

## Anamnetic Action: The Ethics of Remembrancing

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### Liturgical Anamnesis: The Theological State of the Question

One of the more promising approaches in recent years to understanding the ethical dimension of Christian liturgy has been to focus on its memorial character or, as Don Saliers puts it, on liturgy as the “anamnetic enactment of the mystery of faith.”<sup>1</sup> Historical and theological study of the anamnetic dimension of worship has proven crucial to ecumenical convergences in the doctrine and practice of the Eucharist among the churches over the past several decades.<sup>2</sup> In addition, however, it has begun to point a way to understanding how the practice of participating in the liturgy is intrinsically and conceptually related to ethics, that is, to practices of thought, word, and deed whereby believers witness in their daily lives to the biblical vision of God’s reign.<sup>3</sup> The felicitous ecumenical confluence around the concept of anamnesis has

1. Don E. Saliers, “Liturgy and Ethics: Some New Beginnings,” in *Liturgy and the Moral Self: Humanity at Full Stretch before God*, eds. E. Byron Anderson and Bruce T. Morrill (Collegeville: Pueblo/The Liturgical Press, 1998), 33.
2. For a survey of the history of this process, including a treatment of the 1982 Faith and Order Paper No. 111, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, see David N. Power, “The Anamnesis: Remembering, We Offer,” in *New Eucharistic Prayers: An Ecumenical Study of Their Development and Structure*, ed. Frank C. Senn (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), 146-47.
3. Here I follow Don Saliers’ argument that the “link” between liturgy and ethics “is not casual and extrinsic, but conceptual and intrinsic.” See “Liturgy and Ethics,” 16. Edward Schillebeeckx has also argued for the distinct but integrally related roles of ethics and prayer and liturgy in the Christian life. See his *Church: The Human Story of God*, trans. John Bowden (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1990), 30-31, 66, 83-85, 92.

challenged Roman Catholic, Anglican, and Protestant churches both to reassess and modify theological positions taken on such issues as sacrament and sacrifice and to recover ancient ritual elements of narrative and gesture long abandoned in various ecclesial orders of service. As David Power observes, however, it has been easier to introduce anamnestic practices into the churches' books of worship (e.g., the development of eucharistic prayers and anaphoral-style blessings of baptismal water) than to formulate a theological theory of what happens in the act of anamnesis, and how.<sup>4</sup>

The question of theory cannot be neglected. *How* we understand the ritual action of anamnesis has everything to do with the intentionality with which we do it and, thereby, how it forms us as ethical people.<sup>5</sup> Our reformed liturgical texts might well contain robust eucharistic prayers, blessings of water and oils structured in anamnestic-epicletic patterns, and calls for genuinely homiletic preaching, but the promulgation of these texts does not guarantee the extent to which liturgical assemblies and their presiding ministers engage them as performative utterances, experiencing them as manifestations of God's gracious desires for humanity and, indeed, all creation. The desire to participate actively in anamnestic liturgical action cannot be unrelated to the expectation of encountering the presence and absence of God in the unfolding histories of our world or to discerning together something of God's action in the people and events that have gone before us. This presents an ongoing task for liturgical theologians. While biblical and historical research on the Jewish and early Christian texts and ritual practices of anamnesis has yielded evidence for the intrinsic connection of liturgical memorial to ethical commerce in society,<sup>6</sup> this scholarship can only serve a *living* tradition of faith if theologians place

the knowledge of "remembrancing" revealed in the liturgy in dialogue with the present social conditions that impact, both positively and negatively, on the human exercise of memory today.

The challenge is formidable. Explaining the phenomenon of human memory has proven a daunting problem not only for Western philosophers from the pre-Socratics onward but also for modern biologists, physiologists, anthropologists, psychologists and, most recently, computer scientists and theorists of artificial intelligence. The problem of memory takes on specific complexities in the field of Christian liturgy. In formulating theories about the Jewish and early Christian concepts of ritual memory, biblical and liturgical theologians have struggled with finding terminology that adequately translates the Hebrew and Greek biblical words, *lezikkarōn* and *eis anamnesin*.<sup>7</sup> Biblical scholar Xavier Léon-Dufour, for example, has argued that "memorial" is an inadequate translation of *anamnesis*, a Greek term from the New Testament with deep historical roots in Jewish tradition. The problem with "memorial" is that it signifies an action already completed rather than an action that is taking place. Eucharistic anamnesis is not a "subjective conception of memory" nor a "monument to be erected before God" but, rather, "an actualization of the event that was Jesus" wherein Christians "let his action and presence find expression in and through them."<sup>8</sup> In the genre of the Jewish *today*, the eucharistic celebration of remembrance (Léon-Dufour's preferred translation of *anamnesis*) is the Christian community's proclamation of salvation-in-

7. See, respectively, Exod 12:14 and Luke 22:19; 1 Cor 11:24, 25.

8. Xavier Léon-Dufour, *Sharing the Eucharistic Bread: The Witness of the New Testament*, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), 114. In explaining the concept of liturgical remembrance as an "actualization" of a prior event, Léon-Dufour's work basically coincides with that of Old Testament scholar Brevard Childs, who argues that keeping remembrance in Jewish ritual provides the link between past and present. This is not a matter of reliving the past; rather, observing the sabbath and the festivals is for the purpose of the continuation of the history of redemption now and in the future. This history can occur only insofar as the present generation receives the divine command and makes the *decision* to be obedient, just as their ancestors had done. This active sense of decision and commitment, precisely in the context of narrative and ritual memory, is what Childs means by saying that people actualize the event of salvation. They "participate again in the 'event,'" and by obediently doing so, they thoroughly "internalize" the tradition. Brevard S. Childs, *Memory and Tradition in Israel* (Chatham, England: W. & J. MacKay, 1962), 43, 79. See also Clemens Thoma, "Memorial of Salvation: The Celebration of Faith in Judaism," in *The Meaning of the Liturgy*, ed. Angelus A. Häussling, trans. Linda M. Maloney (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1994), 52.

