

## Soteriology, Eucharist, and the Madness of Forgiveness

Christopher McMahon

God freed you from all your sins and invited you here [to  
the Eucharist], but you have not become more merciful.

St. John Chrysostom, *Hom. in 1 Cor. 27:4*

**F**OR CHRISTIAN THEOLOGIANS THE RECENT EXAMPLES of injustice, violence, and tragedy in North Charleston and Baltimore bring to the fore the issues of the coercive power of the state, the exaggerated deference to such power ingrained within White consciousness, and the corresponding mistrust prevalent within non-White communities (especially Black and Latino communities in the U.S.). The demonstrations that unfolded following these events clearly arose from long-standing injustices and frustrations, and the demonstrations stand, in many instances, as communal affirmations of autonomy—acts of defiance in the face of state authority. Both academics and community leaders have at length examined these events and their aftermaths, analyzing the demonstrations, the victims, the perpetrators, and the policies that gave rise to it all. But the remarkable response to outrageous violence exhibited in two recent parallel tragedies demands attention as well: the church shooting in Charleston, SC, and the schoolhouse shooting in West Nickel Mines, PA.<sup>1</sup> In both incidents, the victims were targeted within the context of their religious identities; they were killed precisely because of who they were—Christians who stood out, and in some sense who even represented a challenge to the status quo. Emmanuel AME Church in Charleston was attacked as a locus of racial empowerment within the black community, and the Amish children were seemingly targeted, if one can really assign a motive, for their unwillingness to conform to the social and cultural status quo. The clarity of the motives in each

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<sup>1</sup> On the shootings at West Nickel Mines, see, e.g., John L. Ruth, *Forgiveness: A Legacy of the West Nickel Mines Amish School* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2007), and Donald Kraybill, Steven M. Nolt, and David L. Weaver-Zercher, *Amish Grace: How Forgiveness Transcended Tragedy* (New York: Jossey-Bass, 2007). On the shootings at Mother Emmanuel, see, e.g., Herb Frazier, Bernard Edwards Power, Jr., and Marjory Wentworth, *We Are Charleston: Tragedy and Triumph at Mother Emanuel* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2016).

case demands further scrutiny from legal, social, and mental health experts, but the motivation of the killers is not decisive here; rather, the response of the victims to the violence and injustice experienced is decisive. In both cases, church members assembled in an effort to promote fellowship, understanding, and even forgiveness. This went beyond the need for revenge, beyond the control of a counter violence masquerading as justice. It seems that both church communities were equipped with the habits and practices that enabled them to respond to violence and injustice in more focused and more clearly gospel-centered ways than many (though certainly not all) of their counterparts in North Charleston and Baltimore.<sup>2</sup>

The tragic situations described above bear witness to the basic tension between the human drive for absolute control (Augustine's *libido dominandi*) and the corresponding gospel vocation to live "out of control"—a tension that may be appropriately described as the foremost struggle for the Christian church across the centuries. In particular, this struggle points to the need for the Christian church to constitute itself as a body capable of practicing such an alternative politics—a form of communal life that is beyond the control of worldly powers but is nevertheless constructively engaged with those powers. It is precisely this nexus of issues—control, power, and the call to discipleship—that plagues the Christian church as it deals (or fails to deal) with broader struggles around the issues of mass incarceration and faulty approaches to social progress, particularly in the United States. At the heart of this failure rests an ambiguous attitude among contemporary Christians regarding the exercise of punishment in the civic order and its place within Christian theology and practice. This essay will explore how the theology of Christ's saving work, soteriology, might better underwrite the celebration of the Eucharist and its extension into the world of Christian social action by calling attention to the restorative dimensions of the soteriological tradition. In other words, a more authentic soteriology may connect better with Eucharistic prac-

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<sup>2</sup> The fact that Emmanuel AME included many Black professionals and the Amish community was rural and white should not be dismissed in the overall analysis of the social and political dimensions of the events and responses being narrated here. But the focus of this presentation is the possibilities offered through the practicing church community for responding to the victimization, to tragedy, in very different ways. See, e.g., David Von Drehle with Jay Newton-Small and Maya Rhodan, "How Do You Forgive a Murderer?" *Time* (November 23, 2015), <http://time.com/time-magazine-charleston-shooting-cover-story/>; Mark Berman, "I forgive you": Relatives of Charleston Church Shooting Victims address Dylann Roof," *The Washington Post* (May 15, 2015), [www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-nation/wp/2015/06/19/i-forgive-you-relatives-of-charleston-church-victims-address-dylann-roof/](http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-nation/wp/2015/06/19/i-forgive-you-relatives-of-charleston-church-victims-address-dylann-roof/); Mark Berman, "Remembering the Charleston Shooting Victims," *The Washington Post* (May 18 2015), [www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/national/charleston-church-shooting-victims/](http://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/national/charleston-church-shooting-victims/).

tice to help to structure a more specifically Christian account of justice—one that centers on the therapeutic and restorative dimensions of Christian discipleship—and may more consistently empower the Christian church to faithfully bear witness to restorative and healing practices within a world plagued by sin and violence.<sup>3</sup>

### SOTERIOLOGY AND VIOLENCE

Few aspects of the Christian theological tradition have come under the kind of suspicion that atonement theology has endured, especially in the course of the past century. At the heart of this suspicion lies the violent death of Jesus and its interpretation as a necessary propitiatory or expiatory sacrifice offered to God, the Father, as a substitute for the punishment due for the sins of the world or as an act of satisfaction that is owed to a God whose honor has been compromised. From Peter Abelard to René Girard, Christian theologians of various stripes have sought to mitigate the violence of the cross and its corresponding representation of God.<sup>4</sup> But such a reinterpretation has also created a backlash among other theologians for whom the cross and its violence are central to the biblical witness and amplified throughout the core of the Christian theological tradition in a way that does not permit such contemporary reinterpretations.

The fact that the understanding of Jesus' death in terms of a "sacrifice" and "ransom" goes back to Jesus himself cannot be easily eschewed by theologians.<sup>5</sup> The cultic connotations of terms such as "sacrifice" and "ransom" are fully intended by the authors of the NT, not merely coincidental, and these terms (among others) provide the

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<sup>3</sup> On the possibilities and limits of theological reflection for practical living, see, e.g., Kathryn Tanner, "Theological Reflection and Christian Practices," in *Practicing Theology: Beliefs and Practices in Christian Life*, eds. M. Volf and D. Bass (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), 228-44.

<sup>4</sup> There are many excellent studies of the atonement tradition, but some of the more recent and accessible studies include Joel Green and Mark Baker, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross: Atonement in New Testament and Contemporary Context* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000), and Stephen Finlan, *Problems with Atonement: The Origins of, and Controversy about, the Atonement Doctrine* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2007).

