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Baptism and Identity Formation: Convergences in Ritual and Ethical Perspectives A Dialogue

by

Philippe Bordeyne and Bruce T. Morrill, S.J.*

PART I: Bruce Morrill

I. Initiation into the Inevitable Question of Worship and Ethics: A Pastoral Tale

It was a dark and stormy night. Torrents of rain lashed the windows of the ample third-floor parlor in the parish house of Saint Joseph's Church in Greenwich Village, New York City, where the RCIA group was in the midst of the two hour Tuesday evening meeting that, along with the parish's principal Sunday liturgy, comprised their weekly practice from September 1985 to April 1986. At that point in early February, the group's "journey" had reached the juncture pivoting on the Rite of Election, the church's calling each of the six candidates to full initiation in the Roman Catholic Church, to take place at Easter. Discerning the call with each candidate had been the RCIA director Sister Anne, who, in her first year on the pastoral staff, had assembled eight parishioners as sponsors in the program in addition to me, a Jesuit scholastic in graduate studies. The total group, men and women ranging in age from mid-twenties to late sixties, had reached a certain level of familiarity with one another. Friendships had formed to the point of each candidate having a specific sponsor within the larger group. Affinities and dissonances among personalities, as one might expect, had also emerged, and these came to unprecedented expression with that night's agenda.

In view of the impending Rite of Election, Sister Anne invited the sponsors and candidates to share what full participation in the life of the Church meant to them. Strong differences of opinion among some of the sponsors, which apparently had

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been festering in their psyches for some time, exploded in an argument over whether the principal—or even the sole—reason for being a Roman Catholic was celebration of the sacred liturgy or, on the contrary, service to the poor and advocacy for social justice. As the content of the two positions became increasingly polarized, the rhetoric reached heightened polemics, barely avoiding ad hominem attacks. One of the men insisting on the exclusive priority of the Church's sacramental rituals came to invoke the story of Martha and Mary from the Gospel of Luke. His recollection of the text bore certain embellishments, including his putting in Jesus' mouth an explicit identification of Mary's sitting at his feet with a life of prayer and worship as the singular mission of the Church in its members. A passionate opponent then enlisted her own memory of Luke's story, casting Martha as the paragon of Christian service to those in need—in this case the hungry, as personified by the Jesus who had come to her home for supper. The liturgical proponents howled, others looked perplexed by further interpretations people jumped in to offer, and still others were visibly worried by the display of raw, negative emotions escalating in the argument.

I scrambled to find a copy of the Bible and managed to get a word in edgewise. All agreed, with relief, to my offer to read the actual pericope, which I did. The content of Luke 10:38-42 sounded surprisingly brief in the wake of the runaway debate. The Lord's concluding words, "Mary has chosen the better part," seemed to land unequivocally on the now silent room. The simplicity of the account bespoke the extent to which people had been presenting interpretations of the story as verbatim quotations from the text. I gently observed that such is not unusual and that, furthermore, the hermeneutical process is what keeps any story within a tradition alive: people have to share it, work with it. But that, I pointed out further, was what Luke himself had done in composing his gospel. Primitive eucharistic communities had been hearing and passing on numerous stories of Jesus' words and deeds, some of which each of the four evangelists had eventually selected and placed in a particular order so as to write a compelling, convincing message about Jesus as Lord. And so I turned again to our short passage in question. I noted how the story immediately preceding it is the parable of the Good Samaritan (10:25-37), while the passage directly following Martha and Mary depicts a Jesus at prayer responding to his disciples' request, "Lord, teach us to pray" (11:1). Our enigmatic tale of Martha and Mary, it turned out, Luke had placed at the juncture of two chapters, linking what has become the most recognized parable about service to neighbor, the Good Samaritan, with the most readily recited Christian prayer, the Our Father (11:2-4). Might his having done so, I proposed, not give us a hint that divine worship in prayer and human care in service are not unrelated in the praxis

of Christian faith, that the two are irreducible and indispensible, even if prayer is essential to grounding all life's activities?

II. Liturgy and Ethics in the Theological Academy: The Developing State of the Question

I begin this academic presentation on baptismal liturgy and ethics with this pastoral tale so as to articulate several cautions necessary when venturing into the dangerous territory of liturgy and ethics. That the topic appears dangerous is a good sign. For, as Johann Baptist Metz has taught us, situations fraught with danger rescue the content of the Gospel from banality so that its import for decisions about life, human and Christian—especially when threatened in whatever context—can become a source of rescue itself. That the terrain for worship and ethics is indeed rough has been evident to liturgical and moral theologians now for more than a few decades. In the late 1970s, a Yale-based colloquy between Methodists Paul Ramsey, an ethicist, and Don Saliers, a liturgical theologian, and Catholic moral theologian Margaret Farley proved generative of sustained critical discussion.[1] Drawing upon the burgeoning sub-discipline of character ethics, Saliers claimed a conceptual and intrinsic, rather than merely external and causal, relationship between liturgy and ethics, arguing that prayer and worship over time form believers in deep affections characteristic of biblically inspired Christian tradition.

