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Canon, Cult and Covenant

The Promise of Liturgical Hermeneutics

Scott W. Hahn

To my mind, one of the most notable achievements of twentieth-century biblical scholarship has been the rediscovery of Scripture's *liturgical sense*. This achievement is rightly associated with the pioneering work of Oscar Cullmann and Jean Daniélou, who demonstrated that the biblical acts of God were intended to be carried on in the church's sacramental liturgy. Their insights were reinforced by Henri de Lubac's study of medieval exegesis, and Yves Congar's historical and theological work on tradition, which focused attention on the liturgy as the original and privileged locus of biblical interpretation.¹

This movement of recovery, which has continued among both Protestant and Catholic scholars,² is usually perceived as being in tension with historical and critical methodologies; but, in fact, these methods have also helped us to see that the church's early cult and worship were decisive in the composition, content, and use of the scriptural texts.³ As a result of these developments, we

¹ See generally, Cullmann, *Early Christian Worship*; Daniélou, *The Bible and the Liturgy* and 'Sacraments'; Congar, *Tradition and Meaning of Tradition*. De Lubac comments: 'Let us not forget that Christian exegesis was born, first and foremost, in the office of the liturgy, regarding sacred reading that had to be commented upon. That is where it was developed' (*Medieval Exegesis*, 2:28).

² See Van Olst, *The Bible and Liturgy*; Old, *Reading and Preaching*; Vagaggini, *Theological Dimensions*; Ratzinger, *Spirit of the Liturgy*; Corbon, *Wellspring of Worship*.

³ For instance, source criticism, in moving from hypotheses about original documentary sources, discerns tradition history and liturgical usage underlying biblical texts. Form criticism has also distinguished a variety of liturgical forms such as hymns and prayers, among kerygmatic, catechetical and other forms. Redaction criticism, as well, has focused attention on how the historical situations of the various

now have greater insight into the original purposes of the biblical authors and the ecclesial communities in which these texts were passed on. We can now appreciate that there is always a living and dynamic relationship between *Scripture*, the inspired Word of God in the Old and New Testaments, and *liturgy*, the sacrificial worship and public ritual of God's covenant people.⁴

Recognition of this vital relationship has important implications for the study of Scripture. Indeed, in this paper I will show how the rediscovery of Scripture's liturgical sense points to a new, *liturgical hermeneutic*. Such an interpretive approach leads us to conclude that Scripture is not solely text, and liturgy is not solely ritual, even though the one exists as text and the other exists as ritual. As we can now see, liturgy is where the written text functions as Scripture, as the living Word of God. The liturgy emerges as the proper – though not exclusive – setting for reading and interpreting Scripture, and for actualizing its saving truths.

I begin by showing how study of the *canon* and *covenant* has illuminated both the cultic *content* and *context* of the Bible. This in turn helps us to see what I call the *formal and material unity of Scripture and liturgy* – that Scripture exists *for* liturgy and, in large part, is *about* liturgy. This formal and material unity, I propose, invites us to make a fresh, *liturgical reading* of the integral text of the canonical Scriptures. As I hope to demonstrate, such a reading discloses a *liturgical trajectory* and *liturgical teleology* in the canonical narrative. This liturgical trajectory and teleology in turn suggests three broad principles of theological exegesis – the *divine economy*, *typology*, and *mystagogy*. I propose that these principles, which emerge from an integral reading of the canonical text, help us to lay the foundations for a new, *liturgical hermeneutic*.⁵

worshipping communities – the Second Temple, the Johannine Community, and so forth – influenced the final shaping of the texts.

⁴ Since 'liturgy' means different things to different readers, depending in large part upon denominational background and worship experience, let me clarify that I am following the understanding of liturgy found in ancient Jewish and Christian sources, primarily the Bible; that is to say, I am considering liturgy as sacrificial worship and public ritual in the context of a divine-human covenant relationship.

⁵ These propositions are developed in Hahn, *Letter and Spirit*. For this approach see Ratzinger: 'Since the inner unity of the books of the New Testament, and of the two testaments, can only be seen in light of faith's interpretation, where this is lacking, people are forever separating out new components and discovering contradictions in the sources ... *From a purely scientific point of view, the legitimacy of an interpretation depends on its power to explain things.* In other words, the less it needs to interfere with the sources, the more it respects the corpus as given and is able to show it to be intelligible from within, by its own logic, the more apposite such an interpretation is. Conversely, the more it interferes with the sources, the more it feels obliged to excise and throw doubt on things found there, the more alien to the subject it is. To that extent,

The Liturgical Content and Context of Scripture

The formal and material unity of canon and cult

The recovery of Scripture's liturgical sense by Cullmann, Daniélou and others dovetails with two critical findings of modern biblical scholarship: First, the recognition that Scripture's final canonical shape is essential for determining the meaning and purpose of individual passages and books; and secondly, the identification of covenant as Scripture's keynote narrative theme. Together, these findings have helped us to see a unity between Scripture and liturgy that is both formal and material. Their unity is *formal* in that Scripture was canonized for the sake of liturgy, and the canon itself derived from liturgical tradition. Their unity is *material* in that the content of Scripture is heavily liturgical.

Details about the origins of the *canon* as a definitive collection of sacred writings expressing the faith, worship and instruction of the believing community, remain elusive and are still debated.⁶ However, there is increasing recognition that the motives for establishing the canon were largely cultic and that cultic use was an important factor in determining which Scriptures were to be included in the canon. Put simply, the canon was drawn up to establish which books would be read when the community gathered for worship, and the books included in the canon were those that were already being read in the church's liturgy.⁷

its explanatory power is also its ability to maintain the inner unity of the corpus in question. It involves the ability to unify, to achieve a synthesis, which is the reverse of superficial harmonization. Indeed, only faith's hermeneutic is sufficient to measure up to these criteria' (Behold the Pierced One, 44–45; emphasis mine).

⁶ See generally, McDonald and Sanders (eds.), *Canon Debate*; Childs, 'Canon in Recent Biblical Studies'.

⁷ In considering the contributions of Childs, Sanders has written: 'That which is canon comes to us from ancient communities of faith, not just from individuals ... [T]he whole of the Bible, the sum as well as all its parts, comes to us out of the liturgical and instructional life of early believing communities' (*Sacred Story*, 162). Disputing another leading theory concerning the formation of the Hebrew biblical canon, McDonald states: 'Acceptance into a collection of sacred Scriptures did not have so much to do with a notion about the cessation of prophecy as with use in Israel's liturgy, or worship and instruction, over a long period of time' (*Formation*, 53). Bruce, finds similar imperatives behind the formation of the New Testament canon: 'When the canon was "closed" in due course by competent authority, this simply meant that official recognition was given to the situation already obtaining in the practice of the worshipping community' (*Canon of Scripture*, 42). Of the New Testament canon, Ferguson writes: 'Distinctive worship practices also served as

The importance of liturgical use in the origins of the canon is not a new idea.⁸ It has long been recognized, for instance, that what became canonical writings originated as oral accounts of God's redemptive interventions in history recited in cultic settings and accompanied by ritual actions. This is true for both the Old and New Testament canons.⁹ In each, we have testimony of authoritative scriptural texts being read in the worshipping assembly (Ex. 24:7; Deut. 31:9–13; 1 Tim. 4:13; Rev. 1:3). And textual analysis and form criticism have helped us to also see the profound shaping influence of liturgical use on the composition and final form of individual texts.¹⁰ Broadly speaking, we can say that inasmuch as the exodus was the foundational narrative recalled and celebrated in Israel's liturgy, the 'new exodus' of Christ's death, resurrection and ascension was the 'subject' of the texts heard in the church's eucharistic liturgy.

