

The Liturgy at the Crossroads of Christian Living and Thinking The Incarnational Dynamic at Work within Vatican II

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Abstract. — *With its dual emphasis on communicating Christological and ecclesiological truth, the performance of the liturgy is the “summit” and “font” of the Church (SC 10). It is the primary “means whereby the faithful may express in their lives, and manifest to others, the mystery of Christ and the real nature of the true Church” (SC 2). A similar reciprocal dynamism, or dialectic relationship, also exists with respect to the “mystery of Christ” and the “mystery of Man,” identifying not only the nature of Christology but also the nature of anthropology (GS 22) and ecclesiology (LG 8). The question thus arises whether and in what sense the Christological link between liturgy and life can be understood as the ecclesial expression of the unity of the universal and concrete dimensions of faith, expressing and exploring thus the “mystery of faith.” This contribution analyses how this link is realized in the documents of Vatican II, and claims that this link serves a criterion for the further evaluation of the Council’s reception as a part of a fundamental research on the nature of contemporary and future Catholic theology. Furthermore, this contribution reconsiders the link between “pastoral” and “dogmatic,” which is essential for a “salvation-economical” understanding of the “mystery of faith” and indicates the opening of new theological horizons for the Church by the “de-limitations” that occur because of this very “mystery.”*

Stating that the “mystery of the incarnate Word” elucidates the “mystery of man,” Vatican II’s pastoral constitution *Gaudium et spes* (GS) expresses a kind of reciprocal dynamism or within its understanding of both Christ and humanity (GS 22).² For if such is the case, it implies not only that there is a way proceeding from our understanding of Christ to our understanding of humanity, but also that our understanding of humanity can help us to better consider the mystery of

1. I would like to thank Matthew Eaton for his linguistic help.

2. In what follows, I refer to *Gaudium et spes*’s use of “Man” as a synonym for “humanity.” I will therefore use the latter word.

Christ. As such, the “mystery of Christ” is, following the words of Italian theologian and Archbishop Bruno Forte, the “paradigme de la théologie.”³ Thus, theology is in a “situation paradoxale”⁴ for it speaks of the One who cannot be described by words. Nevertheless, in search of a theological way to express the “mystery of Christ,” Forte draws a comparison between the notion of “analogia” in Thomas Aquinas and in Karl Barth, concluding that both convene in what he calls an “analogia Christi.”⁵ With respect to the problem of human language and its inability to fully express the Divine nature on the one hand, and the truthfulness of biblical language on the other hand, Forte states that this “analogia Christi” can be expressed narratively and symbolically to communicate something of Divine reality. Following such logic, one can go further with Forte’s argument by claiming that liturgy is the “symbolic” expression *par excellence* of Christian faith.⁶ Indeed, when the constitution on liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium* links liturgy and Church by claiming that the liturgy is “the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; at the same time it is the source from which all her power flows” (SC 10), we are confronted yet again with the power of a reciprocal dynamism. Going on further still with Forte’s consideration of the “mystery of Christ” as the “paradigme de la théologie” within Christian thinking, one can argue that the “mystery of Christ” is also the paradigm for Christian living, for liturgy is the “means whereby the faithful may express in their lives and manifest to others the mystery of Christ and the real nature of the true Church” (SC 2).

The question is whether and in what sense these reciprocal dynamisms can be seen as a major contribution of Vatican II concerning our understanding of “mystery” as a central Christian category. In this paper, I will examine how this characteristic of “reciprocal dynamism” from Vatican II’s understanding of liturgy expresses a kind of *interpenetration*, a somehow *circular* or “*perichoretic*” *relationship between Christian living and thinking*.⁷ Indeed, within this dialectic relationship, Christian living

3. Bruno Forte, “Le mystère du Christ: Paradigme de la théologie,” in *La responsabilité des théologiens: Mélanges offerts à Joseph Doré*, ed. François Bousquet, Henri-Jérôme Gagey, Geneviève Médevielle, Jean-Louis Souletie (Paris: Desclée, 2002), 769–783.

4. *Ibid.*, 769.

5. *Ibid.*, 777.

6. See e.g. Andreas Odenthal, *Liturgie als Ritual: Theologische und psychoanalytische Überlegungen zu einer praktisch-theologischen Theorie des Gottesdienstes als Symbolgeschehen* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2002).

7. This paper continues ideas developed among others in Michael Quisinsky, “Inkarnation: Jesus Christus – Ermöglichung und Herausforderung christlichen Lebens

can elucidate Christian thinking and vice versa. It is precisely in this way that such a “reciprocal dynamism” is *constitutive of understanding* “Mystery,” *linking the interpenetration of historic, systematic and practical dimensions of theology in a dialectic relationship*. The circular or “perichoretic” structure implied by expressions such as “reciprocal dynamism” or “dialectic relationship” is not static, but, like liturgy, both radically historical and radically transcends history. Such a notion is centred in the Incarnation and results from it; it is a dynamic rooted in Creation and orientated by the fulfilment that concerns the entire World as well as every human being. As a first step, we will consider the two above-mentioned dynamics through a more global view on Vatican II. As a second step, we will develop some keys for understanding of the category of “mystery” in order to develop in further studies our perception of both the “mystery of Christ” and “mystery of man.” In a short conclusion, I will indicate how this way of conceiving “mystery” could be deepened in further studies.