Saliers' argument resonated with concerns confronting liturgists and ethicists in their respective fields. In the rapidly changing modern environment, including the role of the churches and religious faith therein, liturgical theologians increasingly had to address the problem of liturgy's relevance. By tapping into the arguments of various moral and fundamental-critical theologies, certain liturgical theologians were able to produce apologetics against those who over-identify liturgy with ethics to the point of reducing the latter into the former. This leaves liturgical practice, in whatever inevitably flawed human context, wide open to charges of hypocrisy. On the other hand, across the whole range of Christian communities one can also hear voices insisting that liturgy has nothing to do with ethics, that the act of explicitly, communally worshiping God is the end in itself, and that any question of ethical import cannot but distort liturgy's rightful, singular purpose into an instrument for moral agendas.[2]

Among moral theologians during the same period was developing a contrasting concern to establish an explicitly, properly Christian ethics, as opposed to a practical

[1] See the essays in the *Journal of Religious Ethics* 7.2 (1979) 139-202.

[2] See Paul Westermeyer, "Liturgical Music: *Soli Deo Gloria*," in *Liturgy and the Moral Self: Humanity at Full Stretch before God*, ed. E. Byron Anderson and Bruce T. Morrill (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1998) 193-95.

do-gooder moralism, on the one hand, or a theoretical adoption of the philosophical lineage of Kantian autonomous reasoning, on the other—both of which marginalize the role of divine grace working through human community, agency, and action. Philippe Bordeyne has summarized the problem well: "With hindsight it seems that [nineteenth and twentieth century moral theology's] search for harmony with modernity concluded by masking the very original contribution of Christianity to the moral formation of subjects, especially through catechetical, liturgical, and sacramental practices, or through charitable works."[3] Bordeyne perceives a promising way forward—bridging Protestant and Catholic propensities to center virtues in the ethical quality of the community and the spiritual development of individuals, respectively—in William Spohn's argument for the sacraments as transforming encounters with the risen Christ, for liturgical participation as ongoing "growth in Christ's body that mobilizes faithfulness to the ethical call of Jesus."[4] Spohn reworks the fundamental question in the parable of the Good Samaritan in terms not of identifying one's neighbor but rather of discovering the believer's own identity: Who might I become if I follow Christ, if I go and do likewise? Bordeyne's own proposal for *identity-formation* as the nexus of liturgy and ethics, as we shall see below, aligns with performance theorists' arguments for the subjunctive character of ritual as the key to its function in the development and maintenance of human identity.

Meanwhile, back in the late 1990s, Saliers, in what has proven to be yet another generative, much-cited essay, addressed several substantial issues that had emerged from critiques of his earlier article on liturgy and ethics.[5] Predominant is the question of whether an abstract or purely conceptual notion of liturgy is adequate to the inquiry. Postmodern criticism rejects any appeal to liturgy in the abstract as bearing an unarticulated totalizing agenda about moral character, subject to a particular culturally induced interpretation of Christianity. Similarly, various liberationist theologies are suspicious of any conceptual claims about the ethically formative power of liturgy that do not take into account the operative power relations, and thus ethics, *within* the liturgy as practiced in a particular socio-historical and ecclesial context. While accepting these corrections, Saliers likewise insists that Christian liturgical traditions bear the disposition and means of self-critique. I would characterize this as the prophetic vein coursing through the living body of biblically based tradition and practice. Such criticism is directed to both Christians and

[3] Philippe Bordeyne, "The Ethical Horizon of Liturgy," in *Sacraments: Revelation of the Humanity of God*, ed. Philippe Bordeyne and Bruce T. Morrill (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2008) 121.

[4] Ibid., 125. See William C. Spohn, *Go and Do Likewise: Jesus and Ethics* (New York: Continuum, 2000).

[5] See Don E. Saliers, "Afterword: Liturgy and Ethics Revisited," in *Liturgy and the Moral Self*, ed. E. Byron Anderson and Bruce T. Morrill, 209-24.

their institutions—including their liturgical practices—and the wider culture in which they participate. The tension between normative liturgically based claims and ethical examination (both individual and corporate) is inherent to ritualization within any social body, a tension between the personally and socially cohering function of ritual and the probing desire for personal integrity and mutual accountability. That this is the case for Christian baptism is evident not only from my pastoral vignette above, but in the history of Christianity from the start.

