicates first and foremost that He is ministering or making intercession on our behalf. But it also means that through His work we are *enabled* to live out our lives, ethically, ritually, or culturally. We see this more explicitly in Romans 15:15-16 when St. Paul calls himself a 'minister' or 'liturgist' of Christ through grace. He is ministering to the Gentiles on the behalf of Christ, "so that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit." Through the liturgical, holy, and priestly work of St. Paul, and other ministers, the people of God are not just saved but enabled to praise and worship. Liturgy is the work of God, the work of Christ as "a minister in the sanctuary" (Hebrews 8:2) through whom we are made capable of a life of service and worship.

To put it in sacramental terms, Christ may be called the 'primordial sacrament.' As a human being, hypostatically united to God, He is God's mystery, and we encounter God first and foremost through Him.[79] For us, however, this does not come directly but, as Aquinas notes, in the sacraments, which become mysteries, channels of divine grace, precisely through Christ, God's mystery: "[It is not] unreasonable that spiritual well-being be dispensed by means of

78 Matthew R. Christ, "Liturgy Avoidance and Antidosis in Classical Athens" (*Transactions of the American Philological Association* 120, 1990), 147-169.

79 Romans 16:25; 1 Corinthians 2:1; 2:7; 4:1; Ephesians 1:8-12; 3:1-4; 3:7-10; 5:32; 6:19-20; Colossians 1:25-27; 2:2-3; 4:3-4; 1 Timothy 3:8-9; 3:16, cf. Benjamin Allen Kautzer, *The Works of Mercy: Towards a Liturgical Ethic of the Everyday* (PhD dissertation, Durham University, 2015), 36, 38-57; C. Pierson Shaw, ""Christ as Primary Sacrament": Ways to Ecumenical Convergence in Sacramental Ecclesiology," in *Pathways for Ecclesial Dialogue in the Twenty- First Century: Revisiting Ecumenical Method*, eds., Mark D. Chapman and Miriam Haar (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 29-42; Herbert Vorgrimler, *Sacramental Theology*, trans. Linda M. Maloney (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1992), 27-42, esp. 30-32; Wear and Dillon, *Dionysius the Areopagite and the Neoplatonist Tradition*, 104-106, esp. 104, n16.

visible and corporeal things, since these visible elements are, as it were, instruments of God's Incarnation and Passion."[80] But is there not a disadvantage here, at least for us? We, unlike the apostles, have not heard, seen, or touched Christ. Christ is the one mediator (1 Timothy 2:5), but for us, this mediator is also mediated to us. For us, the revelation of Christ must come, so to speak, hidden, veiled, mediated in Scripture, in the sacraments, and through other people (1 John 1:1-4). In John 20:29, having just received praise from St. Thomas the Apostle, Christ says, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe." Something similar is seen in Luke 24:13-35, were we find two disillusioned disciples walking from Jerusalem to Emmaus on Easter day, not believing in the resurrection stories. They meet Christ on the way, though they do not know, as they are hindered from recognising Him. On the walk, Christ mediates Himself to them, through the Scriptures, and at the end, the two disciples invites Christ to dine with them. Then, as He breaks the bread, they suddenly recognise Him, before He vanishes. They recall how their hearts were "burning within [them] while he was talking to [them] on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to [them]" (v.32), thus emphasising that He was mediated to them through Scripture, and through a preacher (though He was Himself the preacher), before they go back to the other disciples in Jerusalem, proclaiming Christ, and saying that He "had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread" (v.35). According to Scripture, then, we truly see the risen Christ in His gifts, not directly. But why is this?

Scripture, recognising that Christ is not here with us as He was with the apostles, acknowledges that, as bodily creatures, we need concrete means of grace and we need someone to reveal it to us. In 1 John 1:1-3, St. John notes that he, and his fellow apostles, are revealing to us that which they "have heard, what [they] have seen with [their] eyes, what [they] have looked at and touched with [their] hands." We, who have not heard, seen, or touched Christ like the apostles

[80] *SCG* IV, 56:7.

did, must get this revealed to us by other people who points us to Christ and to His gifts, by the power of the Holy Spirit, precisely because we are bodily creatures in concrete places and in a a given time in history.[81] Since we cannot encounter Christ directly, at least not here, He, as mediator, must Himself be mediated to us through the means of grace, through Scripture and the sacraments. And this is a central point of Christian theurgy. Theurgy is the work of God, whose principal subject is God Himself, particularly in Christ. For us, however, it must be mediated. With Iamblichus we can say, as Wear and Dillon, that "*theourgía* is not human work that compels the gods, but rather divine work enacted by humans."[82] As I have argued above,[83] we are incorporated into Christ ritually and sacramentally, and become Christ's body. To point back to my definition of Christian theurgy,[84] we enact or participate in the divine act, the divine theurgy, as members of Christ's body. And this is mediated to us through concrete means and concrete persons. But mediation is not, thereby, less 'real.' Rather, it gives creation a new purpose. The divine or heavenly liturgy in which we participate non-identically, in an expectant and diminished fashion in time, is coming down to us in acts, in water, in bread and wine, in prayer, praise, and thanksgiving. It comes to us in concrete things and actions, through God's gifts in creation, because the Incarnation sanctifies creation in a new way. The point is not that we should try to become 'more spiritual,' but that God became a human being, that God "became *flesh* and and lived among us" (John 1:14) and that He reveals Himself to us in concrete things, not abstractions. The world, in all its createdness, corporeality, and finitude, is then qualified as the place wherein we meet God as giver and wherein we receive His gifts, including the gift of service which we are allowed to offer back. As Oswald Bayer puts it:

> In the particular divine service [the Eucharistic celebration], we can hear, taste, and see, through

81 John 16:4-15; Romans 10:14-17, cf. *CA*, V, XIV; Davison, *Why Sacraments?*, 55-95.

82 Wear and Dillon, *Dionysius the Areopagite and the Neoplatonist Tradition*, 101, cf. Stang, *Apophasis and Pseudonymity*, 108-116.

83 See chapter four, pp.153-162, esp. 155-157.

84 See introduction, p.18, cf. *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (hereafter: *SC*), 7; Struck, "Pagan and Christian Theurgies," 30.

> the word, that what holds the world together in its inmost essence is the categorical gift rather than the categorical imperative (*contra* Kant). *The particular divine service* does not cultivate its own separate religious sphere, but it *discloses the world as creation*.[85]

This is connected to the Incarnation but also to God in Himself, and His relation to creation. God is not transcendent because He is far away in some 'spiritual realm.' No, He is transcendent in Himself. He is equally 'near' and 'far.' This also levels the modern distinction between 'spirit' and 'matter,' pointing to the older (and more fundamental) distinction between God and creation. God has created everything, visible and invisible, as we confess in the *Nicene Creed*.[86] Through the Incarnation, the distinction between God and creation has not been denied but it has, somehow, been 'bridged' – "without confusion, change, division, or separation."[87] And the union gained is not a union between God and humans alone, understood in a spiritualist sense. No, it is a union between God and creation, with humanity, in all its spirituality and physicality, as its centre. We are not called to become non-human and to abandon creation but to become more human, fully human, *in creation*. For Pseudo-Dionysius, this comes to expression in his understanding of hierarchy. The point of theurgy is that it displaces us where we are, deifying us in our place. "Despite the prevalent descriptions of ascent," writes Stang, "proximity and union are not achieved by our moving closer to the source, ascending the hierarchy, but rather by allowing the source to move more fully through us."[88] We are already part of the hierarchy but in Christ we can ascend more fully into it. The point, then, is not that we should become something else, something 'more spiritual,' as we see in Chaldean and Iamblichean theurgy,[89] but that we become more fully human and that the world, in all its createdness, corporeality, and

85 Oswald Bayer, *Theology the Lutheran Way*, ed. and trans. Jeffrey G. Silcock and Mark C. Mattis (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), 91, cf. Knut Alfsvåg, "Luthersk spiritualitet: Om lære og liv i den éne, kristne kirke" (*Dansk Tidsskrift for Teologi og Kirke* 40:1, 2013), 43-46.

86 See *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, eds. Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2000), 22, cf. 19, 22-23.

87 *The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon*, II, 204.

88 Stang, *Apophasis and Pseudonymity*, 115, cf. 81-116, 187-194 (192-194); Louth, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition*, 160-169.

89 *DM* V, 18; VI, 6; *TCO*, frag. 153-154, 194, cf. Majercik, *The Chaldean Oracles*, 20, 198, 212.

finitude, remains the place where we meet God. As Stang notes, creation is the place *through* which the 'divine energy' or the divine work, the theurgy (ie. Christ himself, as light and love) works. This comes to us where we are, and displaces us, most particularly in the liturgical life of the Church:

> To each creature is given the choice to consent to this light and love, that is, to allow it to pass *through* in two directions, as the energy processes downward and returns upward to the neighboring ranks, and to rest *in* the creature. To all of creation is given this same choice, but humans access this energy through the rites of the church. When we consent to have Christ pass through us—as we do once at baptism and regularly at the Eucharist—we seek to be what Paul calls "co-workers with God" (*συνεργοῖ θεοῦ*). This "cooperation" (*συνεργία*) with the work of God is for Dionysius none other than divinization, the very goal of hierarchy. We cooperate first by consenting to be displaced by Christ, and we thereby look to lead a split existence, remaining in our rank in the hierarchy of creation and yet suffering union with the very source of that creation.[90]

When we ascend, our ascent becomes a paradoxical descent into creation, in imitation of Christ. God descended and became a human being, and this descent found its utmost expression on the Cross and it is communicated to us in the sacraments, most particularly in the Eucharist, though what happens in the Eucharist is not just the descent of God but the corresponding ascent of creation. This ascent, however, is paradoxically a descent, as we ascend to the God who is here, amongst us. The principal movement is not from us to God but downwards, from the transcendent God, whose transcendence is not extrinsic and remote but immanent.[91] The Christian, earthly, liturgy, then, is a mediated participation in its divine source but in an imitative, 'diminished' and and non-identically repeated manner in time. We can never do liturgy fully, at least not in this life. It will always remain an 'impossible' repetition of the heavenly liturgy, but not as a participation in some abstract realm 'up there.'[92] We participate in the divine

90 Stang, *Apophasis and Pseudonymity*, 194-195, cf. 194-196.

91 Revelation 21:1-5a, cf. Rudi A. te Velde, *Participation and Substantiality in Thomas Aquinas* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 164: "…transcendence in the immanence."

92 Pickstock, *After Writing*, 173. Gregory Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy*, 3rd ed. (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2005), 718-719 notes that our celebrations are not simple (resembling) 'copies' of the Last Supper. They have developed into a wide variety of (non-identical) rites.

liturgy here on earth in a mediatory and symbolic manner, and in this way the Christian, earthly, liturgy becomes a real (though non-identical) and eschatological anticipation of what is to come, of the union of heaven and earth (or an actual fore-taste of it, in the consecrated elements) when God descends more fully, when He dwells with us more fully, when we become His people more fully, and when He will be with us more fully (Revelation 21:1-5). This is the nature of Christian theurgy. It is first and foremost the ritual participation in God, or the ritual application of our justification and deification, given as a gratuitous gift. What we see in a liturgical conception informed by the analogy of being is an 'assimilation' of nature and culture in worship but only because they participate in Christ, who communicates or mediates Himself to us through nature and culture, forming and transforming them. And now, having argued for a metaphysics of worship and mediation, which embraces nature in its createdness, corporeality, and finitude, I will argue that while this Christian theurgy may be expressed in many ways, its fullest expression is in the celebration of the Eucharist.

3 Analogy, liturgy, and transubstantiation

In this section, I will argue that a doctrine of transubstantiation not only provides the most coherent way of holding together real presence, divine act, and an analogical understanding of reality, but it also preserves the place of nature, *as nature*. To argue this, I will contrast it to John Calvin's understanding of the Eucharist, as he downplays the role of physicality in worship. For him, the central interpretive key of the Eucharist is the *sursum corda* ("lift up your hearts"). We see this particularly in the rather wordy and didactic Reformed liturgy used in Calvin's Geneva, where the minister exhorts the people to lift up their hearts, focusing on heavenly things:

> [L]et us lift our spirits and hearts on high where Jesus Christ is in the glory of His Father, whence we expect Him at our redemption. Let us not be fascinated by these earthly and corruptible elements which we see with our eyes and touch with our hands, seeking Him there as though He were enclosed

> in the bread or wine. Then only shall our souls be disposed to be nourished and vivified by His substance when they are lifted up above all earthly things, attaining even to heaven, and entering the Kingdom of God where He dwells. Therefore let us be content to have the bread and wine as signs and witnesses, seeking the truth spiritually where the Word of God promises that we shall find it.[93]

For Calvinist theology, then, the bread and wine, "these earthly and corruptible elements," have absolutely no value, at least liturgically, if not in themselves. This seems to follow a Pauline emphasis on setting our minds on that which is above (Colossians 3). But it ignores the Pauline emphasis a chapter earlier: "For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have come to fullness in him, who is the head of every ruler and authority" (Colossians 2:9-10). For Calvin, the *sursum corda* signifies our spiritual ascent to God through the Spirit, as he notes in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*:

> The sum is, that the flesh and blood of Christ feed our souls just as bread and wine maintain and support our corporeal life. For there would be no aptitude in the sign, did not our souls find their nourishment in Christ. This could not be, did not Christ truly form one with us, and refresh us by the eating of his flesh, and the drinking of his blood. But though it seems an incredible thing that the flesh of Christ, while at such a distance from us in respect of place, should be food to us, let us remember how far the secret virtue of the Holy Spirit surpasses all our conceptions, and how foolish it is to wish to measure its immensity by our feeble capacity. Therefore, what our mind does not comprehend let faith conceive—viz. that the Spirit truly unites things separated by space.[94]

This is, as Joseph Ratzinger notes, a fundamentally 'dynamic' understanding of liturgy, where the movement is upwards and away from our created context.[95] Understood in theurgic terms, this indicates, in Stang's words, "our moving closer to the source, ascending the hierarchy,"

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93 "The Form of Church Prayers, Strassburg, 1545, and Geneva, 1542," in *Liturgies of the Western Church*, selected and introduced by Bard Thompson (Cleveland: William Collins and World Publishing Co., 1961), 207 (cf. 185-210). For an argument in favour of Calvin's Eucharistic theology, see Martha L. Moore-Keish, *Do This in Remembrance of Me: A Ritual Approach to Reformed Eucharistic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), esp. 22-32.

94 John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 2 vols., trans. Henry Beveridge (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989), B.4, c.17, para. 10 (vol. 2, p.563), cf. para. 36 (vol. 2, p.594).

95 Joseph Ratzinger, *Theology of the Liturgy: The Sacramental Foundation of Christian Existence* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius, 2014), 221-224.

rather than "allowing the source to move more fully through us," the latter of which is the Pseudo-Dionysian approach.[96] In Calvin, we find something similar to the Iamblichean conception of ascent or anagogy (Gk. *anagōgē*), namely a spiritualistic notion of union, which is nonetheless achieved through rituals established by the divine (though the difference is that for Iamblichus, the elements are not worthless in themselves).[97] For Calvin, the liturgy has the same function, though he introduces to it a modern notion of symbolism, anchored in a purely conventional understanding of Christ's institution, the local, yet glorified presence of Christ in heaven, and the action of the Holy Spirit, uniting "things separated by space."[98] Citing St. Paul's point, that bread and the cup participate in Christ's body and blood (1 Corinthians 10:16), Calvin notes that they do so as mere symbols:

> There is no ground to object that the expression is figurative, and gives the sign the name of the thing signified. I admit, indeed that the breaking of bread is a symbol, not the reality. But this being admitted, we duly infer from the exhibition of the symbol that the thing itself is exhibited.[99]

Calvin maintains the symbolic power of the bread and wine (that they symbolise nourishment in Christ and that 'the thing itself,' the body and blood of Christ, is *exhibited* by these symbols), and contrasts this to the belief that they *really* participates in Christ. For Calvin, the Eucharist, as bread and wine, understood in a theatrical and pedagogical manner, is a symbol of our spiritual union with Christ. His use of 'symbol' here resembles the modern semiotic separation discussed by Peirce.[100] He separates out the ontological, conventional, and (merely) iconic dimensions of the sign. His approach, furthermore, is epistemological, focused on us and our understanding, rather than metaphysical, focused on the nature of the gift given. Simon Oliver notes that when

96 Stang, *Apophasis and Pseudonymity*, 115, cf. 115-116; Louth, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition*, 160-169.

97 *DM* VI, 6 (cf. V, 18): "The theurgist, through the power of arcane symbols, commands cosmic entities no longer as a human being or employing a human soul but, existing above them in the order of the gods." Also see *TCO*, frag. 153-154, 194; Majercik, *The Chaldean Oracles*, 20, 198, 212; Uždavinys, *Philosophy and Theurgy*, 18-21.