<sup>5</sup> Although some may dispute the biblical material, it seems fairly clear that the Last Supper and the words of institution connect the death of Jesus with sacrificial imagery in the form of a memorial meal. Whether this sacrifice was "expiatory" (involving substitution) or "covenantal" remains a point of debate. The cultic language of Israel included a range of images, including economic and social images, especially given the tendency in the Second Temple period to spiritualize the meaning of cultic acts. See the discussion in, e.g., Jonathan Klawans, *Purity, Sacrifice, and the Temple: Symbolism and Supersessionism in the Study of Ancient Judaism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 213-46; Stanislas Lyonnet, "The Terminology of Redemption," in *Sin, Redemption, and Sacrifice: A Biblical and Patristic Study*, *Analecta Biblica* 48 (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute Press, 1970), 59-184; Finlan, *Problems with Atonement*; Green and Baker, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross*.

context for understanding the symbolic relationship between the Jerusalem Temple and the origins of Christian language about God's work in Christ. At a very basic level, of course, Jesus himself is portrayed as using the Temple and its system of sacrifice as a reference point for the interpretation of his death.<sup>6</sup> Through his death and resurrection, along with the outpouring of the Spirit, the followers of Jesus experienced the forgiveness of sins and reconciliation with God. In other words, they experienced in Christ what Israel was always taught to expect God would do for them through the Temple.<sup>7</sup> The cultic language employed by New Testament authors reflects this association, but readers would do well to recall that the corpus of the seven authentic Pauline letters alone employs at least ten different metaphors to describe the effects of Christ's death, with the rest of the New Testament adding a wide variety of additional images (cultic, social, and economic), so that any identification of a singular or even a privileged "biblical soteriology" is impossible.<sup>8</sup>

Yet this array of imagery has not prevented the emergence of various attempts to provide a normative, if often highly selective, soteriology. The Patristic period and early Middle Ages saw the development of several different approaches to the saving work of Christ on the cross, all of which tended to develop a strong narrative and even dramatic sensibility, with imagery that was often violent and language that was even bellicose. Such efforts, however, did little to advance a more formal or theoretical understanding of soteriology. These symbolic narratives provided Anselm of Canterbury with the foundation of his complaint offered in the opening chapters of *Cur Deus Homo?* (*CDH*) and served as the proximate motivation for his efforts to articulate *rationes necessariae* ("the necessary reasons") for "why God became human." Anselm's own approach, however, has been widely critiqued and even repudiated by contemporary theologians as not only antiquated but also brutal and even dysfunctional.<sup>9</sup> The contemporary retrieval of Anselm's theology (and that of Aquinas and even the sacrificial language of the NT) has critically identified and nuanced many

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<sup>6</sup> The Cleansing of the Temple in John 2:18-22 stands out as a clear example. But N.T. Wright makes the case that the Last Supper and the Cleansing of the Temple ought to be taken together, seeing the memorial meal of Jesus and its connection to the meaning of Jesus' teaching and death, as a replacement for the Temple system. See N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, vol. 2 of *Christian Origins and the Question of God* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1997), 554-62.

<sup>7</sup> On this point see especially, N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1992).

<sup>8</sup> See, e.g., Joseph A. Fitzmyer, S. J., "Pauline Theology," in *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, eds. R. E. Brown, J. A. Fitzmyer, and R. Murphy (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1990), 82:67-80.

<sup>9</sup> See, e.g., J. Denny Weaver, *The Nonviolent Atonement* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001).

of the distortions at work in the dismissal of his theology of the cross, all in an effort to vindicate him over and against his critics.

Hans Boersma, among others, has undertaken an impassioned and nuanced plea for reconsidering the criticisms of the Christian theological tradition's embrace of violence and its place in the saving work of Christ on the cross.<sup>10</sup> Boersma affirms that the violence associated with the redemptive work of God in Christ, namely the suffering and death of Jesus, is constitutive, though not exhaustive, of that work as it is presented in the New Testament, the Fathers (particularly Irenaeus), the scholastics, and in the work of the Reformers. In other words, the suffering of Christ, the violence associated with his death, is directly willed by God as part of the work of salvation, and thus attempts to undermine that connection are misguided and unfaithful to the data of revelation. Boersma clearly has no desire to glorify violence or to make violence "part" of God (in fact he is critical of some features of Reformed soteriology), but his theology of redemption takes the eschatological proviso seriously—the open, absolute, and radical "hospitality of God" is to be realized only at the end of time, the eschaton. On "this side" of the eschaton, violence (i.e., coercion and exclusion) remains part of the divine plan for salvation (the election of the righteous and the destruction of sin).<sup>11</sup> The context for Boersma's argument is the pervasive critique of sacrificial language and violence in the writings of contemporary theologians, many of whom presuppose the work of the French philosopher and critic, René Girard.<sup>12</sup> But perhaps even more prominent as a subtext of Boersma's argument are concerns about boundaries, limitations, election, and even exclusion as it pertains to the life of the contemporary church.<sup>13</sup> Boersma's concern about preserving violence as a kind of eschatological proviso seems to strike the wrong note when thinking about the power of Christ to liberate human beings from sin even now, on this

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<sup>10</sup> See, Hans Boersma, *Violence, Hospitality, and the Cross: Reappropriating the Atonement Tradition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2004), and "Irenaeus, Derrida and Hospitality: On the Eschatological Overcoming of Violence," *Modern Theology* 19 (2003): 163-80.

<sup>11</sup> The interpretation of "God's wrath" (*orgē tou theou*) against sin plays a large role in Romans and in Reformed and Evangelical soteriology in particular.

<sup>12</sup> See René Girard, *I See Satan Fall like Lightning* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2001); *The Scapegoat* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986); *Things Hidden since the Foundation of the World* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1987). Also in the background are works like Weaver's *The Nonviolent Atonement*.

<sup>13</sup> This point is made sharply in Daniel M. Bell's review of Boersma's *Violence, Hospitality, and the Cross: Reappropriating the Atonement Tradition* in *Currents in Theology and Mission* 34, no. 3 (June 2007): 221-2. On the relationship of soteriology to ecclesiology and discipleship see Darrin W. Snyder Belousek, *Atonement, Justice, and Peace: The Message of the Cross and the Mission of the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012), and Peter Schmiechen, *Saving Power: Theories of Atonement and Forms of the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005).

side of the eschaton. Although the present essay cannot attempt a detailed engagement with Boersma's complex argument, the response to Boersma is instructive nonetheless.

Thomas Schärfl, among others, has robustly addressed Boersma's concerns, not by focusing on the latter's understanding of the "hospitality of God," but by looking at the logic of the cross in light of some basic theological insights.<sup>14</sup> For Schärfl, the cross is part of the economy of salvation only because of sin and not because of something in God, some sense of law, or a sense of justice demanding punishment.<sup>15</sup> Instead, the cross bears witness to God's patient response to sin, what the Old Testament seeks to capture with the word *chesed*.<sup>16</sup> Put simply, God's eternal love, God's *chesed*, when it encounters the world torn by sin and violence, takes the form of a cross. But perhaps Schärfl's most important move against Boersma and others is to invoke Jacques Derrida's paradox of forgiveness. For Derrida, forgiveness seems to be necessary (and uniquely possible) whenever something is done that cannot be forgiven in the literal sense common to everyday understanding. Derrida articulates the paradox in quintessentially Derridian terms, "[F]orgiveness forgives only the unforgivable. One cannot, or should not, forgive; there is only forgiveness, if there is any, where there is the unforgivable. That is to say that forgiveness must announce itself as impossibility itself. It can only be possible in doing the impossible."<sup>17</sup> Forgiveness provides the very basis of morality precisely by challenging the common understanding of legal justice.<sup>18</sup> But if the cycle of forgiveness and evil is endless, how can there be forgiveness?

