

REVIVING EUCHARISTIC SACRAMENTALISM:
SEEING AND CELEBRATING

by
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Reviving Eucharistic Sacramentalism: Seeing and Celebrating

That which is sacramental is that which has holy-making value (*sacra*, “holy” and *mentum*, “to make”). In the words of the Anglican theologian Robert Webber, properties of the sacramental are “visible and tangible meeting points between God and people” and “points of intersection between God’s action and human faith.”¹ Further, a sacrament is that “*signum sacro sanctum efficax gratiae*.”²

Some modernistic and Post-Enlightenment faith traditions perceive sacramentalism to be folklorish and mystical or that sacramentalism requires the reception and

¹ Robert E. Webber, *Evangelicals on the Canterbury Trail: Why Evangelicals Are Attracted to the Liturgical Church* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1985), 48.

² Conor Sweeney, *Sacramental Presence after Heidegger: Onto-Theology, Sacraments, and the Mother’s Smile* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2015), 2.

repetition of rote and ritualistic practices which emphasize “smells and bells” over and against rightly-ordered theology and Christian service.

However, faithfully-practiced orthodox and historic sacramentalism is not (at best) unhelpful or (at worst) pagan. The desire for and the fulfillment in such practices are God-ordained and built-into humankind for worship and human flourishing. Sacramentalism is about living, breathing, and *be-ing* in God’s world through true sight (*betrachtung*) and by true celebration (feast-ing), and is most clearly experienced in Eucharistic participation.

Aura, Qualia, Essence – Participating in Religious Practice in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction

Understanding sacramentality is understanding the nature of “human experience,” the concept of how people *participate* with and in the world. “Participation” is a useful word for two reasons; first, because it deemphasizes humanistic self-centrism. That is, “participation” implies we modestly come-along-side experiences, rather than believe that experiences come-into-existence for or because of our interaction with them.

Second, because it could be easy to substitute the operative word for interaction for the word “knowing” (as in, “understanding sacramentality is *knowing more* about ‘human experience’”). “Knowing” is concentrated on the intellect, but participation involves more than just mere thinking. Participation, in the Gadamerian sense, accepts

organically that “things gain meaning to the extent that they enter into human interactions and projects,” instead of originating in the mind as “mere fixation[s] and verbalization[s] of what has already been thought in thinking.”³ This is not to say that things have meaning *because* of our interactions with them, but that they gain meaning *for us* when we have be-ing (or, when we “enact in participation”) with them. This definition also serves to push aside a Western epistemologically-centered understanding of participation as knowing since knowing requires skills, tools, or resources not available to all (being able to read Latin, understanding symbolic logic, having a college education, et cetera). In this more inclusive definition of participation, “anybody can ponder... gaze into the unfathomable depths...

³ Hans Georg Gadamer and Lawrence Kennedy Schmidt, *Language and Linguisticality in Gadamer's Hermeneutics* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2000)., 128.

get absorbed... touch the mystery” of the nature of reality.⁴

Be-ing will later be described in a religious sense

(*betrachtung* and feast-ing), but for now, it will suffice to use

Heidegger’s definition: “*Dasein*, being in the world, being

with, encounters with entities, temporality and the care of

structure... the meaning of everyday ordinary human

existence.”⁵

Some examples are needed to illustrate participation

as different or other from thinking-only or thinking-first

epistemologies. For instance, two particular integers “2” and

“3” exist in the universe (in some way), and not because you

or I have just thought about them, nor because you or I use

them in an algebra problem. “2” and “3” do not come into

⁴ Josef Pieper, *Only the Lover Sings: Art and Contemplation* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1990), 24.

⁵ Marcella Horrigan-Kelly, Michelle Millar, and Maura Dowling, “Understanding the Key Tenets of Heidegger’s Philosophy for Interpretive Phenomenological Research,” *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 15, no. 1 (February 29, 2016): 1609406916680634, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406916680634>, 1.

existence because they have been written on this paper, but because they simply *are*. It is not important to understand *how* they are, but *that* they are. When one makes use of the concepts or “2” or “3” they are *participating* with their existence in the universe, which includes their illustrating or enacting something to myself or to others. The integer “2” has a certain essence—a quality of itself—which, when it comes to my experience (like in an arithmetic problem) it is participatory with me. I can say, “*two* apples” or “*two* times three equals six.” But, the essence of “2” is not that it symbolizes the concept of one apple and a second one together, or that this “2” unit and another unit can be multiplied together, or that I have utilized it by “thinking” about it in my math problem—the essence of it is something else.

To put it another way: just because you might be a lawyer, a mother to two kids, and a lover of espresso, does

not mean that your essence is “espresso-lover” or “two-kid-mother.” The “you-ness” of you is not bound up or dependent upon those attributes. This is what we mean by essence, the be-ing-ness of something not found fully within its attributes or accidentals. As much as you might love coffee, you would not cease to be you if coffee somehow stopped existing tomorrow; your essence would not be gone. You wouldn’t discontinue in being a human and your soul wouldn’t go away. Returning back to the subject of “2”: the “two-ness” of “2” isn’t dependent on my *participation* with “2” (a very weak participation in this case, since it only has to do with my *thinking* of it), but in thinking about algebra or apples I can participate in “two-ness.” I might not know much about you, but by telling me that you are a lawyer, I have participated with you in some degree by understanding a characteristic about you. One step past this would be further than mere understanding, it would include

empathizing and connecting, which are other, more integrated, forms of participation. This is important, because it takes more than just knowing trivia to truly participate in something—participation is not foundationally or fundamentally epistemological. In fact, it appears to be the case that thinking follows action, tradition, and instinctual physiology, biology, and anthropology. However, most of us are familiar enough with numbers and apples that they can work as an introductory scaffold.

I begin with thought and thinking first, because Western, Post-Enlightenment audiences often begin with the mind. As the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis tells us, our vocabularies and other features of our language directly affect how we perceive things, and perhaps by using examples that have to do with thinking—grounding “normative” Western thought in something that has

context—can be helpful.⁶ Eventually, after using these “thinking-first” examples, perhaps rationalism can be suspended long enough to accept new ways of being.

Participation is our interaction (again, not just mental interaction) with something, and the essence of something is its “something-ness.” The goal in learning more about something, becoming-more-familiar with something, or being-a-part of something has to do with participating with a thing better (not just *knowing* or *understanding* something better). When spiritually participating with something, like with concepts such as forgiveness or sanctification or actual beings such as Christ himself, if one is participating with the essences of those things, it becomes more about the real thing and not merely our perceptions of those things, or merely thinking or knowing trivia about spiritual realities.

⁶ Jon E. Roedelstein, *Dictionary of Theories, Laws, and Concepts in Psychology* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, 1998), <https://search.ebscohost.com/>, 476-477.

Contemplation is a helpful first step in this regard (perhaps similar to the task of reading a philosophical paper, like this one).

To understand the essence of something, we must participate with that thing *correctly*. The philosopher Frank Jackson presents a helpful thought experiment found in a philosophical paper called *Epiphenomenal Qualia*.⁷ In the paper, we are introduced to a neuropsychologist who is passionate about color—how the cones and rods in our eyes take that visual information into our brains, how different colors can make us hungry or sad, and so on. This scientist can tell you anything about nerves, neurons, contrast, hue, saturation, and everything in between, but he has never actually seen color. He has lived in a lab with no windows, and where all of his research instruments are only available

⁷ Frank Jackson, “Epiphenomenal Qualia,” *The Philosophical Quarterly* 32, no. 127 (1982): 127–36, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2960077>, 130.

in scales of grey. Let us compare him to a small child who plays outside every day. From her vantage point on a blanket of soft earthy grass, she can see the golden fingers of sunlight warmly filtering through the stained glass of the red and orange leaves, as they are plucked off through chilly Autumn's breath. She pushes herself up and explores the mosaic of puce and stone through the flowing lens of cool blue water at the mouth of brown and muddy creek.

Who knows more about color? This child has never written a dissertation about color psychology. She has never explored how our brains experience color through the scanners of an fMRI. But there is more to color than what can be published through statistical statements of survey responses in academic journals. With color, and with many other things in our world, what matters more is *experiencing* something, not just finding out facts about something.