98 Calvin, *Institutes*, B.4, c.17, para. 10 (vol. 2, p.563).

99 Calvin, *Institutes*, B.4, c.17, para. 10 (vol. 2, pp.564).

100 Short, *Peirce's Theory of Signs*, 214-225.

Calvin emphasises the *sursum corda*, he maintains that what is important is not the real presence of Christ in the Eucharistic elements but "the Church's Trinitarian participation in the being of Christ" and "the participation in a localized but glorified Christological body in heaven."[101] In this sense, the rituals may become an 'escape' from concrete physical nature, which is deemed 'worthless' *for liturgical purposes* (if not in itself). Calvin separates the 'spiritual' and the 'material,' he denies the real and substantial presence of Christ in the Eucharist, and he separates God, as giver, and His gifts, as we see particularly in his rejection of the practice of adoring Christ in the Eucharistic elements: "For what is idolatry if it is not to worship the gifts instead of the giver?"[102] But the point in the Eucharist is that Christ *is* the gift given, and that this total separation of giver and gift is inappropriate, as Pickstock notes, echoing Søren Kierkegaard: "[I]n the case of the divine gift, gift, giver, giving, and condition of reception are identical, and therefore this is the only real gift in which one can absolutely trust."[103] In Calvin's conception of liturgy, the divine-human relationship is totally 'spiritualised' and we end up with a denial not just of our cultures but of our very physical creation as relevant for liturgy or worship. In order to 'reach' God, we have to, somehow, ignore the physical world that God has gifted us, as well as the cultures through which we express ourselves. Oliver notes that for Calvin, the bread and wine are "representations of that which is elsewhere, namely the body and blood of Christ," which entails that the natural is "somewhat arbitrary and secondary within the Eucharist."[104] This is underscored by the emphasis on the *sursum corda*, where the natural body is "to be

101 Oliver, "The Eucharist before Nature and Culture," 342, cf. 342-350.

102 Calvin, *Institutes*, B.4, c.17, para. 36 (vol. 2, p.594).

103 Pickstock, *Repetition and Identity*, 135 (cf. 134-140). See Søren Kierkegaard, *Eighteen Uplifting Discourses* III, 35-52, IV, 24-53, in *Kierkegaard's Writings*, vol. V, eds. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, 26 vols. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978-2000). "God is the only one who gives in such a way that he gives the condition along with the gift," writes Kierkegaard, "the only one who in giving already has given. God gives both to will and to bring to completion; he begins and completes the good work in a person" (*Eighteen Uplifting Discourses* IV, 32). It should be said that there is a distinction between giver and gift, so that the gift remains *gift* (and free), though never a separation (Davison, *Participation in God*, 160, cf. 155-164). But in the case of the Eucharist, this distinction does not apply to the Eucharist in itself, which *is* Christ, but to the gift of union given *through* the Eucharist. But this becomes a problem for Calvin, as he focuses on us rather than the gift.

104 Oliver, "The Eucharist before Nature and Culture," 342-343.

escaped from rather than itself participating in the economy of salvation towards transformation and redemption," something which entails that for Calvin, "the believer's participation in the liturgy is mimetic."[105] As Calvin notes himself:

> Christ is the only food of our soul, and, therefore, our heavenly Father invites us to him, that, refreshed by communion with him, we may ever and anon gather new vigour until we reach the heavenly immortality. But as this mystery of the secret union of Christ with believers is incomprehensible by nature, he exhibits its figure and image in visible signs adapted to our capacity. … [Christ] makes it as certain to us as if it were seen by the eye; the familiarity of the similitude giving it access to minds however dull, and showing that souls are fed by Christ just as the corporeal life is sustained by bread and wine. … Wherefore [the body and blood of the Lord] are represented under bread and wine, that we may learn that they are not only ours, but intended to nourish our spiritual life; that is, as we formerly observed, by the corporeal things which are produced in the sacrament, we are by a kind of analogy conducted to spiritual things.[106]

The physical liturgy, including the Eucharistic elements of bread and wine, only mimic the heavenly celebration of the liturgy, reducing it to 'mere theatre' with one purpose only: to teach or to illuminate 'dull minds.'[107] His liturgy "adopts a machine-like quality,"[108] which indicates a disconnect between imitation and ontological participation and an affirmation of a purely immanent view of created reality, at least in relation to salvation. If we assume a univocal conception of being, where God is an infinitely distant object, the anagogical countermove to God's descent becomes a spiritual escape from concrete physicality where the actual physical liturgy is nothing but a theatre and where you are 'whisked away' by the Spirit who "unites things separated by space."[109] Liturgy is, then, not really transformative, at least not in any direct

105 Oliver, "The Eucharist before Nature and Culture," 343.

106 Calvin, *Institutes*, B.4, c.17, para. 1, 3 (vol. 2, p.557, 558).

107 We also find tendencies toward this view in the Lutheran tradition, not with regards to liturgy as such, which is seen as essential (*CA* V, VII), but in the treatment of so-called ceremonies, human traditions, and rites which need not necessarily "be alike everywhere" (VII). While this is not problematic in itself, as our rites are always non-identical imitations, it becomes more problematic when the confession later states that that these ceremonies are "especially needed in order to teach those who are ignorant" (XXIV). This way, the way in which we do liturgy becomes somewhat arbitrary and the ceremonies are not valued in themselves but only as a means to an end.

108 Oliver, "The Eucharist before Nature and Culture," 343.

109 Calvin, *Institutes*, B.4, c.17, para. 10 (vol. 2, p.563), cf. Oliver, "The Eucharist before Nature and Culture," 342-350; Ratzinger, *Theology of the Liturgy*, 221-224.

way. If such a conception of liturgy is true, liturgy can only be transformative in an occasional manner, where God, for instance, gives blessings *on the occasion* of the liturgy, on account of promises made, but not because of the nature of the liturgy itself. It is, basically, 'liturgical occasionalism' (though that is never spelled out explicitly). Like the cog, which is nothing in itself, the worshipper only serves a 'higher purpose.' Blessings become utterly spiritualised. The Eucharist is emphasised because it is instituted by Christ but no real value is given to its form or physicality. What seems indicative of Calvin's conception of the liturgy, and of his (consistent) followers, is, as noted, an abandoning of our corporeality and particularity, and especially of our cultures, in favour of a 'spiritualising' both of worship and of the worshipper, where we are, so to speak, 'whisked away' from our bodily context.[110]

If we affirm an analogical and theurgic conception of liturgy, however, we can both affirm culture and physical creation, while also affirming that they need to be perfected in Christ.[111] This, however, is true of all created things, including our very selves. The fundamental dualism of reality is not between *spirit* and *matter*, as it seems to be in modernity, in different guises, and with different consequences, but between *Creator* and *creature*.[112] Contrasting this to Calvin's spiritualised conception, Oliver makes the point that Aquinas's conception of the Eucharist is not principally 'mimetic,' but that liturgy, the concrete and physical liturgical celebration, "becomes an essential and integral element of feeding *par excellence*, which is a feeding on the body of Christ."[113] In this understanding, writes Oliver, "the natural and cultural become not

[110] This also has a flip side, fostering a negative view of creation. See Alfsvåg, "Luthersk spiritualitet," 46-49; Knut Alfsvåg, "Transhumanism, Truth and Equality: Does the Transhumanist Vision Make Sense?" (*Theofilos* 7:3, 2015), 256-267, cf. Pickstock, *After Writing*, 101-118.

[111] For some studies on the place of material culture in Christian worship and theology, see Timothy Carroll, *Orthodox Christian Material Culture: Of People and Things in the Making of Heaven* (London: Routledge, 2018); Francesca Dell'Acqua and Ernesto Sergio Mainoldi, eds., *Pseudo-Dionysius and Christian Visual Culture, c.500–900* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020); Gordon W. Lathrop, *Holy Things: A Liturgical Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1998); Hallvard Olavson Mosdøl and Anne Haugland Balsnes, "Mer enn ord – om gudstjenestereformen og sanselighet," in *Gudstjeneste á la carte: Liturgireformen i Den norske kirke*, eds., Anne Haugland Balsnes et al (Oslo: Verbum akademisk, 2015), 210-229.

[112] Knut Alfsvåg, *Liturgien som modernitetskritikk* (Råde: FBB, 2016); Alfsvåg, "Luthersk spiritualitet."

[113] Oliver, "The Eucharist before Nature and Culture," 344, cf. 344-346; Darley, "Ritual as erotic anagogy." As noted in chapter one, pp.33-34, while Aquinas does not describe his approach as 'theurgic,' if we understand

objective ontological categories that apparently stand over against God and each other and from which we are removed, but most fully themselves as a participation in the divine life." Unlike Calvin, who held that the body of Christ is utterly like our own bodies, Aquinas held that the Eucharist determines what a body really is, that the body of Christ, unlike our bodies, is 'replete,' requiring no accidents. The remaining accidents of bread and wine are thus 'free-floating' without a subject, by divine power which can preserver the accidents in being.[114] The accidents, then, are not non-existent or simple but are upheld by God, *subsistent being itself*, by participation. Elsewhere Oliver notes that this 'un-Aristotelian' use of accidents as 'free-floating,' makes the Eucharist "a recapitulation of creation," as "creation is an accident, but not an accident of the divine substance."[115] The accidents are 'free-floating' by grace because creation is essentially accidental. It only exists because it participates in (or is 'suspended from') God. The Eucharist is a real ontological participation in the divine, and a real presence of the divine, made manifest in the gifts of creation. Transubstantiation explicates the species of bread and wine as symbols, in the comprehensive sense, for the divine through their participation in God. The Eucharist becomes the sacramental focus of all creation and the symbol *par excellence*. It reveals not just the salvation of Christ but also the symbolic nature of creation, reminding us that creation itself participates in the divine, and that this expresses itself as cult and culture, as a non-identical imitation of the divine life.

This participation is a participation in the divine act, the theurgy, which on a Thomistic

theurgy as a participation in the divine act, rather than a coercive 'manipulation' of God, it fits his understanding of metaphysical participation in God, manifested in Christ, worship, and human work. See Thomas Aquinas, *Disputed Questions on the Power of God* (*Quaestiones Disputatae de potentia Dei*, hereafter: *De pot.*), q.3, a.7; *ST* III, qq.60-90, cf. Addey, *Divination and Theurgy*, 32-38, 171-213; Stang, *Apophasis and Pseudonymity*, 81-152 (esp. 106-110); Struck, "Pagan and Christian Theurgies," esp. 31-33, 37-38.

114 *ST* III, q.77, a.1, corpus, cf. qq.75-77. I am indebted, here, to one of my fellow PhD candidates in Durham, now Dr. Joshua Mobley, for letting me read one of his essays on transubstantiation, creation, and contingency, where he develops the notion of creation as a 'free-floating' accident, participating in God. Also see Joshua Kendall Mobley, "*Transubstantiation: Theology, History, and Christian Unity* by Brett Salkeld" (review in *Modern Theology* 36:3, 2020), 692-695.

115 Simon Oliver, "Introducing Radical Orthodoxy: from participation to late modernity," in *The Radical Orthodoxy Reader*, eds., Simon Oliver and John Milbank (New York, NY: Routledge, 2009), 17/27, n31, cf. 17-21; Milbank, Pickstock, and Ward, eds., *Radical Orthodoxy*, 1-20.

account of divine simplicity cannot be distinguished from God in Himself.[116] And the central act of Christian theurgy is the Eucharist. Pseudo-Dionysius calls it "the most Divine Supper, and arch-symbol of the rites performed."[117] In many ways it reveals the ultimate supernatural *telos* of humanity, and of nature. It is, to again use my definition of Christian theurgy, an act of the triune God for us, put into use by Christ as the God-man, and the Church as His body, whose effect is to reconcile the world to God and make humans capable of worship and service through participation in Him.[118] Through the Eucharist, the accidents of bread and wine reach their end through participation in God by becoming icons of Christ, of his most precious body and blood. Aquinas highlights both the signification and the reality, stating that the body of Christ is in the sacrament "not merely in signification or figure," as is Calvin's position, "but also in very truth."[119] Here we see an absolute contrast to the Calvinist liturgy, where we are urged not to "be fascinated by these earthly and corruptible elements which we see with our eyes and touch with our hands" but to "be content to have the bread and wine as signs and witnesses, seeking the truth spiritually where the Word of God promises that we shall find it."[120] For Aquinas, transubstantiation is not a rejection of nature, but an elevating of nature to its *telos*. "God," writes Oliver, "is no longer denied to nature, but sustains the accidents of nature which are thereby most fully realised."[121] With Calvin, I confirm an anagogic understanding of the Eucharist, but against Calvin I hold that this 'rising up' is not a rejection of the concrete, physical nature of creation, but an expression of it. The material world is not destroyed by the divine order but brought into harmony with it. There is a legitimate way to understand the relation of the *sursum corda* and the Eucharist, where we emphasise both the value of the physical liturgy

116 *ST* I, q.3.
117 *EH* III:3, 1 (428B).
118 See introduction, p.18, cf. *SC*, 7; Struck, "Pagan and Christian Theurgies," 30.
119 *ST* III, q.75, a.1, corp.
120 "The Form of Church Prayers," 207.
121 Oliver, "The Eucharist before Nature and Culture," 348, cf. 348-350; Mobley, *Symbolism*, 57-96.

and the participation in the heavenly liturgy, but where this heavenly worship is made present here, in the midst of creation. We do not ascend away to some spiritual realm but we are deified where we are.[122] There is a perfection of the worshipping community, and creation as a whole, *as nature*.

4 Conclusion

In this chapter, following from the discussion in the previous one, I have argued that in a Christian understanding of the divine-human relationship, as in Neoplatonic theurgy, God is always revealed to us as mediated, in symbols and words, and that this presupposes that creation, while fallen, still participates in the divine and that it still retains its theophanic character (Job 12:7-8; Psalm 19:1; Romans 1:20). This presupposes a participatory and analogical conception of being. Our liturgical participation is a concrete manifestation of our participation in God, both as creatures in the Creator and as children and friends in the loving Trinity, through grace. This participation is a participation of the whole human being and of the whole of creation, and it happens in and through this, through mediation, symbolically and analogously. We do not reject createdness, corporeality, and finitude but let it have its place in the economy of God, and in our praise of him. In this conception, practical participation in the liturgical act, as liturgy, flows from, and is only possible through, ontological participation in Christ, or in God through Christ. Or rather: it *is* ontological participation in Christ, as the liturgy is principally the work of Christ, both divine and human, and because our very being is defined not just by mind and thought but also by action. When we act, we do so as participants in God, and it expresses itself non-identically in our imitation of Him. As the principal actor of the liturgical act, Christ does

[122] See Sverre Elgvin Lied, *Participation in Heavenly Worship: The Pre-Nicene Growth of a Concept* (PhD dissertation, VID Specialized University, Stavanger, 2016), cf. Kjetil Kringlebotten, ""Do this in remembrance of me…" A Lutheran defence of the sacrifice of the mass" (*Studia Theologica – Nordic Journal of Theology* 71:2, 2017), 130-136; Louth, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition*, 160-169; Stang, *Apophasis and Pseudonymity*, 115-116.

not reject, destroy, or surpass our nature but perfects and transforms it. And that is, ultimately, what liturgical theology is all about.

God does not want us to escape or transcend the material world, and certainly not in the liturgical act. Rather, He wants us, and the material world, to be brought "into harmony with the divine order."[123] The worshipping community, and creation as a whole, ascends to God, *in its physicality*. Human creatures, as all other creatures, are integrated wholes who relate to God as whole beings, not as disembodied 'spirits.' God created us as physical beings and He works in and through our form, as "nothing in nature is void of purpose."[124] Nature is lifted up into the divine but *as nature*. God is not transcendent because He is a 'larger than life' creature hidden away in a realm 'up there' but because He is utterly other, yet utterly near, being 'subsistent being itself.' Liturgy is, in its essence, a theurgy, as understood and reinterpreted through Christian practice and theology. It is revealed as the work of God by which we are made capable of worship and of a life of virtue. We are given an eschatological foretaste of heaven and we are enabled, through this gift of deification, to offer ourselves – in our createdness, corporeality, and finitude – as living sacrifices to God, in the Holy Spirit (cf. Romans 12:1). Where a univocal conception of being downplays the role of the material, introducing a spiritualised understanding of worship, an analogical concept of being allows us to participate in the divine life and the divine work, as friends and as children, by being transformed and transfigured in Christ, without ceasing to be created. Liturgy, and particularly the Eucharistic celebration, is not mere theatre helping us to become 'more spiritual,' but a real participation in the divine theurgy, the *actio divina* or *actio Christi*. This is not an escape from creation but the descent of God.[125] We are transformed in a way that does not entail a rejection

123 Struck, "Pagan and Christian Theurgies," 30, cf. Darley, "Ritual as erotic anagogy"; Oliver, "The Eucharist before Nature and Culture," 342-350; Ratzinger, *Theology of the Liturgy*, 221-224.