I. Liturgy, Christian Living, and Post-Vatican II Thought

1. *Some Background and Hermeneutical Remarks*

Because the documents of Vatican II constitute a “corpus,”⁸ we cannot interpret one document without considering the other conciliar texts. We also cannot understand any of these texts if we do not consider

und Denkens,” in *Theologie aus dem Geist des Humanismus: Festschrift für Peter Walter*, ed. Hilary Anne-Marie Mooney, Karlheinz Ruhstorfer, Viola Tenge-Wolf (Freiburg i.Br.: Herder, 2010), 292-331; id., “Can Tradition (Not) Change? Truth in the History between God and Humanity,” *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 86 (2010): 107-136; id., “Analogia pleromatis – in der Welt von heute: Inkarnationstheologische Perspektiven auf Neuzeit und Gegenwart,” *Theologie und Glaube* 102 (2012): 69-91; id., “Tradition and the Normativity of History within an ‘Economy of Salvation,’” in *The Shaping of Tradition: Context and Normativity*, ed. Colby Dickinson, Lieven Boeve, Terrence Merrihan, *Annua Nuntia Lovaniensia* 70 (Leuven: Peeters, 2013), 73-90. As to the – analogical – use of “perichoretic,” it is inspired by Bishop Paul Wehrle (Freiburg i.Br., Germany); see Michael Quisinsky, “Spiritualität nach Apostolicam actuositatem: Konkretionen christlicher Weite – Weite christlicher Konkretionen,” in *Aggiornamento im Erzbistum Freiburg: Das II. Vatikanische Konzil in Erinnerung und Dialog*, ed. Katrin Gallegos Sánchez, Barbara Henze, Thomas Herkert, Michael Quisinsky, Tagungsberichte der Katholischen Akademie der Erzdiözese Freiburg (Freiburg i.Br.: Verlag der Katholischen Akademie Freiburg, 2011), 367-372, at 372.

8. Christoph Theobald, “Vatican II: Un corpus, un style, des conditions de réception,” *Laval Théologique et Philosophique* 67 (2011): 421-441.

Vatican II as a historical “event”⁹ with its specific background and context.¹⁰ Vatican II documents are also constituted by a certain “style”¹¹ determining how we interpret the event, and as such it demands a specific “Catholic”¹² hermeneutic as we analyse its corpus and its reception. As to the constitution of the liturgy, it has a special place both in the corpus and in the history of Vatican II for it is the first constitution deliberated at and approved by the Council. Massimo Faggioli, therefore, even states that *Sacrosanctum Concilium* is a key to understanding Vatican II.¹³ Of course, the need for a comprehensive view on Vatican II as a whole notwithstanding, in this paper we have to limit our argument on some significant quotations of the conciliar documents.

2. Liturgy and Christian Living Following Vatican II

What follows exemplifies how the link between liturgy and life can be perceived from a comprehensive view on Vatican II as “style” and “corpus,” where both are part of a “Catholic,” that means “universal,” approach to the Council. As we will see later on, this perception helps us to identify what is meant when we say that Christ is the “paradigme de la théologie” elucidating the “Mystery of Man.”

a. Spotlight on Vatican II as a Christological Council: Christ at the Heart of Christian Liturgy and Life

Concerning the history of the constitution on the liturgy, the “liturgical movement” of the 20th century was one of the most influential tendencies trying to establish a link between liturgy and life expressed

9. Günther Wassilowsky, “Kontinuum – Reform – (Symbol-)Ereignis? Konzilsgeschichtsschreibung nach Alberigo,” in *Das II. Vatikanische Konzil (1962-1965): Stand und Perspektiven kirchenhistorischer Forschung im deutschsprachigen Raum*, ed. Franz Xaver Bischof, Münchener Kirchenhistorische Studien: Neue Folge 1 (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2012), 27-44.

10. Gilles Routhier, Philippe J. Roy, Karim Schelkens (eds.), *La théologie catholique entre intransigeance et renouveau: La réception des mouvements préconciliaires par le concile Vatican II*, Bibliothèque de la Revue d’Histoire Ecclésiastique 95 (Louvain-la-Neuve: Collège Érasme; Leuven: Maurits Sabbibliotheek, 2011).

11. Joseph Famerée (ed.), *Vatican II comme style: L’herméneutique théologique du Concile*, Unam Sanctam: Nouvelle série (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 2012).