What is being illustrated is the concept of *qualia*. Here, “qualia” means the “what-it-is-like aspect” of something.⁸ Part of why we want to understand “what-it-is-like” is so we can avoid some philosophical or cognitive errors, such as the errors of materialism or naturalism. These ways of thinking are similar in that they are “self-contained and self-sufficient,” meaning that “everything which exists or occurs lies entirely within the domain” of either the material world or the processes of our expanding and contracting universe.⁹ According to these views, just because it *looks* like there is something more than what we can cognize—spiritual experiences, morals, the divine—does not mean there *is*. There is, allegedly, an evolutionary, biological, or behavioral explanation for why we seem to

⁸ Byron Kaldis, *Encyclopedia of Philosophy and the Social Sciences* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc, 2013), <https://dts.idm.oclc.org/>.

⁹ William Hasker, *Metaphysics: Constructing a World View*, ed. C. Stephen Evans (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1983).

experience those things, but these explanations do not seem satisfactory in light of our experiences.

A great example of qualia could be found in the common, everyday headache. If you are having a migraine, you *know* you are having a migraine, and no one is going to be able to convince you otherwise. A naturalist might say, “the only reason *you think* that you’re *seeming* to *perceive* pain is because there are certain pain neurons firing that make you think that.” Another critic might inquire, “you say you’re experiencing pain; can you give any proof or evidence that you’re *actually* undergoing pain?” Most of us probably cannot scientifically prove—whatever that means—the presence of a headache when we feel that we are having one. But, when the throbbing in your sinuses start, do you have any doubt that, *in fact*, a headache is taking place?

Your knowledge of the *qualia* of a headache has more to do with your *participation* in the *experience* of the pain of

a headache, and less to do with the *factual knowledge* from reading a brain scan where the pain receptors in your head are lighting up. But, even if you could view a brain scan that indicates that pain is happening, is simply seeing the results of this pain-scanning instrument the same thing at all as actually *experiencing* pain? Certainly not. When it comes to the experience of pain, we are probably familiar with the stories of well-meaning men who say, “I know how you feel” to wives who are minutes away from having a baby. If the husband is a pain management doctor and published OB/GYN researcher, he still doesn’t “know how you feel” when it comes to the pain of childbirth.

If qualia have to do with the “what-it-is-like aspect” of something, this probably leads us to ask about the qualia of other things that are spiritually or mentally deeper, such as the qualia of religion, nostalgia, or love and romance.

As for the subject of love, naturalists and materialists have similar explanations (as with pain) to illustrate that love is nothing more than a herd mentality, or natural selection's way of getting creatures to procreate or take care of their young. It is out of scope to develop a treatise or a thesis to countermand that claim, but all I can say in response is this: have you ever been in love? It stands to reason that our experience, our participation, seems to point to something other than the *scientism* and the scientific explanation. The person who wants to say that there is nothing more than naturalism is ignoring—perhaps purposefully—the real presence of romance. “The real presence of romance”—it is hard to objectively measure this, but you know it's there when it's there. There is no “romance inventory,” but we do not need such an artificial measuring tool to participate in the qualia of a real human experience.

Falling Out of Love: How Romance is Removed from Experience

We cannot reduce something like romance to mere categories. Though not synonymous with it, romance shares much of its essence with the concept of art, which has to do with the capacity for appreciating or engaging in “meaningful making.”¹⁰ We can see how artwork, or how I like to distinguish it, art-*work*, directly engages with the *aesthetic* that speaks to us in romantic and not scientific ways. But what does art-work have to do with love and romance?

Often, our Modern sensibilities push us to, as stated earlier, reduce things down so they can fit into a scientific framework—so they can be hypothesized, tested, retested, and extrapolated from. Art-works, such as beautiful

¹⁰ Frank Burch Brown, *Religious Aesthetics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993).

symphonies, Renaissance paintings, and even romantic relationships, lose their *essence* when we take the *qualia* of such art-works and make them fit scientific schema. To use a rather cliché saying, reducing things down causes us to “miss the forest for the trees.” A powerful polemic against reductionsim comes from the German social philosopher, Walter Benjamin, whose greatest and most pervasive works were penned in the 1930’s.¹¹

Benjamin writes about his concerns in his essay, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*. In Benjamin’s time, a certain technology began to be perfected, and soon became pervasive in the world around him, its produce seen in magazines, billboards, and businesses. This technology was the portable and affordable analog camera. It would be a mistake to brush off Benjamin’s critique as if it

¹¹ Andrew E. Benjamin, *Walter Benjamin and Art*, Walter Benjamin Studies Series (London, UK: Continuum, 2005), <https://dts.idm.oclc.org/>, 1.

was the ramblings of some timeworn senior citizen griping about the “kids these days.” One must be fair to his thesis. In *The Work of Art*, Benjamin argues that photography has fundamentally changed art-work because of the issue we have already introduced: photography is a mechanical reproduction of a thing, whether that thing is a portrait (a reproduction of the perceiving of another person) or a landscape (a reproduction of the perceiving of sky, trees, and mountains). He states that “even the most perfect reproduction of a work of art is lacking in one element: its presence in time and space... the presence of the original is the prerequisite of the concept of authenticity.”¹² A mechanical reproduction cannot capture the *presence* of something, because, as he further states, this reproduction results in a loss of the *aura* of the photographic subject.

¹² Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (Lexington, KY: Prism Key Press, 2010), 14.

The aura of something is tied to presence, “being-there-in-the-moment.” There is an *essence* to the moment, an *aura* which inseparable from the moment itself. The “what-it-is-like aspect” are all the things that are present, as you participate *with them* in that moment. To simply snap a picture and say, “look, this is a scene of the Appalachian Mountains” is to “pry an object from its shell, to destroy its aura.”¹³

No, that picture *is not* a scene of the Appalachian Mountains, because a real scene of the Appalachian Mountains requires you to smell the pines, to feel the sticky mist of that morning’s rain, to be bent with the tedious weight of your pack and gear—to be *there*. In the light of that whole experience, that mechanical reproduction, that violently and abruptly sheared reduction, one is left with nothing more than a parody.

¹³ Benjamin., 18.

It is not wrong to look at pictures of mountains, just like it is not wrong to watch romance movies. But we cannot say that pictures of mountains *are of the same essence* as the *real* hike, and we cannot say that the matinee romantic comedy *is* romance. Inherently, those “parodies” are not sinful or wrong, but it is easy to see how those caricatures can distort and decay the real auras of the real things themselves. In fact, at some point, a society saturated with these knock-offs loses the ability to establish a grounded “good taste,” and becomes no longer able to tell the difference between processed, mechanically-separated *aura* and slow-roasted, made-with-tender-love-and-care *aura*. There is something different, entirely unique about the real thing versus the reduced-down version of it.

Benjamin continues his argument: “the uniqueness of a work of art is inseparable from its being imbedded in the

fabric of tradition.”¹⁴ Suddenly, Benjamin’s work takes a turn. It seemed as though we were discussing the features of technological advances. However, his appeal to the authority of the aura of an art-work is its embeddedness or *instantiation* in a culture’s tradition. He continues his reasoning, by following a religious path.

Originally the contextual integration of art in tradition found its expression in the cult. We know that the earliest art works originated in the service of a ritual—first the magical, then the religious kind. It is significant that the existence of the work of art with reference to its aura is never entirely separated from its ritual function. In other words, the unique value of the “authentic” work of art has its basis in ritual, the location of its original use value.¹⁵

It may seem disconnected at first to discuss film cameras then switch to a conversation about religion, especially considering that Benjamin is not writing as a theologian. However, a reexamination of his thesis shows

¹⁴ Benjamin., 19.

¹⁵ Benjamin.

that these two things—reductive mechanical reproduction and religion—actually go hand in hand. Throughout history, and especially Christian history, art-work has been directly tied to the life and tradition of the Church.¹⁶ Until this age of mechanical reproduction, art-work has often been carried out with the church, through the church, and through the church within the stream of the Church’s practice and preaching.

However, when art-work loses “its basis in ritual, the location of its original use value,” then the essence for this artwork loses its footing, and eventually, the aura is lost as well. Previously, the example of love and romance was used when discussing our experiences and participation with these philosophically-loaded concepts. Many of us understand the experience of falling into, and also falling out

¹⁶ Frank Burch Brown, *Good Taste, Bad Taste, and Christian Taste: Aesthetics in Religious Life* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2003), 26-61.

of love. Sometimes, these experiences came about because what we thought was love was a crush, or lust, or some other inauthentic emotion brought on by various situations or opportunities. But we know these things are not love. We *know* when love happens, and the high school crush was not it. What kind of disordered lives would we live, if we would lose the mooring to real love? Anything and everything would look and feel like love without the correct basis.