124 *De pot.*, q.3, a.7, corp. 2, cf. chapter three, pp.112-114.

125 Louth, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition*, 160-169; Stang, *Apophasis and Pseudonymity*, 115-116.

of physical creation. Liturgy, in all its spirituality and corporeality, *is* the way in which human beings worship, as integrated beings, through the gifts given to us by God.

In the next chapter, I apply my argument, for why we ought to understand liturgical participation in theurgic terms, to the latest liturgical reform in the Church of Norway, in comparison to reforms in the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church, arguing that the reform tends to downplay the metaphysical nature of participation. As Ratzinger notes, there is a focus on practical 'tasks,' where the liturgy becomes fragmented and compartmentalised.[126] And, as Pickstock has noted, we see that the liturgies themselves have become more 'logical' and 'streamlined,' often missing the more non-identical and organic nature of older rites.[127] In the chapter, I argue that in order to properly reform liturgy, we must first ask what liturgy *is*, and who its main actor is, before we ask what we should *do*.

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126 Joseph Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, commemorative ed. (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius, 2018), 185-191.

127 Pickstock, *After Writing*, 170-176; Catherine Pickstock, "A Short Essay on the Reform of the Liturgy" (*New Blackfriars* 78:912, 1997), 56-65.

CHAPTER SIX

Theurgy, liturgy, and reform

1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I argued that God is always revealed to us as mediated, something which presupposes that creation, while fallen, still participates in God, through Christ, as creation. Christ, through whom all things were made and through whom the sacraments become channels of divine grace, is the centre, and this finds its fullest expression in the Eucharist and in a doctrine of transubstantiation. In this chapter, I continue my argument for a theurgic understanding of active participation in the liturgy. While the concept of active participation has been central to the liturgical movement, inside and outside the Roman Catholic Church, though not necessarily by that exact designation, it is often understood in principally practical terms.[1] I, on the other hand, have argued that we should understand such participation principally in metaphysical terms, as a human participation in, and ritual celebration of, the divine act, and that, re-imagined within Christian theology, Neoplatonic theurgy provides us with a philosophical framework through which we can understand this participation, the ultimate expression of

[1] See John F. Baldovin, "The Development of the Liturgy: Theological and Historical Roots of *Sacrosanctum Concilium*" (*Worship* 87:6, 2013), 517-532; Jan Terje Christoffersen, "Sammen for Guds ansikt: Gudstjenestereform mellom visjon og virkelighet," in *Gudstjeneste á la carte: Liturgireformen i Den norske kirke*, eds., Anne Haugland Balsnes, et al. (Oslo: Verbum akademisk, 2015), 24-66 (esp. 26-32); John R. K. Fenwick and Bryan D. Spinks, eds., *Worship in Transition: The Liturgical Movement in the Twentieth Century* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995), esp. 6-7, 23-52, 71-79; Benjamin Gordon-Taylor, "An Anglican Perspective," in *T&T Clark Companion to Liturgy*, ed., Reid, 483-498; Clare V. Johnson, "From Organic Growth to Liturgico-Plasticity: Reconceptualizing the Process of Liturgical Reform" (*Theological Studies* 76:1, 2015), 87-111; Keith F. Pecklers, *The Genius of the Roman Rite: On the Reception and Implementation of the New Missal* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark/Continuum, 2003), 23-45; Joseph Ratzinger, *Theology of the Liturgy: The Sacramental Foundation of Christian Existence* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius, 2014), 541-568, 574-594; Alcuin Reid, "After *Sacrosanctum Concilium*—Continuity or Rupture?," in *T&T Clark Companion to Liturgy*, ed., Reid, 297-316; Alcuin Reid, "On the Council Floor: The Council Fathers' Debate of the Schema on the Sacred Liturgy," in *Authentic Liturgical Renewal in Contemporary Perspective*, ed., Uwe Michael Lang (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2017), 125-143; Alcuin Reid, "The Twentieth Century Liturgical Movement," in *T&T Clark Companion to Liturgy*, ed., Reid, 153-174; Richard J. Schuler, "Participation" (*Sacred Music* 114:4, 1987), 7-10; Kenneth D. Whitehead, ed., *Sacrosanctum Concilium and the Reform of the Liturgy* (Scranton, PA: University of Scranton Press, 2009).

which is the hypostatic union. In the hypostatic union, there is not just a voluntary and contractual union but a real metaphysical union-in-distinction between divinity and humanity and, through humanity, with creation as a whole.[2] The Second Vatican Council's Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy defines liturgy as "an exercise of the priestly office of Jesus Christ" and notes that it is also an act of the Church, but only through participation in Christ: "in the liturgy the whole public worship is performed by the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ, that is, by the Head and His members."[3] When we participate in the liturgy, then, according to the Constitution, we participate in the act of Christ, because we already participate in Him through Baptism. What I demonstrate in this thesis is that, while liturgical participation cannot be separated from particular rites and celebrations, it cannot be reduced to them. I am arguing that we must ground liturgical participation in the divine, in a rational manner, and that if we do not do so, it has no inner coherence.

In this chapter, I examine to what extent such a metaphysical approach to the liturgy can be found in the latest liturgical reform of the Church of Norway (hereafter: CoN). Where that is relevant, I will compare and contrast this to the reforms in the Church of England (hereafter: CofE) and the Roman Catholic Church (hereafter: RCC). I do so because CoN has recently concluded the main parts of an extensive liturgical reform, which started in the early 2000s,[4] because these are all Western churches with similar structures, anchored in a sacramental and liturgical life, because we see in both CoN and CofE, who are in communion, a move towards a more ecumenical or universal shape of the liturgy, informed by the liturgical and ecumenical movements and particularly developments in RCC,[5] and because we see in the reforms of all

2 See chapter four, pp.140-146.

3 *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (hereafter: *SC*), 7. On Vatican II documents, see abbreviations, p.5, n4.

4 Anne Haugland Balsnes, et al., "Innledning: Gudstjenestefornyelse i menighetene," in *Gudstjeneste á la carte*, eds., Balsnes, et al., 13-23; Christoffersen, "Sammen for Guds ansikt."

5 Christoffersen, "Sammen for Guds ansikt," 26-32; Fenwick and Spinks, eds., *Worship in Transition*, 37-52, 61-79.

three churches an emphasis on an activistic notion of involvement an a corresponding deemphasis on a metaphysical dimension of liturgical participation.[6] Although the empowering the laity through involvement is noble, instead of empowering the lay vocation, inside and outside the liturgical setting, this empowering seems to be a turning of the laity into clerics. And furthermore, it has tended to reduce the liturgy to a cultural phenomenon, best studied by sociologists and anthropologists.[7] As I have argued, however, liturgy does not principally express human sentiments or needs but the divine order in which we can discover our place.

The CoN reform started in the early 2000s, with a renewal of the main (Sunday) celebration of Mass,[8] but this had roots in earlier reforms.[9] In the late 1960s, while some started to be more inspired by the liturgical movement, there were certain 'anti-ritualistic' tendencies in the Church of Norway, with some seeing the new (ecumenical) changes as a 'catholicising' and 'ritualising' of the divine service. The critics of this new move emphasised the passive nature of the liturgical and sacramental gifts.[10] Later, including in the latest reform, we saw a move towards a more

6 Anscar J. Chupungco, "The Vision of the Constitution on the Liturgy," in *T&T Clark Companion to Liturgy*, ed., Reid, 261-277; *Transforming Worship: Living the New Creation (GS 1651)*, report by the Liturgical Commission to the General Synod of the Church of England, February 2007), 2.6-7, 2.15, 2.20, 3.5, 5.6.1, 6.9.2, 6.10; Ratzinger, *Theology of the Liturgy*, 541-568, 574-594; Merete Thomassen, "«Jeg brenner jo for involvering.» Involvering og delaktighet i gudstjenester med økt oppslutning" (*Teologisk tidsskrift* 9:2, 2020), 38-54.

7 An example of which can be found in Martin Modéus, *Menneskelig gudstjeneste: Om gudstjenesten som relation og ritual*, trans. and comm. Anita Hansen Engdahl (København: Alfa, 2011). Modéus, rather than starting with the theological nature of the liturgy, sees it as an expression of human experience, discussing it in anthropological and sociological terms.

8 The standard name used to be *høgmesse* (lit. 'High Mass'), which is still in use, but now the more prevalent one is either either *gudsteneste* ('Divine Service,' the equivalent on the German *Gottesdienst*) or *hovudgudsteneste* ('Main Divine Service'). Part of the reason was that there was a tendency to use *høgmesse* of any service on Sunday, even if it did not include the Eucharistic celebration.

9 Christoffersen, "Sammen for Guds ansikt," 26-41. Before this there were to major reforms, one starting in the late 19th century, concluding in the 1920s, after which we have seen many small revisions and additions, and one in the 1960s and 1970s, after which, in 1977, the bishops issued a new liturgy. This was supplemented by additions up to the 1990s. See Lars Flatø, *Den store liturgirevisjonen i vår kirke 1886-1926: En kirkehistorisk undersøkelse* (Oslo: Land og Kirke/Gyldendal, 1982); *Gudstenestebok for Den norske kyrkja*, 2 vols. in one book (Oslo: Verbum, 1996); Øystein Skullerud, *Liturgisk musikk i Den norske kirke 1889 - 2009: Musikkmateriale og faktisk bruk* (Master's Thesis, NMH Norwegian Academy of Music, Oslo, 2010), 9-98.

10 Jørund Håkedal, *Fra prestens gudstjeneste til folkets messe* (Master's Thesis, MF Norwegian School of Theology, Oslo, 2012), 29. An important figure here is the influential theologian Carl. Fr. Wisløff, who emphasised the role of preaching to the extent that the sacraments became secondary. He was highly influential on the more pietistic strands of Norwegian Lutheranism. See Sverre Bøe, ed., *Teologen Carl Fr. Wisløff: En antologi hundre år etter hans fødsel* (Oslo: FMH-forlaget, 2008), as well as Carl Fr. Wisløff, *Nattverd og messe:*

ritualistic focus.[11] In 2001, CoN's Youth Synod or Youth Assembly (No. *ungdomstinget*) issued a resolution emphasising active participation. It stated that the Church must make sure that "the whole congregation participates actively in the Divine Service."[12] Later, in 2002, the Church Council made a decision that if there was to be a reform, this would have to be brought up to the General Synod.[13] The Youth Synod took the challenge and called for a simpler order:

> The liturgy of the current High Mass comes across as inaccessible for many of its participants, and we believe that we have to focus on communicating what it means and what it stands for. It will also be important to have a simpler order, something which can in itself serve as a means to increase the understanding of the order and the content of the Divine Service.[14]

What the Synod called for was more freedom within the existing liturgies, for example being allowed to use more diverse musical expressions or have more youth oriented services (in addition to the family services). The result, however, was a long an complex reform, lasting almost two decades, ending (for now) with a new order of Baptism in 2017 and a new order of the

En studie i Luthers teologi (Doctoral thesis. Oslo: Lutherstiftelsen, 1957), cf. Carl Fr. Wisløff, *The Gift of Communion: Luther's controversy with Rome on Eucharistic Sacrifice*, trans. Joseph M. Shaw (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1964). I criticised Wisløff's approach in Kjetil Kringlebotten, ""Do this in remembrance of me…" A Lutheran defence of the sacrifice of the mass" (*Studia Theologica – Nordic Journal of Theology* 71:2, 2017), 127-147 (esp. 132-136) and Kjetil Kringlebotten, *«Do this in remembrance of me…» The Sacrificial Aspect of the Eucharist in the Systematic Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg and Joseph Ratzinger* (Master's thesis, NLA University College, Bergen, 2013), 104-111, 117.

11 Hallvard Olavson Mosdøl and Anne Haugland Balsnes, "Mer enn ord – om gudstjenestereformen og sanselighet," in *Gudstjeneste á la carte*, eds., Balsnes, et al., 210-229; Gunnfrid Ljones Øierud, "Deltakerroller for konfirmanter," in *Gudstjenester med konfirmanter: En praktisk-teologisk dybdestudie med teoretisk bredde*, ed., Elisabeth Tveito Johnsen (Oslo: IKO-forlaget, 2017), 157-201; Merete Thomassen, "Konfirmanter som ministranter i gudstjenesten," in *Gudstjenester med konfirmanter*, ed., Johnsen, 119-156; Elisabeth Tveito Johnsen, "Gudstjenestelæring gjennom deltagelse," in *Gudstjeneste på ny*, ed., Geir Hellemo (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 2014), 151-179; Kari Veiteberg, "Gudstenesta som ei hending med handlingar," in *Gudstjeneste på ny*, ed., Hellemo, 71-88.

12 *UKM 01/01 Menighetsfellesskap*, resolution on the communion of the congregation from the Church of Norway Youth Synod (Oslo: Kyrkjerådet, 2001), 1 (my translation). Original text: "Det er spesielt viktig at hele menigheten deltar aktivt i gudstjenesten."

13 *KR 08/02 Vurdering av ordningen med liturgiske forsøkssaker*, decision on the possibility of liturgical reform from the Church of Norway Church Council (Oslo: Kyrkjerådet, 2002). For the website of the Church Council (No. *kyrkjerådet* or *kirkerådet*), see https://kirken.no/nb-NO/om-kirken/slik-styres-kirken/kirkeradet/ (accessed 10 February 2021).

14 *UKM 05/03 Hva slags gudstjeneste vil vi ha*, hearing on the liturgy from the Church of Norway Youth Synod (Oslo: Kyrkjerådet, 2003), 2 (my translation). Original text: "Liturgien i dagens høymesse oppleves lite tilgjengelig for mange gudstjenestedeltagere, og vi tror at det må fokuseres på å formidle hva den betyr og hva den står for. Dette vil også være viktig med en enklere ordning, noe som i seg selv kan være et virkemiddel til å øke forståelsen av gudstjenestens gang og innhold."

Divine Service in 2020.[15] Early in the process, the Youth Synod laid out some suggestions for the reform:

> The Synod asks the Church Council to work for a more flexible order of the High Mass and Divine Service. We suggest that one can take a starting point in a basic structure which shall remain the same in all services. In addition, one should strive for a set of core values. Furthermore, forms of expression for the various parts can be adapted to local needs and resources, etc.[16]

From this, the Church Council introduced two central methodological tools;[17] the *ordo*, as a principle of unity (cf. "a basic structure which shall remain the same in all services") and three so-called 'core values'; *flexibility*, *involvement*, and localised *contextuality* (No., *fleksibilitet*, *involvering*, and *stadeigengjering/stedegengjøring*), intended to be used as guidelines for the

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15 See *Gudsteneste med rettleiingar* (Stavanger: Eide, 2020, hereafter: *GDNK 2020*); *Ordning for dåp* (Stavanger: Eide, 2017). Some of these are found online, along with translations (though the translation of the principal service has not yet been updated to the 2020 edition). See https://kirken.no/nb-NO/om-kirken/for-medarbeidere/liturgier/ and https://kirken.no/nb-NO/om-kirken/for-medarbeidere/liturgier/liturgier-oversatt-til-andre-sprak/, both accessed 17 January 2021. There has still not been a revision to the ordination rituals or specific days during the church year. For those, see *Gudstenestebok*. I have been told that the plan is to revise them in the near future. For the website of CoN General Synod (No. *kyrkjemøtet* or *kirkemøtet*), see https://kirken.no/nb-NO/om-kirken/slik-styres-kirken/kirkemotet/ (accessed 17 January 2021). The relevant years are 2010 (no. 4-8), 2011 (no. 4-7), 2017 (no. 5), and 2019 (no. 5). For the debates, plenary proceedings, and votes on the revision in the 2019, see https://vimeo.com/album/5872354, video 4 (1:58:15-3:27:57) and 11 (0:04:15-1:28:01, 2:07:05-2:36:21), accessed 2 April 2019. For some central research, see Balsnes, et al., eds., *Gudstjeneste á la carte*; Håkedal, *Fra prestens gudstjeneste til folkets messe*; Hellemo, ed., *Gudstjeneste på ny*; Robert Lilleaasen, *Old Paths and New Ways: Negotiating Tradition and Relevance in Liturgy* (PhD dissertation, MF Norwegian School of Theology, Oslo, 2016); Jorunn Raddum, *Variety is the Spice of Life? Forandring fryder? the Church of Norway 2011 liturgical reform: A study of the concept of contextuality in Nord-Gudbrandsdal* (Master's Thesis, MF Norwegian School of Theology, Oslo, 2015); Marit Rong, *Det liturgiske møte: Språk og gudsmetaforer i Den norske kirkes høymesse* (PhD dissertation, University of Bergen, 2009); Johnsen, ed., *Gudstjenester med konfirmanter*. A book based on Lilleaasen's thesis has later been published; *Old Paths and New Ways: Negotiating Tradition and Relevance in Liturgy* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2018).