Covenant and cult

If the cultic worship of the Jewish and Christian communities gave rise to the canon, it is because that worship itself is a response to God's redemptive initiatives. In particular, the worship of Israel and the church is a response to God's covenants. The unity that scholars have perceived between cult and canon is established and constituted by the covenant. Again, this is true for both the Hebrew biblical canon and the Christian Bible.

For both Israel and the church, the Scriptures and the liturgical traditions of worship emerge as a single, inseparable response to God's redemptive initiative expressed in his offering of a covenant to his people. For Israel, the covenant at Sinai is foundational. For the church, the 'new covenant' made in the blood of

preconditions for a canon of Scripture. The Eucharist involved the remembrance of the passion of Christ and particularly the institution narrative. Prayers and confessional statements were grounded in the teachings of Jesus and the proclamation of his apostles. Christian materials were read in the assemblies from quite early (Mk. 13:14; Rev. 1:3). The Church did not have to wait until the end of the second century (and certainly not the fourth century) to know what books to read in church' ('Selection and Closure', 296).

⁸ Moule: 'many of the component parts of the New Testament were forged in the flame of corporate worship, and ... this has left its stamp on its whole vocabulary' (*Birth*, 20, cf. 33).

⁹ See the early and important work of Östborn, *Cult and Canon*, especially ch. 5: 'The Canon as Cultic Representation'. See also, Weiser: 'The reading aloud of the written word in the cult gave a natural impetus to the collection of the Old Testament as sacred writings. Here is the real setting (*Sitz im Leben*) for the Old Testament as holy Scripture' (*Old Testament*, 334; cf. Leonard, 'Origin of Canonicity').

¹⁰ McGowan, "'Is There a Liturgical Text in This Gospel?'" ; Goulder, *Evangelist's Calendar*; Swartley, *Israel's Scripture Traditions*; Daube, 'Earliest Structure'.

Christ (Lk. 22:20) is foundational.¹¹ Indeed, it is instructive that *κανών* was not originally the word applied to the list of biblical books. Eusebius, writing in the early fourth century, rather spoke of the Scriptures as 'encovenanted' or 'contained in the covenant' (*ἐνδιάθηκος*).¹²

It is not surprising that many scholars have recognized the 'covenant' as the recurrent and theologically significant theme in the canonical text. The vast literature on this topic cannot be rehearsed here.¹³ Two things are important for our purposes: First, the finding that God's covenants with humanity form the narrative structure and dramatic content of the Bible.¹⁴ Secondly, the conclusion that the biblical covenants are initiated to form kinship or familial bonds between God and his people or family.¹⁵ And thirdly, that covenant-making is a cultic, liturgical act, as much as a legal and ethical one. This last point has not been well-studied. But it is crucial to see the unity of Scripture and liturgy in the establishment, renewal, and maintenance of God's covenant relationship with his people. Again, simply put, for both Christians and Jews, the scriptural texts were originally enacted in the liturgy for the purposes of remembering and ritualizing the divine saving events, and renewing the people's covenant relationship with God.¹⁶

¹¹ It is perhaps interesting to note that the exegesis of Pope Benedict XVI sees a profound unity between the covenant at Sinai and the new covenant, a unity that reflects the inner continuity of the salvation history told in the canonical text: 'With regard to the issue of the nature of the covenant, it is important to note that the Last Supper sees itself as making a covenant: it is the prolongation of the Sinai covenant, which is not abrogated, but renewed. Here renewal of the covenant, which from earliest times was doubtless an essential element of Israel's liturgy, attains its highest form possible' (Ratzinger, 'New Covenant', 62).

¹² See McDonald and Sanders, *Canon Debate*, 295–320, 432. On these themes, see also, McCarthy, *Institution and Narrative*.

¹³ For a review of the relevant themes and literature, see Hahn, 'Kinship by Covenant', and 'Covenant'.

¹⁴ This is a finding that cuts across confessional lines. Congar writes: 'The content and meaning of Scripture was God's covenant plan, finally realized in Jesus Christ (in his *transitus*) and in the Church' (*Tradition and Traditions*, 68–69). See also Segal, *Rebecca's Children*, 4; Wright, *People of God*, 260, 262; Kline, 'Correlation', 265–79.

¹⁵ See for example Ps. 2:7; 2 Sam. 8:14; Lev. 26:12; Deut. 32:6, 8, 18–19; Jer. 30:22; Ezek. 36:28; Hos. 11:1; Gal. 4:5–7; 1 Jn. 3:2. Cross, 'Kinship and Covenant'; Kline, *By Oath Consigned*.

¹⁶ Very few commentators have recognized what Vanhoye has identified as the essential relationship between liturgical cult and covenant in the Bible: 'The value of a covenant depends directly on the act of worship which establishes it. A defective liturgy cannot bring about a valid covenant ... The reason for this is easily understood. The establishment of a covenant between two parties who are distant from each other can only be accomplished by an act of mediation and, when it is a question of mankind and God, the mediation has of necessity to be conducted through the cult'

This helps to explain another seldom-noticed fact: the books of the new and old covenants are heavily liturgical in content. This is what I mean in describing a *material unity* between Scripture and liturgy – the Bible in many ways is *about* liturgy. Much of the Pentateuch is concerned with ritual and sacrificial regulations; significant portions of the wisdom, historical and prophetic books take up questions of ritual and worship. The New Testament, too, is filled with material related to the sacramental liturgy. The Gospel of John, for instance, unfolds as a kind of ‘sacramentary’ in the context of the Jewish lectionary calendar; the Letter to the Hebrews and the book of Revelation contain sustained meditations on the meaning of the Christian liturgy; and the letters of Paul and Peter are animated by liturgical and cultic concerns. Often it is liturgy, or the culpable neglect of liturgy, that drives the biblical drama. Also, though this topic has not been well-studied, liturgy appears at the most significant junctures of the salvation history recorded in the canonical Scriptures.¹⁷

Insofar, then, as the canon was established for use in the liturgy, and inasmuch as its content is ‘about’ liturgy, it follows that we must engage Scripture *liturgically* if we are to interpret these texts according to the authors’ original intentions and the life-situation of the believing community in which these texts were handed on. In what follows I want to begin this process of engagement. Through canonical analysis, I want to offer a reading of the ‘metanarrative’ of Scripture focusing on liturgy – what it is and how it functions in the Bible’s grand ‘story.’¹⁸ Such a sketch must necessarily be broad-brush. But by focusing on the central moments in the canonical narrative – creation, the exodus, the Davidic monarchy, and the new covenant – I believe we will see the familiar biblical outlines in a new light.

Reading Scripture Liturgically: The Old Covenant Witness

Homo liturgicus: Scripture’s liturgical anthropology

I must begin by anticipating my conclusion: a liturgical reading of the canonical text discloses the Bible’s *liturgical trajectory* and *liturgical teleology*. Put another

(*Old Testament Priests*, 181–82). Levenson, too, has seen this. ‘The renewal of the covenant was a central aspect of Israel’s worship in biblical times.’ The purpose of liturgy, he adds, is ‘to actualize the past so that [each] new generation will become the Israel of the classic covenant relationship’ (*Sinai and Zion*, 80–81). See also Haran, ‘The *Brit* “Covenant”,’ 203–19; Faley, *Bonding with God*.