12. Karim Schelkens, “From Dualism to Plurality: In Defence of a ‘Catholic Reading’ of Vatican II,” in “*Theologia semper iuvenescit*”: *Études sur la réception de Vatican II offertes à Gilles Routhier*, ed. Michael Quisinsky, Karim Schelkens, François-Xavier Amherdt, *Théologie pratique en dialogue* 39 (Fribourg: Academic Press, 2013), 19-50.

13. Massimo Faggioli, *True Reform: Liturgy and Ecclesiology in Sacrosanctum Concilium* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2012), 19-22.

within important regional and contextual particularities.¹⁴ In the constitution on the liturgy, especially in SC 5 and SC 7, we find some elements that could easily be qualified as “Christusmystik,”¹⁵ focusing the celebration of liturgy and its link with the Christian life in general on Jesus Christ. In fact, SC 7 states, with respect to the Christological focus, that the liturgy is a “priestly office of Christ.” As to the link between liturgy and life, SC 7 continues that the liturgy signifies “the sanctification of the man ... by signs perceptible to the senses.” This “sanctification of the man,” that is, the “sanctification of humanity” occurs through Christ who is “always present in His Church, especially in its liturgical celebrations. He is present in the sacrifice of the Mass, not only in the person of His minister, ‘the same now offering through the ministry of priests, who formerly offered himself on the cross’, but especially under the Eucharistic species. By His power He is present in the sacraments, so that when a man baptizes it is really Christ Himself who baptizes. He is present in His word, since it is He Himself who speaks when the Holy Scriptures are read in the Church. He is present, lastly, when the Church prays and sings, for He promised: ‘Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there I am in the midst of them (Matt. 18:20)’.” The “sanctification of humanity” necessarily refers to the whole life of man, since reference is made to baptism, which is the beginning of Christian life. Also, this “sanctification” is specified in terms of salvation and knowledge of the unity of body and soul and of the relational reality of mediation and reconciliation: “God who ‘wills that all men be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth’ (1 Tim 2:4), ‘who in many and various ways spoke in times past to the fathers by the prophets’ (Heb 1:1), when the fullness of time had come sent His Son, the Word made flesh, anointed by the Holy Spirit, to preach the gospel to the poor, to heal the contrite of the heart, to be a ‘bodily and spiritual

14. Martin Klöckener and Benedikt Kranemann (eds.), *Liturgiereformen: Historische Studien zu einem bleibenden Grundzug des christlichen Gottesdienstes*, Liturgiewissenschaftliche Quellen und Forschungen 88 (Münster: Aschendorff, 2002); Jürgen Bärsch and Winfried Haunerland (eds.), *Liturgiereform und Bistum: Gottesdienstliche Erneuerung nach dem Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzil* (Regensburg: Pustet, 2013).

15. In his famous text of 18 January 1943, Freiburg im Breisgau’s archbishop Conrad Gröber criticized the liturgical movement for – among others – an “exaggerated Christusmystik” (see Theodor Maas-Ewerd, *Die Krise der Liturgischen Bewegung in Deutschland und Österreich: Zu den Auseinandersetzungen um die „liturgische Frage“ in den Jahren 1939 bis 1944*, Studien zur Pastoralliturgie 3 [Regensburg: Pustet, 1981], 540-569). As this example shows, within the “corpus” and the “style” of Vatican II, SC 5 also implied a reconsideration of Christian thinking, as we can see not only in the consequences and results of the liturgical movement, but also in the perceptions of their opponents.

medicine', the Mediator between God and man ... Therefore in Christ 'the perfect achievement of our reconciliation came forth, and the fullness of divine worship was given to us'" (SC 5). These examples may be enough to show a fundamental dynamics grounding Christian liturgy and life as well as their dialectic relationship: the more we concentrate on Jesus Christ as the centre of our living and thinking, the more we can be open to the fullness of reality.

b. A Fundamental Insight of Vatican II: Liturgy and Life in the World and as a Part of Culture

If Jesus Christ is both the heart of and the link between Christian liturgy and life, then liturgy and life are also linked together by being part of the World with its various cultures. Thus, the reciprocal dynamism linking liturgy and life becomes clearer when we situate the constitution on the liturgy within the entire textual corpus of Vatican II. According to *Gaudium et spes*, which situates the Church in the World, the ecclesial community considers "the various circumstances in the course of the time," it values "the discoveries of different cultures, so that in her preaching she might spread and explain the message of Christ to all nations, that she might examine it and more deeply understand it, that she might give it better expression in liturgical celebration and in the varied life of the community of the faithful" (GS 58). According to the missionary decree *Ad gentes*, the faith is thus "celebrated in a liturgy in harmony with the genius of the people" (AG 19). Liturgy thus remembers the missionary and cultural dimensions of expression within the particularity of the Christian life. Christian living as it is expressed by the liturgy is, therefore, always both concrete and universal. For in the previously quoted, ground-breaking paragraph 58 of the pastoral constitution, it is said that "the Church, sent to all peoples of every time and place, is not bound exclusively and indissolubly to any race or nation, any particular way of life recent or ancient. Faithful to its own tradition and at the same time conscious of its universal mission, it can enter into communion with the various civilizations, to their enrichment and the enrichment of the Church herself. The Gospel of Christ constantly renews the life and culture of fallen men, it combats and removes the errors and evils resulting from the permanent allurements of sin. It never ceases to purify and elevate the morality of peoples. Thus the Church, in the very fulfilment of its own function, stimulates and advances human and civic culture; by its action and also by its liturgy, it leads them toward interior liberty." The idea of a mutual enrichment of