16 *UKM 05/03 Hva slags gudstjeneste vil vi ha*, 2 (my translation). Original text: "UKM [the abbreviation of the Synod's Norwegian title] ber Kirkerådet jobbe for en mer fleksibel høymesse- og gudstjenesteordning. Vi foreslår at man kan ta utgangspunkt i en grunnstruktur som skal være den samme i alle gudstjenester. I tillegg bør man tilstrebe et sett av kjerneverdier. Videre kan uttrykksformer for de ulike ledd tilpasses lokale behov og ressurser osv."

17 *GDNK 2020*, 10-11, 351-393; *KR 10/04 Reform av Høymessen*, decision on the liturgical reform by the Church of Norway Church Council (Oslo: Kyrkjerådet, 2004), esp. 9-10; *KR Protokoll 01/04*, minutes from the Church of Norway Church Council meeting, March 2004 (Oslo: Kyrkjerådet, 2004), 9-12, esp. 10; *Liturgi – Bokmål: Forslag til Ny ordning for hovedgudstjeneste i Den norske kirke* (Bergen: Eide/Kyrkjerådet, 2008), 13-24, 44-46; *UKM 07/08 Gudstenestereforma*, hearing on the liturgical reform from the Church of Norway Youth Synod (Oslo: Kyrkjerådet, 2008), 1-3; *UKM 07/14 Innspill til evaluering av gudstjenestereformen i forkant av Kirkemøtet 2017*, decision on the liturgical reform from the Church of Norway Youth Synod (Oslo: Kyrkjerådet, 2014), cf. Christoffersen, "Sammen for Guds ansikt," 58-66; Rong, *Det liturgiske møte*, 51; Finn Wagle, "Etterord: …*liv fra kilder utenfor oss selv*," in *Gudstjeneste á la carte*, eds., Balsnes, et al., 287-289.

reform nationally, regionally, and locally (cf. "a set of core values"). The concept of the *ordo* was central to the liturgical movement, representing the organising principle of the liturgy, indicating not just the order of service but the deep structures and presuppositions of the liturgy.[18] In the reform, however, this is seen as "a framework or a skeleton for the Divine Service,"[19] and is therefore understood as referring specifically to the surface order of the liturgy. In this framework, the core values represent the freedom of the congregation to shape the way in which this *ordo* plays out, but always within the confines of said *ordo*, except by express permission from the bishop. It is intended to be an ecumenical and structural principle which guards the universal and theological nature of the liturgies, establishing the boundaries of the core values, though it is understood not principally in theological terms but as an extrinsic formal principle, the 'glue' which helps ground local flexibility.[20] Where the *ordo* represents the universality or catholicity of the liturgies, the core values represent their locally anchored flexibility. In this chapter I aim to analyse the way in which the reform understands these terms in order to discover how it envisions liturgical participation and communion. A working hypothesis is that, even if the reform presupposes a metaphysical dimension to the liturgy, as participation in God, its main focus, when it comes to active participation, is not the metaphysical aspect but an activistic notion of involvement. While there was, perhaps, an overemphasis on the dogmatic and passive nature in earlier reforms, this reform overemphasises activism, which is also true for other reforms.[21] My intention, then, is to discuss the reform in light of a metaphysical notion

18 Gordon W. Lathrop, *Holy Things: A Liturgical Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993), 33-83; Martha L. Moore-Keish, "The Importance of Worship that Centers on the *Ordo*" (*Liturgy* 21:2, 2006), 15-23; Alexander Schmemann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, 2nd ed., trans. Asheleigh E. Moorhouse (Crestwood, NY: SVS Press, 1975), 40-71.

19 *Liturgi – Bokmål*, 15 (my translation), cf. *GDNK 2020*, 351-393. Original text: "Den universelle ordo er et rammeverk eller et skjelett for gudstjenesten."

20 *GDNK 2020*, 9-11, 252-254, 351-393.

21 Håkedal, *Fra prestens gudstjeneste til folkets messe*, 29; Egil Morland, "Fritt og fast: Gudstenesta sin *ordo* – eit korrektiv til stadeigengjering," in *Guds rikes skatt: Festskrift til Tore Kopperud*, eds., Egil Morland, Jens-Petter Johnsen and Åge Haavik (Bergen: Fagbokforlaget, 2013), 97-114; Ådne Njå, "Messen som Guds nåde og Kirkens takksigelse: En refleksjon over Luthers messeforordninger med et drøftende sideblikk på liturgi- og trosopplæringsreformen i Den norske kirke," in *«Hva betyr det?» Luthers katekisme i trosopplæringen*, eds., Knut Alfsvåg and Joar Haga (Prismet bok. Oslo: IKO, 2013), 185-202; Thomassen, "Jeg brenner jo

of participation. To do so, I will divide the chapter in three sections.

First, I will analyse the concept of the *ordo* in the CoN reform, particularly in relation to the nature of flexibility. I will first explore how the reform understands the term, before discussing this understanding in light of the work of Gordon W. Lathrop and Alexander Schmemann, as they have both had a huge impact on liturgical theology, and particularly on the nature of the *ordo*, and because the former's work has been central to Lutheran theology.[22] Engaging Joseph Ratzinger, I will argue that the CoN reform neglects the vertical connection to the God as characteristic of the *ordo*, while overemphasising its horizontal dimensions, and that it emphasises human autonomy and creativity in such a way that the revealed or given nature of the liturgy is deemphasised.[23] The reform reduces the *ordo* to a formal unity that unites the liturgical actions and structures an otherwise flexible liturgy, rather than a metaphysically ordering principle which is rooted in the order of God Himself (1 Corinthians 14:26-40). I will argue that while both Lathrop and Schmemann's approaches can help us provide a coherent critique of the understanding of the *ordo* in the reform, these approaches need an analogical and participatory grounding, something which is implicit in Schemann but missing in Lathrop, as he assumes a basic structuralist (and consequentially immanentist) philosophy.

Secondly, I will analyse the first two core values of the CoN reform, flexibility and involvement, arguing that these envision liturgical participation through the lens of an activistic notion of involvement and comprehension, presenting liturgy as principally something we do and something we can comprehend. Comparing and contrasting this to similar strands of the CofE and RCC reforms, I will argue that this downplays the principal role of divine agency

for involvering," cf. Chupungco, "The Vision of the Constitution on the Liturgy"; *Transforming Worship*, 2.6-7, 2.15, 2.20, 3.5, 5.6.1, 6.9.2, 6.10; Ratzinger, *Theology of the Liturgy*, 541-568, 574-594; Reid, "After *Sacrosanctum Concilium*."

22 Lathrop, *Holy Things*, 33-83; Schmemann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, 40-71, cf. Modéus, *Menneskelig gudstjeneste*, 96-103; Moore-Keish, "The Importance of Worship that Centers on the *Ordo*."

23 Joseph Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, commemorative ed. (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius, 2018), 27-37.

in human action and overemphasises the human capacity to do and to comprehend liturgy. In dialogue with Catherine Pickstock, I will argue that from a human perspective, liturgical participation is impossible, that it is only made possible through participation in Christ,[24] and that while this is being downplayed in the reforms, it finds more clear expression in the liturgies themselves.

Thirdly, I will analyse the core value of localised contextuality, arguing that this indicates a concept of communion which overplays the locality in such a way that the wider ecclesial communion may be forgotten, threatening our understanding of our communion with God and our notion of catholicity, which is never only individualistic or local. In dialogue with Aquinas and Pickstock, I will make the point that what we see in this emphasis on local contextuality is a specifically Norwegian (and parochial and congregationalist) example of the Anglican fresh expressions movement,[25] which may have missional value but also represents us with a flawed conception of communion, seen from the perspective of the catholicity or universality of the Church. I will argue that the liturgical self, while being an individual, is fulfilled in communion and that this communion, while manifesting itself locally, is principally universal or Catholic, rooted in Christ.

2 *Ordo*, flexibility, revelation, and tradition

When describing what characterises the *ordo*, the CoN Youth Synod does not provide a principled argument for why liturgy should be ordered, but argues pragmatically by noting that you

[24] Catherine Pickstock, *After Writing: On the Liturgical Consummation of Philosophy* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 169-192, 238-253; Catherine Pickstock, "Liturgy, Art and Politics" (*Modern Theology* 16:2, 2000), 161-162, esp. n8.

[25] See Steven Croft, Ian Mobsby, and Stephanie Spellers, eds., *Ancient Faith, Future Mission: Fresh Expressions in the Sacramental Tradition* (New York, NY: Seabury Books 2010); Louise Nelstrop and Martyn Percy, eds., *Evaluating Fresh Expressions: Explorations in Emerging Church. Responses to the Changing Face of Ecclesiology in the Church of England* (London: Canterbury Press Norwich, 2008), cf. https://freshexpressions.org.uk, accessed 23 February 2021. For a critique, see Andrew Davison and Alison Milbank, *For the Parish: A Critique of Fresh Expressions* (London: SCM Press, 2010).

can still recognise the liturgy when you are abroad because you recognise its universal structure.[26] In one of the reform documents, which accompanied the 2008 trial liturgy, the *ordo* is understood as the structure of the service, and it functions as the universal (or Catholic) element, though it is understood principally in terms of our actions:

> The universal level is represented by the term *Ordo*. The Latin word ordo means in the first place order or structure, and refers to the structure shown in the section above.[27] But in this context, the word also acquires a wider meaning. It also stands for tradition or inheritance or that which is handed over, ultimately for "the way in which it is common to celebrate a divine service". Characteristic of the *ordo* is also that the divine service is fundamentally seen as a series of *acts* that the congregation does together, more than specific words or formulas. This is especially expressed through the sacraments, Baptism and the Eucharist, but also the reading from Scripture, the sermon and the prayers must be seen from the point of view of action. Together, the actions form a *liturgy*, a word which directly translated from Greek means "the people's work". But saying that the divine service is something people do alone is still not exhaustive of the divine service. It can also be seen as a gift which creates a frame around the means of grace, i.e. the Word and the sacraments, where God acts with us.[28]

Understood this way, the *ordo* becomes the equivalent of the four part structure of the liturgy, or any similar structuring (the Gathering, the Word, the Eucharist, and the Dismissal),[29] while the work God is doing becomes a kind of 'bonus,' where He acts alongside us to 'frame' our actions.

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26 *UKM 07/08 Gudstenestereforma*, 1-2. Of course, that is not always the case. In a contemporary CofE celebration of Mass, for example, the Gloria is placed near the beginning, after the confessions and Kyrie (as is also the case in CoN services), while in a traditional Anglican Mass, it is placed after the communion. See *The Book of Common Prayer*, standard ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 259; *Common Worship: Services and Prayers for the Church of England* (London: Church House, 2000, hereafter: *CW*), 171; *GDNK 2020*, 157-162.

27 Earlier in the reform there was a five part part structure, while there is now a four part structure. See *GDNK 2020*; *Gudsteneste for Den norske kyrkja* (Stavanger: Eide, 2011); *Liturgi – Bokmål*, 8-9, 14-15.

28 *Liturgi – Bokmål*, 15 (my translation). Original text: "Det universelle nivået er representert ved begrepet Ordo. Det latinske ordet ordo betyr i første omgang ordning eller struktur, og henviser til den strukturen som er vist i avsnittet over. Men i denne sammenheng får ordet også en videre betydning. Det står også for tradisjon eller arv eller overlevering, i siste hånd for "den måten det er vanlig å feire gudstjeneste på". Karakteristisk for ordo er også at gudstjenesten grunnleggende sett betraktes som en rekke *handlinger* som menigheten gjør sammen, mer enn bestemte ord eller formularer. Dette kommer særlig til uttrykk i sakramentene, dåp og nattverd, men også lesningen fra Skriften, prekenen og forbønnene må ses under synsvinkelen handling. Til sammen danner handlingene en *liturgi*, et ord som direkte oversatt fra gresk betyr "folkets verk". Det er likevel ikke utfyllende å si at gudstjenesten er noe som folket alene gjør. Den kan også ses som en gave som danner en ramme rundt nådemidlene, dvs. Ordet og sakramentene, hvor Gud handler med oss."

29 *GDNK 2020*, 351-393.

These actions, however, are seen as human first and foremost, as 'the people's work.'[30] The *ordo*, then, is not principally understood in theological terms, or in terms of our participation in divine agency, but as an external structure which may be universal but is principally human nonetheless. Its universality is understood principally with reference to the Church herself, often reduced to a universality of place, and it is understood as an extrinsic formal principle of unity, the 'glue' which helps ground local flexibility. This, however, is not usually what is meant by *ordo* in liturgical theology. To explore this, I will engage Gordon W. Lathrop and Alexander Schmemann.

For Lathrop, who is the most central figure to work on the *ordo* in Lutheran theology,[31] the key lies precisely in structure and relation. He understands it not just as the texts and rubrics but "the presuppositions active behind such scheduling":

> Meaning occurs through structure, by one thing set next to another. The scheduling of the *ordo*, the setting of one liturgical thing next to another in the shape of the liturgy, evokes and replicates the deep structure of biblical language, the use of the old to say the new by means of juxtaposition.[32]

For Lathrop, the operative word is *juxtaposition*. The *ordo* is not just a collection of actions, things, or people, but their relation. He presents different pairs of juxtapositions, for example between the Seven Days and the Eight Day (the week and Sunday), producing a tension which highlights creation and re-creation, death and resurrection, this world, as God's good gift, and the hope of the new heaven and the new earth.[33] The *ordo*, then, emerges in these relations, and provides the dynamic structure of the liturgy which drives the liturgical act. The acts of God are juxtaposed with our everyday experiences and things, and through this, these things

30 See chapter five, pp.182-183.

31 Modéus, *Menneskelig gudstjeneste*, 96-103; Moore-Keish, "The Importance of Worship that Centers on the *Ordo*."

32 Lathrop, *Holy Things*, 33, cf. 33-83. Also see Gregory Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy*, 3rd ed. (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2005), esp. 36-140; Allen Cabaniss, *Pattern in Early Christian Worship* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1989).

33 Lathrop, *Holy Things*, 36-53, 55-83, cf. Moore-Keish, "The Importance of Worship that Centers on the *Ordo*," 16.

are given new meanings and become holy. Water or bread and wine, for example, become holy when juxtaposed with the Word in Christ, as expressed through St. Augustine's dictum, "the word comes to the element and so there is a sacrament" (Lt. *accedit verbum ad elementum, et fit sacramentum*).[34] Lathrop understands the *ordo* not merely as the structure of this or that rite but the deep structures of the Christian tradition. His approach, then, widens the context of the liturgy, seeing it as universal or Catholic, as he can use the *ordo* as a tool to unite different churches, traditions, and expressions. He widens the context beyond the local church, the diocese, or the denomination, and he roots it in the acts of God. This approach is very useful if we aim to understand how the words, gestures, acts, symbols, and people within a ritual tradition relate and how these relate to God (and to equivalents in different ritual traditions).[35]

Schmemann, likewise, understands the *ordo* not principally as the texts themselves or the simple order (such as the four part structure of the CoN liturgy), but the theological principle and content which underlies the liturgical life. He understands the *ordo* in terms of a 'liturgical dualism' between the old and the new, not as separation but union and fulfilment. Early Christian worship, notes Schmemann, "is a participation in the old cult and at the same time the presence— from the very beginning— of the cult of the new."[36] This is not a dualism between 'Hebrew' and 'non-Hebrew,' but between the old rites and the new revelation in Christ. The main structural element is Christ, who fulfils the old and brings in the new (2 Corinthians 5:17). This, however, comes through renewal. Christ does not destroy these older rites but transforms them. For Schmemann, the Christian *ordo* is the cult itself, not reduced to this or that particular rite or external structure, but specifically as it is oriented towards Christ and His acts. All the

34 Quoted in Lathrop, *Holy Things*, 164, cf. 164-169.

35 Jan Terje Christoffersen, "På hvert et sted: Inn til kjernen av gudstjenestereformen" (*Tidsskrift for Praktisk Teologi* 31:1, 2014), 4-15 (esp. 9-14); Morland, "Fritt og fast"; Dag Øivind Østereng, "Ordo og dens betydning for den liturgiske agenda — en respons på liturgireformen i Dnk" (*Lære og liv* 1/2009), 18-26 (esp. 22-23), cf. Knut Alfsvåg, "Luthersk spiritualitet: Om lære og liv i den éne, kristne kirke" (*Dansk Tidsskrift for Teologi og Kirke* 40:1, 2013), 42-56.