Benjamin further states that the first art-works existed in the realm of religious ritual. Certainly, this makes sense from a biblical perspective, as some of the first religious participation with God came in the form of sacrifice.¹⁷ It is impossible to deny that rituals of religious people seem to be almost engrained in humankind. Even Daniel Dennett, one of the “four horsemen of New Atheism,” understands this natural slide for humankind to develop

¹⁷ Genesis 4:3-4, 8:20-21; Job 1:5.

toward religion. Though he certainly does not let the presence of religious rituals effect his view of evolutionary theory, he is forced to admit that the rise of religion is somewhat puzzling from his vantage point.¹⁸ According to Darwinian evolutionary theory, for a system to be preserved in an evolutionary line, there must be a benefit or value if some feature is to be hereditarily retained. For example, the value of a “maternal instinct” feature allows developed adults to care for defenseless or weaker children. So, the evolutionary economy would continue making use of this feature, since it allows for survival and preservation. However, it seems not very advantageous that religious ritual be preserved as an instinct, especially when compared to other survival-reproduction traits such as maternal care, fight or flight, or self-preservative pain responses. This kind

¹⁸ Michael Peterson et al., eds., *Philosophy of Religion: Selected Readings*, 4th ed. (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2009), 11-18.

of overriding religious ritual instinct does not appear as a simple internal spirituality, either; it appears across time, place, and culture as *disruptive practice*. Religious ritual involved community sacrifices, tied to ceremony, feasting, and festivals. One's whole life and service could have been given to these rituals, submitting to religious calendars, submitting to giving up the firstborn of their flocks. For clergy throughout millennia, a religious calling could have included celibacy, asceticism, or vows of poverty. It is strange that humans in our recent time, have divorced religion from these rituals. Private faith was never in vogue; lengthy celebrations and grand temples were always tied to the human experience of "doing worship."

It is this aspect of worship that Dennett finds puzzling, because this kind of worship "is a hugely costly endeavor."¹⁹ Even from a dehumanizing evolutionary

¹⁹ Peterson et al., 11.

perspective, it seems obvious that human beings are—perhaps against their better Darwinian instincts—tied to the “useless things” of religion.

Dennett’s Darwinian way of viewing the world, though antithetical to religious faith, elucidates the matter of useless things. The tool of scientific reductionism does not have the explanatory power needed to make sense of the world’s other-worldliness. Reductionism cannot explain our instinctual desire to interact with other-worldliness through worship. Modern, scientific cultures attempt to trick their tenants into believing that if something cannot be “proven,” that knowledge cannot be sure. But Christians should not forget Christ’s rebuke to the “first Modernist”: “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe.”²⁰

²⁰ John 20:24-28, ESV.

One must choose whether to identify either with the scientist who has spent years researching color, or the child who experiences and participates with color. One can interact with their innate design in desiring to practice religiously, or they can believe that they have evolved past those useless things. One can appreciate non-mechanically-reproduced forms of true romance, or deny the existence of love, simply because it does not fit nicely into scientific categories.

Following the Festival: The Universal Language of Feasting

The essence of some things must be explored through participation, not experimentation. Color is explored through aesthetics and not through science if one wants to understand the substance of its qualia.

It is with this understanding that we revisit another important part of Benjamin's earlier quote. He said that "the earliest art works originated in the service of a ritual" and that "the unique value of the 'authentic' work of art has its basis in ritual, the location of its original use value."²¹

Something—in this case, art-work—has a greater importance or authority if it is carried out, explored, or meditated upon in the context of a religious rite. These significant things are of greater consequence than "fight or flight," more important than survival, and more central to human existence than food and shelter.

The Roman Catholic theologian Josef Pieper commented on this, and brilliantly, his thoughts are largely congruent with Benjamin's. Pieper, in his various writings, called his readers to understand, as it were, color not in the

²¹ Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, 19.

grey-scale laboratory but in the glorious outside world. The qualia of holiness, or other-ness, can be found even in seemingly-mundane things (*dasein*), like going to a festival or resting on the weekends. Not only is there a sense of other-ness found in these ordinary things, but there is also a special aspect to them which sets them apart. That distinctive element is what Pieper calls “festivity.”

Of festivity or *feierabend* (the special, set-aside time for being done with a long day’s work and celebrating with friends and family), Pieper says this:

How should we conceive of such an activity that does not need something other for its justification, that is not defined as producing useful goods and objective results? An activity that does not bring forth the means for our existence but is existential realization itself, an activity in which man’s true and proper good, his genuine richness, fullest life, and most perfect happiness is attained?²²

²² Pieper, *Only the Lover Sings.*, 21-22.

The *Sabbath*/workweek concept should be considered here. We work with Sabbath in mind, which is not to belittle or depreciate work, but we understand that there is an end goal to which we proceed *after* working. This “existential realization” of our human experience is seen in being able to celebrate by feasting and festivity. But one must have the right faculties, if they are to experience this reality.

I am well aware that there are realities we can come to know through “hearing” alone. All the same, it remains a fact that only through seeing, indeed through seeing with our own eyes, is our inner autonomy established. Those no longer able to see reality with their own eyes are equally unable to hear correctly. What can be done? A better and more immediately effective remedy is this: to be active oneself in an artistic creation, producing shapes and forms for the eye to see. Before you can express anything in tangible form, you first need eyes to see.²³

The color scientist has the wrong “eyes to see” because he was *studying about* nature, rather than being in nature itself. To experience things-in-themselves, one must

²³ Pieper., 34-35

experience them in their authoritative original setting to preserve their qualia.

A Central Thesis: The *Betrachtung* and The Ability to Celebrate a Feast

According to Pieper, there are two very important requirements to understand, appreciate, and participate with aesthetic things (worship services, interpersonal relationships, art museums, for example). Our participation with the reality of these things involves two key concepts: *betrachtung* and feast-ing.

Having the Right Eyes

The first requirement is “having the right eyes,” or *betrachtung*, which is to “look (closely) at”, “consider, contemplate, regard”, as well as to “meditate or reflect (up)on” something.²⁴ Without properly-aligned *betrachtung*,

²⁴ Harold T. Betteridge, *Cassell's German Dictionary: German-English/English-German*, 2 edition (London: Cassell, 2001), 109.

one would miss out on the “what-it-is-like aspects” or the essences of many things. In fact, *betrachtung* is so important, much of the previous pages have been written just to scaffold this particular phrase.

Betrachtung is chief in this domain. Romance is not truly romance if our eyes are attuned to how we might use or abuse our romantic partner. We have the wrong eyes if all we see are faults and opportunities to criticize. We have the wrong eyes if we fail to grow closer to the other person for who *they are*—engaging with their essence. Contemplative, romantic eyes see clearly.

Whenever *betrachtung* is carried out correctly, we “behold the very essence of reality.”²⁵ Further, “such reaching out in contemplation [*betrachtung*] to the root and foundation of all that is to the archetypes of all things, this activity that is meaningful in itself can happen in countless

²⁵ Pieper, 23.

actual forms.” One way to explore with *betrachtung* is by going out and seeing colors in nature. Another way is to love your romantic partner for who they are. And of course, in agreement with Benjamin, Pieper says that the preeminent way of exploring with *betrachtung* is to engage in religious practice.

We as humans were built to worship; a Roman Catholic theologian, (Pieper) a militant atheist apologist (Dennett), and a Frankfurt School philosopher (Benjamin) all agree on this point. But there is more to religious service than just generic pious-looking worship, or cafeteria-style, choose-your-own-adventure individual spirituality. One cannot just willy-nilly approach religious things with an air of arrogance or with no knowledge of how to engage with the traditions and cultures of specific religious practices. And one, of course, must not engage with religious practice with the wrong eyes. One who literally stretches out their hands

out and is served communion, or who utters the assenting amen submits to the placing of a lens over one's eyes. Just as a person understands a foreign language by submitting to the rules of syntax and to the agreed-upon definitions of vocabulary words, one submits in the same way to the syntax and vocabulary of liturgy through practice—and such liturgies must be “accomplished... with an attitude of receptive openness and attentive silence.”²⁶

“If the conditions are right,” then the liturgy shares its essence with its faithful practitioners.²⁷ But for these conditions to be right, these practitioners must agree, ascent, and *submit* to the practices of proper participation. In John 6, Jesus' uncommitted followers had the shape—*die gestalt*—of their *betrachtung* mis-in-formed because they were inaccurately molded to a physical hand-out that would have

²⁶ Pieper., 25.