Church and culture is thus another “reciprocal dynamism” expressed in the documents of Vatican II, in line with *Gaudium et spes* 45 where it is said that the Church receives help from the world.¹⁶ In the same way, the Church as communion and the interior liberty of human culture are correlated. Thus, we can conclude up to now that because of the Christ-centred link between liturgy and life exposed above, this link is a specific way that the “joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, ... are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ” (GS 1); it is a specific way that the Christian “community realizes that it is truly linked with mankind and its history by the deepest of bonds” (GS 1).

3. *Liturgy and Christian Thinking Following Vatican II*

After having briefly explored how Vatican II’s liturgical doctrine contributes to our understanding of Christian *living*, we must now ask how Vatican II can help us to conceive of Christian *thinking* in order to examine the “perichoretic” relationship between them.

a. Theology in the Light of the Unity of the “Pastoral” and “Dogmatic” Dimension in the Life of the Church

In the conciliar documents quoted up to now, both the link between liturgy and life, and the dialectical relationship between Christian living and thinking have been mentioned. It is therefore worth having a more specific look at this latter dimension. Of course, in doing

16. “While helping the world and receiving many benefits from it, the Church has a single intention: that God’s kingdom may come, and that the salvation of the whole human race may come to pass. For every benefit which the People of God during its earthly pilgrimage can offer to the human family stems from the fact that the Church is ‘the universal sacrament of salvation’, simultaneously manifesting and exercising the mystery of God’s love. For God’s Word, by whom all things were made, was Himself made flesh so that as perfect man He might save all men and sum up all things in Himself. The Lord is the goal of human history, the focal point of the longings of history and of civilization, the center of the human race, the joy of every heart and the answer to all its yearnings. He it is Whom the Father raised from the dead, lifted on high and stationed at His right hand, making Him judge of the living and the dead. Enlivened and united in His Spirit, we journey toward the consummation of human history, one which fully accords with the counsel of God’s love: ‘To re-establish all things in Christ, both those in the heavens and those on the Earth’ (Eph. 11:10). The Lord Himself speaks: ‘Behold I come quickly! And my reward is with me, to render to each one according to his works. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end’ (Rev. 22:12-13).”

so, we must consider the conciliar documents themselves as well as the theological context in which they were to be evaluated after the Council. Patrick Prétot states that because of the unity of “pastoral and dogmatic” dimensions in the constitution on the liturgy, one should articulate more clearly its link with the pastoral constitution.¹⁷ Indeed, as well as and in line with the link between liturgy and life, the conciliar unity of the “dogmatic” and “pastoral” dimension can be understood within a “reciprocal dynamism” that is constitutive of Christian thinking after Vatican II.

Within the Church, theology thus expresses Christian thought in a special way, even if Christian thinking cannot be reduced to theology. In any case, the horizon of theology corresponds to the horizon of liturgy where the “mystery of Christ” is both celebrated and understood, as it is expressed in the axiom *lex orandi, lex credendi*. Concerning theology, *Dei Verbum* (DV) 24 states that its task is to scrutinize “in the light of faith all truth stored up in the mystery of Christ.” Thereby, theology is “most powerfully strengthened and constantly rejuvenated by the word” (DV 24), for the “study of the sacred page is, as it were, the soul of sacred theology” (DV 24). In fact, Vatican II valorized the Word of God in the life of Church in general (DV chapter 6) and in the liturgy in particular (SC 51 – it is noteworthy that this is mentioned in the chapter dealing with the mystery of the Holy Eucharist).¹⁸ In order to scrutinize “all truth stored up in the mystery of Christ,” the very intention of Vatican II to link the “pastoral” and the “dogmatic” dimension calls, therefore, for a real “Catholic,” that means “universal,” horizon and, in line with that, a “Catholic” methodology.

b. A “Catholic” Theological Horizon: Reciprocal Dynamism between God and Humanity

Concerning the theological horizon, GS 22 and its assertion that the “mystery of Christ” elucidates the “mystery of man” indicates that one must consider the inseparable relationship between the divine and

17. Patrick Prétot, “La constitution sur la liturgie: Une herméneutique de la tradition liturgique,” in *Vatican II et la théologie: Perspectives pour le XXI^e siècle*, ed. Philippe Bordeyne and Laurent Villemin, *Cogitatio Fidei* 254 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 2006), 17-34, at 31.