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<sup>14</sup> Thomas J. Schärfl, "Propter Nostram Salutem: The Cross and Our Salvation," in *Finding Salvation in Christ: Essays on Christology and Soteriology in Honor of William P. Loewe*, ed. Christopher Denny and Christopher McMahon (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2011), 143-70.

<sup>15</sup> On this point Schärfl cites Romano Guardini, *The Lord*, trans. Elinor Castendyk Briefs (Chicago: Regnery, 1954), 466.

<sup>16</sup> See F. Brown, S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs, eds., *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1906), 247; "loving kindness;" see, e.g., Ps 136.

<sup>17</sup> Jacques Derrida, *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*, Thinking in Action, trans. Mark Dooley and Michael Hughes (New York: Routledge, 2001), 32-33. Interestingly, Boersma does not make use of Derrida's work on forgiveness; rather, he makes exclusive use of Derrida's work on hospitality. See Jacques Derrida, "Hospitality, Justice, and Responsibility: A Dialogue with Jacques Derrida," in *Questioning Ethics: Contemporary Debates in Philosophy*, ed. R. Kearny and M. Dooley (London: Routledge, 1999), 65-83, and *Of Hospitality: Anne Dufourmantelle Invites Jacques Derrida to Respond*, trans. R. Bowlby (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000).

<sup>18</sup> Derrida, *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*, 38-39. For a provocative account of how the Christian tradition has adopted certain presuppositions about "justice" from the Roman world see Darrin W. Snyder Belousek, *Atonement, Justice, and Peace: The Message of the Cross and the Mission of the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011), 24-58.

In other words, a final word of forgiveness seems absolutely necessary, and this final word, of its very nature, will be transcendent—it will transgress the common definitions of borders of any human structures of forgiveness. This paradox of forgiveness is the paradox of the cross, the Paschal Mystery. In Christ, God is victimized by the violence of sin and through this victimization he reveals the fundamental nature of sin, its absolute negativity and unintelligibility.<sup>19</sup> The truly unforgiveable act, crucifying God, is made known in the cross, and the unforgiveable is forgiven precisely in the moment it is revealed and prior to any compunction, contrition, or exchange. This is “madness,” to use Derrida’s own word. But as thick as Derrida’s understanding of madness is, it is appropriate to inquire as to whether or not the madness of forgiveness might be thematized within the context of the soteriological tradition.

### PAIDEIC, TRANSFORMATIVE, AND BOUNDLESS

The Derridian account of forgiveness and the aspiration for Christians to “live out of control” provide Christians with the caveats against which theological and ecclesiological proposals ought to be read. Yet, this philosophical or theological bravado, however truthful and authentic, must also be tested against the demands of the tradition and of living in the concrete and complex world where God’s redemptive love is directed. The soteriological tradition must be read, or re-read, in light of the needs of the world as those needs are presented to the church, for the church only knows how *to be church*, how to be redemptive, as it listens to the world.<sup>20</sup> How does the madness of forgiveness find responsible and constructive articulation within the tradition? How does the voice of God’s love, God’s work of forgiveness and reconciliation-restoration find its place within the world? The re-reading of the tradition offered below is necessarily selective and will focus on three features of the soteriological tradition that will prove salutary for the cultivation of authentically Christian practices of restoration and healing. First, the work of God in Christ is therapeutic, that is, healing, as well as paideic (or noetic) insofar as it centers on the patience with which God forms human beings in their redemption through instruction. Second, the work of Christ is transformative, particularly of the will. God’s righteousness is not *simply* imputed to the believer; rather, the believer is transformed in love.<sup>21</sup> Finally, this

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<sup>19</sup> John 3:14; see William P. Loewe, “Irenaeus’ Soteriology: Transposing the Question,” in *Religion and Culture: Essays in Honor of Bernard J. F. Lonergan, S. J.*, eds. Timothy P. Fallon, S. J. and Philip Boo Riley (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1987), 170.

<sup>20</sup> See Stanley Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom: A Primer on Christian Ethics* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991), 59-62; cf. Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et spes*, nos. 40-5.

<sup>21</sup> See Rom 4:1-8 and DS no. 821.

transformation transgresses boundaries, evidenced not just in the practices characteristic of Jesus' own life and ministry but supremely in the Incarnation and the paschal mystery—his passage from death to life.

### *Salvation as Paideic and Therapeutic*

The popular understanding of the cross of Christ has suffered greatly from its being uncoupled from the life, ministry, and teaching of Jesus.<sup>22</sup> Yet, the canonical gospels themselves carefully integrate the teaching of Jesus and his practices with his suffering and death to give a more comprehensive and nuanced soteriology.<sup>23</sup> The early centuries of the Christian era also saw an emphasis on the paideic aspects of the Christ's saving work. For example, Irenaeus's theology of recapitulation (*anakephalaiōsis*) embraces a soteriology that is thoroughly paideic, therapeutic, and oriented to the restoration of humanity and its share in God's life—the *ōsis*.<sup>24</sup> Irenaeus answered the challenge of the Gnostic mythos by constructing a counter-myth centered on recapitulation through an appeal to the Christ-Adam typology, an approach deployed by St. Paul, especially in Romans 5:12-21.<sup>25</sup> For Irenaeus, Christ reveals the love of the Father from the cross, in part, by unmasking the lies and violence of Satan. Even though Irenaeus often utilizes violent battle imagery in *Adversus haereses* (*AH*),<sup>26</sup> such imagery is clearly secondary when readers perceive the importance of obedient discipleship exercised in imitation of Christ as the broader context of bringing humanity to full fellowship with God, making humanity capable of the fruitful reception of the gifts God bestowed on humanity in Adam: immortality and incorruptibility.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>22</sup> For a succinct and popular description of this problem in the tradition see, e.g., Stephen J. Patterson, *Beyond the Passion* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004).

<sup>23</sup> Perhaps the best synthesis of the gospel's soteriological vision can be found in Gerhard Lohfink's *Jesus of Nazareth: What He Wanted, Who He Was* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2012).

<sup>24</sup> On *paideia* as the hallmark of patristic soteriology see, e.g., Gisbert Greshake, "Der Wandel der Erlösungsvorstellungen in der Theologiegeschichte," in *Erlösung und Emanzipation*, *Questiones Disputatae* 61, ed. Leo Scheffczyk (Freiburg: Herder, 1973), 69-101. On *paideia* as therapeutic, see e.g., Graham Ward, "Salvation: The Pedagogy of Affect," *NGTT* (*Dutch Reformed Theological Journal*) 55, no. 1 (2014): 999-1013.

<sup>25</sup> See also, e.g., 1 Cor 15:45-9; Phil 2:4-11; Col 1:15-20. On Irenaeus' *AH* as a "counter-myth," see Loewe, "Irenaeus' Soteriology: Transposing the Question."