4. See David N. Power, *The Eucharistic Mystery: Revitalizing the Tradition* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1992), 260, 304.

5. Both Saliers and Paul Westermeyer argue that an "instrumental" view of liturgy, i.e., its reduction to a means for exhorting or motivating people to certain ethical ends, is incompatible with the nature of Christian worship as the glorification of God and the sanctification of people. For a view of numerous liturgical theologians' arguments against this instrumental understanding of liturgy, see Paul Westermeyer, "Liturgical Music: *Soli Deo Gloria*," in *Liturgy and the Moral Self*, 193-96.

6. See Bruce T. Morrill, *Anamnesis as Dangerous Memory: Political and Liturgical Theology in Dialogue*, (Collegeville: Pueblo/The Liturgical Press, 2000), 146-205. For another survey of scholarship on the biblical and historical meaning of the term *anamnesis*, see William R. Crockett, *Eucharist: Symbol of Transformation* (New York: Pueblo Publishing, 1989), 21-28.

Christ in the act of gathering in his name. Léon-Dufour's wrestling with terminology indicates both the conceptual challenges inherent to the notion of liturgical anamnesis and the import of such wrestling—namely, an explanation that does justice to the dynamic character of this act of remembering with its demand for, in Bernard Cooke's words, "covenant decision."<sup>9</sup>

### Anamnesis in a Political-Theological Perspective

The liturgical notion of memory has long inspired Johann Baptist Metz's argument for the practical, ethical (and thus, emancipatory and redemptive) implications of embracing the Christian faith as the dangerous memory of Christ's passion, death, and resurrection. Interestingly, for the first two decades of his project Metz did not make explicit in his political theology the relationship of its central category of memory to this liturgical locus.<sup>10</sup> However, as Metz came to focus more intently in the early 1990s on the Jewish-biblical tradition as the crucial source for a genuinely Christian theology of memory, he coined a neologism that captures well the dynamic character of liturgical anamnesis: *Eingedenken*. James Matthew Ashley translates this as "remembrancing," an English gerund that conveys the verbal form Metz intends.<sup>11</sup> As Ashley explains, Metz constructs this word on the basis of the German adverb *eingedenk*, "in remembrance of," the very phrase used in the institution narrative of the Eucharistic Prayer, "Do this in remembrance of me."<sup>12</sup> Metz argues that this cultic action of the Church constitutes the key way in which Christianity has preserved its distinctive form of memory.<sup>13</sup> Christian theology now needs to recognize this intrinsically historical way of

9. See Bernard Cooke, *Sacraments and Sacramentality*, rev. ed. (Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 1983), 160.

10. See Klemens Richter, "Liturgical Reform as the Means for Church Renewal," in *The Meaning of the Liturgy*, 119-20.

11. Johann Baptist Metz, *A Passion for God: The Mystical-Political Dimension of Christianity*, trans. J. Matthew Ashley (New York: Paulist Press, 1998), 181, n. 10.

12. James Matthew Ashley, *Interruptions: Mysticism, Politics and Theology in the Work of Johann Baptist Metz*, (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1998), 161.

13. See Metz, *A Passion for God*, 131. See also "Unity and Diversity: Problems and Prospects for Inculturation," trans. Francis McDonagh, and "Freedom in Solidarity: The Rescue of Reason," trans. John Bowden, in *Faith and the Future: Essays on Theology*,

remembering ("remembrancing") as "the fundamental anamnestic structure of mind and spirit" or a "remembrance-structure" that Christians can bring to the social, political arena.<sup>14</sup> Metz emphasizes the Jewish origins of this type of remembering, which entails a sense of absence, or the refusal to forget the suffering and dead. He also notes that from its origins the eucharistic act of remembrance was meant to be celebrated in festive expectation of Christ's return, an anticipatory awareness long dormant in much of the First World church.<sup>15</sup>

Metz considers the lack of expectation in a definitive future to be a symptom of a deep malaise in mainstream Christianity. Over the years Metz has argued that to the extent both that Greek philosophical categories have obtained a governing role in Christian theology and that sacramental activity has been isolated from narrative memory and given a ritualistic interpretation, Christianity has failed to take time seriously. Whenever Christians lose the sense of time's urgency (in memories of past suffering and the dead, as well as apocalyptic images of the future), the practice of faith cedes to a religion of timeless myths, hindering the practical-ethical demands of the gospel's message. In post- or late modernity, social (economic and technological) structures foster such a sense of apathetic timelessness. Consideration of Metz's political theological analysis can provide two lines of insight into the ethical and theological dimensions of liturgical anamnesis: (1) timelessness as an ongoing temptation to the praxis of Christian faith, and (2) the specific circumstances of the contemporary social context that challenges a liturgical and ethical (mystical and political) praxis of Christian memory.