²⁷ Ibid, 24.

been physically digested, leaving them physically *and* spiritually hungry. Because of this lack of ascent and mis-forming, most of the crowd left in a confused huff. Of this necessary-yet-difficult submission to mystery, Pieper says we must “be aware of those different forms of touching the core of reality and to acknowledge them as ‘meaningful in themselves,’ to experience them and simply to live in them as such.”²⁸ It follows that our interactions with a transcendent God will sometimes include ethereally nonsensical things. While we may not fully understand mysterious spiritual things, our world is coherent enough that we can use concrete earthly examples (for example, color scientists) to make sense of some aspects of transcendental realities.

²⁸ Ibid.

Having the Ability to Celebrate a Feast

Having introduced Pieper's first requirement for participation—*betrachtung*—we continue to the second: “the ability to celebrate a feast.”²⁹ Feast-*ing* and festivity have to do with acceptance and submission, because such festivity will, at some point, involve the “useless things.”³⁰ Though Saturday could be used as another workday, we choose to Sabbath instead. This is not unlike the indigenous tribe who, for the sake of a feast, sacrifices the fatted calf in spite of a famine. We submit not to economics, but to aesthetics.

It is therefore, dangerous to feast. But, “wherever the arts [or, the aesthetic] are nourished through festive contemplation of universal realities and their sustaining

²⁹ Ibid, 25-26.

³⁰ Louise Lockwood, *Why Beauty Matters* (BBC Two, 2009), Video.

reasons, there in truth something like a liberation occurs.”³¹

We choose freedom or liberty in feasting, rather than slavery to endless work and toil. We might relate the concept of actualization to Pieper’s concept of liberation. We are not made to simply hunt, eat, procreate, and live to fight another day. In a Maslowian sense, our Creator calls us to actualize further than the natural world’s primal concerns.³² What we long for—what we are built for—is the other-ness of the holy, set-aside things, the sacramental things. It is through these that we are truly liberated from evolutionary, reductionistic experiences and transported to *be* God’s image-bearers.

27. ³¹ Pieper,

³² Gerald Corey, *Theory and Practice of Counseling and Psychotherapy* (Belmont, CA: Brooks Cole, 2012).,

The Eucharist as Submission to Aesthetic:

***Betrachtung* and Feast-ing**

Christ viewed his Supper or Communion as a life-giving necessity, a sacred work effecting an unfathomable spiritual reality. Before he died, he instituted it as a memorial to be kept indefinitely, until he comes again to take of it the Final time.³³ St. Paul instructed the church in Corinth to correct their misappropriation of the Lord's Supper, because their improper participation was causing their judgment—God-ordained sickness and death.³⁴ The Eucharist, according to the early Church, was central to the Christian community and was viewed sacramentally.³⁵ From Tertullian and Irenaeus to Augustine and the Angelic Doctor,

³³ Matthew 26:26-29.

³⁴ 1 Corinthians 11:28-29.

³⁵ Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine, Vol. 1: The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1975), 167-168.

writers and commentators puzzled over the strangeness of Christ's words at the institution, "This is my body" and "this is my blood."³⁶

Continuing in this line of thought, Pieper wrote that the Lord's supper is not "merely symbolic.' It not only *signifies* something... it at the same time *effectuates* what it means."³⁷ The same could be said about baptism—what it signifies (physical cleansing) is what it does or effectuates (spiritual cleansing). We set aside these two sacraments because they are Christ-instituted. Though it can be spiritually meaningful to walk through the forest on a crisp fall day, there is something different about participating in Christ's specifically-set-apart sacraments. A special place is reserved for these things; they are sacramental.

³⁶ Pelikan., 167-168; 238.

³⁷ Josef Pieper, *Josef Pieper: An Anthology* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1989)., 190.

This emphasis on set-apart-ness can be seen throughout the Eucharistic liturgies of the historic churches. The example I will use is from the Anglican 1928 Book of Common Prayer. I have chosen this rite for a few reasons. First, for ecumenical practicality: the Anglican rite includes a view of “mere sacramentality” without requiring communicants to accept a doctrine of *metousiosis* or be in communion with a specific church body. Secondly, as Schmemmann states, “one can speak with conviction only insofar as one has experience” with a particular liturgical rite, and this is the one I personally participate in on Sunday mornings.³⁸ Third, this particular liturgy has stood the test of the time and has been used across countries and cultures (as opposed to being a “set list” put together by a praise band leader the Saturday before Sunday’s worship). It should be

³⁸ Alexander Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World: Sacraments and Orthodoxy* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1973), 26.

noted that while the 1928 BCP liturgy has its unique particularities, many historic liturgies share common features, such as a closing Gloria, an oblation, and an invocation. This is because these liturgies are grandchildren of the traditions of the early church. For instance, the BCP28 consecration is almost a facsimile of the 4th Century Syrian rite found in the Constitutions of the Holy Apostles.³⁹

The statements concerning the reality of the materials of the Eucharistic elements appear in the epiclesis: “bless and sanctify, with thy Word and Holy Spirit these thy gifts and creatures of bread and wine; that we... may be partakers of his most blessed Body and Blood.”⁴⁰ The Syrian invocation

³⁹ Charles Hefling and Cynthia Shattuck, eds., *The Oxford Guide to the Book of Common Prayer: A Worldwide Survey* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2008); Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, eds., *Fathers of the Third and Fourth Centuries: Lactantius, Venantius, Asterius, Victorinus, Dionysius, Apostolic Teaching and Constitutions, Homily, and Liturgies*, vol. 7, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1886). 489-491.

⁴⁰ Oxford University Press, *The 1928 Book of Common Prayer* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993)., 81.

says, “send down upon this sacrifice Thine Holy Spirit... that He may show this bread to be the body of Thy Christ, and the cup to be the blood of Thy Christ.”⁴¹ Later, in the BCP28 Prayer of Humble Access, the celebrant entreats, “Grant us therefore, gracious Lord, so to eat the flesh of thy dear Son Jesus Christ, and to drink his blood, that our sinful bodies may be made clean.”⁴² Further, when the deacon or chalice bearer delivers the consecrated wine to the communicants, they declare, “The Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was shed for thee, preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life. Drink this in remembrance that Christ’s Blood was shed for thee, and be thankful.”⁴³

⁴¹ Roberts, Donaldson, and Coxe, *Fathers of the Third and Fourth Centuries: Lactantius, Venantius, Asterius, Victorinus, Dionysius, Apostolic Teaching and Constitutions, Homily, and Liturgies.*, 489.

⁴² Oxford University Press, *The 1928 Book of Common Prayer.*, 82.

⁴³ Oxford University Press., 83.

One could claim Christ's words (via the invocation) are simply metaphor, but it seems strange to request the invasion of the Spirit (*epiclesis*) into wheat and grape juice, and especially for one to state that those materials should then "preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life." Perhaps a submission to the promises of Christ's words and the teaching and practice of the church is required for us to understand—or participate in—this fully. Greyscale scientific instruments should be retired to spend a day in the colors of the forest.

Waiting for the Weekend: An Ever-Present Human Desire for the Other

David Fagerberg, channeling one of the Pope Paul VI's arguments in *Lumen Gentium*, states the incredible importance of putting the regular, everyday world in its rightful place—a place of holiness. This is not because of

pantheism, but because of a kenosis, an “exorcism” of the world to its Edenic and future eschatological state.⁴⁴ To understand the need for a thin place—a consecrated place with consecrated objects—is to understand the Pope’s call for *consecratio mundi*, mundane liturgical theology, the rite through which the world is consecrated.⁴⁵

To understand this “liturgy of the ordinary,”⁴⁶ one must also understand the teleological direction of the mundane. By way of example: most evangelical Christians (within the free church or evangelical traditions) have no concept of sacramental theology (some even go as far as to say there are no *dominical* sacraments, just “ordinances”). But if there is no *sacramentus*, then all things only are and

⁴⁴ David W. Fagerberg, *Consecrating the World: On Mundane Liturgical Theology* (Kettering, OH: Angelico Press, 2016), 2.

⁴⁵ Fagerberg, 3.

⁴⁶ The title of a rather relevant work by Rev. Tish Warren, a helpful related resource, though unfortunately not quite within the thrust of the thesis of this paper.

can ever be is *mundanum*. Not even any meal can be considered a Eucharist.⁴⁷ If nothing can be made sacramental, there is no sense in pretending that something can be rightly considered other. However, simply thinking about Jesus' death is not the criteria of "partaking of the Lord's supper," just as simply thinking nice thoughts about one's wife is not the criteria of "love." Love, without the romantic sixth-sense that drives it, cannot be considered love. It is better to close the temple doors than to sacrifice invisible and non-existent lambs.