<sup>26</sup> E.g., *AH* V 21, 1: "He has therefore, in His work of recapitulation, summed up all things, both waging war against our enemy, and crushing him who had at the beginning led us away captives in Adam, and trampled upon his head..."

<sup>27</sup> For a fuller account of Irenaeus' soteriology and its pedagogical or noetic dimensions, see William P. Loewe, *'Lex Crucis': Soteriology and the Stages of Meaning* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2016), 15-70 and "Irenaeus' Soteriology: *Christus Victor* Revisited," *Anglican Theological Review* 67, no. 1 (1985): 1-15.



In fact, the plan for salvation definitively moves away from the violence inaugurated by sin:

And for this reason did the Word become the dispenser of the paternal grace for the benefit of men, for whom He made such great dispensations, revealing God indeed to men, but presenting man to God, and preserving at the same time the invisibility of the Father, lest man should at any time become a despiser of God, and that he should always possess something towards which he might advance; but, on the other hand, revealing God to men through many dispensations, lest man, failing away from God altogether, should cease to exist. For the glory of God is a living man; and the life of man consists in beholding God. For if the manifestation of God which is made by means of the creation, affords life to all living in the earth, much more does that revelation of the Father which comes through the Word, give life to those who see God. (AH IV, 20)

[God] did not use violence, as the apostasy had done at the beginning when it usurped dominion over us, greedily snatching what was not its own. No, He used persuasion. It was fitting for God to use persuasion, not violence, to obtain what He wanted, so that justice should not be infringed and God's ancient handiwork not be utterly destroyed. (AH V, 1)

For Irenaeus, "the entire history of salvation is a pedagogical process that culminates in Christ, the educator."<sup>28</sup> Through the practice of discipleship one comes to know God's Word, prefigured in the Old Testament and completed in the teaching, example, passion, and resurrection of Jesus.<sup>29</sup>

### *Soteriology as Transformative*

Interpreters have often overlooked or downplayed the subjective aspects of God's saving work in Christ in the soteriologies of Anselm and Aquinas, whose theologies are often presented as cold theories of salvation and as the antithesis of the patristic emphasis on *paideia*. But a closer look at key points in their work helps to reinforce the transformative dimensions of soteriology, especially in their respective understandings of the importance of Christ's will in the transformation of the meaning of the cross from sin to salvation.

A perennial issue in the interpretation of Anselm's theology of the atonement is the origin and meaning of the term *satisfactio*, the centerpiece of his theology of atonement. Often interpreted in the most negative light, especially when connected to his understanding of the "honor" of God, the provenance and meaning of *satisfactio* actually

<sup>28</sup> Herman-Emile Mertens, *Not the Cross but the Crucified: An Essay in Soteriology*, Louvain Theological and Pastoral Monographs, 11 (Louvain: Peeters, 1992), 67.

<sup>29</sup> E.g., AH V 1; V 8.

has the potential to open up Anselm's theology of the cross as a work of subjective transformation and not merely an objective one. *Satisfactio* is clearly opposed to *poena* in Anselm's *Cur Deus homo?* (*CDH*) where the two terms are offered as alternatives (*poena aut satisfactio*).<sup>30</sup> The common confusion of these two alternatives among theologians stems from the desire to contextualize Anselm's use of the term *satisfactio* within Germanic law (*weregeld*) or the feudal system of his day where it functioned as an aspect of retributive justice.<sup>31</sup> Guy Mansini, however, convincingly demonstrates that the origin of the term can be found in the *Rule of Benedict* (*RB*), the religious rule under which Anselm had been formed for decades.<sup>32</sup> Mansini connects *RB* and *CDH* by making a few rather simple observations that help evoke essential aspects of Christ's saving work and mitigate any characterization of Anselm's atonement theology as inherently violent or grotesque.

In *CDH*, *satisfactio* deals with the restoration of the right order (*rectus ordo*) between persons where the person who has offended or disturbed that order seeks forgiveness from the offended party. *Satisfactio* involves the offender's willing acceptance of the consequences of the offense via this order, but it also has a supererogatory character insofar as it involves rendering something to the offended party that was not already required. And one finds the same characterization of *satisfactio* within *RB* where the term never describes something to which the offender is subjected. Rather, the offender may be subjected to *poena*, but when it comes to *satisfactio*, the offending monk *willingly* undertakes or performs a supererogatory act (i.e., an action not already part of the rule of life the monk is obligated to live).

The importance of Anselm's emphasis on the will, and its place in making satisfaction, should not be underestimated. Aquinas, for his part, picks up Anselm's work and interprets it within a broader matrix, recapturing some of the nuance, complexity, and elusiveness of the biblical material.<sup>33</sup> The Angelic Doctor begins by framing the redemptive work of Christ in terms of *convenientia*—a contingent matter of

<sup>30</sup> *CDHI*, 15. The admonition, *satisfactio aut poena* (satisfaction or punishment), often seems to get lost in the discussion of the cross. Notable on this conflation is the work of the Calvinist theologian, Charles Hodge. See his *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2, reprint (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1940), 480-544.

<sup>31</sup> Much has been written about the Germanic *weregeld* and its influence on Anselm's use of *satisfactio* (e.g., W. M. Thompson, *The Jesus Debate* [Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 1985], 348-9), but scholarship on the question favors locating the concept within the penitential and ascetic practices of the church; cf. Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Growth of the Medieval Theology*, *The Christian Tradition*, vol. 3 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 43.

<sup>32</sup> Guy Mansini, OSB, "St. Anselm, 'Satisfactio', and the 'Rule' of St. Benedict," *Revue Bénédictine* 97 (1987): 101-21.

<sup>33</sup> *ST* III q. 1, a. 2, co.

fact the intelligibility of which remains to be determined by the theologian.<sup>34</sup> In other words, God could have chosen a number of ways to deal with sinful humanity, but in wisdom and goodness, God chose to save humanity through the incarnation, life, death, and resurrection of the Son. The persecution and execution of Jesus was only the indirectly willed consequence of the love for human beings that Christ shares with his Father. God, then, bears no culpability for those who persecuted and killed Christ; their evil, instead, is transformed by the will of Christ and the Father into a greater good. Aquinas writes:

Christ suffered voluntarily out of obedience to the Father... inasmuch as, by the infusion of charity, He inspired Him with the will to suffer for us. (*ST III*, q. 47, a. 3, s. c.)

[God] inspired Him with the will to suffer for us. God's severity is thereby shown, for He would not remit sin without penalty.... Likewise His goodness shines forth, since by no penalty could man pay Him enough satisfaction. (*ST III*, q. 47, a. 3, ad. 1).

This transformation of an evil act into a higher and redemptive good occurs through the *will* of Christ inspired through the infusion of *caritas*.<sup>35</sup> For Thomas, Christ freely suffered and died out of love for both the Father and other human beings,<sup>36</sup> and thereby offered the Father the love that is greater than the offense of humanity's sin.<sup>37</sup> The free exercise of love, the love expressed in Jesus for the Father and for humanity, is the sacrifice offered by Christ on the cross, a sacrifice of love.<sup>38</sup> The union of love from the Father and in the Son provides the solution to the ravages of sin both in its offering to God as a sacrifice and as a paideic example to human beings.<sup>39</sup>

The soteriology of Aquinas is notoriously complex, and the simplification of his work is inevitably selective.<sup>40</sup> Yet, the complexity of his theology finds at least one anchor in its emphasis on the love of God and Christ as constitutive of Christ's saving work, both as an offering and as an example. The twentieth century Canadian Jesuit Bernard Lonergan worked extensively with the corpus of Thomas, and

<sup>34</sup> *ST III* q. 1, a. 2, s. c. The Latin term *convenientia* is often translated as "fittingness."