Metz increasingly finds ours to be a time of "postmodern Godless Christianity," by which he means a Christianity practiced without recourse to the unsettled, and therefore unsettling, history of catastrophe and consolation that comprises the narrative of Judeo-Christian tradition. In place of this bounded history of suffering and salvation, in denial of the contradictions inherent to historical religious awareness, many postmodern Christians have undertaken a new recovery of religious myths, seeking "to

*Solidarity, and Modernity*, eds. Johann Baptist Metz and Jürgen Moltmann (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1995), 63, 77.

14. Metz, *A Passion for God*, 64, 131.

15. *Ibid.*, 85.

16. *Ibid.*, 102.

unlock the potential for consolation that slumbers in myths and fables."<sup>16</sup> Metz judges this temptation to "mythicisism" to be a perduring problem for Christianity since the second century. The recourse to myth (and for the purposes of liturgical theology one could easily add the recourse to a ritualism inordinately opposing the sacred and profane<sup>17</sup>) has its roots in the Gnostic threat of dividing the order of creation from that of redemption. The problem is one of seeking relief from the apocalyptic cry of Judeo-Christian tradition, or as Metz puts it, "What is God waiting for?"<sup>18</sup> In late modernity we experience this cry breaking out when we accompany the sick in their suffering, when we witness recurrent explosions of violence near and far, and when we stagger under the economic burdens of a consumer culture and the images produced by the culture industry. In face of these realities, people are turning more and more to new forms of religious myth and ritual, eclectically mixing and matching them in a manner that has been symbolized by the concept of New Age religion.

Metz is certainly not unsympathetic to the postmodern subject in these throws. He astutely warns, however, that for Christian churches to respond to the newfound and legitimate need for religious ritual on the postmodern principle of pastiche, rather than the narrative-practical character of the faith, renders a grave disservice to people. For the Church to practice its mission effectively (that is, faithfully to tradition), it must assess how humanity and thus the gospel is threatened in the present context. In the "still- or postmodern" world, the religious temptation to myth is actually consistent with and plays into a mythical background that pervades all of society. Metz's ongoing assessment of the predominant social worldview finds it to be one of mythical, unbounded timelessness.

Metz identifies a pervasive form of practical reason that has emerged through two interrelated processes of the Enlightenment: capitalism's principle of exchange and the instrumental reason of technology and science. For all the human benefits the Enlightenment has brought, the problematic feature these two practices of rationality share is the manner in which they effectively render time as an endless and empty continuum. Metz recognizes an "evolutionary" rationality so pervasive in technological and economic systems, and thus influential throughout society, that it

17. See Alexander Schmemmann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, trans. Asheleigh E. Moorhouse (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1986), 183-84. See also, Morrill, *Anamnesis*, 92-100.

18. Metz, *A Passion for God*, 84.

constitutes an interpretation of reality and the world itself. This evolutionary logic amounts to an operational worldview that qualifies the way in which Western subjects perceive themselves in relation to nature, history (time), fellow humans, themselves and, therefore, the way in which they can or cannot (do or do not) receive and live the message of Christianity.

Based as it is on technical or instrumental or calculating rationality, this evolutionary worldview is one in which whatever or whomever is encountered can be reduced to the status of an object submissive to some form of scientific analysis or explanation. The purpose of this sort of reasoning is to make the object useful for some precise, technical end. The world, both natural and historical (societal), comes to be perceived as the sum-total of scientific, that is, technological and economic problems to be solved. Modern humanity exists as those taking part in an ongoing and total domination of nature. Therein lies the evolutionary logic of technological, capitalist society: Humanity's ability to master discrete "problems" is presumed along with the expectation that each successful technical solution inevitably (and unquestionably) contributes to further progress. To the extent that Western society neglects to ask what greater end is being achieved by technical rationality, this logic of evolution amounts to "a new form of metaphysics" or "a quasi-religious symbol of scientific knowledge."<sup>19</sup>

In Metz's judgment, the power of this largely tacit evolutionary worldview has proven to have negative consequences for society and its subjects. Far from generating the sort of optimistic view of history and nature that characterized the nineteenth century, the present valorization of technical reason has produced deep measures of fatalism and apathy. People find themselves part of an anonymous, inevitable, timeless technological and economic process: "There is a cult today of the makeable—everything can be made. There is also a new cult of fate—everything can be replaced.... This understanding of reality excludes all expectation and therefore produces that fatalism that eats away [the

19. Johann Baptist Metz, *Faith in History and Society: Toward a Practical Fundamental Theology*, trans. David Smith (New York: The Seabury Press, 1980), 171, 176. Here the influence of Horkheimer and Adorno's argument that Enlightenment has proven itself to be mythological is evident in Metz's thought. See Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming (New York: Seabury, 1972), 9, 12.