There is nothing about an "ordinance-ing" world that can break the fourth-wall into the sacramental other-world. If only ordinances exist, nothing can invade in or outside of this planet. No thing from another world can be efficaciously imputed upon this closed system. One might compare this

⁴⁷ "Every Meal a Eucharist: Introducing DTS Magazine," *DTS Voice* (blog), accessed November 11, 2017, <https://voice.dts.edu/article/every-meal-a-eucharist-glahn-sandra/>.

concept to Pieper’s feast-ing and Sabbath-ing. For one to Sabbath, one must work. This is because feast-ing is “something out of the ordinary, something unusual, which is not covered by the rules governing the workaday world.”⁴⁸ For there to be un-usual, there must be the usual; for there to be extra-ordinary, there must also be the ordinary.

To unravel sacramentality, one must consider Dante’s two keys (one of silver, signifying abstinence and one of gold, signifying replacement) and allow them to work together “because the key of negation and the key of affirmation must cooperate to operate the lock.”⁴⁹ Negation at its extreme fails to appreciate that the Lord “richly provides us with everything to enjoy.”⁵⁰ Affirmation at its extreme fails to appreciate God-ordained boundaries and “does not abide in

⁴⁸ Josef Pieper, *In Tune With The World* (South Bend, IN: St. Augustines Press, 1999), 52.

⁴⁹ Fagerberg, 6-7.

⁵⁰ 1 Timothy 6:17, ESV.

the teaching of Christ.”⁵¹ Tension must be maintained between *both* keys. Like many concepts in the Christian world, dualism or unbalanced extremes carry dangerous ramifications.

A “silver” theology of ordinances denies “golden” theology entirely, and thus becomes a theology of negation. One must understand that “the way of negation could easily become masochistic, puritanical and... we would become satisfied with escaping hell, but not becoming heaven.”⁵² Memorializing and ordinance-ing over the Lord’s Supper occupies the mind such that it is too busy thinking about a wafer rather than lusts (“escaping hell”), but what more does it accomplish (“becoming heaven”)?

Again, if there is no *theosis* or no partaking of the divine nature, there is no other benefit besides command-

⁵¹ 2 John 9, ESV.

⁵² Fagerberg, 8.

keeping. It is not wrong (clearly) to “keep commands,” but without divine otherness (imputation of righteousness, sanctification, etc.), keeping commands is simply marking things off of a to-do list—and such a practice is only, merely, within the category of “escaping hell.” But Christians *do* believe in an invading otherness, the Incarnation, which comes from that other world into this one—somehow—and He is able to apply Himself—somehow—to us that we might be saved. If one believes in the Incarnation (and they must if they are to be an orthodox Christian), they already have made their first step on the road to accepting sacramentality. Because of the Incarnation, we are given permission to perceive the world as *miraculous*, outside of our normal categories and out of the natural order. Therefore, through the Incarnation, there is now a “hitherto unheard-of depth as

a language and means of expression for the Uncreated Reality.”⁵³

Incarnation is a full-circle concept. Christ did not become Man to be like Man, Christ became Man so that Man could become like Christ. And Man becomes like Christ through the sacraments. Sacraments are not “completed by Christ offering himself to us for our partaking; [they are] completed only when we actually partake of Christ” through the waters of baptism and through the eating and drinking of his body and blood.⁵⁴

⁵³ Aidan Nichols, *The Word Has Been Abroad: A Guide Through Balthasar’s Aesthetics* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1998), 4.

⁵⁴ Nicholas Wolterstorff, *The God We Worship: An Exploration of Liturgical Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015), 4.

Romantic Theology: Before Ever-Present Altars

Charles Williams’ “escaping hell vs. becoming heaven” categories were foundational for Lewis’ writings on “satisfying insatiability.”⁵⁵ This term appears at first to be a paradox, but it can be understood through Benjamin’s lens. He critiques artwork in the age of mechanical reproduction because such technology is birthed out of “the desire of the contemporary masses to bring things ‘closer’ spatially and humanly,” and instead of truly coming-to-know the thing-in-itself, the viewers instead “over[come] the uniqueness of every reality by accepting its reproduction.”⁵⁶

Evangelical sacramental theology has come to look more and more like evangelical places of worship. If out of

⁵⁵ Fagerberg, *Consecrating the World*, 19.

⁵⁶ Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction.*, 18.

the increase of the hearts the hands build, then architecture communicates a message in crystal-clear quality. The “sanctuaries” have oxymoronicly become *not* set apart, but rather are built to be portable or multi-purpose. For some churches, the Sunday morning trappings inconveniently take over the fixtures of a mid-week recreational hall. These church buildings are “developed within a modern cultural mind-set that downplayed or rejected outright any literal understanding of the supernatural in the world.”⁵⁷ While such a critique might normally be leveled against those who deny orthodox beliefs regarding the Virgin birth, miracles, or the bodily resurrection of Christ, it appears that such a rejecting of the supernatural comes in shades. Even “conservative” churches deny the other-worldly when “the focus on the immanence of God in human community”

⁵⁷ Mark A. Torgerson, *An Architecture of Immanence: Architecture for Worship and Ministry Today* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), 12.

results in worship spaces which look no different than coffee shops or concert venues.⁵⁸ What results is not a sacred space, but rather just space. When one flips a light switch on, they give no thought regarding the wiring, turbines, or windmills that provide these services.⁵⁹ Electrical theory, renewable energy, or the well-being of power plant staff are irrelevant considerations because “virtue” is driven by the answer to the question, “what does it *do*?” This is related to the relatively recent appropriation of liturgical elements in some evangelical churches. The novelty of these “features” is employed to drive traffic, increase attendance, and put more money in the collection plate. In these cases, liturgical elements only exist as “limited, token-ish” marketing

⁵⁸ Torgerson., 145.

⁵⁹ Benjamin, 12.

embellishments.⁶⁰ We must understand that these practices—tactics, really—are fundamentally not romantic.

“And when, expecting someone whom we love, we put a beautiful table cloth on the table and decorate it with candles and flowers, we do all this not out of necessity, but out of love. And the Church is love, expectation and joy.”⁶¹ Schmemmann is describing the “sacred space” of a romantic date. The set-apart-ness of a romantic date is more than just finding a place to get dinner, because “getting dinner” only requires a fast-food cheeseburger. But the romantic date needs something else, an *aura* which creates a new scene, setting, and reality. Immanently-focused drive-throughs leave the festivity behind for the sake of utility, and because the end of such utilitarian things is more work, their

⁶⁰ James K. A. Smith, *Awaiting the King: Reforming Public Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017), 205.

⁶¹ Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, 30.

teleology no longer points to the resolved and restful completed-ness of feast-ing and Sabbath-ing. To have anything romantic—from a romantic dinner to romantic theology—one needs other articles and objects that will seem unnecessary to utilitarians.

This is why the historic Church has placed such an emphasis on liturgical order, religious art, embellished vestments, and other useless things. The romance of the liturgy is experienced in the beauty and transcendence of the processional movement. Beauty is a useless thing—“unnecessary it is indeed, for we are beyond the categories of the ‘necessary.’ Beauty is never ‘necessary,’ ‘functional,’ or ‘useful,’” and yet “beauty will save the world.”⁶²

Lewis, in his usual pithy matter, gives a relevant example concerning the use of aesthetic *betrachtung*: “if I

⁶² Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*; Fyodor Dostoyevsky and Eva Martin, *The Idiot* (Auckland, NZ: The Floating Press, 2009), <http://search.ebscohost.com/>, 29, 756.

find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world.”⁶³ This quote is perhaps the most illustrative of the need for romantic theology: we must be able to accept that “the most probable explanation” is the existence of other-ness, otherwise, we will never be able to see the form of God. One must accept that a truly Christian aesthetics is not under the taxonomy of philosophy, but alongside ontology.