<sup>35</sup> On *caritas*, see *ST II-IIae* q. 24, a. 1.

<sup>36</sup> *ST III* q. 47, a. 2, ad. 1.

<sup>37</sup> *ST III* q. 48, a. 2.

<sup>38</sup> "The sacrifice that is offered outwardly represents the inward spiritual sacrifice" (*ST II-IIae*, q. 85 a.2).

<sup>39</sup> *ST III* q. 46, a. 3.

<sup>40</sup> For two very different approaches to finding systematic unity in Aquinas' soteriology, see William P. Loewe, '*Lex Crucis*': *Soteriology and the Stages of Meaning*, 103-155 and Matthew Levering, *Christ's Fulfillment of Torah and Temple: Salvation According to Thomas Aquinas* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002).

integrated his own genius to further develop the Thomistic tradition's emphasis on the fittingness (or *convenientia*) of the cross, rather than its necessity, and its consummation in love.

Working within the confines of the pre-conciliar Roman seminary system, Lonergan offers a symbolic-narrative formulation of the solution to "the reign of sin" in his Latin textbook on Christology (*De Verbo Incarnato; DVI*).<sup>41</sup> Lonergan offers that account in blunt and powerful terms:

The Son of God became man, suffered, died, and was raised again because divine wisdom ordained and divine goodness willed, not to remove the evils of the human race through power, but to convert those evils into a supreme good according to the just and mysterious Law of the Cross.<sup>42</sup>

The formulation of the Law of the Cross follows the thesis given above: sin incurs the penalty of death; but death, if accepted in love, is transformed; and transformed dying receives the blessing of new life. The Law of the Cross represents the intrinsic intelligibility of the redemption, which is revealed in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. Moreover, this solution to the problem of sin and evil that God provides does not stand apart from the world as a violent imposition, or some alien ordinance. Instead, the Law of the Cross coincides with the actual order of the universe and represents a universal law. As in Irenaeus, God does not conquer evil through the exercise of domination and violence; rather, Jesus, as a human being, learned to consent and to obey the Law of the Cross.<sup>43</sup> By conforming his will to the cruciform demands of God's work of redemption, the new life Christ receives and makes available in the resurrection invites the faithful to conform their wills to the Law of the Cross. The cross of Christ symbolically communicates the principle of transformation, of conversion, and as the Law of the Cross it functions as a precept by which human beings are to share fellowship or communion with God in Christ.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> *ST III*, q. 48, a. 1-5. See Bernard Lonergan, "The Redemption," in *Philosophical and Theological Papers, 1958-1964*, Collected Works of Bernard J. F. Lonergan, S. J. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), and William P. Loewe, "Toward a Responsible Contemporary Soteriology," in *Creativity and Method: Essays in Honor of Bernard J. F. Lonergan, S. J.*, ed. Matthew Lamb (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1984), 213-28.

<sup>42</sup> Bernard J. F. Lonergan, S. J., *De Verbo Incarnato*, third edition (Rome: Pontifical Gregorian University, 1964), 552. The English translation is taken from Charles Hefling's translation, *The Incarnate Word* (Toronto: Lonergan Research Institute, 2006).

<sup>43</sup> See Charles C. Hefling, Jr., "Lonergan's *Cur Deus Homo*: Revisiting the 'Law of the Cross,'" in *Meaning and History in Systematic Theology: Essays in Honor of Robert M. Doran, S. J.*, ed. John D. Dadosky (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2009), 145-66.

<sup>44</sup> See Gal 2:19-20; Rom 5:5.

Salvation thus involves shifts in human acts of meaning and value, in which the heart and mind are reconfigured to increase the likelihood of the reign of sin's reversal. In the work of salvation, God does not offer the world a new form of control, a Christian version of the *libido dominandi*, a false certainty. Instead, the work of Christ creates the essential conditions for the possibility of transformation and authentic redemption in history. As a community of faith, of redemptive recovery, the Church continues to proclaim the Law of the Cross both in the liturgy and most especially in the daily lives of the faithful, who confront the death-dealing power of evil, and through the gift of God's love in Christ and the Spirit transform that power to new life.<sup>45</sup> It is this power that is being enacted so boldly and poignantly by the community of believers at Mother Emmanuel and in the Amish community at West Nickel Mines—a power that transgresses the boundary between the offender and victim, between the guilty and the innocent.

### *Salvation as Boundless*

Crossing boundaries has stood at the center of the Christian tradition from the earliest articulation of the gospel: Jesus' practice of inclusive table fellowship in the face of objections from his co-religionists,<sup>46</sup> the *kenōsis* (or self-emptying) of Christ in the great hymn in Phil 2:5-11, and the majestic Prologue of the Fourth Gospel in which the Word became flesh (John 1:14). This theme of self-emptying and crossing boundaries must be at the heart of any account of Christ's saving work, but the tension between the biblical account and the human drive to find limits and impose boundaries stands as a threat to this boundary-crossing understanding of God's work in Christ.

An emphasis on the boundlessness of God's work in Christ often seems to fly in the face of common accounts of God's justice. After all, how can God be just to himself while restoring all things in Christ? A reading of justice in Augustine, Anselm, and Aquinas suggests that Jesus, as the justice of God, subverts classical accounts of justice as *suum cuique* (the Greco-Roman adage, "to each his own").<sup>47</sup> In fact, God refuses to render to humanity what it is owed due to sin and, instead, offers humanity love, mercy, and fidelity (*chesed*). In Christ,

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<sup>45</sup> *DVI*, 571. On the nature of the Church as the instrument of redemptive recovery in history see Joseph A. Komonchak, *Foundations in Ecclesiology*, Supplementary Issue of the *Loneragan Workshop Journal*, Volume 11 (Boston: Loneragan Workshop, 1995), 167-89.

<sup>46</sup> See, e.g., Craig Blomberg, "Jesus, Sinners, and Table Fellowship," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 19.1 (2009): 35-62, who challenges a recent movement in the academy that has questioned the historicity of this aspect of Jesus' ministry.

<sup>47</sup> Daniel M. Bell, Jr., "Deliberating Justice and Liberation," in *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Ethics*, ed. Stanley Hauerwas and Samuel Wells (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 182-95. One might also add Origen's understanding of justice to this list of theologians explicitly treated in Bell's essay.

this justice is ordered to the honor of God and the right order of creation wherein humanity is destined to share in the divine nature. God becomes human to restore that honor by giving humanity the path to this participation: God became human so that human beings might become divine and become friends with God.<sup>48</sup> Inasmuch as charity provides all other virtues with their form, so the operations of justice determine their ultimate ends: communion with God and freedom from sin.