36 Schmemann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, 47, cf. 45-51.

elements of the liturgy find their meaning in relation to Him, or through participating in Him. The cult, notes Schmemann, is the presence of Christ Himself, which provides the content of the rule of prayer or the *lex orandi*.[37] Schmemann concludes his article by noting that there "is good reason to regard the principle of the Ordo, i.e. of that co-relation and conjunction of the Eucharist with the liturgy of time in which we recognize the fundamental structure of the Church's prayer, as having existed from the very beginning in her 'rule of prayer,' as the real principle of this rule."[38] The *ordo*, then, relates life to Christ, given to us in the Eucharist. In this, we find echoes of Lathrop's framework, but there is a crucial difference.

While Lathrop presents the liturgy in terms of a set of relations and juxtapositions,[39] Schmemann emphasises the primordial relation to Christ. Although he does not treat the metaphysics of the *ordo* in the text,[40] his theology presupposes a participatory and ontological grounding. He notes, elsewhere, that baptismal theology should focus on "ontological terms" and he holds that "the fundamental Christian understanding of creation" should be understood "in terms of its ontological *sacramentality*."[41] By emphasising the fundamental relation of Christ (in the sacrament) and the world, and its rituals, he emphasises that these are suspended from their transcendent source.[42] This, however, is not merely juxtaposition. Whilst we, as human beings, are, so to speak, juxtaposed to Christ or related to Him horizontally, as He is truly man, our most fundamental relation to Christ is still vertical, as He is truly God. For Lathrop, however, in the liturgy it is precisely the juxtapositions which produce meaning, as meaning "occurs through

37 Schmemann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, 50-70, cf. chapters three and four, pp.106-118, 153-162.
38 Schmemann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, 70.
39 Lathrop, *Holy Things*, 33-83.
40 Schmemann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, 40-71.
41 Alexander Schmemann, *For the Life of the World: Sacraments and Orthodoxy*, 2nd ed. (Crestwood, NY: SVS Press, 1997), 67, 129. Furthermore, as noted by David W. Fagerberg, *Liturgy outside Liturgy: The Liturgical Theology of Fr. Alexander Schmemann* (Hong Kong: Chorabooks, 2018), 63-76, for Schmemann, liturgy is the ontological condition for (theoretical) theology.
42 Cf. John Milbank, Catherine Pickstock, and Graham Ward, eds., *Radical Orthodoxy: A new theology* (London: Routledge, 1999), 1-20.

structure, by one thing set next to another."[43] Following philosophical trends in late modern or postmodern thought,[44] Lathrop advocates for a structuralist (and consequentially immanentist) philosophy. While this can be a fruitful way of discovering relations on a horizontal level, this lacks a robust metaphysics of participation, whereby we relate vertically to God. It therefore risks turning our participation into something extrinsic and imposed and/or making God into just another (horizontal and immanentist) thing in the structure, albeit the most central one.[45] I argue that while the liturgical *ordo* is expressed in concrete rites and celebrations, and we can discern certain universal (or Catholic) structures or patterns in worship, it is more than just an extrinsic formal principle that helps us structure an otherwise flexible liturgy. It is our ritual orientation to God, grounded in an analogical and participatory metaphysic, and particularly in the incarnation (1 Corinthians 14:26-40). Through the hypostatic union, we are related to God horizontally, through Christ as a human being, but our fundamental relation to Him remains vertical (and analogical).[46] And it is in the crossroads of these two points that we see that the liturgical order is theurgic. As we saw in the introduction, inspired by *Sacrosanctum Concilium* and Peter Struck, I define theurgy as "an act of the triune God for us, put into use by Christ as the God-man, and the Church as His body, whose effect is to reconcile the world to God and make humans capable of worship and service through participation in Him."[47] The divine act

43 Lathrop, *Holy Things*, 33.

44 We can see this particularly in coherentist approaches, where truth is understood in terms or relation and structure. See Lorenz Bruno Puntel, *Structure and Being: A Theoretical Framework for a Systematic Philosophy*, trans. and in collab. with Alan White (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008); Nicholas Rescher, *Philosophical reasoning: A study in the methodology of philosophizing* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001). Against this, we find foundationalism. See J.P. Moreland and William Lane Craig, *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic/InterVarsity Press, 2003), 110-129, 146-147.

45 Cf. Pickstock, *After Writing*, 47-166. Catherine Pickstock, *Repetition and Identity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 33 sidesteps the discussion between coherentism and foundationalism by simply noting that "if finite things imitate and participate in transcendent realities, there need be no finite original, and one finds, in this world, a play of repetitions without original, where each variation is equally an original because it is equally a copy." This way we are not basing reality in *either* a foundational fact *or* in a relational structure, which are both finite and immanent categories, but in *subsistent* and *active* being itself.

46 See chapters three and four, pp.106-118, 153-162.

47 Introduction, p.18, cf. *SC*, 7; Peter T. Struck, "Pagan and Christian Theurgies: Iamblichus, Pseudo-Dionysius, Religion and Magic in Late Antiquity" (*Ancient World* 32:2, 2001), 30.

is established by God and put into use by Christ, first and foremost, and only secondarily by the Church, as His body (Romans 12:1-8; 1 Corinthians 12:12-31), participating in His act. In 1 Peter 2:5, we are called to "let [ourselves] be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." As Schmemann notes, the *ordo* is first and foremost grounded in the revelation of Christ, and in His act. With him, then, I see the *ordo* both as the ordering of the liturgy, the way in which it is celebrated, but also, and more fundamentally, the orientation towards Christ, both horizontally and vertically. It is an expression of, or a participation in, the life of God, in the God who is Himself order: "For God is a God not of disorder but of peace" (1 Corinthians 14:33).

If we understand the *ordo* in this way, we are also provided with a way to problematise the emphasis, in the reform, on human autonomy and creativity (especially when combined with the emphasis on flexibility and local contextuality). If the *ordo* is merely an extrinsic formal principle that helps structure an otherwise flexible liturgy, liturgy becomes a principal human work, even if sanctioned by God. This was evident in the reform, which saw the *ordo* simply as the surface structure, the 'glue' which helps ground local flexibility, while the content itself is more flexible.[48] Norwegian church historian Ole Fredrik Kullerud notes that if the *ordo* is reduced in such a way, it turns Lutheran theology on its head.[49] Defining the Church, *Confessio Augustana* (hereafter: *CA*) states:

> The church is the assembly of saints (Lt. *congregatio sanctorum*) in which the gospel is taught purely and the sacraments are administered rightly. Ans it is enough for the true unity of the church to agree concerning the teaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments. It is not necessary that human traditions, rites, or ceremonies instituted by human beings be alike everywhere.[50]

[48] In the 2011 liturgy, for example, the Offertory prayers had this rubric: "The offering may conclude with a short prayer, for example this…" See *Gudsteneste for Den norske kyrkja*, 2.16 (my translation). Original text: "Ofringa kan avsluttast med ei kort bøn, til dømes denne." Here you do not find a large selection of alternatives but practically endless ones, as the alternative is only put there as a suggestion.

[49] Ole Fredrik Kullerud, "«Et godt sted å være for alle»: Forslaget til liturgisk reform i Dnk (2011-liturgien)" (*Lære og liv* 1/2009), 29.

[50] *CA*, VII. For notes on the Lutheran confessions, see abbreviations, p.5, n3. If not otherwise noted, quotations from *CA* follow the translation of the Latin text.

Kullerud argues that in the reform, the *ordo* represents the replacement of doctrinal with formal unity, reduced to a 'skeleton,' to the now four part structure of the liturgy: the Gathering, the Word, the Eucharist, and the Dismissal.[51] If, however, the *ordo* is more than simply the composition of the liturgy but represents the deep structure of participatory relation and orientation towards God, we must take into account what He has revealed to us when it comes to worship. As I have argued, in Christian (as well as theurgic Neoplatonic) thought, truth is *revealed* and discovered.[52] If that is the case, liturgy must be rooted in revelation and in the divine act. Joseph Ratzinger, for instance, notes that "Man himself cannot simply "make" worship," that if "God does not reveal himself, man is clutching empty space" and that "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.[53]

The question, however, is how we understand revelation and how it expresses itself liturgically. On one side we can find those who hold to a 'liturgical eclecticism,' where liturgical forms are principally human expressions, though with divine sanction. As we will return to later, we can find this, for example, in the emerging church or fresh expressions movements.[54] On the other side we find the Calvinist 'regulative principle of worship,' where nothing explicitly sanctioned in Scripture is allowed in Christian worship.[55] In this framework, the *ordo* becomes a rigid

51 *GDNK 2020*, 351-393.

52 Chapter three, p.112. See Knut Alfsvåg, "Gudsåpenbaring og virkelighetsforståelse: Kristen åpenbaringsteologi i dag" (*Dansk Tidsskrift for Teologi og Kirke* 42:3, 2015), 204-206; Mark L. McPherran, "Socratic Religion," in *The Cambridge Companion to Socrates*, ed., Donald R. Morrison (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 111-137, esp. 122-127.

53 Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 35-36, cf. 27-37. This notion of revealed religion or ritual is also central to Iamblichean theurgy. See Iamblichus, *De mysteriis*, Greek and English, intro. and trans. Emma C. Clarke, John M. Dillon, and Jackson P. Hershbell (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003, hereafter: *DM*), I, 21; II, 11.

54 Croft, Mobsby, and Spellers, eds., *Ancient Faith, Future Mission*; Gladys Ganiel and Gerardo Marti, "The Emerging Church Movement: A Sociological Assessment" (*Currents in Theology and Mission* 42:2, 2015), 105-112; Nelstrop and Percy, eds., *Evaluating Fresh Expressions*, cf. Davison and Milbank, *For the Parish*.

55 See John M. Frame, *Worship in Spirit and Truth: A Refreshing Study of the Principles and Practices of Biblical Worship* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1996).

structure, misunderstanding the orientation towards God, who can be participated in numerous ways. A Catholic notion of liturgy places itself in between, stating that liturgies will never (and should not) be completely identical. *Confessio Augustana* notes that it is "not necessary that human traditions, rites, or ceremonies instituted by human beings be alike everywhere."[56] From a Catholic perspective, God reveals Himself through liturgical acts, enacted in the Church.[57] This is rooted in the divine act, in the being of God, and is therefore deeply theurgic. If we understand liturgy as a concrete ritual participation in God, we must also remember that this cannot be exhaustive, that it will remain analogical and non-identical. Commenting on divine goodness, Thomas Aquinas notes that "since God's goodness is infinite, it can be participated in an infinite number of ways, and in other ways besides those in which it is participated by those creatures which now are."[58] And since there are no real distinctions in God, this can also be applied to our liturgical participation in the divine, which can equally take on numerous forms. But even if we can participate in God in infinite ways, or rather that God may provide infinite ways for Himself to be participated, by different species, He nevertheless governs the world through the *forms* of each of these numerous beings.[59] A metaphysical concept of the *ordo*, as an orientation to God, expressing itself in concrete rituals, will, then, involve a great deal of freedom but it does not involve chaos. Rather than advocating a modern notion of freedom from restraint, a 'freedom of indifference,' this advocates a freedom towards God, flowing from this participation, a 'freedom for excellence.'[60] Liturgy, then, is characterised by both *revelation*

56 *CA*, VII, cf. Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy*, 718-719.

57 Andrew Davison, *Why Sacraments?* (London: SPCK, 2013), 55-65; Schmemann, *For the Life of the World*, 117-151.

58 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles* (hereafter: *SCG*) I, c.81:4. For notes on the Thomistic corpus, see abbreviations, p.4, n1.

59 Thomas Aquinas, *Disputed Questions on the Power of God* (*Quaestiones Disputatae de potentia Dei*, hereafter: *De pot.*), q.3, a.7; Thomas Aquinas, *An Exposition of the On the Hebdomads of Boethius* (*Expositio libri Boetii De ebdomadibus*, hereafter: *In De Hebd.*), c.2, 70.

60 See Louise A. Mitchell, "Free to Be Human: Thomas Aquinas's Discussion of *Liberum Arbitrium*" (*New Blackfriars* 96:1061, 2015), 22-42.

and *tradition*, but always in that order,[61] i.e. by an orientation to God and His gifts and the ways in which this manifests, communally, in different contexts and cultures. To use Aquinas's language, liturgy expresses both grace and nature, where the latter is transformed and perfected by the former.[62] It is rooted in revelation, but this revelation expressed itself in various ways in creation, and particularly in our nature as human beings. Yes, as modern humans we may expect flexibility but at the same time the reform process made it clear that we also crave stability (or perhaps catholicity). In 2011, for example, the CoN Church Council introduced nineteen different musical settings by almost as many composers.[63] In 2017, having tried them out, these were reduced to five.[64] Part of the reason for 'tightening' this and other areas was that many people, valuing givenness, recognition and stability over flexibility and local contextuality, had complained that the alternatives were too numerous, that some of the music was too complex for congregational singing, and that they often could not recognise the service when visiting different parishes.[65] In practice, then, the *ordo* was not just an extrinsic formal principle, structuring an otherwise flexible liturgy but a theological principle, actually informing the *content* of the liturgy, orienting it towards its source. And on the theurgic understanding of liturgy that I have argued for, this is how the *ordo* should be understood. Now, having argued that the reform has a problematic understanding of the *ordo*, I turn to the values of flexibility and involvement, arguing that these envision an overly activistic conception of human agency.

61 Østereng, "Ordo og dens betydning for den liturgiske agenda," 19-21.
62 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* (hereafter: *ST*) I, q.1, a.8, ad 2.
63 *Liturgisk musikk for den norske kirke* (Stavanger: Eide, 2011).
64 *KR 47/18 Presentasjon av høringen av saken Justering av hovedgudstjenesten og alminnelige bestemmelser*, attachment *to 47/18 Hovedgudstjenesten* by the Church of Norway Church Council (Oslo: Kyrkjerådet, 2018), 11.
65 *KR 47/18 Presentasjon av høringen*, 2, 9-26, cf. Morland, "Fritt og fast"; Raddum, *Variety*, 24, 42-45.

3 Flexibility, involvement, and agency

In some of the earlier documents in the reform, the CoN Youth Synod states that we must make sure that "the whole congregation participates actively in the Divine Service,"[66] and it calls for "a simpler order, something which can in itself serve as a means to increase the understanding of the order and the content of the Divine Service."[67] This echoes *Sacrosanctum Concilium*'s calls for "fully conscious, and active participation in liturgical celebrations," something which is the "right and duty" of the people of God "by reason of their baptism,"[68] and for rites "distinguished by a noble simplicity" that are "short, clear, and unencumbered by useless repetitions" and which "should be within the people's powers of comprehension, and normally should not require much explanation."[69] Underneath these texts, we find not only the noble idea of lay empowerment, which often resulted in a clericalisation of the laity, but the idea that liturgy, perhaps particularly worship, is a human work which we can understand. And this became even clearer in later documents, especially in the presentation of the *ordo* which I cited above. The document states that "the divine service is fundamentally seen as a series of *acts* that the congregation does together, more than specific words or formulas," that this is "especially expressed through the sacraments, Baptism and the Eucharist," but that "the reading from Scripture, the sermon and the prayers must [also] be seen from the point of view of action," and that these actions, together "form a *liturgy*, a word which directly translated from Greek means "the people's work"."[70] Liturgical participation, then, is principally understood in activistic terms, with particular focus on external and concrete involvement.

We see this particularly in the first two of three 'core values': *flexibility* and *involvement*.[71]

66 *UKM 01/01 Menighetsfellesskap*, 1 (my translation). See n12 above (p.202).
67 *UKM 05/03 Hva slags gudstjeneste vil vi ha*, 2 (my translation). See n14 above (p.202).
68 *SC*, 14, cf. 11, 19, 21, 27, 30, 41, 50, 79, 113-114, 121, 124.
69 *SC*, 34, cf. 21, 50, 59, 66, 79, 90, 92, 117.
70 *Liturgi – Bokmål*, 15 (my translation), see n28 above (p.207).
71 *UKM 07/08 Gudstenestereforma*, 1-3; *UKM 07/14 Innspill til evaluering av gudstjenestereformen*.