person's] soul."<sup>20</sup> The need to conform in these systems, so as to be personally successful in them, depletes people's imaginations, inhibits dreams for the future, and ultimately threatens the loss of their subjectivity and freedom. The ethos of control and technical manipulation has depleted people's openness to mystery and marginalized whatever or whomever does not succumb to the solution of calculating reason or its attendant socio-cultural conventions. In its now nearly universal economic form, the exchange mentality inherent to market capitalism integrally influences not only political institutions but also "reaches the foundations of our spiritual life," to the effect that "everything now appears to be exchangeable, and interchangeable, even interpersonal relationships and life commitments."<sup>21</sup> The strains upon interpersonal and social relations overlap. Frustrations, especially economic hardships, in the face of the inadmissible limits of the instrumental reason of technology, the market, and political bureaucracies give rise at times to hateful fanaticism, for which Auschwitz stands as the haunting witness.<sup>22</sup>

To arrive at such a powerful symbol of modernity's disastrous turn in the twentieth century is to arrive with Metz at an awareness of the genuine danger that characterizes the condition of so much of our world. Metz is not unaware of various social and political movements that have emerged over the past few decades identifying the damage and threats that technological and economic processes have leveled on developing nations, on our cities, and on the environment. Anonymous progress is interrupted when people question just *whose* progress it is and at what cost to the freedom of *other* human subjects. Far from being a cause for disinterest, let alone opposition, for Christians, these movements alert believers to the call of the gospel all around them: "Danger and being in danger permeate every New Testament statement."<sup>23</sup> What Christians bring to social-political processes is a form of rationality that challenges and interrupts

20. Metz, *Faith in History and Society*, 170. Elsewhere, Metz discusses how Nietzsche's philosophy exposed this mythical totality that tacitly pervades modernity. See *A Passion for God*, 78-81, 172-73.

21. Metz, *A Passion for God*, 166.

22. See *Ibid.*, 39; and Johann Baptist Metz, *The Emergent Church: The Future of Christianity in a Postbourgeois World*, trans. Peter Mann (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1981), 17-33.

23. Metz, *A Passion for God*, 48.

instrumental reason's narratives of progress: the dangerous memory of the lost and ruined, which "resists identifying meaning and truth with the victory of what has come into being and continues to exist."<sup>24</sup> Christians are only able to make this social contribution, however, if they celebrate their faith as a remembrancing of the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus, embracing its scandal and hope, and recalling the apocalyptic dimension of biblical eschatology that reveals a God passionately engaged in the bounded time of history.

Metz admits that he finds himself only at the beginnings of understanding the apocalyptic revelation of time,<sup>25</sup> even as it spurs him on to formulate theological conjectures about the practical implications of biblical memory and expectation for those who profess faith in them as the word of God. The turn to the Jewish-biblical roots of Christian doctrine has become one of Metz's primary theological passions, one that would appear to be gradually opening before him the liturgical, historical, and biblical research being marshaled in liturgical theologians' theories of anamnesis. Elsewhere I have argued that Metz's engagement with the philosophies of Ernst Bloch, Walter Benjamin, and the early Frankfurt School provided Metz with crucial insight into the social-ethical urgency of the modern context.<sup>26</sup> In the same way, I find a need on both his part and that of liturgical theologians to seek further philosophical resources that might inform our efforts to face a great challenge to the liturgical and ethical practice of memory: the struggle of both Christianity and wider society to engage time in a way that is redemptive and emancipatory. Edith Wyschogrod's recent work provides analysis both of Western philosophical and Christian theological struggles with questions of time and memory and of the contemporary social and technological context.

### Wyschogrod on the Ethics of Remembering

In *An Ethics of Remembering: History, Heterology, and the Nameless Others*, Wyschogrod defines the historian broadly as anyone with a vocation to speak of the past through narrative and image. This is an intrinsically paradoxical work, the task of eliciting the past from one's situatedness in a present context. The "heterological historian" receives

24. *Ibid.*, 40.

25. *Ibid.*, 47.

26. See Ashley, *Interruptions*, 100-122; see also, Morrill, *Anamnesis*, 26-34.

her call, with its ethical dimension of responsibility, from the voiceless dead others for whom she passionately promises to speak. To make such a promise with its sense of urgency and pressure is to enter into the realm of ethics. Ethics in this case does not concern narrow epistemological questions concerning the criteria of truth and their application, nor does it rely on theories of justice. Ethics is something prior to this "discursive space," pursuing a very different line of inquiry: "Whose truth is being told, to whom, by whom, and to what end?" These questions concern not only history but "bear upon" everyday life in "searing ways."<sup>27</sup> The heterological historian's vocation is thus also directed to a community, working to return to the community some aspect of its past. In the present context, the task is to refigure the community that has been disfigured by what Wyschogrod calls the "cataclysm," a name she purposely chooses for its "cosmological dimensions."<sup>28</sup>

The cataclysm constitutes the first of two governing conditions of the modern context. Wyschogrod defines the cataclysm as the nadir point history reached in the twentieth century, "the void exposed by the event of the mass annihilation of persons within ever more compressed time frames, a void that remains indescribable and yet constitutes the unique moment, the entry of the nihil into time."<sup>29</sup> While by no means the only subject nor even the prolegomenon for every contemporary work, the cataclysm requires that alterity cut into any historical narrative in a manner comparable to (yet different from) Levinas's *il y a*. The second governing condition of the modern context is the emergence of the culture of image and information. Visual and computer technologies have produced media wherein the object has become disconnected from materiality, resulting in a volatilizing of images in a hyperreality that the historian cannot escape and must, therefore, engage negatively from within. While Western thought has, through the ages, found the "unfettered" image threatening, the contemporary "universe of digitality," with its "simulations of the hyperreal," poses an even greater challenge to efforts at evoking the truth

27. Edith Wyschogrod, *An Ethics of Remembering: History, Heterology, and the Nameless Others* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), 4.