¹⁷ See Hahn, *Letter and Spirit*, especially ch. 3, ‘The Unities of Scripture and Liturgy’. See also Brown, ‘Johannine Sacramentary’; Pagolu, *Religion of the Patriarchs*.

¹⁸ See generally, Rendtorff, ‘Canonical Interpretation’; Bartholomew and Goheen, *Drama of Scripture*; Vanhooger, *First Theology*.

way: as presented in the canonical narrative, there is a liturgical reason and purpose for the creation of the world and the human person, and there is a liturgical ‘destiny’ toward which creation and the human person journey in the pages of the canonical text. At each decisive stage in God’s covenant relations with humanity, the divine-human relationship is expressed liturgically and sacrificially. The mighty acts of God in Scripture at every point climax in the liturgy, from the sacrificial offering of Noah following the flood to the institution of the Eucharist at the Last Supper. From the first page to the last, the canonical text presents us with a liturgical anthropology – the human person is *homo liturgicus*, created to glorify God through service, expressed as a sacrifice of praise.

This begins in the Bible’s very first pages. In the liturgical hymn of Genesis 1, creation unfolds in a series of sevenfold movements, beginning with the first verse which is exactly seven words long in Hebrew, and proceeding with seven clearly defined creative speech acts of God (‘Let there be ...’).¹⁹ Linguistic and thematic parallels between the account of the primordial seven days and the later building of the tabernacle (Ex. 25–40)²⁰ have helped us to see the author’s intent: to depict creation as the fashioning of a cosmic temple, which, like the later tabernacle and Temple, would be a meeting place for God and the human person made in his image and likeness.

In the second creation account in Genesis 2–3, the Garden of Eden is described in highly symbolic terms as an earthly sanctuary – again with evident literary parallels to later sanctuaries, especially the inner sanctum of the Temple.²¹ For our liturgical reading, the most important parallels are those that describe the terms of the relationship between God and man in the garden and in the sanctuary. God is described as ‘walking up and down’ or ‘to and fro’ (הלך) in the garden (Gen. 3:8). The same Hebrew verb is used to characterize God’s presence in the tabernacle (Lev. 26:12; Deut. 23:15; 2 Sam. 7:6–7). The first man is described as placed in the garden to ‘till’ or ‘serve’ (עבד) and to ‘keep’ or ‘guard’ (שמר) it. These verbs are only found together again in the Pentateuch to describe the liturgical service of the priests and Levites in the sanctuary (Num. 3:7–8; 8:26; 18:5–6).²²

These literary clues suggest the biblical authors’ intent to describe creation as a royal temple building by a heavenly king. The human person in these pages is intentionally portrayed as a royal firstborn and high-priestly figure, a kind of priest-king set to rule as vice-regent over the temple-kingdom of creation.²³

¹⁹ Genesis 1 describes ‘a heavenly liturgy. With a severe and solemn rhythm the same expressions occur again and again throughout the whole chapter like a litany’ (Westermann, *Der Schöpfungsbericht vom Anfang der Bibel* [Stuttgart, 1960], quoted in Maly, ‘Israel – God’s Liturgical People’, 9).

²⁰ Levenson, ‘Temple’.

²¹ Wenham, ‘Sanctuary Symbolism’; Stager, ‘Jerusalem’.

²² Wenham, ‘Sanctuary Symbolism’, 21.

²³ Callender, *Adam in Myth and History*, 29.

The priestly king of Genesis

This reading of Genesis is confirmed intertextually in the Old Testament and throughout the intertestamental and rabbinic literature.²⁴ Perhaps the clearest inner-biblical reflection on the nature of the primal human is found in Ezekiel's famous lament over the King of Tyre (Ezek. 28:1–19).

Among numerous echoes of the original Eden account, Ezekiel describes the king as created in Eden, which is depicted as 'the garden of God' and the 'holy mountain of God' – that is, as a symbol of the site of the Temple (vv. 13, 14, 16). He 'walks among (לְלִי) the stones of fire' or burning coals (v. 14), which elsewhere are associated with the divine presence (Ezek. 1:3; Ps. 18:13). He is stamped with a 'signet' of 'perfection' or 'resemblance' (v. 12) – a symbol elsewhere associated with royal likeness and authority (Gen. 41:42; Hag. 2:23; Jer. 22:24–25).

As the king's creation is described in Adamic and priestly terms, so his sin is characterized as a form of sacrilege and profanation punished by exile and 'deconsecration.' The king's sin, like Adam's, is grasping after divinity – wanting to be 'like a god.' This becomes the refrain of Ezekiel's indictment (compare Gen. 3:5, 22; Ezek. 28:2, 6, 9). Driven by cherubim he is cast from God's presence as a 'profane thing' who has desecrated God's sanctuaries (Ezek. 28:16, 18; compare Gen. 3:23–24).

This passage of Ezekiel suggests that already within the Old Testament there was a traditional understanding of the human person as created in relationship with God and endowed with an identity that is at once royal and priestly, filial and liturgical.²⁵ The terms of the human relationship with God are ordered by the covenant of the Sabbath established on the seventh day.²⁶

²⁴ See Oberholzer, 'What is Man ...?'; Louis, *Theology of Psalm 8*. The Psalter, the wisdom literature, and the prophets all give us the picture of creation as a cosmic or heavenly sanctuary and the Temple as a microcosm (Ps. 52:8; 78:69; 92:13–15; Lam. 2:6; Isa. 60:13, 21). The Chronicler understands the task of the Levitical priesthood in terms of the serving, guarding and gatekeeping imagery in Genesis (1 Chr. 9:17–27; 2 Chr. 23:19; Neh. 11:19). 'The garden of Eden was the holy of holies and the dwelling of the Lord,' we read in the intertestamental *Book of Jubilees* (8:9). A midrash on Genesis describes Adam's primordial task as that of offering priestly sacrifices (*Genesis Rabbah* 16:5). In a Targum, Adam is described as having been formed from dust at the precise site where the Temple sanctuary would later be built (*Targum Pseudo-Jonathan Gen.* 2:7). The Qumran community apparently saw itself as the 'Temple of Adam' (4Q174 1:6). For a good review of these themes, see Beale, *Temple*.

²⁵ Callender, *Adam in Myth and History*, 132.

²⁶ The term 'covenant', of course, is not used in the creation account. However, that creation is ordered to the covenant is everywhere implied. See Murray, *The Cosmic*

The first of God's mighty works then, the creation of the world, has a liturgical climax – the divine and human 'rest' of the seventh day. This becomes clearer further on in the Pentateuch, as we will see with Moses' building of the tabernacle, and God's giving of the Sabbath ordinances.

The priestly people of the exodus

These creation themes – man as made for worship in a covenant relationship as God's royal and priestly firstborn – are made explicit in the canonical account of the Exodus. As Adam was made in God's image and likeness, God identifies Israel as 'my own people' (Ex. 3:7, 10, 12; 5:1; 6:5, 7) and 'my son, my firstborn' (Ex. 4:22–23). And as Adam was made to worship, God's chosen people are liberated expressly for worship.

The early chapters of Exodus involve a play on the word עָבַד, ('serve' or 'work'), the word that described the primeval vocation given to man (Gen. 2:15). The word is used four times to stress the cruel slavery ('hard service') inflicted upon the Israelites by the new Pharaoh (Ex. 1:13–14; see also 5:18; 14:5, 12). But the same word is also used to describe what God wants of the Israelites (Ex. 3:12; 4:22; 7:16; 9:1, 13; 10:3, 24–26). They are to serve, not as slave laborers but as a people that serves him in prayer.²⁷ They are to 'offer sacrifice' (זָבַח; Ex. 3:18; 5:3). Moses and Aaron are instructed to tell Pharaoh that God wants Israel to hold a religious 'feast' or 'festival' (הָג; Ex. 5:1; cf. Ex. 12:14; 23:16; 34:25).