These categories, which are sociological rather than theological or metaphysical, emphasise human action first and foremost. They are there to ensure the involvement of the people as a whole by creating a larger 'pool' of alternatives to choose from and by facilitating the external involvement of as many people as possible in the liturgical act, both as members of the congregation but also as assistants who may, for example, serve as ushers,[72] carry the processional cross, read texts, collect money, or carry the gifts in the offertory. These values highlight how the reforms present the nature of liturgical participation and it is understood principally through the prism of practical involvement of as many people as possible in the liturgical act and in a way that is fully graspable for those involved. In this framework, the sacramental rituals are seen as acts that we do, rather than divine acts which we are made partakers of. And though the sacraments themselves are still seen as divine gifts, this concept is added almost as a kind of 'bonus,' as noted above, where God acts alongside us to 'frame' our actions.[73] The sacramental gifts, then, i.e. the body and blood of Christ or the salvation given in Baptism, stands alongside our human ritual actions, framing them. Perhaps we are back to Lathrop's position, where our acts and God's are juxtaposed and the former received meaning through this juxtaposition. Furthermore, as noted, because of this position, the word 'liturgy' is again seen as 'a work done *by* the people' and not 'a work done *for* the people' which nonetheless creates the condition of there being any 'work *by* the people' in the first place.[74]

This activistic notion of participation is not exclusive to the CoN reform, however. In *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, while this is rooted in the act of Christ,[75] the main focus is still on the way in which people can be involved, practically, in the rites: "To promote active participation,

72 In CoN, these are often called 'Church hosts' (No. *kyrkjevertar* or *kirkeverter*).

73 "But saying that the divine service is something people do alone is still not exhaustive of the divine service. It can also be seen as a gift which creates a frame around the means of grace, i.e. the Word and the sacraments, where God acts with us" (*Liturgi – Bokmål*, 15, my translation). See n28 above (p.207).

74 See chapter five, pp.182-183.

75 *SC*, 7.

the people should be encouraged to take part by means of acclamations, responses, psalmody, antiphons, and songs, as well as by actions, gestures, and bodily attitudes. And at the proper times all should observe a reverent silence."[76] And for some, this is understood in principally external and practical terms. Anscar J. Chupungco, who is a central actor in the liturgical work of RCC,[77] notes that some, following the Constitution "envisioned a type of Roman liturgy that would encourage active participation" and that to "this end it was felt that the rites had to be simplified so that they could be easily understood."[78] Later, citing the Constitution, he notes that "intelligent, active, and easy participation by the faithful is the "primary criterion" to be observed when revising the rites of sacramentals."[79] And when the Constitution states that in order for the Church to "promote active participation, the people should be encouraged to take part by means of acclamations, responses, psalmody, antiphons, and songs, as well as by actions, gestures, and bodily attitudes,"[80] Chupungco envisions this active participation as external, stating that it "consists principally of such external activities," and that "[t]he Latin substantive *actuositas*, adjective *actuosus*, and adverb *actuose* refer primarily to external action done with energy, though of course they do not exclude inner disposition."[81] For Chupungco, and others, *participatio actuosa* is first and foremost a practical notion, concerned primarily with human activity, focusing on the various ritual acclamations, responses, gestures, 'players,' etc. He defines 'active' to mean primarily being *externally and practically involved in the concrete liturgical act*, principally outwardly but also inwardly.[82] Someone like Chupungco would

76 *SC*, 30.

77 Peter C. Phan, "Liturgical Inculturation: Unity in Diversity in the Postmodern Age," in *Liturgy in a Postmodern World*, ed., Keith Pecklers (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark/Continuum, 2003), 55-86 (esp. 75-79), cf. Anscar J. Chupungco, *Cultural Adaptation of the Liturgy* (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1982); Anscar J. Chupungco, ed., *Handbook for Liturgical Studies*, 5 vols. (Pueblo Books. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1997-2000).

78 Chupungco, "The Vision of the Constitution on the Liturgy," 262, cf. *SC*, 34. Also see Reid, "After *Sacrosanctum Concilium*", 307-310.

79 Chupungco, "The Vision of the Constitution on the Liturgy," 266, cf. *SC*, 79.

80 *SC*, 30.

81 Chupungco, "The Vision of the Constitution on the Liturgy," 267.

82 Chupungco, "The Vision of the Constitution on the Liturgy," 266–267, cf. *SC*, 14, 30, 79. It should be noted, though, that Chupungco, interpreting participation principally as external involvement, seems, to distinguish

not, of course, disagree with the fact that we participate in God through the liturgy, as this is central to the Constitution,[83] but his focal point is different from those who principally emphasis this metaphysical interpretation. Ratzinger, for example, agrees with Chupungco about what happened during the implementation of *SC*, but he sees it as problematic, noting that the term 'active participation' 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."[84] For him, liturgy is always first the work of God.

Likewise, this activistic notion of participation can be found in the CofE, as we see from one of the documents from the Liturgical Commission: "Words are not only spoken in worship, they are embodied, through posture, symbols, and ritual actions. Through a faithful participation in worship, Christ seeks to 'dwell in us' that the worshippers themselves may 'present their bodies as a living sacrifice' (Romans 12.1)."[85] Here, worship is seen principally within an activistic framework. The Commission, it seems, says that Christ's indwelling, which allows for further action, is not the *cause* of our "faithful participation in worship," embodied in ritual, but its *result*. It is true that we are made one with Christ in Baptism, in a liturgical act. But in Catholic theology, this act is primarily an act of God. By being baptised into Christ, St. Paul notes, we are baptised into His death and are raised with Him, by the power of God.[86] And by using the word 'worship,' the Commission is very close to turning Christ's indwelling in us into something we instigate. Rephrased to indicate that our worship follows from Christ's indwelling (cf. Galatians 2:19-20), this could be seen as similar to Aquinas's middle voiced notion of repentance, where God gives everyone 'sufficient grace' ("convert me") that can, by their free conversion, become

between this and our inner dispositions, while I would argue that both are consequences of our fundamental participation in God through Christ.

83 *SC*, 7.

84 Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 185, cf. 185-191; Ratzinger, *Theology of the Liturgy*, 541-568, 574-594; Schuler, "Participation."

85 *Transforming Worship*, 2.6, cf. 2.6-7, 2.15, 2.20, 3.5, 5.6.1, 6.9.2, 6.10.

86 Romans 6, cf. Davison, *Why Sacraments?*, 1-14; Harald Hegstad, *Dåpen: En nådens kilde* (Oslo: Verbum akademisk, 2019), 38-45, 51-90.

'efficient grace' ("God lets me convert myself towards Him").[87] But where Aquinas is very careful to point out that this only comes to be because we participate in God and receive His grace,[88] the Commission seems to presuppose this knowledge, and therefore it ends up creating the assumption that we facilitate the presence of Christ in us, which in turn allows for further action. It is, however, the other way around. Because of Christ's indwelling, given to us as a gift, we are oriented towards God in Christ. Any 'faithful participation' that we do follows from this, it does not produce it. We participate in the divine act, the theurgy, through Christ, and only then can we act. To point again to my definition of theurgy,[89] the liturgy is a divine act put into use by Christ and by the Church, through participation in Him, which reconciles the world to God and makes us capable of worship and service. As Christ notes: "I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). The focus, therefore, must first be on the divine act, without which everything else would be null. We can only offer worship by first participating in this act.

This metaphysical notion of participation, however, is downplayed (and at times missing) in the reforms. Yes, an argument can be made that reforms documents need to be read contextually, in light of the overall theology of the Church in question. And while that is true, I do not think that we should assume the religious literacy required to interpret such texts correctly. By emphasising what we should *do*, and obscuring the gifted nature of the liturgy, especially the sacraments, we end up misrepresenting the nature of the liturgy, treating it as a human act that we are capable of doing on our own. What is lacking is an analogical and participatory perspective, emphasising the divine act primarily and the the congregation's participation in (or orientation

87 *ST* I-II, q.109, a.6, ad 1, cf. Rudi A. te Velde, ""Partnership with God": Thomas Aquinas on Human Desire and God's Grace" (*Nova et vetera* 15:4, 2017), 1174, n38. See chapter one, pp.52-54.

88 *ST* I-II, q.109; q.112, cf. *De pot.*, q.3, a.7.

89 Introduction, p.18, cf. Struck, "Pagan and Christian Theurgies," 30; *SC*, 7.

towards) this act secondarily. To explore this further, I will engage Catherine Pickstock's notion of the impossibility of liturgy.

Pickstock notes that liturgy is only possible if we participate in Christ, that even then it still reminds us that it is impossible, but that this perspective is lacking in many of the modern reforms, which tend to smooth out the liturgies in order to make them more 'understandable' and 'doable.'[90] They do so by flattening out the staccato like performance which is typical of older rites. These are full of beginnings and re-beginnings, non-identical repetitions, and 'liturgical stammer,' which help remind us that we cannot fully grasp or do liturgy. In a Norwegian liturgy from 17th century, for example, the Lord's prayer was prayed four different times, while in the current liturgy of CoN it is said that if there is both Baptism and a celebration of the Eucharist, the prayer may be omitted from the former.[91] And in the older Roman rite and the Eastern liturgies repetitions abound.[92] Pickstock notes that these repetitions, which aim to dispossess us, remind us that liturgy is not principally our work:

> In the Roman Rite … the worshipping "I" is both designated and realized by self-dispossessing acts of doxological impersonation which displace any sense of enclosed autonomy in the subject in favour of that which is impersonated. However, this does not result in a radically discontinuous subject, but rather intensifies his continuity, by revealing the zenith of differential continuity to reside in God.[93]

We can only do liturgy by entering into something and 'impersonate' God (and the Angels). When we praise, when we offer "faithful participation in worship," embodied in ritual, to quote

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90 Pickstock, *After Writing*, 170-176, cf. Catherine Pickstock, "A Short Essay on the Reform of the Liturgy" (*New Blackfriars* 78:912, 1997), 56-65. Also see Nathan Mitchell, *Real Presence: The Work of Eucharist*, new and expanded ed. (Chicago, IL: Liturgy Training Publications, 2001), 135-138; David Torevell, *Losing the Sacred: Ritual, Modernity, and Liturgical Reform* (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 146-169.

91 *Kirkeritualet 1685*, the Church of Norway liturgy from 1685, found at Oddvar Johan Jensen, ed. *Kirkens liturgi* (Bergen: NLA Høgskolen), cf. *GDNK 2020*, 270.

92 See *The Divine Liturgy of our Father among the Saints John Chrysostom*, English and Greek (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995); *Messeboken – Missale Romanum*, Latin and Norwegian (Oslo: Oslo katolske bispedømme, 1961); *Missale Romanum*, Editio Typica (Vatican City: Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1962).

93 Pickstock, *After Writing*, 208, cf. 180-192, 208-213; Mitchell, *Real Presence*, 142-144. Also see Jose Isidro Belleza, *Lex Loquendi, Lex Orandi: Pickstock, Aquinas, and the Reform of the Roman Offertoria* (Master's Thesis, the University of Berkeley, 2019).

the CofE Liturgical Commission,[94] this is only possible because this worship participates in God, as all we do is rooted in Him (Acts 17:28). As Pickstock notes: "The human being is in the image of God as God's worshipper, a sharer in his Trinitarian self-praise."[95] In an age of self-help and self-discovery, what we need is not a liturgy expressed through what are essentially Christianised neo-capitalistic slogans (flexibility, involvement, and localised contextuality).[96] We need a liturgy in which we are reminded that the praise which we offer God is, ultimately, God's gift to us, as we express in one of the Offertory prayers: "Eternal God, yours is the earth and all that is in it. Everything we have belongs to you. Of your own, we return to you. Receive us and our gifts in Jesus's name. Amen."[97] Before God, we always remain receivers and He will always remain the one who gives, as St. Paul notes (1 Corinthians 4:7): "For who sees anything different in you? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you received it, why do you boast as if it were not a gift?" It is a participation in the divine act through Christ, the ultimate act of theurgy, which is established by the divine and participated in and re-enacted in the Church. The liturgy we participate in, however actively, is principally a divine act and our involvement is only possible because we are initiated into it and made capable for it. To rephrase the CofE the document from the Liturgical Commission,[98] we can say that *because* Christ 'dwells in us,' we, as worshippers, may 'present our bodies as a living sacrifice' (Romans 12:1) and offer a faithful participation in worship. And what is interesting here is that, regardless of the express goals of the CoN reform, the liturgy itself, following the classic structure of the

94 *Transforming Worship*, 2.6.

95 Catherine Pickstock, "Ritual. An introduction" (*International Journal of Philosophy and Theology* 79:3, 2018), 220.

96 Njå, "Messen som Guds nåde og Kirkens takksigelse," 196-201.

97 *GDNK 2020*, 171 (my translation). Original text: "Evige Gud, di er jorda og det som fyller henne. Alt vi eig høyrer deg til. Av ditt eige gjev vi deg attende. Ta imot oss og gåvene våre i Jesu namn. Amen." This is based partly on Psalm 24:1. Compare this to the prayer in *CW*, 291 (which is based partly on 1 Chronicles 29:11): "Yours, Lord, is the greatness, the power, the glory, the splendour, and the majesty; for everything in heaven and on earth is yours. All things come from you, and of your own do we give you."

98 *Transforming Worship*, 2.6.

Western liturgical tradition, counteracts a principal focus on human agency.[99] We start off by a kind of 'impersonation' ("in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit"),[100] we confess our sins and our weakness, sing the Kyrie and join in not in our own hymn of praise but that of the angels, confess our faith in God as Creator, redeemer, and sanctifier, pray, offer back to God from the things he has given us, receive back the offering of Christ for our blessing, give thanks, commune with God, and with our fellow believers, through the sacred meal, are blessed, and are sent out to witness to God as Lord. The liturgy argues against a principally cultural and anthropological understanding of its character by consistently pointing to God and Christ as its source and its principal agent (or the 'master theurgist').[101] And such a Christian theurgic perspective on liturgy, where the focus is first and foremost on God as actor, and not on us, as either 'performers' or 'students,' has important implications for how the Church meets (and integrates) people in worship, perhaps particularly people with disabilities.

While modern reforms tend to turn the divine mysteries in the liturgy into solvable riddles which often presuppose a certain level of intellectual life,[102] and sees the ideal worshipper as an 'able-bodied' person who 'actively' participates in liturgy through words, gestures, actions,[103] a properly Christian theurgic perspective, informs us that while these elements, both the intellective and the active, are important, the central import of the liturgy is the presence of God and His gift of participation.[104] When we participate in the liturgy, the primary point should not be

99 *GDNK 2020*, 154-192.

100 Pickstock, *After Writing*, 183-184, 203-213.

101 Struck, "Pagan and Christian Theurgies," 31-33, 37-38, cf. chapter four, pp.140-146.

102 We see this particularly in the idea that the liturgies should be simplified to make them understandable (*SC*, 34; *UKM 05/03 Hva slags gudstjeneste vil vi ha*, 2). This obscures the fact that liturgy, being an orientation towards God Himself, cannot be fully comprehendible. This can also be found, as I have noted in the introduction and in chapter three, pp.15, 115-116, in Pagan notions of theurgy, where distinctions are made between 'the theurgists' and 'the herd' or 'the mass of men.' See Ruth Majercik, *The Chaldean Oracles: Text, Translation, and Commentary* (Leiden: Brill, 1989, hereafter: *TCO*), frag. 153-154, 194, cf. pp.20, 198, 212; *DM* V, 18. For notes on the *Chaldean Oracles*, see abbreviations, p.5, n5.

103 Njå, "Messen som Guds nåde og Kirkens takksigelse," 196-201.

104 For some perspectives on disability and the problem of ableism in liturgy and theology, see Inger Marie Lid and Anna Rebecca Solevåg, eds. *Religiøst medborgerskap: Funksjonshemming, likeverd og menneskesyn* (Oslo: Cappelen Damm Akademisk, 2020), especially the chapter by Therese Marie Ignacio Bjørnaas, "*Imago Dei* og kroppsliggjort væren: En funksjonshemmingsteologi i lys av Thomas Aquinas," pp.269-286.

our level of 'understanding' or 'contribution,' although these things are not unimportant, but that we are made partakers of the divine act and of God Himself. While a Wiccan or a Buddhist may be able to say the words of the liturgy and extrinsically perform its acts or gestures, this does not constitute 'active participation,' grounded in Baptism. But a baptised Christian who cannot do any of the acts or gestures, may still be actively participating in the liturgy, precisely through his baptismal character.[105] How participation manifests itself in life and in liturgy (how a person *imitates God*, be it through singing, praying, reading, contemplating, or a myriad of other things) is not unimportant but it is always secondary to that person's *participation in* or *incorporation into* Christ. A Christian theurgic perspective on the liturgy helps us to keep a correct balance between these things and it focuses on the one thing needed; on Christ, our Saviour and Lord, and not on how 'able' we are to worship Him. In fact, this perspective tells us that outside Him, we are not able to worship at all. Now, having argued that the reform espouses an overly activistic notion of participation, I turn to the value of contextuality, arguing that this envisions an overly local conception of communion.