A similar account of justice underwrites Origen's emphasis on restoration, and Origen's work also inspired one of the most influential theologians of the twentieth century, Hans Urs von Balthasar. In the fourth chapter of his *Mysterium Paschale*, Balthasar evokes the hope or possibility of restoration in his account of Holy Saturday or The Descent into Hell.<sup>49</sup> The event of the cross, the cry of dereliction, and the tomb represent the distancing of the man, Jesus, from the Father, a distance that is equal to that of the God-forsaken, the damned.<sup>50</sup> Anne Hunt characterizes this *kenōsis* of the Son in powerful terms:

In Balthasar's theology, the descent represents Jesus' solidarity with humanity in its sinfulness (without, however, any cooperation in sin itself: Jesus is "free among the dead," not bound by any of the bonds of sin). It is Jesus' complete identification with the sinner in his death, in his radical separation from God, in his hellish desolation and utter loneliness as a being-only-for-oneself, and in his complete powerlessness to redeem himself. At this point, Balthasar takes us to the extremes of paradox. In the descent into hell, God experiences God-forsakenness and God-estrangement. For him it is precisely here that the glory of the Lord is revealed.<sup>51</sup>

In this way, no sin, violence, or experience of separation from God can escape redemption, for Hell has no power. The drama of the paschal events has a formative character that dramatically transcends boundaries, redemptively embracing the violence of sin without directly causing it. God's boundless love embraces violence and forsakenness such that human beings who endure this state of radical separation are not, in fact, beyond the reach of God's redemptive love. In

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<sup>48</sup> Athanasius, *De Incarnatione Verbi* 54.3 and Irenaeus, *AH V*, preface.

<sup>49</sup> Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale: The Mystery of Easter*, trans. Aidan Nichols, O.P. (London: T&T Clark, 1991). Balthasar's proposal has inspired a backlash among some theologians. See Alyssa Lyra Pitstick, *Light in Darkness: Hans Urs von Balthasar and the Catholic Doctrine of Christ's Descent into Hell* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007).

<sup>50</sup> Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale*, 179-80. See also his essay, "The Descent into Hell," in *Spirit and Institution*, Explorations in Theology, vol. 5 (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1995), 401-14.

<sup>51</sup> Anne Hunt, "Psychological Analogy and Paschal Mystery in Trinitarian Theology," *Theological Studies* 59 (1998): 197-218, at 202.

Christ's descent, forsakenness, damnedness itself, is transformed and redeemed.

Balthasar raises the issue of the limits or boundaries of God's work in Christ. Whatever one might say of the population of Hell,<sup>52</sup> Christians dare to hope that it is empty, even if Hell's existence is a formal and very real possibility. Nevertheless, Balthasar's point has less to do with a census of Hell and more to do with what has been united to God in Christ, namely the experience of loss and separation. And if this paschal journey not only includes Holy Saturday but actually privileges it, then the meaning Balthasar sees in the second day of the Triduum raises important challenges for those who claim salvation in Christ and practice this salvation in their worship, which is nothing less than a re-presencing of God's saving work in Christ and a foretaste of heaven itself. But one might rightly wonder if, and to what extent, this understanding of Christian worship is widely shared among the faithful.

### CRUCIFORM WORSHIP

Christians seem to be confused about what they are doing when they worship. Moreover, Christians often have little sense of the relationship between God's saving work in Christ and the practice of worship, let alone its connection to a world racked with violence and victimization. At the symbolic level, soteriology tends to be incoherent even if it can oftentimes (perhaps spasmodically) produce noble and praiseworthy results. Yet, when these symbolic expressions become theory, they can become heretical and threaten to underwrite aberrant and dysfunctional ecclesial practices. Perhaps more likely, however, is the uncoupling of liturgy and Christian practice, each left incoherent without the other. The impassioned liturgical debates belie these concerns, centering as they do on aesthetics and, for lack of a better term, matters of style, taste, or ideology. Yet, these debates are fraught with deep theological and social significance, and should center on the paideic, transformative, and boundless dimensions of soteriology discussed above.<sup>53</sup> Above all, these discussions should reflect on whether and how liturgical practice can spill out into the world and bear witness to the power of God as the church confronts the power of violence and injustice.

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<sup>52</sup> "Origenism" is, of course, the heretical formulation of several positions attributed (rightly or wrongly) to Origen, one of which concerned universal restoration; see DS nos. 203-11; 223; 271.

<sup>53</sup> See Massimo Faggioli, *True Reform: Liturgy and Ecclesiology in Sacrosanctum concilium* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2012).

*Cruciform Eucharist: Learning to be Saved*

Philip Kenneson has offered a succinct and prescient analogy for understanding the formative power of worship, one that is fully attentive to overcoming the temptation of disconnecting liturgy from the world.<sup>54</sup> Drawing on the competing images of the amusement park and military boot camp, Kenneson is able to draw out, in an unsettling way, common misconceptions about how worship is to function within the believing community. For Kenneson, Christian worship is not simply a time apart from the ordinary demands of life, allowing one to “reconnect” to “the people and relationships that matter most,” to borrow a few clichéd expressions. Rather, Christian worship is meant to call believers out of their private worlds and the assumptions that seem to determine their day-to-day living, to form them in a way of being in the world for which they are not prepared. Like a military boot camp, liturgy provides the believing community with a time set apart to practice and rehearse the story that tells them who they are and how to be in the world. The liturgy is to form people, in their minds and in their bodies, through practices such as passing peace, singing as a congregation, fasting in community, and eating together, so that they re-enter the world of day-to-day life with a different purpose, a different focus, and even a different “bearing.” Kenneson’s point is that Christians *learn to be saved* in worship, and that learning is truly transformative. Worship changes the worshippers so that they might sacramentally engage the world.

The Second Vatican Council’s Constitution on the Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum concilium* (SC), affirms the liturgy itself as essential to the life of the Christian, not as some mere disciplinary obligation, but precisely because of its formative power and the central role that power plays in the Church’s mission in the world.

The liturgy in its turn moves the faithful, filled with “the paschal sacraments,” to be “one in holiness;” it prays that “they may hold fast in their lives to what they have grasped by their faith;” the renewal in the Eucharist of the covenant between the Lord and [humans] draws the faithful into the compelling love of Christ and sets them on fire. From the liturgy, therefore, and especially from the Eucharist, as from a font, grace is poured forth upon us; and the sanctification of [humans] in Christ and the glorification of God, to which all other activities of the Church are directed as toward their end, is achieved in the most efficacious possible way. (SC 10)

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<sup>54</sup> Philip Kenneson, “Gathering: Worship, Imagination, and Formation,” in *Blackwell Companion to Christian Ethics*, ed. S. Hauerwas and S. Wells (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 53-67; see also John Berkman, “Being Reconciled: Patience, Punishment, and Worship,” 95-109 in the same volume.