Israel's vocation is most clearly stated in the preamble to the covenant at Sinai. There God calls Israel 'a kingdom of priests (מַמְלֶכֶת כֹּהֲנִים) and a holy nation (גּוֹי קְדוֹשׁ)' (Ex. 19:5–6).²⁸ Israel is to be corporately what Adam was created to be individually – the firstborn of a new humanity, a liturgical people that will dwell with God in a relationship of filial obedience and worship.

The covenant at Sinai is ratified by liturgical actions – the reading of the book of the law, the profession of fidelity sworn by the people, the offering of sacrifices, the sprinkling of 'the blood of the covenant' and the meal eaten in

Covenant. The Sabbath was seen as a sign of God's covenant oath with the first man and woman in the rabbinic and intertestamental literature. See, for instance, the midrashic *Sifre Deuteronomy*; the *Book of Jubilees* (36:7), and *1 Enoch* 69:15–27. See also de Vaux: 'Creation is the first action in this history of salvation; once it was over, God stopped work, and he was then able to make a covenant with his creature ... The "sign" of the covenant made at the dawn of creation is the observance of the Sabbath by man (Ezek. 20:12, 20)' (*Ancient Israel*, 481). Recent Catholic magisterial documents have referred to the Sabbath of creation as 'the first covenant.' See John Paul II, *Dies Domini*; cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 288.

²⁷ Note the use of עָבַד to describe the priestly liturgical service offered to God in the tabernacle (Num. 3:7–8; 4:23; 7:5; 16:9).

²⁸ Wells, *God's Holy People*, 34–35.

the presence of God (see Ex. 24:1–9). Much of the Law, in fact, consists of regulations regarding how God is to be rightly worshipped – the design of the tabernacle and furniture, the priestly vestments, the liturgical calendar of festivals and ceremonial rubrics of the sacrificial system. In their worship, the Israelites celebrated their birth as a people of God and rededicated themselves to their royal and priestly vocation (Deut. 6:4–5).²⁹

As creation was ordered to the Sabbath, the exodus is likewise ordered to a liturgical ‘end.’ The exodus was begun with a liturgical act – the celebration of the Passover – and it ‘concludes’ in the canonical text with the construction of the tabernacle. The literary parallels with the creation account suggest a close connection between Sabbath, creation, covenant, and the dwelling that Israel is instructed to build.³⁰ The plans for the dwelling are given by God immediately after the liturgical ratification of the Sinai covenant in Exodus 24. Moses’ time on the mountain can be seen as a kind of ‘new creation’ – the cloud of divine presence covers the mountain for six days and on the seventh Moses is called to enter the cloud and receive the divine blueprint for the dwelling. God’s instructions consist of a series of seven commands that continue for seven chapters and conclude with the ordinances for the seventh day, the Sabbath (Ex. 31:12–17).

The making of the priestly vestments and the building of the tabernacle again recall the creation narrative. In both, the work is also done in seven stages, each punctuated with the words, ‘as the Lord commanded Moses.’ As God did, Moses beholds his handiwork, and blesses it (Ex. 39:43). As God ‘finished his work,’ so Moses ‘finished the work’ (Gen. 2:1–2; Ex. 40:34). And as God rested on the seventh day, blessing and hallowing it, when Moses finished his work, the divine presence filled the tabernacle (Ex. 40:34).

In the Israelites’ work to build the tabernacle we glimpse what the royal and priestly service of the human person was meant to be about: God’s sons and representatives were to rule in his name, according to his commands. Through their work they were to bring creation to its fulfillment, to complete God’s work by making the world a home in which they dwell with him and live as his people.³¹

All of creation is ordered to the covenant, this familial dwelling of God with his people. The Sabbath, as the sign of God’s ‘perpetual covenant’ (Ex. 31:16), is meant to be a living memorial of the original perfection and intention of God’s creation – his desire to ‘rest’ in communion with creation. The Sabbath orders human work to worship, labor to liturgy. The royal calling to subdue

the earth finds its expression in the liturgical consecration of the earth’s fruits to God. Through their worship on the Sabbath, God bestows his blessings on his people and makes them holy (Ex. 31:13).³²

As Israel is given an ‘Adamic’ vocation, it experiences an Adamic fall from grace. And as the primeval fall results in exile and deconsecration of the royal priestly figure, so too does Israel’s worship the golden calf.³³ God calls the people ‘corrupted,’ using a Hebrew term (מְחֻרָשׁ Ex. 32:7) found elsewhere to describe an animal too blemished to sacrifice or a priest unfit for service.³⁴ In defiling itself through ritual rebellion, Israel, like Adam, is rendered unfit for its divine vocation. It is interesting that the royal-priestly title of Exodus 19:6 is never again used to describe Israel in the Old Testament.

According to the biblical narrative, the apostasy results in the Levitical priesthood becoming the locus of the holiness that God intended for all Israel.³⁵ God’s presence remains among the people, but access is highly restricted and must be mediated by the Levites. A complex array of cultic laws were introduced for apparently penitential and pedagogical purposes – as mechanisms that will enable Israel to atone for its inevitable sins against the covenant and to teach them the true meaning of worship.³⁶

³² Ratzinger: ‘The Sabbath is the sign of the covenant between God and man; it sums up the inward essence of the covenant ... [C]reation exists to be a place for the covenant that God wants to make with man. The goal of creation is the covenant, the love story of God and man ... If creation is meant to be a space for the covenant, the place where God and man meet one another, then it must be thought of as a space for worship ... Now if worship, rightly understood, is the soul of the covenant, then it not only saves mankind but is also meant to draw the whole of reality into communion with God’ (*Spirit of the Liturgy*, 26–27).

³³ See Hahn, ‘Kinship by Covenant’, 226–53.

³⁴ See also Lev. 22:25; Mal. 1:14; 2:8. Rodriguez writes: ‘The point to notice here is that the people of Israel as a whole now have a moral defect that separates them from God. They cannot come to the sanctuary for they have rejected God, and thus have become like a defective animal or a disqualified priest, unable to come into God’s presence’ (*Sanctuary Theology*, 139).

³⁵ Scholer, *Proleptic Priests*, 13–22. Although well beyond what I can do here, it is worth noting that the ‘liturgical reading’ of Scripture helps us to understand why, by the Second Temple period in general, and in the Qumran material in particular, we have such an explicitly developed Adamic, high priestly theology. In other words, Israel’s high priest is portrayed as a kind of ‘new Adam’ who represents Israel, which in turn is seen as a kind of ‘new humanity’ that exists for ‘liturgical’ ends. See, Fletcher-Louis, ‘Jesus and the High Priest’, and *All the Glory of Adam*.

³⁶ See the important contributions of Gese on ‘The Law’ and ‘The Atonement’ in his *Essays on Biblical Theology*, 60–116.

²⁹ Levenson, *Sinai and Zion*, 80–81.

³⁰ For these parallels, see Balentine, *Torah’s Vision of Worship*, 136–41; Anderson, *Genesis of Perfection*, 200–202.

³¹ See Anderson, *Genesis of Perfection*, 201–202.