4 Contextuality and communion

Where the first two of the core values of the CoN reform (*flexibility* and *involvement*) concern the act of liturgy itself, by creating a larger 'pool' of alternatives to choose from and by facilitating the external involvement of as many people as possible in the liturgical act, the third, localised *contextuality*, concerns the local place in which this manifests. The word, which in Norwegian is *stadeigengjering* or *stedegengjøring*, was introduced as the equivalent of 'contex-

These are all written in Norwegian but they have English abstracts. For some suggestions of involvement of people with disabilities in the liturgy, see two books (in Norwegian) by Rune Rasmussen; *Bønn med alle sanser: Bønnestasjoner til bruk i trosopplæring, gudstjeneste og smågrupper* (Oslo: IKO-forlaget, 2010) and *Se, smak og kjenn! Tilrettelagt konfirmantopplegg med bakgrunns- og metodestoff* (Oslo: IKO-forlaget, 2006).

105 Schuler, "Participation," 8.

tualisation.'[106] But unlike 'contextualisation,' which is applicable to multiple different circumstances (private, public, local, regional, national, denominational, or universal, to name a few), the Norwegian term is decisively local. *Stad* means 'place,' while *eigengjering* means to make something your own. To contextualise the liturgy in this sense, then, is to treat it as a principally local and congregational phenomenon. And when combined with the value of flexibility, this indicates much variation from congregation to congregation or even within congregations.[107] In some ways, this may be a Norwegian version of the fresh expressions movement, though with a more local and parochial 'flavour.'[108] While some of this predates the reform (and said movement), we have seen an increase in 'seeker friendly' or 'seeker-sensitive' services,[109] to use language more common in evangelical circles.[110] What was new in the reform, however, was that it envisioned that each parish should have its own distinct liturgy, within the confines of the official texts, with all its variants. Each parish, then, could be its own 'fresh expression,' though rooted in the place, rather than in a shared interest. And while I think this is better than fresh expressions, as it emphasises the importance of the parish,[111] such localisation still has

106 *KR 10/04 Reform av Høymessen*, 9-10.

107 Raddum, *Variety*, esp. 24-29, 42-45.

108 Croft, Mobsby, and Spellers, eds., *Ancient Faith, Future Mission*; Nelstrop and Percy, eds., *Evaluating Fresh Expressions*. Part of the reason for its local and parochial 'flavour' is that the Norwegian unity culture is still relatively strong but also because in many places the local CoN parish is the only Christian congregation (or even the only religious community), as CoN still counts about 69% of the population as members. See the website of the central bureau of statistics, Statistics Norway (https://www.ssb.no/en/kultur-og-fritid/statistikker/kirke_kostra, accessed 8 March 2021). And even though surveys indicate that about 25% of Norwegians identify as non-religious, many of these are still members of the Church, and still attend their local churches for reasons of tradition. See Atle Christiansen, "Most non-religious Norwegians are members of the Church of Norway" (University of Agder News, 22 August 2018); Sivert Skålvoll Urstad, "The Religiously Unaffiliated in Norway" (*Nordic Journal of Religion and Society* 30:1, 2017), 61-81.

109 Examples can be 'Young Mass' (no. *ung messe*), youth services aimed specifically at youth under 18, often those who are getting confirmed, Thomas Mass (no. *Tomasmesse*), where the target audience are young people and particularly those with doubts, or a Mass were you invite those who were confirmed 40+ years ago (No. *konfirmantjubileum*). See *Gudstenestebok*, II, 84 (cf. 71-84); *Ung messe: Håndbok med melodihefte for menigheten* (Oslo: Verbum, 1997). The tradition of the 'Thomas Mass' started in Finland and while it is connected to St. Thomas the Apostle, and his doubt, it is not connected directly with his feast day, which bears the same name. See https://www.tuomasmessu.fi/english/, accessed 22 February 2021.

110 For an example of this in an evangelical context, see Ed Dobson, *Starting a Seeker Sensitive Service: How Traditional Churches Can Reach The Unchurched* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1993). For a partly critical take, see Matthew Wade, "Seeker-friendly: The Hillsong megachurch as an enchanting total institution" (*Journal of Sociology* 52:4, 2016), 661-676.

111 For arguments, see Davison and Milbank, *For the Parish*, 41-223, esp. 64-92, 144-223.

serious implications for our understanding of communion. And to argue this, I will take as my starting point 1 Corinthians 10:16-17:

> The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.

In this passage we find two central terms, 'sharing' (Gk. *koinōnía*) and 'partake' (Gk. *metechō*). These terms are connected, as partaking or participation (*metechō* or *methexis*) indicates a sharing in something universal.[112] There is a difference, however, as *koinōnía* and its cognates give explicit expression to the communal aspect of participation.[113] We can see this when St. Paul uses the word to denote a 'contribution' (or better, a *gift*) from one Christian community to another (Romans 15:26; 2 Corinthians 9:13). According to him, our interpersonal ecclesial communion comes through the sacrament, i.e. through Christ. The Church, partaking of the body of Christ in the sacrament, is thereby established as a community, as a body (1 Corinthians 10:16-17; 1 Corinthians 12:12-31).[114] But how should we understand this? And what can this tell us about the picture of communion envisioned in the CoN reform? What is the relation

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112 *In De Hebd.*, c.2, 70, cf. Rudi A. te Velde, *Participation and Substantiality in Thomas Aquinas* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 11; John F. Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas: From Finite Being to Uncreated Being* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2000), 96. This, however, does not mean that we exhaust that which we partake of. See *ST* I, q.75, a.5, ad 4: "Now participated existence is limited by the capacity of the participator." While *methexis* is a cognate of *metechō*, and is central in Platonic thought, it is not used in the New Testament.

113 Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed., rev. and ed., Frederick William Danker (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 552-554, 642-643. *Metechō* and its cognates occur fifteen times in the New Testament, while *koinōnía* and its cognates occur 42 times.

114 See chapter three, pp.121-123, for Pickstock's arguments in favour of a eucharistic ecclesiology which upholds a connection between Christ's historical body, the sacramental body, and the ecclesial body which are, in a mysterious way, one, without collapsing into each other. See Pickstock, *After Writing*, 158-166, 259-261, cf. Hans Boersma, *Nouvelle Théologie and Sacramental Ontology: A Return to Mystery* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 242-287; Hans Boersma, "Sacramental Ontology: Nature and the Supernatural in the Ecclesiology of Henri de Lubac" (*New Blackfriars* 88:1015, 2007), 242-273; Henri de Lubac, *Corpus Mysticum: The Eucharist and the Church in the Middle Ages*, 2nd ed., trans. Gemma Simmonds with Richard Price and Christopher Stephens (London: SCM Press, 2006), esp. 13-119, 248-262; Simon Oliver, "Henri de Lubac and Radical Orthodoxy," in *T&T Clark Companion to Henri de Lubac*, ed., Jordan Hillebert (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2017), 393-418; Gemma Simmonds, "The Mystical Body: Ecclesiology and Sacramental Theology," in *T&T Clark Companion to Henri de Lubac*, ed., Hillebert, 159-179.

between the parts, between the communion, *koinōnía*, and the individual, and between locality and universality?

On an etymological level, an individual indicates being a basic member of a class of beings which is, in some way, indivisible. And individual has its own existence and can, if sentient, act independently.[115] We find this, to a certain extent, in Aquinas. For him, the central term is *suppositum*, a concrete essence which subsists in being, underlies the changes, and is the subject of its acts.[116] Aquinas notes, in *De potentia Dei*, that "the supposit (Lt. *suppositum*) has a nature, for instance, a man has human nature: for the nature is not beside the essence of the haver, indeed it is his essence: thus Socrates is truly that which is a man."[117] The *suppositum* is the individual substance or the subject. And in the case of rational creatures, notes Aquinas, this entails *personhood*, as a person is "an individual substance of a rational nature" (Lt. *rationalis naturae individua substantia*).[118] By these terms we might get the sense that Aquinas's emphasis is on individuality, on the *suppositum*, being undivided, existing in itself. In one sense, that is true. Although created things have their being and operations by participation, this is still real. As Andrew Davison notes, it is 'derived solidity.'[119] What we see in Aquinas is that even though he affirms a broadly Aristotelian emphasis on substantiality, he still understands this within a participatory framework.[120] As we see from his discussion of love and particularly self-love, Aquinas sees this substantiality in relational and participatory terms.[121] A human being can love himself out of charity because he is "one with himself which is more than being united to another."[122] Note that individuality is here expressed in relational terms. For Aquinas, persons

115 See 'individual, *adj.* and *n.*,' in *Oxford English Dictionary Online* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
116 te Velde, *Participation and Substantiality*, 201-202; *ST* I, q.29, a.2, corp., cf. chapters one and four, pp.35-36, 140-146.
117 *De pot.*, q.2, a.1, ad 2, cf. te Velde, *Participation and Substantiality*, 202-203.
118 *ST* I, q.29, a.1.
119 Andrew Davison, *Participation in God: A Study in Christian Doctrine and Metaphysics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 65-83.
120 te Velde, *Participation and Substantiality*, esp. x-xiv, 3-83.
121 *ST* I-II, qq.26-28; II-II, qq.23-27.
122 *ST* II-II, q.25, a. 4, corp.

are what they are because they relate, not just to others but to themselves.[123] The *suppositum*, then, which underlies the common nature and has a degree of self existence, is still essentially relational. When we analyse the word *person*, we see that while it denotes individuality, as we see from the Greek *hypóstasis*, which indicates individuality or substance ('that which stands under'), it is also intersubjective. To be a person is not to be absorbed into something else and be 'cancelled out,' but equally it is not isolating. The Latin *persona*, as well as its Greek equivalent *prósōpon*, which both mean 'face' or 'countenance,' indicate communion and relationality. In ancient Greco-Roman society, they were also used for the masks of actors through which they spoke, and thus conveyed communion or relation. An actor would 'don a persona,' and act out his role. So, while personhood is individual, it is only fulfilled in communion.[124]

How is this grounded, however? My argument is that this follows from our relation to God, in two ways. First, while we are, of course, more fundamentally related to ourselves on a creaturely (and horizontal) level, as we are more fully united with ourselves, we are more fundamentally related to God, as we only exist through this relation. As He is the one who keeps us, our very personhood, and everything else, in existence, our analogical relation to Him is more fundamental than our substantiality. Our being, therefore, is relational before it is substantial. Whilst we are individuals, we are so only through participation in Him, which indicates that our individuality, while having its own integrity, is derived or participated.[125]

123 For a thorough treatment, see Anthony T. Flood, "Love of Self as the condition for a Gift of Self in Aquinas" (*Studia Gilsoniana* 7:3, 2018), 419-435.

124 See Eugene Webb, "The Hermeneutic of Greek Trinitarianism: An Approach Through Intentionality Analysis," in *Religion in Context: Recent Studies in Lonergan*, eds., Timothy P. Fallon and Philip Boo Riley (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1988), 141-158, cf. Else K. Holt, "The Prophet as Persona," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Prophets*, ed., Carolyn J. Sharp (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 300-302. In Norwegian, we have an equivalent of this; *framtoning*. It means 'appearance' or 'presentation' (the way you present yourself) but is constructed from the verb *tone* ('to sound') and the adverb *fram* ('forward, forth'), and literally means 'to sound forth' (i.e. to communicate). For discussions of the liturgical self, see James G. Leachman, ed. *The Liturgical Subject: Subject, Subjectivity and the Human Person in Contemporary Discussion and Critique* (London: SCM Press, 2008).

125 W. Norris Clarke, "Person, Being, and St. Thomas" (*Communio* 19, 1992), 601-618; Davison, *Participation in God*, 65-83; Milbank, Pickstock, and Ward, eds., *Radical Orthodoxy*, 1-20; Adrian Pabst, *Metaphysics: The Creation of Hierarchy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012), 5-53.

Secondly, as the God in whom we participate, and in whose image we are created, is triune, we are created for community and relationality,[126] the *telos* of which is communion with God in Christ. "The consummation of creaturely existence, to participate in God," writes Davison, "is to participate (in a creaturely way) in the Trinitarian Persons' own participation in one another. If that sounds complicated, the point is simply this: God is relational, and God draws us into this relationship."[127] Our very being is first and foremost rooted in our participation, *methexis*, in the Triune God but is also made complete in our communion with him. Our focus should not first be on the individual worshipper but on the divine work, His theurgy, which draws us in and establishes our liturgical selves, through participation.

As beings in the image of God, we are created for communion and created within a community. Though *individuality* is central for Christianity, because God knows, meets, and re-creates us *as individuals*,[128] this does not propose *individualism*, as we are created for fellowship and find fulfilment by relating outwards, not just to God, but to other human beings and to creation as a whole. And, as I have argued,[129] this finds its central expression in the Eucharist (1 Corinthians 10:16-17). But while *locality* is central here, because the Church is constituted in the liturgical celebration,[130] this does not propose *congregationalism*. When we quote 1 Corinthians 10:17 in the liturgy, saying that "[t]hough we are many, we are one body, because

126 It is important, though, to understand this analogically and not to read too much of this human interpersonality back into God, as if the divine persons were united in the same way that creatures are. See Karen Kilby, "Perichoresis and Projection: Problems with Social Doctrines of the Trinity" (*New Blackfriars* 81:957, 2000), 432-445; Simon Oliver, "The Holy Trinity and the Liturgical Subject," in *The Liturgical Subject*, ed. Leachman, 229-240.

127 Davison, *Participation in God*, 129, 130, cf. 126-130. Davison notes that this is properly the work of the Holy Spirit. Aquinas makes a distinction between our fundamental participation in God, as creatures (*ST* I, qq.44-45), and our friendship with God, through Christ, which grants a participation in the divine nature, as we see in 2 Peter 1:4 (*ST* I-II, q.112, a.1). See te Velde, "Partnership with God," 1153-1158.

128 Exodus 33:12-17; Psalm 39; Jeremiah 1:4-8; John 10:14-18; 10:27; 1 Corinthians 8:3; 1 Corinthians 13:12; Galatians 4:9; 2 Timothy 2:19; Revelation 2:17.

129 See chapter five, pp.188-196.

130 *CA*, VII, cf. Aidan Nichols, *The Thought of Pope Benedict XVI: An Introduction to the Theology of Joseph Ratzinger*, new ed. (London: Burns & Oates, 2007), 94-109, esp. 96-105 (on eucharistic ecclesiology and the unity of the Church).

we all share in one bread,"[131] the one bread is not just the single host (or hosts) of that particular celebration, but the Eucharist in every Church. This is Christ Himself, "the bread of life" (John 6:48). All our particular celebrations participate, analogically (*pròs hèn*),[132] in the one heavenly celebration or the wedding feast of the Lamb.[133] And because of this relation to Him, who does not belong exclusively to any local congregation, we have communion with all those whom He calls His (cf. John 17).[134] And furthermore, since liturgy is first and foremost an orientation towards God, in whom all of reality participates, liturgy should remain universal or Catholic, though it manifests itself in various ways.

Part of the reason why this has been toned down in the CoN reform is that the universal and Catholic aspect, the *ordo*, which is supposed to provide the framework of the liturgy, is understood in a purely formal manner and on a horizontal level. It is understood in a quantitative sense as extension, rather a qualitative catholicity rooted in Christological participation. And because of this, locality becomes more basic than universality. This, I maintain, is problematic because it tends to take the starting point in the individual worshippers rather than God or Christ. Liturgy is not principally an expression of human emotion or experience but our common participation in God through Christ, made manifest most fully in the sacramental life of the Church. The Church is the body of Christ and He is not 'divisible.' Rather, we become members of the Church by being incorporated in to Him.[135] Universality, then, while being manifested locally, has priority.[136] By emphasising localised contextuality and flexibility, and by reduc-

131 *CW*, 179, cf. *GDNK 2020*, 188.

132 Cf. chapters one and four, pp.40-44 (esp. 40-41), 155-156.

133 Cf. Kringlebotten, "Do this…," esp. 130-136.

134 This means, interestingly, that the standard practice in CoN, of using multiple hosts, instead of one, for the Eucharistic celebration, may indeed be a symbol of the universal character of the 'one bread.'

135 John 15:1-11; 17; Romans 11:11-24; 12:1-8; 1 Corinthians 12:12-31. For my argument for how we relate to Christ, and to God in Christ, see chapter four, pp.153-162.

136 Ratzinger similarly argues that the universal Church is prior to its local manifestations, as it is rooted in Christ. For a discussion of his view and his debate with Walter Cardinal Kasper, see Kilian McDonnell, "The Ratzinger/Kasper Debate: The Universal Church and Local Churches" (*Theological Studies* 63:2, 2002), 227-250.

ing catholicity and universality to something formal, the reform has downplayed the universal character of the Church. Interestingly, however, this is also where it 'failed,' as we have seen above. It envisioned one kind of liturgical participation, focused on locality and flexibility. The liturgy itself, however, became more 'conservative' and much less flexible and contextual, because people valued universality, givenness, recognition, and stability over flexibility and local contextuality.[137] From a ritual perspective, this is not surprising. People (and cultures) are defined through their acts, and particularly through their communal rituals, whether religious or secular, something which participates in the being and the agency of God.[138] And this, while manifesting itself locally, is principally universal or Catholic, at least in the case of Christian liturgy, because that is rooted in Christ, not just horizontally but also vertically.