The Council affirmed that for the liturgy to be fully activated in the lives of the faithful, the liturgy needed to invite (or compel) the “full, active, and conscious participation of all.”<sup>55</sup> Moreover, the Council determined that greater instruction in the liturgy itself and the development of a “noble simplicity” in the liturgy was necessary in order to facilitate that participation.<sup>56</sup> These two principles of liturgical renewal—emphasis on the paschal mystery and active participation in the liturgy—emerged during the twentieth century and together anchored much of the liturgical renewal and reform at the Council.<sup>57</sup> The reform and renewal of the liturgy was meant to help believers contact the very reality of Christ’s once and for all redemptive act in such a way that they would live by the power of Christ’s redemptive act: “I have been crucified with Christ, but I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me.”<sup>58</sup>

The vision of liturgy offered here demands the transformative engagement and response of worshippers. The liturgical life of the Church clearly centers on the saving mystery and enacts the paschal *transitus* from death to life in the lives of individual believers and the Church community as a whole. The call to transformation, to learning our salvation, pushes the ecclesiological envelope, so to speak, insofar as one is forced to deal with the Eucharistic celebration as one in which all participants are students, in a sense, and all are included in this very public “work.” It is the sinner who needs to be instructed, formed, and restored, and that need is precisely what is being made available in the liturgical assembly, so long as it is properly engaged.

### *Cruciform Eucharist: Forming the Will in Love*

The fact that Catholic doctrine has long characterized the Eucharist as a sacrifice can unintentionally obfuscate the worldly engagement the celebration of the Eucharist is supposed to generate.<sup>59</sup> While the term “sacrifice” remains a complex part of the history of Eucharistic theology, it finds a comfortable place within the work of Lonergan,

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<sup>55</sup> SC 14.

<sup>56</sup> SC 34. It is precisely this emphasis on simplicity and clarity that causes such a backlash among a certain strand of liturgists who contend that such simplicity robs the rites, especially in their medieval forms, of their evocative power. See, e.g., Catherine Pickstock, “Medieval Liturgy and Modern Reform,” *Antiphon* 6 (2001): 19-25.

<sup>57</sup> The work of Odo Casel was pivotal in connecting these two principles. See Rose M. Beal, “The Liturgical Legacy of Odo Casel, O.S.B.,” *Worship* 86, no. 2 (2012): 98-123.

<sup>58</sup> Gal 2:20. See also Burkhard Neunheuser, “Mystery Presence,” *Worship* 34, no. 3 (1960): 120-7.

<sup>59</sup> On the Eucharist as “sacrifice” see the Decrees of the Council of Trent, Session XXII, 1562 (DS nos. 938-40). See also David N. Power, *The Sacrifice We Offer: The Tridentine Dogma and Its Interpretation* (New York: Crossroad, 1987), and Edward J. Kilmartin, *The Eucharist in the West: History and Theology* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1998), 169-78.

for whom the term means nothing less than “the proper symbol of a sacrificial attitude”<sup>60</sup> and orients the worshipper to personal and social transformation. The Eucharist is the symbol of this attitude, this will, in Christ, and through the Eucharist the “attitude” of Christ becomes the source of this attitude for the faithful.<sup>61</sup> It is precisely because the bread and wine of the Eucharist offers the faithful full communion with the sacrificial attitude of Christ that these elements actually contain the sacrificial attitude of Christ, his incarnate meaning, or Christ himself.<sup>62</sup> The Eucharist, through the sharing of a meal, offers human beings a participation in the sacrificial attitude of Christ, of which the cross is the ultimate symbol.

The Church, through its worship, draws the faithful and the entire world more deeply into the divine life, which, in a world torn by sin, takes the form of the cross, or perhaps more completely, takes the form of the paschal mystery.<sup>63</sup>

We learn from the same Apostle that we must always bear about in our body the dying of Jesus, so that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in our bodily frame. This is why we ask the Lord in the sacrifice of the Mass that, ‘receiving the offering of the spiritual victim,’ he may fashion us for himself ‘as an eternal gift’ (SC 12)

The paschal mystery is a reality in which humans are called to participate, and in the Church’s mission through the liturgy they are empowered to call the world to conversion, to transformation of hearts, minds, and even bodies and to full participation in the divine life.<sup>64</sup>

In affirming the connection between liturgy and participation in the divine life, it must be acknowledged that liturgy is an act of love, and

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<sup>60</sup> Bernard Lonergan, S. J., “The Notion of Sacrifice (*De Notione Sacrificii*),” in *Early Latin Theology*, Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan, trans. Michael Shields, S. J. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 2-51. See also Raymond Moloney, S. J., “Lonergan on Eucharistic Sacrifice,” *Theological Studies* 62 (2001): 53-70.

<sup>61</sup> Phil 2:5.

<sup>62</sup> On Lonergan’s metaphysics as it is applied to the Eucharist, see Joseph C. Mudd, *Eucharist as Meaning: Critical Metaphysics and Contemporary Sacramental Theology* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2014).

<sup>63</sup> Although the term occurs only eight times in *Sacrosanctum concilium* (nos. 5, 6 [2x], 61, 104, 106, 107, 109), it is widely regarded as a central theme of the Council’s reform of the liturgy. See, e.g., Rita Ferrone, *Liturgy: Sacrosanctum Concilium*, Rediscovering Vatican II (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 2007), 23-5. For an insightful account of the moral and social dimensions of the prayerful appropriation of the paschal mystery in the liturgy see, e.g., Bruce T. Morrill, S. J., *Encountering Christ in the Eucharist: The Paschal Mystery in People, Word, and Sacrament* (New York: Paulist, 2012), chapter 3.

<sup>64</sup> SC 10.

as such, it is an end in itself and not simply a tool.<sup>65</sup> After all, scriptural images of heaven frequently center on eternal worship and our joyful assimilation into that worship (e.g., Isa 6:1-4; Rev 4:1-11). So, everything else can rightly be said to be preparation for (or oriented to) the intimacy and justice of heavenly worship. Liturgy is the celebration of the love that God has given in Christ, and that love is transformative. Pope Benedict reminds us that in the end, “love can be ‘commanded’ because it has first been given,”<sup>66</sup> making the love that has been “presenced” in this shared meal—a love that is both divine and human—spill out into the world.

### *Cruciform Eucharist: Boundless*

The contemporary church is a wounded pilgrim,<sup>67</sup> whose lack of fellowship or unity is all too apparent to insider and outsider alike. It has long been noted, with great irony, that the Eucharist, the Lord’s Supper, is the singular place where the absence of Christian *koinōnia* is most apparent.<sup>68</sup> The racial, economic, and social divisions within the Body of Christ make the examples of Mother Emmanuel and West Nickel Mines all the more remarkable,<sup>69</sup> even as these divides threaten to further entrench racial and economic conflict within the church.

Although neither the sacral nor formative dimensions of the Eucharist can be underestimated or played off against one another other, the sanctity of the celebration and the moral-ecclesial status of participants have become a point of stark tension for the church both *ad intra* and in its orientation *ad extra*. If the church is ordered to the redemptive transformation of the world, the Eucharistic celebration ought to more clearly reflect this conviction. Moreover, if the work of God in Christ is centered on transgressing boundaries, especially the boundaries that separate human beings from God, then one might rightly ask how well current practices reflect the boundless love of God in Christ.

It is precisely as *a shared meal* that the Eucharist is also a sacrifice through which the faithful encounter the presence of Christ in a variety of modes (e.g., in the presider, assembly, word, Eucharistic elements).