18. Recently, far-reaching considerations on the Word of God in the life of the Church have been made by the protagonists of the “Pastorale d’engendrement,” see especially Christoph Theobald, “L’Évangile et l’Église,” in *Passeurs d’Évangile: Autour d’une pastorale d’engendrement*, ed. Philippe Bacq and Christoph Theobald (Brussels: Lumen Vitae, 2008), 17-40.

the anthropological dimensions for theological construction. The very “mystery of Christ,” as well as its mediation in liturgy, therefore, has to be radically reconceived of with the dialectic relationality of both theological and anthropological dimensions. Christologically speaking, this interpenetration takes part in the reciprocal dynamism between the concrete and the universal dimension of Christian faith expressed in *Gaudium et spes*. While the “signs of the times”¹⁹ (GS 4 *et al.*) refer to the theological impact of the concrete dimension, the cosmological Christology in GS 45 expresses the universal dimension. As Marie-Dominique Chenu, a theologian concerned with the “signs of the times” and one of the people who inspired *Gaudium et spes*, showed in his 1967 commentary on the constitution on liturgy, there exists a link between SC and the cosmological Christology of GS.²⁰ Moreover, since Christ is part of the Trinity, the “Mystery of Christ” is itself a Trinitarian one. Yet, according to Karl Rahner, the immanent Trinity cannot be conceived of without conceiving at the same time of the economic Trinity concerned with the salvation of the entirety of history as well as the individual histories of man throughout time.²¹ What could be called a “salvation-economical” (*heilsökonomisch*) worldview is made concrete by the different insights occurring in the analysis of both the theological and anthropological dimensions as well as their dialectic relationality. The reciprocal dynamism of this relationship is necessarily historical and thus concrete, while the “mystery of Christ” also transcends any specific way of being with its particular historical, theological expressions. Thus, like “economy of salvation” (*Heilsökonomie*) in general, the “mystery of Christ” as horizon for theology implies a fundamentally eschatological orientation and dynamics.

c. A “Catholic” Theological Methodology: *Loci Theologici* as a Way to Explore Reciprocal Dynamism

Concerning theological methodology, we must consider a multitude of aspects and dimensions as well as the dialectic relationships between

19. See on this Peter Hünermann, Bernd Jochen Hilberath, Lieven Boeve (eds.), *Das Zweite Vatikanische Konzil und die Zeichen der Zeit heute (Festschrift Karl Kardinal Lehmann)* (Freiburg: Herder, 2006).

20. Marie-Dominique Chenu, “Anthropologie de la liturgie,” in *La liturgie après Vatican II: Bilans, études, perspectives*, ed. Jean-Pierre Jossua and Yves Congar, Unam Sanctam 66 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1967), 159-177, at 170.

21. On a specific understanding of “Economy of salvation” developed following Rahner, see especially Quisinsky, “Tradition and the Normativity of History within an ‘Economy of Salvation.’”

them. In the light of the Council, a Vatican II-inspired reinterpretation of the *loci theologici* established by Melchior Cano²² seems to be an appropriate way to conceive of such a “Catholic” methodology necessary in scrutinizing the “mystery of Christ.” Of course, a pure accumulation of “*loci*” is not helpful, yet the reciprocal dynamism characteristic of both the liturgy and the mystery of Christ can help to conceive of the relatedness of the many *loci*: whether they explain themselves mutually or whether they “interrupt”²³ each other, the different *loci* interpenetrate themselves for the very theological horizon which they have in common and which they elucidate in these very interpenetrations. Because they scrutinize the “mystery of Christ,” the *loci theologici* as a theological methodology corresponding to the conciliar interpenetration of “pastoral” and “dogmatics” are the expression and the tool of a Christian thinking which cannot be anything but relational and dynamic. The privileged relationship of the liturgy to the very “mystery of Christ” that theology scrutinizes makes of it quite naturally a central aspect of such a methodology. While Patrick Prétot²⁴ regrets that the liturgy is not present as “*locus theologicus*,” theologians such as Peter Hünemann and Julia Knop go beyond the list of *loci* established by Cano and proclaim that liturgy should also be considered as a *locus theologicus*.²⁵

In any case, we can see that Vatican II initiates a “Catholic,” that means “universal,” way of doing theology, linking present theological research to traditional methods and transcending both through this very link. Of course, the concrete “reciprocal dynamism” or “dialectic

22. At this place, we cannot but refer to the highly instructive discussions around a reconsideration of Melchior Cano’s insights in contemporary German speaking theology, see especially Peter Hünemann, *Dogmatische Prinzipienlehre: Glaube – Überlieferung – Theologie als Wahrheitsgeschehen* (Münster: Aschendorff, 2003); Hans-Joachim Sander, “Gott: Vom Beweisen zum Verorten,” in *Glaube in der Welt von heute: Theologie und Kirche nach dem Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzil (FS Elmar Klingler)*, ed. Thomas Franz and Hanjo Sauer (Würzburg: Echter, 2006), 574-596.