The priestly kingdom of David

Creation was ordered to the Sabbath worship of the royal and priestly first couple. The exodus was ordered to the establishment of Israel as a priestly people to offer service to God. The exodus began with the Passover liturgy and culminated in the building of the tabernacle, and the liturgical celebration of God's presence filling the sacred space. The conquest of the land was ordered to the establishment of the priestly kingdom of David. Following the pattern of the exodus, the conquest of the land began with the overthrow of Jericho by 'liturgical' means – not by military engagement but by a liturgical procession led by the Ark of the Covenant and Israel's priests. Also, as the exodus culminated in the erection of the tabernacle, so too, the conquest culminates in the construction of the Temple and the liturgical celebration of God's abiding presence.

The Davidic kingdom marks the fullest expression of the Bible's liturgical anthropology and teleology. In the dynasty established by his covenant with David, God restates his divine will for the human person – to be a son of God, a priest and a king.³⁷ The royal–priestly primogeniture granted to David's seed (2 Sam. 7:14; Ps. 110:4; 89:26–27) is linked to the royal priesthood intended for Israel (Ex. 3:6–17; 4:22; 19:5–6). David is portrayed as a 'new Melchizedek' – a priest and king who serves the most high God from his capital in Salem, that is, Jerusalem (cf. Gen. 14:18; Ps. 76:2; 110). David is shown taking actions that are at once cultic and political, military and liturgical. His first act after establishing Jerusalem as capital of his kingdom, is to restore the Ark of the Covenant – the defining symbol of Israel's election and the site of God's living presence among the people during the wilderness period (Ex. 25:8–22; Josh. 3:8–11).

David's great concern for the Ark is central to the early drama of his reign, and the Ark's installation in the Temple marks the culmination of the Chronicler's account.³⁸ As the architectural expression of the Sinai covenant was the tabernacle, the architectural expression of the Davidic kingdom was not a royal palace, but the Temple.

The building of the Temple is presented as a new creation. As creation takes seven days, the Temple takes seven years to build (1 Kgs. 6:38; Gen. 2:2). It is dedicated during the seven-day Feast of Tabernacles (1 Kgs. 8:2) by a solemn prayer of Solomon structured around seven petitions (1 Kgs. 8:31–53).

In the Temple worship, the precise sacrificial system of the Mosaic cult continues, but there are new elements and accents. The kingdom's corporate worship takes the form of praise and thanksgiving. Many commentators have

³⁷ See the discussion in Hahn, 'Kinship', 359–60; see also Kruse, 'David's Covenant'; Levenson, 'Davidic Covenant'.

³⁸ See Begg, 'Ark'.

identified the centrality of songs of praise (תהלה) and songs of thanksgiving (תודה) in the Temple liturgy. Many of the psalms of praise appear to have been written to accompany the offering of sacrifices in the Temple (Ps. 27:6; 54:6, 8; 141:2). This is true also for the 'thanksgiving songs' organized by the Levites (Neh. 11:17; 12:8, 31).

David's own thanksgiving hymn (1 Chr. 16:7–36) is presented as a kind of paradigm for Israel's prayer. It is, in essence, a celebration of God's covenant in liturgical form. This hymn sets the tone and provides the content for the acts of worship and the theology of worship we find in the Psalter. God is praised and thanked in remembrance of his mighty works in creation and for his saving words and deeds in the life of Israel – the defining experience being that of the exodus and the covenant.

The sacrifice of praise

Praise and thanksgiving, accompanied by sacrifice, is understood to be the only appropriate response to the God who has created Israel to be his own and rescued them from death.³⁹ This is seen most evocatively in the *todah* (תודה) or thanksgiving psalms (for example, Ps. 18; 30; 32; 41; 66; 116; 118; 138). Composed to accompany the offering of a sacrificial meal of bread and meat in the Temple (Lev. 7:1–21), these are some of the highest expressions of the Old Testament's liturgical anthropology.⁴⁰

In the *todah* psalms, the experience of the individual believer is almost typologically compared to that of Israel's captivity and exodus experience. Typically these psalms begin with a confession of faith and a vow of praise and self-offering. There follows a lament concerning some life-threatening distress that had befallen the believer. Then the believer describes how God delivered him from death or Sheol (the netherworld) and brought him to sing God's praises in the Temple.⁴¹ In these psalms, 'life' is equated with worship and sacrifice in the presence of God in his Temple; 'death' is seen as a sort of exile or captivity, to be cut off from God's presence, outside of his Temple.⁴²

We see in these psalms and in the prophetic literature a new and deepening understanding of the liturgical vocation of biblical man. In the prophets, this recognition of the inner truth of sacrifice often takes the form of denouncing

³⁹ Kuntz, 'Grounds for Praise', 182–83.

⁴⁰ Gese writes: 'It can be said that the thank-offering constituted the cultic basis for the main bulk of the psalms. It not only represents the high point of human life, but in it life itself can be seen as overcoming the basic issue of death by God's deliverance into life' (*Essays on Biblical Theology*, 131). On the spirituality of the *todah* and its influence on Christology, see Ratzinger, 54–57.

⁴¹ See Gunkel, *Introduction to the Psalms*, 199–221.

⁴² Anderson, 'Praise of God', 28.

the corruption of Israel's cult and worship (e.g. Is. 1:10–13; 66:2–4; Jer. 7:21–24; Amos 4:4–5, 6b; Mic. 6:6–8; Hos. 6:6; Mal. 1:10, 13–14). Positively, worship comes to be seen as a sacrificial offering in thanksgiving for redemption, for deliverance from death. Praise is revealed as the sacrifice by which men and women are to glorify God (Ps. 50:14, 33; 141:2). God is portrayed as desiring that Israel serve him – not with the blood of animals but with their whole hearts, aligning their will with his, making their whole lives a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving (Ps. 40:6–8; 51:16–17).

With this profound understanding that they are called to a pure worship of the heart comes the recognition that no amount of ethical striving or moral reform can make them holy enough to serve their God. A new covenant is promised as a new exodus and a new creation in which there will be a forgiveness of sins and a divine transformation of the heart (Jer. 31:31–34; 32:40; Ezek. 36:24–28).

In the vision of the prophets, the new exodus will mark a renewal of Israel's vocation as the firstborn and teacher of the nations. Isaiah sees Israel fulfilling its ancient vocation as 'priests of the Lord' (Isa. 61:6), and the instrument of God's blessings for the nations (Isa. 19:24). Isaiah foresees nations streaming to Zion to worship the Lord (Isa. 2; see also Jer. 3:16–17) – including arch-foes Egypt and Assyria, which serve (עבד) Israel's God and offer sacrifices and burnt offerings.⁴³

We see then, on the threshold of the New Testament, the promise that man's primal vocation will be renewed, that Israel will be gathered together with all nations at Zion to offer acceptable sacrifice to the God of Israel.

Reading Scripture Liturgically: The New Covenant Witness

The new Genesis and the new Adam

In the New Testament, Jesus and his church are presented as the fulfillment of the promises and institutions of the old covenant.⁴⁴ The story of the incarnation is told as a new creation. In Jesus there is a new beginning for the human race. He is explicitly called the new Adam (Rom. 5:12–20; 1 Cor. 15:45–49). In the early chapters of the letter to the Hebrews – especially in the opening catena of seven Old Testament quotations – Jesus is described in terms of Adam's original royal, filial and priestly vocation.⁴⁵ Here and throughout the Pauline

⁴³ Begg, 'Peoples'; Clements, 'A Light to the Nations'.

⁴⁴ For extensive bibliographies, see Moyise, *The Old Testament in the New*.

⁴⁵ See Lane, *Hebrews 1–8*, 46–50.

corpus, it is understood that the human vocation was frustrated at the outset by Adam's sin.