The evangelical theologian John Piper seemed to understand Lewis’ *betrachtung* through the sermon “The Weight of Glory.” Understanding that “our desires [are] not too strong, but too weak,” Piper through “Christian Hedonism” established an aesthetic ontology by editing the Westminster Shorter Catechism’s thesis to say, “the chief end

⁶³ C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (San Francisco, CA: HarperOne, 2015), 136-137.

of man is to glorify God *by* enjoying Him forever.”⁶⁴ While Piper’s evangelical ontology does not include Eucharistic sacramentalism, perhaps it can serve as an example that anyone, regardless of their Christian faith tradition, can come to understand that the most powerful spiritual drives exist in the heart/soul/spirit, not in the head. In his philosophy, Piper shares a similar perspective with Pieper, who states that within people there is an “unquenchable inner dynamism,” a “persistent restlessness at the core of the unfolding human existence,” a “yearning” which is “perfect happiness, the state of bliss (*Glückseligkeit*).”⁶⁵

God is glorified when we en-joy Him, and enjoying seems to fit within the aesthetic concept of feast-ing. It is “meet, right, and our bounden duty” to en-joy in God by our

⁶⁴ John Piper, *Desiring God, Revised Edition: Meditations of a Christian Hedonist* (Colorado Springs, CO: Multnomah Books, 2011), 20, 18.

⁶⁵ Pieper, *Only the Lover Sings.*, 39.

“sacrifice of praise.”⁶⁶ Furthermore, Christ made of himself “a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction” which we—if we allow ourselves to enter into the reality of sacramentalism—can give back to Him through his own “holy gifts, which we now offer unto thee,” “according to the institution” of Christ.⁶⁷ The gift of Christ is the most perfect substance one can possibly enjoy, and as a perfect gift, it must come from God, it must be offered to God, and—as with the priests of the temple—it must be made a part of the people of God.

Symbols, Memory, Nostalgia, Anamnesis

Much of our worshipping capacity requires the inspirational: the right music, the right setting, the right

⁶⁶ Oxford University Press, *The 1928 Book of Common Prayer.*, 76; Hebrews 13:15, ESV.

⁶⁷ Oxford University Press, 80.

stirring of emotions, and so on. One powerful sensation is that of remembrance.⁶⁸ “Ordinance-ing” and “Memorializing” have been established to be lacking, but one point must be clarified about memory. Christ’s words of institution, which are repeated by the celebrant, include the word ἀνάμνησις. *Anamnesis* should not be thought of as a brief thought about something, but it should be considered in the context of ἀναφορά. And it is to the anaphoras of sacred liturgies to which Pieper directs his reader’s thoughts:

[in the concept of remembrance, we] sense the artist’s inner relationship to the priest, who is called, above all, to keep alive the remembrance of a face that our intuition just barely perceives behind all immediate and tangible reality—the face of the God-man, bearing the marks of a shameful execution.⁶⁹

There is a difference in simplistic “memorial-izing” and nostalgic “re-member-ing.” “Thinking about” a thing, in

⁶⁸ Pieper, *Only the Lover Sings.*, 59.

⁶⁹ Pieper, 62.

this sense, is a mechanical reproduction of the limbic system. Christians must separate themselves from the tempting pull of Platonism, in which the definition of *anamnesis* is constrained to the realm of the forms. That is, Christians must differentiate between thinking about the ideal, versus *recalling our experience in* the ideal (who is Christ). A second-order “remembrance” only requires one to “think about” something, not participate in the qualia of something.

A further distinction regarding Platonism is required. Balthasar states that one must understand where the εἰκών is in relation to the anamnestic object. This icon-anamnestic is seen in Romans where Christ is declared to be *similar to* Man, yet different: “Christ appears in the ‘form of sinful flesh (Romans 8:3), in such a way, of course, that the element of dissimilarity is always in the background, excluding every possibility of sinfulness in Christ.”⁷⁰ Similarly, in Philippians,

⁷⁰ Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord, Vol. 1*, 561.

Christ is said to be in the μορφή of humankind.⁷¹ This is not to imply a Docetic understanding of the hypostatic union, but a highlighting of the fact that there were key differences in Christ and normal human beings (he had a divine nature, he was sinless, et cetera).

The point is not to wade into Trinitarian systematics, but to surface this question: is the Eucharist anamnestic iconographically, or is it anamnestic *actually*? This question leads Balthasar to state that if there is nothing more than iconographic memorialization in the sacrament, “then the relationship between archetype and image would remain merely external and exemplary,” leaving “nothing more than the symbol” of the sacrament, empty elements of an ordinance.⁷²

⁷¹ Balthasar, 561.

⁷² Balthasar, 562.

The character Father Rodrigues, of the film and novel *Silence*, illustrates his anamnestic experiences:

And as I speak [the Mass] there often arises in my mind the face of one who preached the Sermon on the Mount; and I imagine the people who sat or knelt fascinated by his words. As for me, perhaps I am so fascinated by his face because the Scriptures make no mention of it. Precisely because it is not mentioned, all its details are left to my imagination. From childhood I have clasped that face to my breast just like the person who romantically idealizes the countenance of the one he loves. While I was as still a student, studying in the seminary, if ever I had a sleepless night, his beautiful face would rise up in my heart.⁷³

The initial assumption of an “knowing-first” reading should be assuaged after a second glance. Even though the Jesuit says that “the face” of Christ “arises in [his mind],” he “clasps” this face in his heart, and in romantic idealization. If one feels such a longing for Christ during a non-sacramental memorialization of the Lord’s Supper, then this is a bonus—however, the range of remembering enacted by the presider

⁷³ Shusaku Endo, *Silence: A Novel*, trans. William Johnston (New York, NY: Picador Modern Classics, 2016), 44.

does not come from a cracker and a sip of juice, but from the spiritual heart of the communicant. Quite simply, the wafer does not—in of itself and without consecration—contain any substance over which a person should have a romantic reaction.

This is why Christ issues a very special statement: “Do this... in remembrance of me.”⁷⁴ Of this statement, Pope Benedict said that “the *memorial* is not merely the recollection of past events but the proclamation of the mighty works wrought by God for men,” and these “mighty works” cause the memorial objects to “become in a certain way present and real.”⁷⁵ For Bishop Ratzinger, the word “memorial” implies the invading sacramental power of God.

⁷⁴ 1 Corinthians 11:25, ESV.

⁷⁵ Joseph Ratzinger, *Catechism of the Catholic Church: Revised in Accordance With the Official Latin Text Promulgated by Pope John Paul II* (Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 2000), 343.

Another aspect of re-member-ing must be considered: how can one remember something that they have never seen or experienced? Christ would never command the impossible for us. Therefore, one should conclude that Christ makes a way to become present so that this command may be fulfilled.

A further consideration: *anamnesis* is not an independent act; here, communion-memory or common-memory is required (one does not partake of the Eucharist by themselves, alone). As such, the purpose and the point of the participatory liturgy is to bring the congregation together for the sake of the communal moment. If, as St. Paul critiques, some are going hungry and others are drunk, the communal moment has been lost for only some have entered into the moment over which Christ presides.⁷⁶ Tradition, and not personal preferences, may hold the key to keeping the

⁷⁶ 1 Corinthians 11:21.

κοινή memory intact. Eucharistic dogma dependent upon novel or individual thought would be at the mercy (or the despotism) of popular theologies or places in time. Rather than submit to the unreserved thought-control of fashionable philosophies, Christian thought stays in control of itself (and not by innovators) because the relationship of one's self to tradition is one of submission. As Pieper states about the relationship between a tradition-giver and a tradition-receiver, "they are not in a position of mutual influence. Learning, however, is one thing. To receive something that has been handed down and to accept something transmitted as part of tradition is quite another."⁷⁷ The memory of tradition can be retained because the resource of re-membering resides in a place outside of the present participant's memory. And, of course, the traditions

⁷⁷ Josef Pieper, *Tradition: Concept and Claim* (South Bend, IN: St. Augustines Press, 2010), 10-11.

handed down by the apostles and Fathers were sacramental ones.

It is not within the power of humans, or within tradition itself, that sacramental memory can be fully maintained. The celebrants certainly continue in and pass on the traditions of the liturgy, but the responsibility of re-creating anamnesis of Christ does not fall upon the priest. “Christ alone is priest in the full sense (*iereus*),” meaning that the celebrant, in one sense, is nothing more than a glorified street sign that points a pilgrim down the path to Christ.⁷⁸ Only Christ can be the means of generation; he decides if he is present. And, he promises that in the right circumstances, he will be.

The aesthetic of the Eucharist must be remembered. When participating in the art-work of the Eucharist, the viewing of the forms and materials—a crucifer bearing the

⁷⁸ Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord, Vol. 1*, 558.

cross representing Christ, incense representing prayers, stained glass representing scenes from Scripture, bread and wine representing the body and blood—is not fake, because it is not reproduced in a mass-produced, manufactured sense. They are “by no means mere copies of reality, much less aesthetic idealizations. They contain nothing false.”⁷⁹ These liturgical objects are not “the next best things,” they are icons. In spite of the fact that what the priest gives to a communicant is just a piece of bread or a sip of wine, these materials are of an other-order. If they were not “other,” they could not be considered art-work. If they are not art-work, they are not enacting re-memberance. If they are not enacting re-mebrance, then they are not sacraments—a statement contradictory to the plain reading of Christ’s words in the upper room.