28. *Ibid.*, xvi, xiii.

29. *Ibid.*, 14.

of past events.<sup>30</sup> In a culture that presumes that anything can be simulated technologically, in which the distinction between the actual and the imaginary is blurred, it is difficult to communicate the truth about past events and persons (especially those of the cataclysm) and to do so in a way that is not manipulative.<sup>31</sup>

While the volatilizing of images presents new problems for the effort to make predicative and ethical statements about the past, the work of the heterological historian is also plagued by a long lineage of mistaken theories about language and image as *representations* of past realities. Wyschogrod argues that the "commonplace view" that some of our thoughts and communication are representative of certain realities *as they exist independently* of our own perspectives is a conflation of "the major models of memory that have governed Western thought, that of inscription incising upon a surface, and that of a storehouse into which one can reach to fetch up some particular of the past."<sup>32</sup> Such representationalist views fail to take into account the gap or unsurpassable difference between the originating event and later occasions (acts of memory) relating to it. Structuralist and phenomenological philosophers have produced a mounting number of arguments for the untenability of thinking that the past can be "re-presented as if hypostacized in a perceptual 'present.'"<sup>33</sup> Such notions of representation fail to take account of, among other things,

30. Wyschogrod finds this fear of the image epitomized in Hegel. *Ibid.*, 178, 200. Frank Rich describes "fluid turn-of-the-century America" as follows: "Our youth culture is dominated by hip-hop, which has become a means for white kids to reconfigure themselves as black. The god of adult commerce is Martha Stewart, who, like Ralph Lauren before her, instructs us all on how to be old-school white. In a country where obsession with body image is now a transgenerational religion, the metamorphoses promised by plastic surgery outnumber Baskin-Robbins flavors and are nearly as accessible to all. Those who wish to remake themselves in gender, age or biography without invasive surgery, whether for fun, profit or criminality, need merely trot out a new screen name or biography Online, which in its 5.0 upgrade increases the number of possible fictive identities per subscriber from five to 31. Frank Rich, "American Pseudo," *The New York Magazine* (December 12, 1999), 80.

31. A stellar example of Wyschogrod's point here can be found in the struggle by opposing parties to persuade public opinion through video imagery and still photography in the U.S. government's removal of Elian Gonzalez from his Miami relatives for a reunion with his father on April 22, 2000.

32. Wyschogrod, *An Ethics of Remembering*, 174.

33. *Ibid.*, 38.

the constitutive role of language in all acts of cognition. The critiques that Wyschogrod brings to the commonsense view of representation motivate her inquiries into the essential role of narrativity in the exercise of memory. They also press upon us the need to acknowledge the challenge that time's passage poses to the paradoxical effort to attest not only to what happened in past events but also to the affective dimension of those events both for the people originally involved (and now dead) and for those who presently remember them. Wyschogrod's development of a bifurcated theory of time unfolds the mutual and necessary roles of narrative and image in the ethical action of remembering past events on behalf of the dead others.

The commonplace notion of memory as representation and the now pervasive culture of specularity and information (i.e., the rapid passing of words and images detached from material contexts) require the heterological historian to develop a theory of time that will enable her to argue against the former's presumption that a certain replication of a given event provides its meaning once and for all. It also requires the communication of the truth of the past in a way that accommodates specularity's framework, "in which reference is obliterated and images refer only to themselves."<sup>34</sup> These conditions require Wyschogrod (following Kant, James, Nietzsche, and Heidegger) to elaborate a theory of time's "doubleness" or bifurcation, a theory that holds two distinct views of time—time as stretched or flowing and time as punctiform—in a reciprocally challenging relationship. The first view envisions some block of time as a flowing of events through their past, present, and future. This stretched view of time enables speaking about the relative distance of past or future events in relation to each other and the present. It thus provides a structure of discursive or visual narration that replicates the dynamics of that time period as actually experienced. As such the stretched view of time yields answers to the historian's cognitive queries. The other, punctiform, view of time "supplies the framework for the ethical dimension of the historian's work." Whatever the time span between the before and after, "the after reflects a radical alteration in social, political, economic, and other cultural circumstances."<sup>35</sup>

Such an approach to time, with its expectation that the past can provide cognitive information and ethical implications for our present

34. Ibid., 147.

35. Ibid., 148.

lives, takes time with utmost seriousness. It invests time with a crucial, irreducible role in the quest for human freedom and redemption. Wyschogrod's cognitively and ethically productive view of time correlates with Metz's theological articulation of Christian faith as a praxis of memory, narrative, and solidarity engaged in the real history of suffering humanity—a position he offers as a corrective to modern (e.g., Rahner's) theological anthropology, which tends to think in terms of the historicity of the abstract human subject.<sup>36</sup> Like Metz, Wyschogrod also recognizes an inclination toward timelessness in Christian theology. She recognizes in Christian neo-Platonism a view of "immobilized time, a static and changeless present or eternity as contrasted with the change, coming into being and passing away of time."<sup>37</sup> For Augustine, time is unreal. In the *Confessions* (XI, 13-15) eternity constitutes a presence that overcomes time's passing, a continuously moving now in which any present moment ceases to exist in its giving way to past and future. With the present instant thus defying conceptualization, time cannot be punctiform. Yet for Augustine, to think about time *before* creation, to think about what God was doing before that event, is "mind shattering."<sup>38</sup> Wyschogrod argues that creation thus constitutes an epochal *moment* for Augustine. It is this recognition of time as punctiform, with moments after which affairs can never be the same, that is so important to an ethics of remembering.