23. On this specific use of “interruption,” see Lieven Boeve, *Interrupting Tradition: An Essay on Christian Faith in a Postmodern Context*, Louvain Theological & Pastoral Monographs 30 (Leuven: Peeters, 2003); id., *God Interrupts History: Theology in a Time of Upheaval* (New York: Continuum, 2007); and, developing on Boeve’s ideas, Quisinsky, *Can Tradition (Not) Change?*

24. Prétot, “La constitution sur la liturgie: Une herméneutique de la tradition liturgique,” 22.

25. Hünemann, *Dogmatische Prinzipienlehre*, 222; Julia Knop, *Ecclesia orans: Liturgie als Herausforderung für die Dogmatik* (Freiburg: Herder, 2012), 198-212, 290-303. See also Rudolf Voderholzer, “Dogmatik im Geiste des Konzils: Die Dynamisierung der Lehre von den loci theologici durch die Offenbarungskonstitution ‘Dei Verbum,’” in id., *Offenbarung, Tradition und Schriftauslegung: Bausteine zu einer christlichen Bibelhermeneutik* (Regensburg: Pustet, 2013), 61-81, at 80.

relationships” characteristic of Vatican II cannot but be part of a more general theological method. Yet we have to ask how it is that the Christ-centered liturgy shows us how this methodology is reciprocally determined by the “Mystery” it tries to scrutinize and express?

II. At the Crossroads of Christian Living and Thinking: Liturgy and the Understanding of “Mystery”

The theological methodology briefly developed in the preceding section is intrinsically orientated toward the “mystery” it tries to perceive. The same is also true for the life of the Church, which exists as a “sign and instrument both of a very closely knit union with God and of the unity of the whole human race” (LG 1). How can we conceive of the dialogal relationship between Liturgy and Church and what does this mean for our understanding of “Mystery”?

1. *The “Real Nature of the Church”: Encounter at the Crossroads of God and Man*

In order to answer the question at hand, we must consider what liturgy tells us about the Church. SC 2 states that the liturgy expresses both the “mystery of Christ” and “the real nature of the Church.” Because the conciliar testimony on the Church is contained not only in the constitution of the Church, but also in documents such as the constitution of the liturgy, the decree of the missionary activity of the Church and the pastoral constitution, we cannot but consider the liturgy at the crossroads of Christian living and thinking. Like the Church, the liturgy is always “in the world of today” (GS 2). As Jean-Pierre Jossua expressed in 1967, there exists an indispensable dialectics between the liturgy and the Church’s presence in the world.²⁶ Of course, within a “Catholic” understanding of Church and world, we must consider not only the present, but also the past and the future. By doing so, we become aware of how liturgical forms and content are profoundly influenced by historical contexts and cultural frameworks. Throughout time, historical and cultural developments occur alongside of ecclesiastical and theological dynamics, which is itself influenced by the general

26. Jean-Pierre Jossua, “La constitution ‘Sacrosanctum Concilium’ dans l’ensemble de l’œuvre conciliaire,” in *La liturgie après Vatican II*, ed. Jossua and Congar, 127-156, at 149-156.

historical context, but also by the “*longue durée*,” whether directly or indirectly.

In addition to historical and cultural influences, liturgy is also an emotional matter for the Church. Everyone who participates in the preparation or performance of a liturgical celebration knows this phenomenon – which also influenced the post-Vatican II discussions on liturgy and reform.²⁷ As the “political”²⁸ aspect of these discussions show, they are also a specific expression of the togetherness of Church and world, liturgy and life, “pastoral” and “dogmatic.” Thus, since there is always a concrete context of any debate on liturgy and life, Church and world, “pastoral” and “dogmatic,” there must also be a unity between both theological and anthropological dimensions of any discussion regarding the Christian life. The fundamental character of this unity is found in the fact that the very crossroads where liturgy and life meet is the Church and as such this unity elucidates the “Mystery of Christ.” In fact, the Church, which is also called a “mystery” in the initial chapter of *Lumen gentium*, is “by no weak analogy ... compared to the mystery of the incarnate Word” (LG 8). If the liturgy as “summit and source” (SC 10) of this very Church is profoundly an expression and an actualization of the paschal mystery,²⁹ it reminds us of the togetherness of the mysteries of Incarnation and Resurrection that cannot be placed in opposition to one another.³⁰ Regarding this incarnational dynamic,

27. Jürgen Bärsch and Winfried Haunerland (eds.), *Liturgiereform vor Ort: Zur Rezeption des Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzils in Bistum und Pfarrei*, Studien zur Pastoral-liturgie 25 (Regensburg: Pustet, 2010).