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<sup>65</sup> See M. Therese Lysaught, “Love and Liturgy,” in *Gathered for the Journey: Moral Theology in Catholic Perspective*, ed. D. McCarthy and T. Lysaught (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), 24-42.

<sup>66</sup> *Deus caritas est* 14.

<sup>67</sup> On the image of the church as “pilgrim,” see *LG* 48-50.

<sup>68</sup> Cf., *SC* 26.

<sup>69</sup> See the Pew Research Center’s 2014 survey of U.S. religious diversity, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/07/27/the-most-and-least-racially-diverse-u-s-religious-groups/>. Of special interest for evangelical Christians is the principle of race consciousness as an ally of evangelization and mission as articulated by Donald McGavran in what became a guide for the church growth movement. See, *The Bridges of God: A Study in the Strategy of Missions* (World Dominion Press, 1955; reprint, Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2005), 10.

This appreciation of the Eucharistic celebration as a shared meal promises to unleash much of what the liturgy is supposed to accomplish,<sup>70</sup> but the fact that the liturgy has been increasingly privatized through the course of the last six centuries tends to blunt the power of liturgy and this privatization ought to provoke sharp concern among theologians and pastors alike.<sup>71</sup>

The therapeutic potential of the Eucharist, understood as a shared meal, one that transgresses boundaries while creating new bonds, dovetails nicely with the image of the church as a “field hospital” that Pope Francis has recently employed.<sup>72</sup> Perhaps the real eschatological proviso of ecclesial hospitality (contra Boersma) ought to be more Matthean, since in a variety of places in that gospel one finds the eschatological proviso about separation or expulsion running in the direction of inclusivity ahead of eschatological judgment (e.g., Matt 7:1-6; 18:15-17; 22:1-14). In fact, the admonition in Matthew’s Church Order Discourse to treat those who do not submit to the church as “a Gentile or tax collector” (Matt 18:17) is really a call to redouble efforts at ministry and reconciliation. After all, if one looks at the way Jesus treats tax collectors and Gentiles (Matt 8:7 and 9:10-11) one finds a special focus on the way an encounter with Christ at table actually facilitates conversion and fellowship.<sup>73</sup> Perhaps the most pertinent image of the meal-sharing aspect of the Eucharist can be found in Matt 9:11-13, where, in response to Pharisees’ objection to Jesus’ practice of table fellowship with tax collectors and sinners, Jesus says:

Those who are well do not need a physician, but the sick do. Go and learn the meaning of the words, ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice’ [Hos 6:6]. I did not come to call the righteous but sinners. (Matt 9:12b-13)

In this passage, precisely in the context of the shared meal, Jesus identifies himself as a “physician,” and by doing so he represents a radical opinion in the early Jewish world, as he sought out the company of

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<sup>70</sup> On the OT foundations of sacrifice as a shared meal see, e.g., Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 440-90.

<sup>71</sup> Dom Gregory Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy*, reprint (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2005), 599.

<sup>72</sup> See the interview with Antonio Spodaro, S.J., “A Heart Open to God,” *America* 209, no. 8 (September 30, 2013), <http://americamagazine.org/pope-inter-view>.

<sup>73</sup> The exegesis of this passage is by no means settled—see, e.g., Sharyn Dowd, “Is Matthew 18:15-17 about ‘Church Discipline’?” in *Scripture and Traditions: Essays on Early Judaism and Christianity in Honor of Carl R. Holladay*, *Novum Testamentum Supplements* 129, ed. Patrick Gray and Gail O’Day (Lieden: Brill, 2008), 137-50, esp. 146-7; cf., Donald Senior, *Matthew*, *Abingdon New Testament Commentaries* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1998), 209-10. Yet, some have questioned the historicity of Jesus’ practice of inclusive table fellowship; see, e.g., Dennis E. Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist: The Banquet in the Early Christian World* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003).

sinner, even before they had converted.<sup>74</sup> The curative care administered by Jesus took the form of a shared meal—a practice that was thought by many to contaminate the righteous. But as the physician, Jesus is not contaminated; rather, he heals and purifies through mercy and fellowship, which may (or may not) lead to conversion.

How does the practice of Jesus' formative and scandalously boundless table fellowship form the church in its fundamental self-expression, the Eucharist? Obviously, there has always been some form of church discipline when it comes to the celebration of the Lord's Supper, from the New Testament period through today, and in almost every expression of the Christian tradition. But the Eucharist is also meant to disrupt all false "communions" in order to create genuine fellowship in Christ, a fellowship that is not purely ethnic, nor uniquely cultural, nor economic, nor racial, but a fellowship that is always and everywhere truly universal, *katholikos*, and *always on offer*. For, unlike the family meal, or even the Passover Seder, both of which are meant to solidify natural bonds of blood and kinship, the Eucharistic meal breaks apart family and social bonds to create new bonds,<sup>75</sup> ones that will transgress the divisions of race, class, gender, etc., to promote not only the redemption of the believing community but also redemptive recovery in the world.

## CONCLUSION

Pope Benedict's recent admonition, "a Eucharist which does not pass over into the concrete practice of love is intrinsically fragmented,"<sup>76</sup> raises the issue central to the life of the Church: how does the church bear faithful witness to the saving power of Christ in a world of violent madness, unjust social and economic order, and evil, especially when it comes to both victims and perpetrators? Christians contend that in the liturgy heaven erupts into space and time in the form of the cross, and through an active participation in the celebration, believers are trained to see and shape the world differently, even "madly," because God's forgiveness *transcends* rather than reinforces the economic grammar of "lawful punishment." Pastors, teachers, and theologians can help one another see the ways the biblical witness and

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<sup>74</sup> Eric Ottenheim, "The Shared Meal—a Therapeutical Device: The Function and Meaning of Hos 6:6 in Matt 9:10-13," *Novum Testamentum* 53 (2011): 1-21. For a comprehensive look at the issue of table fellowship in Jesus' ministry, see Kathleen Corley, *Private Women, Public Meals: Social Conflict in the Synoptic Tradition* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993), and Jerome H. Neyrey, "Meals, Food and Tablefellowship," in *The Social Sciences and New Testament Interpretation*, ed. R. L. Rohrbaugh (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), 159-82.

<sup>75</sup> See Gillian Feeley-Harnik, *The Lord's Table: Eucharist and Passover in Early Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981), 144.

<sup>76</sup> *Deus caritas est*, 14.

the tradition itself calls for a soteriology and corresponding Eucharistic practice that is paideic, transformative, and boundless. To the extent that these dimensions of the soteriological tradition are embraced, Christians will be formed as a people of radical and transformative engagement with an often tragic world. Because the faithful (and even the not so faithful) have come to know and rehearse the madness of God's forgiveness intimately in their own lives, they may thus learn to be more capable of embracing tragedy faithfully and more capable of enacting God's grace in the world. Perhaps then the witness of the faithful at Mother Emmanuel and West Nickel Mines may become more the rule than the exception.<sup>77</sup> **M**

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<sup>77</sup> A word of thanks goes out to Luke Briola, Debra Faszler-McMahon, and the anonymous readers, whose comments and suggestions helped to greatly improve this essay.