In the contemporary context, the culture of virtuality generates its own tendency not to consider time real and thus not to perceive the persons and events of the past as exerting ethical pressure on the present. The current immobilizing of time is brought about by the fragmenting of the world into the virtuality of volitalized images that, in turn, are volitalized into information. Perhaps the sensationalism that makes for a "grabbing" photo in the news industry, or the anachronistic manipulation of historic persons and images by the advertising industry, or the colloquial notion of the "sound bite" can help us grasp Wyschogrod's point here. In the face of this marginalizing of the stretched view of time, Wyschogrod proffers a significant thesis: "I want to argue that from the standpoint of time's continuity, the question is not one of the reality or unreality of the past but rather of its hyperreality. The past is always already hyperreal,

36. See Metz, *Faith in History and Society*, 200.

37. Wyschogrod, *An Ethics of Remembering*, 152.

38. Ibid., 153.

volatilized, awaiting only the technological instantiation it has now received."<sup>39</sup> Whereas the spatial world is comprised of material objects positively available to grasp, the only way one can grasp the past is by way of negation. To assert that something *was* is an "unsurpassable negation that breaks into the materiality of the world and volatilizes it." The past can only return to us as word and image, "through its volatilization in images."<sup>40</sup>

The problem remains as to how the historian decides which images to choose and, moreover, how to relate them to each other and to the ethical context of the present. Wyschogrod continues to exploit the stretched view of time, turning to Heidegger's theory of the future as the primordial mode of time, of human existence as an ongoing reach toward Dasein's non-being, that is, of life as anticipation of the non-being of death. The future's distinguishing feature is its relation to possibility, in that the future is anticipated as an annihilation of possibilities. Wyschogrod points out that the past is governed by this structure of futurity also. A past event exhibits possibilities for its future that it saw *then* but which now are annihilated. What the historian does is to narrate both that which did occur as well as any number of scenarios of what could possibly have happened but did not occur. "If the past is to be retrieved, the not of that which can never be made present, the past's ungroundedness, its hyperreality, the field of images of that which could have but did not occur are intrinsic to that which is to be recovered."<sup>41</sup> Moreover, a further negation delimits the historian's interpretative presentation of the past. She is bound by the negative grounding of any historical narrative, namely, the assertion of what could *never* have been the case. This movement within the flow of time provides a "thick description" of the historical images in a narrative, resulting not in any absolute truth about the past but, still, a "kind of certainty" with which the historian can testify on behalf of the dead.

In addition to this cognitive yield from the stretched view of time, the punctiform view helps to establish the ethical significance of the passage of time, as found in an alteration of social, economic, political, and cultural forces. Matters of value are generated by a "moment" after which things

39. Ibid., 166.

40. Ibid.

41. Ibid., 167.

must be considered differently. The change may be sudden or gradual, but the historian's task is to assert that at some point "a new state of affairs has come about."<sup>42</sup> A contemporary example is captured in the phrase "after Hitler." We can note that, in a similar fashion, Metz argues for the changed state of the Church's mission and, thus, theology "after Auschwitz."<sup>43</sup>

The conclusions Wyschogrod draws from this dual engagement with time for the ethical vocation of the historian take on their own theological tone. Following Benjamin, she describes this vocation as messianic. Each generation must take up the responsibility of responding to the claim that previous generations have on it. Prior to writing narrative, the heterological historian considers the before and after that establishes the ethical space of her enterprise. She also needs the narrativity of flow (past, present, future) in order to know the contexts of utterances, the particularities of subjects, the relations within and among images, and so on. Thus able to assert in indicative language the importance of an historical event, the heterological historian does so reflexively, personally attesting to the truth she puts forth.

### Liturgy and Ethics: Pursuing the Remembrance-Structure of Christian Faith

Wyschogrod's profound philosophy of memory, which I have only been able to sketch here, offers theoretical contributions to any theology that defines (and thereby must serve) Christian faith as a *praxis* of mysticism and ethics. In my estimation, such an understanding of the theological enterprise includes not only political but also liturgical theology. Her open definition of the heterological historian lends her philosophical investigation and conclusions to the Christian theologian who, with the fractured image and narrative of the crucified yet risen Jesus at the center of faith, knows well that any effort at an intellectual articulation of that faith is characterized by only a "kind of certainty." While the proclamation of faith bears truth from which believers should never demur, that truth is known only in the often perplexing and even tragic bodily and historical realities of the human condition. That is, however, only to state in a

42. Ibid., 169. Wyschogrod notes Kierkegaard's theological concept of the momentous, the point at which eternity breaks into time as a person recognized as Jesus the Christ, altering the believer's view of life.