⁷⁹ Pieper, *Only the Lover Sings*, 62.

Trusting our Senses: Good Taste and Feast-ing

“Man is what he eats.’ With this statement the German materialist philosopher Feuerbach thought he had put an end to all ‘idealistic’ speculations about human nature.”⁸⁰ Pieper’s commentary here establishes a truth known even by miracle-denying philosophers: our tastes guide our ability to be formed. Central to our be-ing is the ability to engage in feast-ing, which could be why the Lord entrusted the first humans to live in and care for a garden. The world of Adam and Eve was a grove of nourishment. This is why the Tree was tempting; it was “good for food, and... a delight to the eyes.”⁸¹ From the very beginning of

⁸⁰ Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, 11.

⁸¹ Genesis 3:6, ESV.

Creation in the realm of a perfect, sin-free state, “we were created hungry.”⁸²

The pre-Fall perfection included the human desire for satiation, for physiological, eschatological, and psychological reasons. We hunger for the Eucharist over which Christ will preside.⁸³ Our spiritual hunger—like the intertwined physiological hunger—is satiated by temporary and temporal filling or fulfillment, providing a freedom-from-hunger which reminds us (*anamnesis*) of permanent filling or fulfillment. A full temporal belly registers anamnesticly as a *full-filled* belly—our souls (which are of both worlds) “feel” “full” in the same way. The temporal hunger is staved off by temporal fulfillment in the Eucharist, the elements of which are tied to the High Priest who has a non-temporal body.

⁸² Craig M. Barnes, *The Pastor as Minor Poet: Texts and Subtexts in the Ministerial Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 32.

⁸³ Matthew 26:29, ESV.

This eschatological element is summarized by Pieper when he says, “such foreshadowing of the ultimate and perfect fulfillment is necessary for man, almost more necessary than his daily bread, which is indeed indispensable and yet insufficient.”⁸⁴ Aristotle’s statement “we work so we can have leisure” makes sense through Pieper’s understanding—we *have liturgy* so we can *have paradisum*.⁸⁵ Through the celebrant’s work, an other-form is produced; through the consecration of the elements, we can “perceive, if ever so vaguely, the paradise of uncorrupted primordial forms beneath the obvious surface of that still discernible common reality.”⁸⁶

Exploring the psychology behind our satiation is important as well, because we understand that the Eucharist

⁸⁴ Pieper, *Only the Lover Sings*, 27.

⁸⁵ *Ibid*, 27.

⁸⁶ *Ibid*, 67.

is not to fill stomachs. Sts. Augustine and Aquinas recognized that “*normally* [emphasis added] food and drink are to nourish the body, which is to sustain the mind.”⁸⁷ However, the Eucharistic food and drink are more than utilities that we partake of; they are more than stomach-fillers from which energy may be metabolized until the next nihilistic meal. This is clearly seen in that the portions of the Eucharist have historically been smaller than what is needed for a “normal” meal.

Further, we should understand that there is a difference in speaking of something imaginary, such as Narnia or “crazy town,” places that are merely symbolic versus speaking about a real place, such as England, which has many referents in reality (England appears on maps, it is a place you can physically travel to, et cetera.). The “real-

⁸⁷ John Milbank and Catherine Pickstock, *Truth in Aquinas* (London, UK: Routledge, 2000), 83.

ness” of the Eucharist is not like “crazy town,” it is more like England. Pickstock and Ward continue this line of thought:

In the case of the words of institution, it seems that sense and reference peculiarly change places, or collapse into each other. Thus, pointing to a piece of bread and saying “this is my Body” does not even make fictional or imaginative sense, as we do not tend to imagine an unknown body as bread. The phrase only makes sense if it does, however absurdly, actually *refer*: that is, there is only a meaning here if the words *do* point to the Body via the bread.⁸⁸

Clearly, one could argue that the words merely “point to” the Body, and do not do anything more in actuality. One might use this rationalization because it does not make logical sense that bread could really be anything more than bread. Believing in the Eucharistic presence of Christ seems to go against common sense; it is shocking to consider the possibility. We should again be reminded of history, however. If this doctrine was truly so incredulous, why was it

⁸⁸ Milbank and Pickstock., 96.

the understanding and teaching of the earliest Church, and why for so long has it been defended?

Our tongues have the power to override our “common sense.” Besides sexual union, the only other way to have something enter or become a part of us is to ingest it. Unless we expect divine disclosure to only interact with the hamstrung tools of rationalism, we must be open to God’s holy impartation through some other sense, such as taste. Truth does not only come through the pleasant tones of a pastor’s teachings to our ears—heard and cognized. Truth can also be perceived through the bite of red wine and the dry flakes of a wafer, which are “the mediation between presence and absence” of the realities of we “in Him and He in us.”⁸⁹ Logical arguments cannot truly be considered “in” us, but food certainly can.

⁸⁹ Milbank and Pickstock., 95; 1 John 4:13, ESV.

Further, the aspect of sacramentality which includes an of-this-earth material becoming a not-of-this-earth material further forces a Christian to combat the anti-*theosis* of the secular. Christ could have celebrated his last supper in the holy halls of the temple, but he chose a lowly rented upper room, a normal place for a family to gather and eat. The disciples, mere laity from the Jewish perspective, prepared the place for Christ—priests and Levites were not in attendance. This same mundane-ness applies to how the church now brings forth the physical materials of liturgical use. As Smith states, “it’s not wheat and grapes that are on the table; it’s bread and wine. These are not naturally occurring phenomena; they are the fruit of culture, the products of human making.”⁹⁰

⁹⁰ James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 199.

We must revisit the question: why have we not, over the centuries of the church's existence, simply rejected the notion of Christ's presence? Our very bodies—not our minds only—crave the invasion of Christ, through bodily nourishment and not through the language of the mind, that is, through logic and rationale. Consumption, hunger, and filling have to do with desire. Desire, as it is used here, is not meant to be “lack and frustration,” something unfulfilled and desiccated.⁹¹ This nuanced kind of desire requires a form of provocation and tension. There is an expectation of fulfillment, but no one knows the day or the hour.⁹² In this regard, “for desire to fully operate, there must be both the possibility of fulfillment, and a sustained strangeness and

⁹¹ Milbank and Pickstock, *Truth in Aquinas*, 103.

⁹² Matthew 24:36.

distance,” and this is an “optimum and therefore defining situation.”⁹³

Mudd states that animals could eat a consecrated Host to no spiritual effect.⁹⁴ Why? Because animals are not able to conceptualize this enduring eschatological desire as meaningful—a piece of bread is nothing more than a snack. While grateful to their owners for having dropped this crumb from the dinner table, their meditation goes no deeper. However, for us “rational animals,” we cannot remove ourselves from the fact that “we have moved into a world mediated by meaning” and, having watched the consecration—even if we don’t believe anything really happened to the consecrated elements—we cannot deny that “*this* bread has had *these* words spoken over it in *this*

⁹³ Milbank and Pickstock, 103.

⁹⁴ Joseph C. Mudd, *Eucharist as Meaning: Critical Metaphysics and Contemporary Sacramental Theology* (Collegeville, MN: Michael Glazier, 2014), 181.

ritual.”⁹⁵ Even if one does not believe the substances of the bread or the wine have changed, they must realize there is a change—meaning has been attributed. And not only do we watch this liturgical procedure, we step forward, we kneel, and we accept the fruits, “*this* bread” which we then ingest into our bodies. The grotesqueness of Christ’s crucifixion is in ironic tension compared to the comfortable and easy task of our receiving, in that the agonizing, tortuous, hours-long death of Christ is accepted and amen-ed by communicants through the simple and naturally instinctive act of chewing and swallowing. We work (have liturgy), but we have not earned the Eucharist as payment. As Pieper states, “the truly great and uplifting things in life come about perhaps *not without* our own efforts but nevertheless *not though* those efforts. Rather, we will obtain them only if we can accept

⁹⁵ Mudd., 181.

them as free gifts” [emphasis added].⁹⁶ The victory of Gideon’s whittled-down, 300-strong army—purposefully disadvantaged by God’s command—was won “not without [their] own efforts but nevertheless not through those efforts.”