It is impossible to put forward here a biblical-theological argument concerning the specific nature of Adam's sin.⁴⁶ However, I would suggest that Adam's disobedience was understood inner-biblically as having something to do with a failure to offer himself – what we might call a failure of worship. His transgression of God's command betrays a broader abdication of his task of priestly service in the temple of creation.⁴⁷ In this sense, the story of the fall is truly the first chapter of the Bible, preparing the reader for Israel's history. That history unfolds according to the pattern of Eden – divine benediction is offered and accepted only to be followed quite immediately by human profanation, resulting in punishment by exile from the land of God's presence.⁴⁸

I do not want to reduce the history of sin in the Bible to a story of cultic failure. But I do want to suggest that a liturgical reading of Scripture enables us to understand better why Christ's 'obedience' is so often cast in cultic, sacrificial and priestly terms. The identification of Christ's redemptive work with cultic sacrifice is especially strong in those passages that most scholars agree represent christological hymns used in early Christian worship.⁴⁹

The hymn in Paul's letter to the Philippians (2:6–11)⁵⁰ underscores the dramatic reversal of Adam's sin. Unlike Adam, who was made in the image of God, Christ did not grasp at equality with God, but instead offered his life in humility and obedience to God. In Hebrews, this obedience is compared to the liturgical act of high priestly sacrifice (Heb. 9:11–28). As Israel's high priest would enter the sanctuary once a year to offer animal blood in atonement for the people's sins, Jesus enters the 'true' sanctuary – 'heaven itself' (Heb. 9:24) – to offer his own blood in sacrifice 'to take away the sins of many' (Heb. 9:28).

By this priestly act, this offering of blood, Jesus does even more than atone for sin. He also reveals the true nature of sacrifice as intended by God from the beginning – man's offering of himself in filial obedience to the divine will. Hebrews explains this through a christological reading of Psalm 40

⁴⁶ For recent theories, see Barr, *Garden of Eden*, 1–20; Towner, 'Interpretations and Reinterpretations'.

⁴⁷ Beale, *Temple*, 69–70.

⁴⁸ Anderson notes: '[T]he story of Adam and Eve in the J source shows a striking parallel to Israel's larger national story. We might say that the entire narrative of the Torah is in tersely summarized form ... Adam and Eve fall at the first and only command given to them. And like the nation Israel, the consequence of their disobedience is exile from a land of blessing' (*Genesis of Perfection*, 207–208).

⁴⁹ For example, see the redemptive 'blood' imagery in Rom. 3:24–25; Eph. 1:3–12:13; Col. 1:15–20; Heb. 1:3; 1 Pet. 1:18–21. On these hymns, see Hengel, 'Hymn and Christology'.

⁵⁰ Martin, *Carmen Christi*.

finding in it a prophecy of Christ's offering of his body on the cross (Heb. 10:5–10).

Christ's self-offering is the worship expected originally of Adam and again of Israel as God's firstborn, royal and priestly people. His sacrifice marked the fulfillment of all that Israel's sacrificial system was intended to prepare and instruct Israel for – that through Israel all the nations of the world might learn to make a perfect offering of heart and will to God.⁵¹

The new exodus

As the New Testament presents it, Jesus' sacrificial death brought about a new exodus – liberating God's people from slavery to sin and subjection to death, ending their exile from God, gathering them and all peoples and leading them into the promised land of the heavenly kingdom and the new Jerusalem.

This 'new exodus' theme is now widely recognized as a decisive and shaping factor in the New Testament.⁵² It is now widely accepted that Jesus is presented as a 'new Moses.' His passion and death are described as an 'exodus' (ἔξοδος; Lk. 9:31) in a transfiguration scene filled with allusions to the theophanies of the wilderness period. His death on the cross is described as a paschal sacrifice – that is, in terms of the liturgical sacrifice commanded by God to be offered on the night before Israel's exodus (Jn. 1:29, 33; 19:14, 33, 36; 1 Pet. 1:19; 1 Cor. 5:7; Rev. 5:6, 9; 7:17; 12:1; 15:3).

This typological reading of a new exodus and a new passover is hardly contested. It is also generally accepted that the New Testament writers present the sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist as means by which Christian believers are joined to the new exodus. Baptism is prefigured by the Israelites' passage through the Red Sea, the Eucharist prefigured by the manna and the water from the rock in the desert (1 Cor. 10:1–4; Jn. 6). As the first exodus is preceded by the institution of a liturgical memorial, by which Israelites would annually celebrate their establishment as a people of God, so too Christ institutes a memorial of his exodus sacrifice in the Eucharist inaugurated in the last supper with his disciples.

But a critical aspect of the typology has gone largely unnoticed in the literature – how the New Testament writers appropriate the Old Testament understanding of the *purpose* for the exodus. As we saw, God's liberation of Israel was ordered to a very specific end – namely the establishment of Israel as God's royal and priestly people destined to glorify him among the nations.

Echoes of that exodus purpose are clearly heard in Zechariah's canticle at the outset of Luke's Gospel (1:67–79). In a song resounding with exodus

⁵¹ Congar, *Mystery*, 126, 141.

⁵² See most recently, Allison, *New Moses*; Watts, *Isaiah's New Exodus*; Pao, *Acts*; Keesmaat, *Paul and His Story*.

imagery,⁵³ Zechariah sees the 'goal' of Christ's exodus as precisely that of the first exodus – to establish Israel as a holy and righteous people that worships in God's presence. Luke even employs here the specific term for the covenant 'service' (λατρεύω; Lk. 1:74) that God intended for Israel.⁵⁴

In 1 Peter, we encounter a rich passage (1 Pet. 1:13–20; 2:1–10) in which the exodus themes are applied to the newly baptized. They are told to 'gird up the loins,' as the Israelites did on the night of their flight (Ex. 12:11). Peter says they have been 'ransomed' (λυτρώω; 1 Pet. 1:18), using the same word used to describe Israel's deliverance (Ex. 15:13), by the blood of a spotless unblemished lamb (Ex. 12:5). Their lives are described as a sojourning like that of Israel in the wilderness; they too are fed with spiritual food as the Israelites drank living water from the rock in the desert.

Finally, this passage culminates with the explicit declaration that the church is the new Israel – 'a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation.' This direct quotation from the Septuagint translation of Exodus 19:6 is joined to a quote from an Isaianic new exodus text that foresees the world-missionary dimension of Israel's royal and priestly vocation as 'the people whom I formed for myself, that they might announce my praise' (1 Pet. 2:9–10; Isa. 43:21).

The new priestly kingdom

Christ's new exodus is ordered to the establishment of the priestly kingdom that God intended in the first exodus. This understanding is enriched by another type found in the New Testament writings – that of the church as the restored kingdom or house of David. Jesus is portrayed throughout the New Testament as the son of David anticipated in the Old Testament, a priest-king according to the order of Melchizedek.⁵⁵ The church, heir of the royal priestly sonship of Israel, is said to participate in the heavenly high priesthood and royal sonship of Christ.

The redemptive work of Christ is both sacrificial and priestly. It brings about 'purification from sins,' Hebrews tells us in language drawn from the Old Testament purification rites (καθαρισμός; Heb. 1:3).⁵⁶ Through his priestly work, Christ 'consecrated' believers (ἀγιάζω; Heb. 2:10; 10:10), as previously

⁵³ See the review of 'scriptural metaphors derived from the exodus' in Green, *Luke*, 110–20.