43. Metz, *A Passion for God*, 55-56, 121-32.



complex way what Saint Paul put so directly: Gospel faith is lived and known (i.e., practiced) only in hope.<sup>44</sup> Moreover, the history of suffering is not the only contributor to the reserved certainty with which Christians live the truth they profess in faith. In addition to the fissured certainty with which Christian truth is known in ethical and political practice is the apophatic reserve intrinsic to all Christian practices of mysticism, liturgy, and prayer. The trinitarian God of biblical faith reveals Godself *as* truth and *in* truth, and yet certainty of our knowledge of this God is circumscribed not only by the human limits to our apprehending the divine mystery but also by the perplexing revelation of the biblical God down through the history of suffering to this very day. The dialectical praxis of faith through mysticism and ethics gives rise, as Metz so poignantly argues, to the apocalyptic cry, "What is God waiting for?"<sup>45</sup>

Wyschogrod's demonstration of the necessity of not only image but also narrative for responsible ethical remembering in this age of specularity indicates both the redemptive and the emancipatory importance of Christians fully and actively participating in the liturgy's anamnestic enactment of the mystery of faith. Wyschogrod's analysis of the culture of specularity and information, with its volatilizing of images in hyperreality, indicates both a danger and an opportunity for those who seek to testify to the truth of the past and the lives of the dead. The danger lies in a diminishing of the value of people and events in the ever more rapid blur of passing images. The opportunity, however, lies in Wyschogrod's insight that the only way the past can return in the present is in the hyperreality that the past inherently is. Untethered to the spatial world of material objects, the recovery of the past requires the volatilization of those past persons and events in word and image. When believers liturgically remember the kenotic character of Christ's person and mission, they articulate not only what did happen to Jesus (his missionary decisions and actions resulting in his rejection and execution) but also the possibility that his story and future might have gone otherwise. This is articulated in the biblical and liturgical language and imagery of the Son of God emptying himself by taking on the human condition and suffering a tortured death for the sake of the many. This narrative (found, for example, in the Philippians hymn and eucharistic prayers, ancient and modern) indicates that the Son might not have done this at all and, thus,

44. See Rom 8:22-25.

45. Metz, *A Passion for God*, 71.

that his choice was made in both freedom and generous love. Liturgical acts of anamnesis present anew the profundity of what Jesus decided and did, and thus, who he was and is. Thus does participation in the Church's rituals of remembrancing have an impact upon the mind and affect of believers, inspiring them to follow in service to a broken world the Christ they encounter liturgically in word and sacrament.

Reflecting in this way on the liturgical action of remembering is in no way meant to imply that the anamnestic enactment of the paschal mystery can be reduced to and thereby fully explained in terms of the human processes of memory. *How* Christ is made present in anamnestic (and, one must add at least parenthetically, epicletic) action is a dual question concerning not only the human means and capacity for remembering but also the divine initiative and grace that make the liturgical event an epiphany of God's reign, a moment of redemption. David Power draws an important lesson from what he convincingly argues is Thomas Aquinas's dialectical understanding of the relationship between the causing and signifying that occur in the sacramental action.

Beyond the capacity to signify by use of the proper matter and form, to be causes of grace the sacraments of the New Law have to be endowed in act with a power that gives rise to an effect that goes beyond their native power to signify. Aquinas refers to this as a *virtus fluens*, operative only in the moment of sacramental action and not attributable to signification as such, even though operative through it. In fact Aquinas never says of sacraments *significando causant*, that is, he does not say that they cause by signifying.<sup>46</sup>

Power recognizes in Edward Schillebeeckx's work a continuation of this view of cause and signifying action as distinct but related. Whereas Aquinas used the categories of sign and instrument within the analogy of being, Schillebeeckx was able to employ the interpersonal and symbolic within the more helpful analogy of an encounter with God. He did so, nonetheless, in a way that kept in mind the apophatic limits of the human capacity to speak of the presence and action of God that, in the end, defy all analogies and demand the simple affirmation of faith.

Xavier Léon-Dufour has pursued the personal-phenomenological approach to sacramental liturgy in a compelling exegesis of the dominical

46. Power, *The Eucharistic Mystery*, 233-34.

command, "Do this in remembrance of me." While Léon-Dufour recognizes the content of the command as fundamentally linked with the death of Jesus, he points out that the Lord's command is to enact the supper not "in memory of my death" but "in memory of me." As the conclusion to Jesus' words over the bread and cup, "my body...my blood," the command includes the instruction that when celebrating the memorial, his followers' attention "is to be on the presence of a person," on the presence of the one whose life of service unto death is now the source of their lives.<sup>47</sup> Jesus establishes for his followers a new form of his presence that will not only sustain but be formative of them in the period of his absence after his death. The ritual action, through its symbolic imagery of words, objects, and gestures, makes present again the cognitive content and affective power of encountering the one who died once and for all for sinful humanity. Here again, the theological dialectic of sign and cause is evident: The source of eucharistic grace lies in the divine mystery of the human person Jesus, but this divine-human gift of his person is formative of Christ's followers through the human, symbolic media of word and sacrament.