There is a fine line between the parody and the symbolic. Though bread and wine are a far cry from the holy body and blood of our Lord, they in and of themselves are not parodies. But in a church where these elements are nothing more than bread and wine, the essence of them shifts from anamnestic mysteries to the divine-essence-lacking secular parodies.

⁹⁶ Pieper, *Only the Lover Sings*, 25

Falling Out of Love: The Divorce of Romantic Theology from Non-Sacramental Lifestyles

Modern thinking assumes that behavior and emotion is caused by what the brain understands or cognizes. Therefore, the modernist form of *lex orandi, lex credendi* could be, “the rule of thinking is the rule of acting.” This viewpoint views cognition as the “norming norm,” the best possible way of be-ing. Such a perspective, taken to the extreme, would say, “Blessed are those who have been scientifically, cognitively, and empirically persuaded, and yet believe.”⁹⁷ Modern thinkers, then, are anchored in a way of thinking that can assume one of two things about sacramentalism. First, that the ways of sacramentalism (liturgy, ritual, “smells and bells”) are “as rote, non-

⁹⁷ See John 20:29, English Standard Version.

cognitive, and therefore not epistemically helpful.”⁹⁸ On the other side of things, the modern thinker could assume that the “hocus pocus”⁹⁹ of sacramentality is “premised upon magic, doing something in order to get something.”¹⁰⁰

Essentially, modern thinkers easily get caught up wondering what sacramentality *does*.

All human beings are driven by patterns and rhythms—the basic connotation of liturgy. Liturgy is literally wired in our bodies. At the biological level our bodies are programmed—“entrained”—around time-based rhythms, the circadian, infradian, and ultradian rhythms.¹⁰¹ These innate systems, grounded to daily, monthly, and yearly “calendars,”

⁹⁸ Dru Johnson, *Knowledge by Ritual: A Biblical Prolegomenon to Sacramental Theology* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2016), 181.

⁹⁹ The origin of this word itself illustrates the sentence it’s being used in.

¹⁰⁰ Johnson, *Knowledge by Ritual: A Biblical Prolegomenon to Sacramental Theology*, 181.

¹⁰¹ Carole Wade and Carol Tavris, *Psychology* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2002), 142-143.

base the human experience in patterns which affect sleep, childbirth, and aging. It is impossible to escape the fact that humans are rhythmic beings, even from a purely naturalistic perspective. While some evolutions might claim that the presence of these built-in rhythms is simply an evolutionary beneficial development or feature, Christians would claim that there are deeper reasons for such drives.

Rhythms, patterns, and rituals are biologically powerful, but they are also driving factors in our anthropology and sociology. For those who question whether or not liturgies are as powerful as they are being indicated here, one simply needs to look at the nearest football stadium.¹⁰² There are liturgical colors, vestments, “signs of the cross,” genuflection, and many other symbolic practices and rites.¹⁰³ At the beginning of the game, there is even a

¹⁰² Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 93-112.

¹⁰³ *Ibid*, 105

Credo; “O say can you see / by the dawn’s early light” is repeated in unison by the young and old, who have been catechized to chant the words from memory.

One might say that there are traditions like this in almost any venue; that such a critique is making a big deal to call out these practices as secular liturgies. This seems like a valid grievance, until one observes what happens when someone “commits heresy” by, for example, choosing to kneel during the National Anthem in protest of implicit celebrations of political injustices.

The strong response to these rebels—in the form of public anathemas—lead us to say, no, it is not a false comparison to claim that the “calls to worship” found in various patriotic or sporting displays are not terribly different from the commitment required by the liturgies of the church. It must be noted that these liturgies—“secular liturgies”—are not inherently sinful. At the same time, the

subscription, adherence, and perhaps fanaticism towards the observance of these liturgies may indicate something about one's loyalty to religious liturgy. This is why the example of patriotism is so pertinent—the patriotic symbols, gestures, and cathedrals can become “places of worship” for one's “king and country.” It would be naïve and unobservant, even in the context of secular patriotic displays or in secular sports, to make the claim that liturgy is not all that important to humans.

At the same time, secularism is not an institution to be defended. I stand with Schmemmann when he says that it is “the great heresy of our own time, it requires from the Church not mere anathemas, and certainly not compromises, but above all an effort of understanding so it may ultimately be overcome by truth.”¹⁰⁴ There are several points to unpack in the Orthodox priest's statement. First, that secularism is

¹⁰⁴ Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, 128

our culture's greatest heresy. Going to a football game or being patriotic are not heretical acts; but *sportsism* and *patriotism* become so by replacing the Church's sacraments with the world's sacraments, and thereby venerating secular parodies.¹⁰⁵ Note also how Schmemmann describes what should be the Church's reaction to such parodies: not anathema or compromise, but understanding. In comparison to the fleshly things the world offers, the true, set-apart things of God are of another category. But one cannot understand this—one cannot escape the parodies of the world—unless one understands the sacred, set-apart-ness of that which is consecrated.

¹⁰⁵ John Milbank, Catherine Pickstock, and Graham Ward, eds., *Radical Orthodoxy: A New Theology* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1998), 195.

What Must Be Avoided: “Who Have Once Been Enlightened, Who Have Tasted the Heavenly Gift”

The celebration of the Eucharist is the liturgy that binds the Christian community together through sacramentality, eschatology, and communion with God and his Church. Humankind *requires* the nourishment of these sacramental patterns and rhythms for our survival and flourishing. What I hope to argue here is a message for the “straggler,” the one who understands these points, but for various reasons, does not want to “make the jump” and commit (in whatever way) to sacramentality.

When it comes to liturgy, there are two sides to the same coin: rational, naturalistic, or materialistic positivism on one side and anti-traditional, iconoclastic, reductionistic “ordinance-ing” on the other. Both sides have their fundamentalists and both engage in *mythophobia*. The

problem for both is a lack of romance. The “realism” from both of these vantage points is not a shiver-inducing passionate involvement, but an almost-embarrassed “auto-eroticism,” a shameful “self-donation.”¹⁰⁶

The above-mentioned coin is an “anti-sacramental” token, forged from the unbalancing of Dante’s keys. It cannot be said that such a token is simply a “de-emphasizing” of sacramentality, because the removal of the essence of sacramentality (the *qualia* of sacramentality) is a removal of the thing-in-itself. So, the secularists in their demythologization take away the soul of sacramentality, because they claim that there cannot really be a metaphysical “otherness” to liturgy, religious experience, and worship. The non-secularist Christian who “opts out” of sacramentality does the same thing, for perhaps different reasons, but nevertheless ends up at the same dried-out oasis. The

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, 215.

emphasis on the “memorialization” of the Eucharist and the centrality of the “symbolism” of baptism (*if* either of these two sacraments are even carried out) both negate the very real other-ness of them. If baptism is nothing more than a “public profession” and not a sacramental reality—and especially for pouring or sprinkling, it is a very worthless bath—why engage in baptism, because there is nothing about water that should impute the entrance into covenant community? If the Eucharist is nothing more than a memorial meal, and not a sacramentality reality—and a wafer and a sip of wine are very useless meals for filling one’s stomach—then why is the Eucharist literally killing people in 1 Corinthians 11:30? It would take more faith to believe that these “unconsecrated elements” are merely symbolic objects, than it would to believe that there is a mysterious other-ness to them.

Perhaps, in some flavor and in some way, one accepts a minimal kind of “other-ness,” but a kind of other-ness subject to the rationalizations of a cognitive-first framework. One cannot expect to hear or see differently at all through this foggy lens, because the aesthetic of the liturgy is lost if one cannot hear its music. It is in the language of the higher plane, the “*exercitium metaphysice occultum*,” a exercise wherein “the soul [is] entirely oblivious that philosophy, in fact, is happening here.”¹⁰⁷ It is simply a “philosophy” not understood by those who have forgotten the pre-modern ways of being (not ways of thinking) in which Christ, the apostles, and the early Church lived.

Perhaps a better word for aura is needed, again, not to slander the material world (of which any part can be consecrated and of which all will be transformed). But since Christians await the eschaton, perhaps the *already* of the

¹⁰⁷ Pieper, *Only the Lover Sings*, 39.

already-not-yet may be made to shine over those not-yet transferred things which await perfection. Therefore, we might say that which maintains a divine full-of-beauty aura maintains expectant eschatological *glory*.¹⁰⁸ In what sense can the coming Christ be already in our presence, if we deny his presence? Christ tells us what is his body and blood. He offers it, and so we must put down our mechanical instruments and step into his glory—the color of romance.

¹⁰⁸ Nichols, *The Word Has Been Abroad*, 5.

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