28. Massimo Faggioli, “Die kulturelle und politische Relevanz des II. Vatikanischen Konzils als konstitutiver Faktor der Interpretation,” in *Exkommunikation oder Kommunikation? Der Weg der Kirche nach dem II. Vatikanum und die Pius-Brüder*, ed. Peter Hünemann, *Quaestiones disputatae* 236 (Freiburg: Herder, 2009), 153-174.

29. See now Simon A. Schrott, *Pascha Mysterium: Zum liturgiethologischen Leitbegriff des Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzils*, Theologie der Liturgie 6 (Regensburg: Pustet, 2014).

30. In fact, Christ is the “incarnate Word” as well as the Crucified and Risen one. While in the incarnational movement of Kenosis, God enters in history, he transcends it in the Resurrection. “For his humanity, united with the person of the Word, was the instrument of our salvation” (SC 5). So from its very first time, “the Church has never failed to come together to celebrate the paschal mystery: reading those things ‘which were in all the scriptures concerning him’ (Luke 24:27), celebrating the Eucharist in which ‘the victory and triumph of his death are again made present’, and at the same time giving thanks ‘to God for his unspeakable gift’ (2 Cor. 9:15) in Christ Jesus, ‘in praise of his glory’ (Eph. 1:12), through the power of the Holy Spirit” (SC 6). While liturgy thus remembers and actualizes Easter, it has in the same time an eschatological dynamic: “In the earthly liturgy we take part in a foretaste of that heavenly liturgy which is celebrated in the holy city of Jerusalem toward which we journey as pilgrims, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God, a minister of the holies and of the true

Lumen gentium repeats an idea already expressed in SC 2: “It is of the essence of the Church that she be both human and divine, visible and yet invisibly equipped, eager to act and yet intent on contemplation, present in this world and yet not at home in it.” Liturgy and life are thus linked through a Christological framework of the Church, whose being is Trinitarian, “salvation-economical,” and eschatological: “As the assumed nature inseparably united to Him, serves the divine Word as a living organ of salvation, so, in a similar way, does the visible social structure of the Church serve the Spirit of Christ, who vivifies it, in the building up of the body” (LG 8); and the Church is “all these things in such wise that in her the human is directed and subordinated to the divine, the visible likewise to the invisible, action to contemplation, and this present world to that city yet to come, which we seek” (SC 2). It is thus precisely as an expression of the “Church in the world of our time,” with all its contingencies and contextual particularities, but also within a universal horizon driven by its very particularity that the liturgy is celebrated at the very “crossroads of the Christian living and thinking.” Insofar as the liturgy expresses the “real nature of the Church” and the Church cannot be but conceived of as a Church “in the world of our time,” the Church is in a special sense the very crossroads of Christian living and thinking in which the liturgy is celebrated as a mediation of the “mystery of Christ,” which nevertheless transcends this very mediation.

2. Towards a “De-limitating” Understanding of “Mystery”

The dialectic relationship between the “mystery of Christ” and the “mystery of man” expressed in GS 22 implies a “reciprocal dynamism.” Another analogical “perichoretic” dynamics is implied in SC 10 when liturgy is considered as “summit” and “source” of the life of the Church. Concerning the paradoxical situation, which Bruno Forte diagnoses with respect to the “mystery of Christ,” it seems to be a specific kind of paradox that could be conceived of as a togetherness of *many* dialectical relationships. For the individual aspects of the dynamism interrupt and interpenetrate one another, each complimenting and co-creating the other. In line with Vatican II, we can thus state that “Mystery” is first of all a theological category, able to think together a multitude of

tabernacle; we sing a hymn to the Lord’s glory with all the warriors of the heavenly army; venerating the memory of the saints, we hope for some part and fellowship with them; we eagerly await the Saviour, Our Lord Jesus Christ, until He, our life, shall appear and we too will appear with Him in glory” (SC 6).

interrupting and interpenetrating dynamics occurring diachronically and synchronically within the Church in the world.

Thus, the best way to deal with the “Mystery of Christ” is not so much in constructing a precise “de-finition” for the concept. Rather, the “Mystery of Christ” exists within Christian life and thought as a kind of “de-limitation.” Through the relational dynamics of the liturgy as mediation of the “Mystery of Christ,” the very presence of Christ actualized and celebrated within the liturgical gathering of Christians, opening up new perspectives of life and new horizons of faith through concentration on the foundations of Christian faith expressed within the liturgy and especially by the Eucharist. Of course, this dynamic opening is not developed apart from methodological criteria, and it is precisely the ecclesiastic dynamics presupposed and established by the liturgy that develops and guarantees the reality of communion in faith. Also, de-limitation does not mean dispersion. On the contrary, within a “Catholic” reading of Vatican II,³¹ which corresponds to the Catholic nature of the Church,³² the dialogal articulation of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* and *Gaudium et spes* show how the articulation between liturgy and life can be a “promising endeavor in a time where the Christian life has a tendency to be atomized.”³³