⁵⁴ See Deut. 11:13. In the Septuagint, λατρεύω routinely translates עָבַד, which, as discussed above, means 'to serve or worship [God] cultically, especially by sacrifice.' Mathewson, *New Heaven*, 205–206. See also Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 1:385; Green, *Luke*, 117.

⁵⁵ See Hahn, 'Kingdom and Church'; idem, 'Kinship', 592–93; Strauss, *Davidic Messiah*.

⁵⁶ Cf. Ex. 29:37; 30:10; Lev. 16:19; 2 Pet. 1:9. Lane, *Hebrews 1–8*, 15.

God consecrated the Israelites (Ex. 31:13; Lev. 20:8; 21:15; Ezek. 20:12; 37:28). The Christian life is depicted as a living out of this priestly consecration. The believer, Hebrews says, has been consecrated and purified ‘in order to serve (λατρεύειν) the living God’ (Heb. 9:14; 12:28).

The ‘holy priesthood’ of all the faithful is to render liturgical service, offering ‘spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ’ (1 Pet. 2:5; Rom. 12:1).⁵⁷ Speaking in the sacrificial vocabulary of the Temple, Paul urges the Philippians to live as ‘without blemish’ (ἄμωμα; Phil. 2:15) and exhorts them in the ‘sacrifice and liturgy of [their] faith’ (τῇ θυσίᾳ καὶ λειτουργίᾳ τῆς πίστεως ὑμῶν; Phil. 2:17). Life itself is here seen as liturgy (λειτουργία), with Paul adopting the Septuagint word for the ritual worship of God – λατρεύειν – to define the Christian way of life.⁵⁸

The highest expression of this liturgy of life is seen in believers’ participation in the cosmic liturgy, the worship in heaven mediated by the high priest Christ. Hebrews describes the Eucharist as a ‘festal gathering’ celebrated by the ‘church of the firstborn’ (ἐκκλησίᾳ πρωτοτόκων) with the angels on ‘Mount Zion ... the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem.’⁵⁹ The liturgy of the new covenant, the Eucharist, forms the pattern of life for the firstborn of the new family of God. Like the liberated Israelites, they no longer serve as slaves but as sons. By joining themselves sacramentally to the sacrifice of Christ, the sons and daughters were to offer themselves ‘through him’ as a continual ‘sacrifice of praise’ (Heb. 13:15).⁶⁰

The liturgical consummation of the canon

The New Testament also depicts the church fulfilling the mission of Israel – to gather all nations to Zion to offer spiritual sacrifices of praise to God.⁶¹ This is the vision we see in the Bible’s last book. John’s Apocalypse is a liturgical book. The literary evidence clearly indicates that the book was intended to be read in the liturgy, most likely in the celebration of the Eucharist ‘on the Lord’s day,’ (Rev. 1:10).⁶² The Apocalypse is also a book ‘about’ liturgy. What is unveiled is nothing less than the liturgical consummation of human history in Christ. The vision John sees is that of a Eucharistic kingdom, in which angels and holy men and women worship ceaselessly around the altar and throne of God. The vision

⁵⁷ Corriveau, *Liturgy of Life*.

⁵⁸ See, for example, Acts 24:14; 27:23; Rom. 1:9; 2 Tim. 1:3. See Corriveau, *Liturgy of Life*, 141–42.

⁵⁹ Of course, many recent commentators reject the earliest interpreters of Hebrews and deny that there are Eucharistic references either here or elsewhere in the letter. I am persuaded otherwise. See Hahn, ‘Kinship’, 624–29.

⁶⁰ Lane, *Hebrews 9–13*, 549.

⁶¹ Wells, *God’s Holy People*, 243.

⁶² Vanni, ‘Liturgical Dialogue’; Aune, ‘Apocalypse of John’.

even unfolds in liturgical fashion, in a series of hymns, exhortations, antiphons and other cultic forms.⁶³

Jesus, described throughout the book as ‘the Lamb,’ with obvious reference to the lamb of the Passover, brings about a new exodus.⁶⁴ In this final book of the canon, we see the fulfillment of the canon’s first book: In the new heaven and new earth, the new Jerusalem of Revelation, the children of the new Adam worship as priests and rule as kings, and the entire universe is revealed to have become a vast divine temple.⁶⁵

Gathered together into this new paradise, those redeemed by the blood of the Lamb make up a priestly kingdom, as John sees it, quoting God’s commission to Israel in Exodus 19:6 (Rev. 1:6; 5:10). But in this new kingdom, the children of Abraham reign with people from every tribe, tongue, and nation (Rev. 5:9; 7:9). Jesus is the ‘firstborn’ of this new family of God, the prophesied root and offspring of David (Rev. 22:16; 3:7) in whom all are made divine sons and daughters of God (Rev. 21:7) – royal sons and priests who will rule with him until the end of ages (Rev. 20:6).

Before the throne of God and the Lamb, the royal sons of God are shown worshipping him, gazing upon his face, with his name written upon their foreheads and reigning forever (Rev. 22:1–5). John chooses his words carefully here to evoke the Old Testament promises of God’s intimate presence to those who serve him. The word rendered ‘worship’ in most translations of Revelation 22:3 is λατρεύουσιν. This, as we have seen, is the word used in the Septuagint to translate עָבַד – the Hebrew word that describes Adam’s original vocation as well as the purpose of the exodus and conquest.⁶⁶

At the conclusion of our liturgical reading of the canon, we hear the purpose and meaning of the entire Bible summed up in the refrain of the Apocalypse: ‘Worship God!’ (Rev. 14:7; 19:10; 22:9). The human person has been shown from the first pages of Genesis to the last of Revelation to be liturgical by nature, created and destined to live in the spiritual house of creation, as children of a royal and priestly family that offers sacrifices of praise to their Father-Creator with whom they dwell in a covenant of peace and love.⁶⁷

Towards a Liturgical Hermeneutic

Our liturgical reading of the canonical text reveals a clear liturgical *trajectory* and *teleology*. The story of the Bible is the story of humankind’s journey to true

⁶³ Gloer, ‘Worship God’, 38–40.

⁶⁴ Mathews, *New Heaven*, 62–64.

⁶⁵ Dumbrell, *End of the Beginning*.

⁶⁶ Mathews, *New Heaven*, 205–206.

⁶⁷ Congar, *Mystery*, 192, 245–48.

worship in spirit and truth in the presence of God. That is the trajectory, the direction toward which narrative leads. This true worship is revealed to be the very purpose of God's creation in the beginning. That is the *teleology* revealed in the canonical text.

The formal unity of Scripture and liturgy, and the recovery of the canonical text's liturgical teleology and trajectory have important methodological implications for biblical scholarship. Indeed, I would argue that three interpretive imperatives arise from our liturgical reading. These imperatives, which I will consider under the headings *economy*, *typology*, and *mystagogy*, undergird the assumptions of the biblical authors and present themselves as crucial dimensions that must be understood for any authentic interpretation of the text.

The unity of Scripture: The divine economy

Our liturgical reading highlights the importance of what ancient church writers called 'the divine economy' – that is, the divine order of history as presented in the canonical text. Throughout the canonical narrative, the divine economy is presented as the motive for God's words and deeds.⁶⁸ The biblical writers understood the economy as part of 'the mystery of his will, according to his purpose ... a plan (οἰκονομίαν) for the fullness of time' (Eph. 1:9–10). In this the apostolic witness is faithful to the teaching of Christ, who is shown teaching them to see biblical history fulfilled in his life, death and resurrection (Lk. 24:26–27, 44–47).