This brief excursus into the dialectic of divine causality and human signification in the sacrament of the Eucharist demonstrates that ongoing philosophical reflection into the human phenomenon of remembering, while leaving in the background the question of how God is present and active in Christian liturgical anamnesis, is not done with any intention of denying or even minimizing the unique faith the Church places in the divine mystery of its central ritual action. The biblical content of Christian faith, however, reveals both the human history of suffering and the unique personhood of every Other as constitutive of this ritual tradition. It is this irreducible role of history in human salvation and the heterological vocation of service to the Other (in imitation of Christ) that situates the practice of faith in the "space" of ethics. Nearly two millennia of Christian practice, however, bears witness to the fact that faith in Christ does not in some magical way, least of all "through" the sacraments, eliminate a person's inclination to recoil from or neglect the face of the suffering Other, despite Christ's teaching that this is the very place we can encounter the Lord whom we seek.<sup>48</sup> Likewise, the temptation to think that we know entirely who the Other is, that we can "write off" that

47. Léon-Dufour, *Sharing the Eucharistic Bread*, 67.

48. See Matt 25:31-46.

person, for example, as merely a homeless person and thus unworthy of a fireman's heroic efforts, betrays what Wyschogrod calls the "category mistake" of thinking that our language directly applies to (or represents) the Other.<sup>49</sup> Here arises the ethical necessity of narrative. Narrative history always fissures such totalizing illusions, such reductions of others to quick images like "homeless." Wyschogrod's argument for the "narrative dimension of truth and value"<sup>50</sup> helps Christian theology bring intellectual support to a faith practiced in mysticism and politics, liturgy and ethics.

These explorations into ethics and remembering, memory and sacrament, help to develop Metz's liturgically inspired insight about the "remembrance-structure" that Christianity can bring to the social processes of late modernity along two lines of inquiry: what this remembrance-structure is, and how Christians can indeed "bring" it to the social arena. In making present the truth or reality of our salvation, liturgical anamnesis demonstrates both the punctiform and stretched views of time. Performance of the Eucharistic Prayer, for example, proclaims a definitive moment in history, the death and resurrection of Jesus, which brought about a whole new way of conceiving God, the human condition, and the status of this world. This image in the moment, however, also needs the fluid sense of time, generated not only in the narrative of the Eucharistic Prayer but in the context of the entire liturgy, including its Service of the Word. The reduction of the narrative dimension in the Mass, wherein for centuries the Liturgy of the Word cyclically touched a narrow scope of Scripture, homiletic preaching was lost, and the Liturgy of the Eucharist was performed silently by a priest who raised host and chalice above the back he offered to the people, cut out the human heart the act of divine worship was meant to sanctify. The meaning and, therefore, the symbolic impact of the eucharistic liturgy depends upon the anamnetic dimension of the proclamation of the Word in the readings and homily, of the assembly's response in the general intercessions, of the interplay of proclamation and response in the Service of the Eucharist. Stripped of any or all of these remembrancing elements, the liturgy loses the very possibility of being an image of the glory of God and salvation of humanity in which the assembled people can take a full, conscious, and active part.<sup>51</sup>

49. Wyschogrod, *An Ethics of Remembering*, 9.

50. *Ibid.*, 32.

51. The latter is a paraphrase of the Second Vatican Council's Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum concilium* no. 14. Space limitations prohibit my elaborating

As each enactment of liturgy, in word and image, reveals God's pleasure in being glorified through the redemption and liberation of people in history, its participants are formed in the remembrance-structure that is integral not only to the celebration of the faith itself but also to the pattern of seeing the world in the light of that faith. That is to say, the remembrance-structure that Metz wants Christians to "bring" to contemporary society is a frame of mind wherein they consider the narratives and images of the lost and dead, of those presently silent and marginalized, to be essential to decisions and actions taken in the economic, political, technological, and educational arenas. With the Service of the Lord's Day functioning as the source and summit of their lives, they find not only the courage and strength but also the desire and aptitude for joining fellow citizens in the ethics of remembering, which opens up a space from which the work for justice can move forth.

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examples from other liturgies of the Church, such as the importance of the anamnestic dimension of the blessing of the waters of baptism.

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## Initiatory Fantasy and White Western Male Identity<sup>1</sup>

Ronald L. Grimes

**W**e associate ritual almost exclusively with tradition. The phrase "initiatory fantasy" makes about as much sense as "raspberry screwdriver" or "purple theory," so examples are necessary.

It's second-century North Africa. A bedraggled, discombobulated pilgrim is being dragged along in the wake of a procession. Suddenly, he finds himself gaping at a goddess. Isis says to him (in a sixteenth-century English rendition of her speech):

Thinke not that amongst so faire and joyfull Ceremonies, and in so good a company, that any person shall abhorre thy ill-favoured and deformed figure [he's an ass], or that any man shall be so hardy as to blame and reprove thy suddaine restoration to humane shape... [after she changes him, he's bare-ass naked]. If I perceive that thou art obedient to my commandement, addict to my religion [Isn't that a wonderful phrase?], and merite my divine grace, know thou, that I will prolong thy daies above the time that the fates have appointed...."<sup>2</sup>

A transforming power sweeps across Lucius. His pointed ears retract, his tail disappears, and his hooves become feet. No longer a braying jackass [like you and me], he is left standing there an embarrassed, stripped-down,

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1. This paper, based on chapter two of *Deeply into the Bone: Re-Inventing Rites of Passage* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), was originally presented in the Ritual Studies Group of the American Academy of Religion, Boston, 1999. It is adapted here with the permission of the Press.

2. Lucius Apuleius, *The Golden Ass: Being the Metamorphoses of Lucius Apuleius*. trans. W. Adlington, Loeb Classical Library Series (London: W. Heinemann [1566] 1958), book 11.