It goes without saying that such a “de-limitating” dynamic of the liturgy leads to questions concerning Christian identity and, more precisely, the unity of different coexisting Christian identities. It is also a specific challenge for such an approach to the “Mystery of Christ” that in concretely celebrated liturgies, not all the participants are always believers and that there often is, on the contrary, the question of how to deal with the presence of non-believers, e.g. at wedding or funeral Eucharistic celebrations.³⁴ At this point, we cannot but observe that this presence can, first of all, question (and be enriched by questions) from the “outside” our “internal” understanding of the liturgy at the crossroad of living and thinking: does there really exist an interpenetration between liturgy and life (in all its complexity) or do they coexist without disturbing our understanding of the “Mystery of faith” which is both the “Mys-

31. Schelkens, “From Dualism to Plurality.”

32. On the rediscovery of the Church’s catholicity by Vatican II see Gilles Rouhier, *Penser l’avenir de l’Église* (Montréal: Fides, 2008), esp. 15ff.

33. Prétot, “La constitution sur la liturgie: Une herméneutique de la tradition liturgique,” 31.

34. Joachim Wanke, “Liturgie und säkulare Gesellschaft: Erwartungen eines Bischofs,” in *Gottesdienst in Zeitgenossenschaft: Positionsbestimmungen 40 Jahre nach der Liturgiekonstitution des Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzils*, ed. Martin Klöckener and Benedikt Kranemann (Fribourg: Academic Press, 2006), 209-220.

tery of the incarnate Word” and the “Mystery of Man”? Nevertheless, this is after all only a liturgical expression of the very situation of the “Church in the world of our time.” The real question is a deeper one, namely, how to deal with and better understand the fact that at the Crossroads of liturgy and life, absolute and reductionist definitions of complex realities such as Church, world, mystery, Christ, or humanity are unhelpful. If we want to make of the “Mystery of Christ” the “paradigme de la théologie,” it is more helpful to take the very paradoxes of Christian faith in the contemporary world as the starting point of a dynamics of Christian living and thinking in their “perichoretic” relationship. This Christologically-rooted, Trinitarian-structured and eschatologically-orientated dynamism leads then to necessary “de-limitations” within human perception in the light of faith. These dynamics are a precise expression of the “Mystery of Christ,” which orientates the life of Humanity. Vice versa, the life of Humanity can orientate the human expression of the “Mystery of Christ” (in liturgy and beyond) in order to make it a real “*analogia Christi*” and thus a real “Mediation” – at the crossroads of Christian living and thinking.

III. Conclusion

We can say that following Vatican II, liturgy is situated at the crossroads of Christian living and thinking. We can also say that the various reciprocal dialogal, dialectical, and “perichoretic” dynamics and relationships at work in this encounter enable us to conceive of the “Mystery” in a “de-limitating” way. An expanded understanding of the “Mystery of the incarnate word” helps us to cross the frontiers of our understanding of Humanity. A better understanding of the “Mystery of Man” helps us to cross the frontiers of our understanding of Christ. Of course, what is drafted here in a general way and exposed in a more fundamental-theological manner needs further research, especially in partnership with historical and practical theology. We must explore concrete fields of Christian living and thinking in order to discover the specific aspects that these very “mysteries” contribute to the dynamic processes of theological understanding and Christian practice in Church and society. Yet the general structure – which is an ongoing *modus procedendi*³⁵ – can be

35. On this *modus* initiated by Vatican II and initiating further conciliar-hermeneutical fundamental research with respect to its signification for contemporary Catholic theology see Christoph Theobald, *La réception du concile Vatican II*, I: *Accéder à*

summarized as follows: Christian living and thinking are rooted in the “Mystery of faith,” including both the “Mystery of the incarnate Word” and the “Mystery of Man.” Christian living and thinking, through grace, are drawn into this “Mystery of faith.” With humility, theology tries thus to correspond to the “most sacred Mystery of the Eucharist”: “The Church, therefore, earnestly desires that Christ’s faithful, when present at this mystery of faith, should not be there as strangers or silent spectators ... through Christ the Mediator, they should be drawn day by day into ever more perfect union with God and with each other, so that finally God may be all in all” (SC 48).

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La source, Unam Sanctam: Nouvelle série (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 2009), 128-160. On p. 900, Theobald announces that the upcoming second volume will be coroneted by an interpretation of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* in order to explore liturgy as “summit” and “font” of Christian life. On the Christological foundation of a *modus procedendi*, see also id., *Le christianisme comme style: Une manière de faire de la théologie en postmodernité*, *Cogitatio Fidei* 260 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 2007), 177f.