As we have seen, the liturgy of both the old and new covenants is founded on remembrance and celebration of God's saving words and deeds. Liturgy, then, as presented in the Scripture, is an expression of faith in the divine economy and a means by which believers gain participation in that economy.⁶⁹ The Scriptures themselves are regarded by the biblical authors as the divinely inspired testament to the divine economy as it has unfolded throughout history, culminating in the saving event of the cross.

It follows that if our interpretations are to be true to the integrity of the texts, we must pay close attention to this notion of God's economy. The economy gives the Bible its content and unity.

⁶⁸ For explanations of God's words and deeds in light of a divine covenant plan, see Ex. 2:24; 6:5; 33:1; Num. 32:11; Deut. 1:8; 9:5; 30:20; 2 Sam. 7:8, 10, 11, 22–25; 1 Chr. 16:14–18; Jer. 31:31–37; 33:14–26; Lk. 1:46–55, 68–79; Acts 2:14–36; 3:12–26; 7:1–51; 11:34–43; 13:16–41.

⁶⁹ The purpose of Christian liturgy, says Dalmais, is 'to express man's *faith* in the divine economy and perpetuate the living effects of the incarnation' (*Introduction to the Liturgy*, 27). See also Daniélou: 'The object of faith is the existence of a divine plan' ('Sacraments', 29).

The typological pattern

The divine economy is comprehended and explained in Scripture through a distinct way of reading and writing that originates in the canonical text and is carried over into the living tradition of the faith community that gives us these texts. We characterize this way of reading and writing broadly as *typology*.⁷⁰

In our liturgical reading, we observed the pervasiveness of typological patterns of exegesis in both the Old and New Testaments.⁷¹ To recall but a few examples: the world's creation was portrayed in light of the later building of the tabernacle. The tabernacle in turn was described as a 'new creation.' Jesus' death and resurrection are seen as a new Passover and a new exodus. The Christian sacramental life is illuminated by the exodus event.

The extensive use of typology in the Scriptures reflects a profound biblical 'worldview.' If the economy gives narrative unity to the canonical Scriptures, fashioning them into a single story, typology helps us to understand the full meaning of that story. Recognition of this biblical worldview has important hermeneutical implications. The interpreter of the Bible enters into a dialogue with a book that is itself an exegetical dialogue – a complex and highly cohesive interpretive web in which the meaning of earlier texts is discerned in the later texts, and in which later texts can only be understood in relation to ones that came earlier.

In order to read the texts as they are written, the exegete needs to acknowledge the authors' of the Bible deep-seated belief in both the divine economy and in the typological expression of that economy. From our liturgical reading, we see that three moments in the economy of salvation stand out as having decisive typological significance for the entire canonical text – creation, the exodus, and the Davidic kingdom. These in turn should have special significance for the exegete.

We must remain mindful that the foundation of all authentic biblical typology is the historical and literary sense of the text. Typology is not an arbitrary eisegesis. For the biblical authors, God uses historical events, persons, and places as material and temporal symbols or signs of future events and divine realities. The prophets can speak of a 'new exodus' only because they presuppose the historical importance of the original exodus. The exegete likewise must see the literal and historical sense as fundamental to his or her approach to Scripture.

Mystagogy: Living the Scripture's mysteries

The final hermeneutical imperative that emerges from our liturgical reading is *mystagogy*. *Mystagogy* recognizes that the same typological patterns by which

⁷⁰ See most recently, Dawson, *Figural Reading*; Seitz, *Figured Out*.

⁷¹ Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation*; Daniélou, *The Bible and the Liturgy*, 5.

the divine economy is comprehended in Scripture continue in the church's sacramental liturgy. As we noted at the start of this paper, the canon was a liturgical enactment – the Scriptures come to us as the authoritative texts to be used in Christian teaching and worship. But as it was written and passed on to us, Scripture has more than an instructional or exhortative function. When proclaimed in the church's liturgy, Scripture is intended to 'actualize' what is proclaimed – to bring the believer into living contact with the *mirabilia Dei*, the mighty saving works of God in the Old and New Testament.⁷²

Mystagogy focuses our attention on the deep connection between the written 'Word of God' – the Scripture itself – and the creative Word of God described in the pages of the Old and New Testaments. From the first pages to the last, we see expressed the biblical authors' faith that God's Word is living and active and possesses the power to bring into being what it commands. The church's traditional understanding of the sacramental liturgy is built on this belief in the performative power of the Word of God as a 'divine speech act.'⁷³

Proclaimed sacramentally and accompanied by the ritual washing of water, the Word brings the Spirit upon people, making them sons and daughters of God through a real sharing in his life, death and resurrection (Rom. 6:3; Gal. 4:6; 1 Pet. 1:23). Proclaimed as commanded in the Eucharistic liturgy, the word brings about true participation in the one body and blood of Christ (1 Cor. 10:16–17). The Word in the sacramental liturgy continues the work of the Word in Scripture. This pattern, too, is shown originating in the pages of Scripture. The interpretation of Scripture is ordered to the celebration of baptism (Acts 8:29–38) and the Eucharist (Lk. 24:27–31). The New Testament also gives us numerous passages in which the sacraments are explained 'typologically', that is, according to events and figures in the Old Testament (1 Cor. 10; 1 Pet. 3:20–21). This paschal catechesis is at the heart of what early church writers called *mystagogy*.⁷⁴

At a minimum, then, our interpretations of Scripture must respect the mystagogic content of the New Testament. In this exegetes will do well to recall that the sacramental liturgy afforded the first interpretive framework for the Scriptures. But on a deeper level, the exegete must appreciate the *mystagogic intent* of the Bible. The exegete must always be conscious that the Word he or

⁷² Pontifical Biblical Commission: 'In principle, the liturgy, and especially the sacramental liturgy, the high point of which is the eucharistic celebration, brings about the most perfect actualization of the biblical texts, for the liturgy places the proclamation in the midst of the community of believers, gathered around Christ so as to draw near to God ... *Written text thus becomes living word*' (*Interpretation of the Bible in the Church*, IV, c, 1. Emphasis supplied).

⁷³ Ward, *Word and Supplement*; Vanhoozer, 'Speech Acts'.

⁷⁴ Mazza, *Mystagogy*.

she interprets is written and preserved for the purpose of leading believers to the sacramental liturgy where they are brought into a covenant relationship with God.⁷⁵

Towards a liturgical hermeneutic

I believe that, as a natural outgrowth of the past century's rediscovery of Scripture's liturgical sense, we are prepared for the development of a new, *liturgical hermeneutic*. As I have tried to sketch in this paper, this new hermeneutic is at once literary and historical, liturgical and sacramental. It will be capable of integrating the contributions of historical and literary research while at the same time respecting the traditional meanings given to the Bible by the believing community in which the Bible continues to serve as the source and wellspring of faith and worship. A liturgical hermeneutic will recognize the liturgical content and 'mission' of the Bible – its mystagogic purpose in bringing about, through the sacramental liturgy, the communion of believers with the God who has chosen to reveal himself in Scripture. It is, then, a hermeneutic that grasps the profound union of the divine Word incarnate in Christ, inspired in Scripture, and proclaimed in the church's sacramental liturgy.

Much work remains to be done. But, I believe this understanding of Scripture has great potential to renew the study of the Bible from the heart of the church. Reading Scripture liturgically, we will find no tension between letter and spirit, between the literary and historical analysis of Scripture and the faithful contemplation of its religious and spiritual meaning.

⁷⁵ Daniélou, 'Sacraments', 28, 31. See also DiNoia and Mulcahy, 'Authority'.

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