5 Conclusion

In this thesis, I have argued for a Christian theurgic perspective on liturgy, where the focus is first and foremost on God as actor, and not on us, as either 'performers' or 'students.' I have argued that this has important implications for how the Church meets, and integrates, people in worship, perhaps particularly people with disabilities. Where the latest reform in CoN tends to turn the divine mysteries into solvable riddles which presuppose a certain level of intellectual life, and envision the 'average worshipper' as an intellectual and able-bodied person who 'actively' participates in liturgy through words, gestures, and actions, a properly Christian theurgic perspective, however, informs us that while these elements, both the intellective and the active, are important, the central import of the liturgy is the presence of God and His gift

137 *KR 47/18 Presentasjon av høringen*, 2, 9-26, cf. Morland, "Fritt og fast"; Raddum, *Variety*, 24, 42-45.

138 See chapter one, pp.44-49, 54-58. Also see Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 3rd ed. (London: Duckworth, 2007), x-xiv (esp. x-xi), 181-225; James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 17-129, esp. 19-27, 39-110.

of participation.[139] When people participate in the liturgy the important point is not whether or not they understand it or what they 'contribute,' in a superficial manner, although these things are not unimportant, but that they are made partakers of the divine act and of God Himself. How that manifests itself in life and in liturgy – how a person *imitates God* through singing, praying, reading, contemplating, or a myriad of other things – is not unimportant but it is always secondary to the way in which that person *participates in God*, in the ground of Being, and in Christ.

I have argued that a Christian theurgic perspective on the liturgy helps us to keep a correct balance between these things and it focuses on the one thing needed; on Christ, our Saviour and Lord, and not on how 'able' we are to worship Him. In fact, this perspective tells us that outside Him, we are not able to worship at all. Christ's own theurgy is available to everyone who has been initiated through Baptism, regardless of age, capability, or anything else. But as I have also noted above, this does *not* negate the distinction between elite and non-elite. Rather, it consummates it in Christ. Scripture does not distinguish between 'the herd' and 'the theurgists,' but between Christ on the one hand and all humans on the other, equally subject to sin and fallenness.[140] Christ, however, does not keep this to Himself. He allows us to participate in it through Him, by means of the sacrament of Baptism, regardless of age, capability, or anything else. And although a Christian conception of theurgy is in a sense *more* elitist than a Pagan one, where Christ is the only true theurgist, this is a proper and true elitism. It is not between creatures, but between God and creation.

What is interesting, though, is that there is a discrepancy between the ideals expressed in the reform, which tend to overemphasise the intelligent and able-bodied worshipper, and the actual liturgies that resulted from the reform. We see it in the liturgy itself, which counteracts

139 Bjørnaas, "*Imago Dei* og kroppsliggjort væren"; Njå, "Messen som Guds nåde og Kirkens takksigelse," 196-201; Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 185-191.

140 Romans 3:23: "…all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (cf. Roman 3:9-31; 5:12-21).

a principal focus on human agency by emphasising confession of sins, the Kyrie, the Gloria, confession of faith, and prayers, to name a few. But more importantly, we see it in the fact that the visions of flexible and contextual involvement actually failed. When the reform in CoN, for example, emphasises the three core values,[141] this emphasis on the concrete involvement of the faithful shifted focus from God to us, focusing primarily on us as actors.[142] But having tried out the liturgy after 2011, the Church discovered that people valued recognition over local contextuality.[143] The resultant liturgies in 2020 were different from their predecessors, but they had grown organically, and they gave expression to our fundamental dependence on God. Consequently, the actual texts themselves gives a better expression to the theurgic nature of liturgy than the reforms. But, as Gregory Dix notes, this is not surprising. Liturgies and liturgical traditions have been written, rewritten, codified, decodified, changed, omitted, improved, and enriched through the centuries. And no matter how many liturgical committees that have been erected, the actual result tend to be more 'conservative' when they are actually celebrated:

> The depth and breadth and allusiveness of the classical rites comes just from this, that their real author is always the worshipping church, not any individual however holy and gifted, any committee however representative, or any legislator however wise. … No one man is great enough or good enough to fix the act of the Body of Christ for ever according to his own mind and understanding of it. The good liturgies were not written; they grew.[144]

141 *KR 10/04 Reform av Høymessen*, 9-10; *KR Protokoll 01/04*, 9-12; *UKM 07/08 Gudstenestereforma*, 2-3; *UKM 07/14 Innspill til evaluering av gudstjenestereformen*, cf. Christoffersen, "Sammen for Guds ansikt," 62-64; Wagle, "Etterord," 287-289.

142 Njå, "Messen som Guds nåde og Kirkens takksigelse," 196-201.

143 *KR 47/18 Presentasjon av høringen*, 2, 9-26, cf. Morland, "Fritt og fast"; Raddum, *Variety*, 24, 42-45.

144 Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy*, 718-719, cf. 699-720; *SC*, 23.

CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I have discussed how we ought to understand the notion of active participation in the liturgy, as this comes to expression in the Second Vatican Council's constitution on the Sacred Liturgy.[1] In critical dialogue with Thomas Aquinas, Joseph Ratzinger, and Catherine Pickstock, I have argued that this should not be reduced to external activity but that it is, in Ratzinger's words, principally a divine work in which we are allowed to participate: "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."[2] Our participation in God is the foundation of our lives and our actions, as St. Paul notes: "In him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28). I should note again that by 'participation in God' or 'participation in the divine,' I do not mean that we participate directly in the divine essence, which is uncommunicated, incommunicable, and unparticipated (Wisdom 14:21), but that we participate analogously in the likeness of God, 'through similitude,' by receiving being from God.[3] As we read in James 1:17: "Every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change." From this, I have emphasised the paradoxical importance of focusing *both* on the primacy of the *actio divina* over human agency and expressions, *and* on the crucial importance and substantial nature of human agency and expressions. Though our being is derived, it is real, but it is so precisely because it participates in the ground of being.

Participation, however, can be understood in two related senses: the ontological participa-

1 *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (hereafter: *SC*), 14. On Vatican II documents, see abbreviations, p.5, n4.

2 Joseph Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, commemorative ed. (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius, 2018), 188, cf. 185-191.

3 See chapter one, pp.32, 40-44, cf. Andrew Davison, *Participation in God: A Study in Christian Doctrine and Metaphysics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 155-164; Gregory T. Doolan, "Aquinas on *esse subsistens* and the Third Mode of Participation" (*The Thomist* 82:4, 2018), 611-642; Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* (hereafter: *ST*) I, q.13, a.9; II-II, q.94, a.4; q.97, a.4 ad 3. For notes on the Thomistic corpus, see abbreviations, p.4, n1.

tion in God, expressed through the notion of *méthexis*, and our non-identical imitation of this, expressed through the notion of *mímēsis*. Our practical involvement in the liturgy, whether inwardly (for example through meditation or inwards prayer) or outwardly (for example through singing, gestures, or assistance during Mass), is a kind of *mímēsis*. It follows upon, and is and expression of, our fundamental participation in God through Christ but it is not identical, neither to the divine act nor to other expressions or rites.[4] And as I have argued, this is fulfilled only in Christ. We can only truly relate to God, analogously, and become "participants in the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4), which, by the grace of God, moves beyond our general participation in God as creatures,[5] by becoming "partners of Christ" (Hebrews 3:14). He is the "one mediator between God and humankind" (1 Timothy 2:5), precisely because He is the God-man. Through Him, we are not only related to God as creatures but have a real *metaphysical* union-in-distinction with Him.[6]

In order to hold these elements together, I have argued that this ought to be understood both in terms of theurgy, with Christ at the centre as 'master theurgist,' and through an adequately participatory and analogical understanding of created reality, which is central both to Christian and Pagan Neoplatonism.[7] In Christ, the God who keeps us in existence from moment to moment, descends, incarnationally, for us, allowing us to be incorporated into the divine life and to participate in the divine act. To point back to my definition of theurgy,[8] theurgy is an act

4 Gregory Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy*, 3rd ed. (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2005), 718-719; *Confessio Augustana* (hereafter: *CA*) VII. For notes on the Lutheran confessions, see abbreviations, p.5, n3. If not otherwise noted, quotations from *CA* follow the translation of the Latin text.

5 *ST* I-II, q.112, a.1, cf. chapter one, pp.49-54.

6 See chapter four, pp.140-146, 153-162.

7 Iamblichus, *De mysteriis*, Greek and English, intro. and trans. Emma C. Clarke, John M. Dillon, and Jackson P. Hershbell (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003, hereafter: *DM*) I, 8; John Milbank, Catherine Pickstock, and Graham Ward, eds., *Radical Orthodoxy: A new theology* (London: Routledge, 1999), 3-11, 19; Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, 2nd ed., reprint, ed., trans., intro., and comm. E.R. Dodds (Oxford: Clarendon, 1971), props. 1-13, 23-24; Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Divine Names* (*De Divinis Nominibus*, hereafter: *DN*), IV, 7 (701C-704C); Peter T. Struck, "Pagan and Christian Theurgies: Iamblichus, Pseudo-Dionysius, Religion and Magic in Late Antiquity" (*Ancient World* 32:2, 2001), 25-38 (esp. 30-38). For notes on the Pseudo-Dionysian corpus, see abbreviations, p.4, n2.

8 See introduction, p. 18, cf. *SC*, 7; Struck, "Pagan and Christian Theurgies," 30.

of the triune God for us, put into use by Christ as the God-man, and the Church as His body, whose effect is to reconcile the world to God and make humans capable of worship and service through participation in Him.

This participation, however, is not granted directly but mediated through the liturgy, through concrete means of grace.[9] The liturgy and its symbols, as theurgy, become truly anagogical through Christ, in the Holy Spirit, because it lifts us up to God.[10] This anagogy happens, however, in a paradoxical manner by God's descent, and it happens *in* the created world. This way, Christian anagogy is different from its Iamblichan counterpart. Though the latter tradition holds that matter is not bad or evil, and emphasises human descent into creation through theurgic ritual,[11] the ultimate goal of the ritual is the exclusively spiritual ascent to, and union with, the gods, reserved for those who are able to achieve it.[12] Christian theurgy and liturgy, however, while being anagogical is not so in the sense that we are, as individuals, 'whisked away' to some 'spiritual realm.' No, in the Spirit and through Christ, we are given communion with God *here and now*, by means of specific rituals,[13] and this participates not only in the transcendent (yet immanent) God or in the heavenly liturgy of Christ (Hebrews 8:1-3), but anticipates God's eschatological descent to the world: "See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them" (Revelation 21:3).

In a way, we can say that the whole cosmos is lifted up to God, but it is so *precisely as nature*, and it is so not by 'ascending' the hierarchy but by achieving fuller unity with God

9 See chapter five, pp.176-188, cf. *CA* V, VII-XIV; Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles* (hereafter: *SCG*) IV, 56:7.

10 Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Celestial (or heavenly) Hierarchy* (*De coelesti hierarchia*, hereafter: *CH*), II, 4 (144B), cf. Peter T. Struck, *Birth of the Symbol: Ancient Readers at the Limits of Their Texts* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 262.

11 John Milbank and Aaron Riches, "Neoplatonic Theurgy and Christian Incarnation," foreword to Gregory Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul: The Neoplatonism of Iamblichus* (2nd ed. Angelico Press/Sophia Perennis, 2014), xiv-xvi, cf. Eyjólfur Kjalar Emilsson, "Plotinus' doctrine of badness as matter in Ennead I.8 [51]," in *Platonism and Christian Thought in Late Antiquity*, eds., Panagiotis G. Pavlos et al. (London: Routledge, 2019), 78-99.

12 *DM*, V, 18; VI, 6, cf. *TCO*, frag. 153-154, 194 (cf. pp.20, 198, 212).

13 John 3:3-5; 6:48-59; Romans 10:14-17; 1 Corinthians 10:16-17; 11:23-26; Colossians 2:6-15; Romans 6:1-14; Galatians 3:27-28.

through Christ, who opens this for all, not just those 'able.'[14] God, while being transcendent, is not so because He is 'far off' as a distant object in some inaccessible 'spiritual realm,' but simply because *he is God*. His transcendence is a 'transcendence in the immanence.'[15] As Ratzinger reminds us, "God does not become more divine when we push him away from us in a sheer, impenetrable voluntarism."[16] Furthermore, He comes to us in concrete rituals, analogously to the way He descended in the Incarnation, as Pickstock notes: "Theurgically to instigate the divine re-descent in baptism and the Eucharist, just as Mary instigated the theurgic descent of God become Man, is to repeat a drama which is both heavenly and historical."[17]

This metaphysical perspective, however, has often been neglected. Though no one denies the primacy of divine agency, liturgy is frequently seen as a more or less flexible series of acts, rather than a concrete ritual and rational participation in God through Christ, an action which orients us towards God, through Christ, in the Holy Spirit.[18] By downplaying this, we risk preaching to the world that with regards to praise, human agency is simply autonomous. Yes, it is autonomous in a sense, as we are not 'collapsed' into God, but it remains a participated and derived autonomy.[19] What we have seen, though, is that even if reforms are more 'radical,' liturgies tend to become more 'conservative.' More than anything else, the liturgies highlight the relation between God and creation, emphasising our dependence on God but also the very real nature of human acts. If we overemphasise human agency, we may find as an unintended

14 Andrew Louth, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition: From Plato to Denys*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 166; Charles M. Stang, *Apophasis and Pseudonymity in Dionysius the Areopagite: "No Longer I"* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 115-117, cf. chapters three and five, pp.126-127, 167-169.

15 Rudi A. te Velde, *Participation and Substantiality in Thomas Aquinas* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 164.

16 Benedict XVI, *The Regensburg Lecture*, §27. For the text, see James V. Schall, *The Regensburg Lecture* (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine's Press, 2007), 130-148.

17 Catherine Pickstock, *Repetition and Identity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 177-178.

18 *Liturgi – Bokmål: Forslag til Ny ordning for hovedgudstjeneste i Den norske kirke* (Bergen: Eide/Kyrkjerådet, 2008), 15, cf. chapter six, p.207. Also see chapters three and four, pp.106-118, 153-162, cf. Ådne Njå, "Messen som Guds nåde og Kirkens takksigelse: En refleksjon over Luthers messeforordninger med et drøftende sideblikk på liturgi- og trosopplæringsreformen i Den norske kirke," in *«Hva betyr det?» Luthers katekisme i trosopplæringen*, eds., Knut Alfsvåg and Joar Haga (Prismet bok. Oslo: IKO, 2013), 185-202, esp. 196-201.

19 Davison, *Participation in God*, 65-83.

consequence that we, or those to whom we are sent to preach, end up forgetting that God is the primary agent. But likewise, if we overemphasise divine agency, we might end up with a liturgically pacified Church. The balance between these, understood hierarchically, comes to expression precisely through a theurgic, participatory, and analogical framework.

In the introduction, I pose a series of questions:[20] who is active in the liturgy, and what does it mean to engage in it? How should we understand the relationship between divine and human agency in Christian practices, and particularly in the liturgical action? If God is the supreme agent of the liturgical act, how do we understand human participation in the same? How is it even possible to speak of human agency in this context, and why is it even necessary?

In an absolute sense, God is the one active in liturgy. Human agency, however, is *real*, though only because it derives from, and participates in, divine agency. A theurgic perspective manages to provide a rational grounding for this, preserving the nature of creaturely agency, and liturgy in particular, as an objective divine gift while simultaneously opening up to flexibility and non-identity. If liturgy is a participation in, and an imitation of, God, it will therefore always remain analogical and non-identical. Our participation in God, for being, life, praise, etc. can take on numerous forms, precisely because God, being infinite, "can be participated in an infinite number of ways."[21] But even if we can participate in God in infinite ways, or rather that God may provide infinite ways for Himself to be participated, by different species, he nevertheless governs the world through each of these numerous beings through their *form*.[22] This thesis has emphasised that while liturgies have ritualistic, anthropological, or sociological perspectives, these important elements should not overshadow their theological and metaphysical grounding in divine agency. Participation is transformative. It is a gift of God which allows

20 See introduction, pp. 8-9.
21 *SCG* I, c.81:4.
22 Thomas Aquinas, *Disputed Questions on the Power of God* (*Quaestiones Disputatae de potentia Dei*, hereafter: *De pot.*), q.3, a.7.

us to grow. But it does so organically, through our *form*. And that is probably what more than anything characterises the liturgy: it is a non-identical repetition which remains old, tested, and tried but is at the same time ever new.

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