A final and salutary caution from Saliers concerns the self-deluding error of any scholar attending exclusively to liturgical *texts* as if their content could convey what historically (either in the past or present) a given ritual might actually entail and affect among its participants—and even beyond them. Working with and through the resources of historical and social-scientific scholarship is obligatory when enlisting liturgical evidence from the past. Turning to the contemporary context, this drive beyond the text opens into consideration of "how mass media, social rituals [of sports events, the arts, entertainment, and the workplace], and 'lifestyle' options imaged in a consumerist society are far more powerfully formative of habit, perception, and moral character than are religious practices found in Christian liturgy."[6] To this one can only respond, "Amen!" I would, nonetheless, add the further observation that Christianity has always functioned symbolically and ritually in concert—and at times in conflicting tension—with a given host culture (noting in the case of colonialism the domination of the conquering culture), such that individual and communal Christian identity has been and continues to be forged in the matrix of a wider culture and a particular church as a subculture therein. Thus, clear-eyed recognition of the extent to which contemporary Christian identity and practice is affected by the images and habits generated by our telecommunicating, consumerist, militarized, globalized yet often nationalistic contexts is essential to avoiding any liturgical-textual positivism, that is, any notion that a rite such as baptism could singularly, unequivocally govern the thoughts, imaginations, and actions of any and every Christian participating in it. I say "Amen" to that.

III. Conversion–Initiation: Baptismal Symbols Constantly Reorienting Christian Lives

But I also say, with the sage Qoheleth (Eccl 1:9b): "There is nothing new under the sun." For, more than ever, historical, literary, anthropological, and archeological scholarship is helping us appreciate the extent to which the small and shaky venture of nascent Christianity was characterized by a search for communal and individual identity that had to be negotiated amidst the predominant social and

[6] Ibid., 216.

cultural forces of the late-antique Mediterranean world. The very content of the New Testament abounds with evidence that the first generations of Christians were people who needed a great deal of explanation and exhortation about who they were and what they were supposed to be about in their lives.[7] The Pauline and other apostolic letters, as well as the four gospels, betray a range of ways in which the enigmatic belief in the crucified Jesus of Nazareth as risen Lord lent itself to notions of glory—an overly-realized eschatology—or ambivalence or indifference toward society and neighbor and even fellow Christian that easily strayed down well-worn human paths of conventional virtue and vice or bounded off in uncharted territories of charismatic enthusiasm.

It is to those texts that became the New Testament that contemporary believers, such as that RCIA group in New York some years ago, turn for authoritative answers at the origins of the faith. And yet, even as their memories and imaginations are amply impressed with outlines of such stories as Luke's Martha and Mary, the danger is always that their recall might be the pursuit of a pristine, primordial moment when all was clear, everyone sincere, the Christian content of faith and morals unadulterated by the messiness of psyches and bodies—natural and social. A fresh return to the normative narrative such as that of Martha and Mary, rather, models a life of faith in the company of the church that must always question, in the presence of Jesus, what life with him is all about: Once graced with the presence of the Lord Jesus at our house, what are we supposed to do?

"Brothers, what should we do?" In Luke's Acts of the Apostles (2:37), this is the people's response to Peter's proclamation of the executed Jesus as exalted Lord. The answer: Get baptized. But that does not settle matters, does not finish the question about one's life in front of the disturbingly attractive message about Jesus. No, baptism does not settle things; rather, it *frames* them. By the time of Luke's writing, baptism, however varied in the details of its execution from place to place, functioned as a primary ritual and, thus, symbol of the Christian body, what social scientists Adam Seligman and associates call a "shared convention that indexes a shared world."[8] Indeed, the details in Peter's answer include the basic elements of baptism found across the New Testament: "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). Receiving the gospel

[7] I am indebted to Gordon Lathrop for stimulating and encouraging my thought along these lines by his sharing ideas from his *The Four Gospels on Sunday: The New Testament and the Reform of Christian Worship* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012).

[8] Adam B. Seligman, Robert P. Weller, Michael J. Puett, and Bennett Simon, *Ritual and Its Consequences: An Essay on the Limits of Sincerity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008) 105. Hereafter, in the body of my text, I shall refer to the authors of this book simply as "Seligman."

message, forgiveness of sin, invocation of Christ, immersion in water, infusion of the Holy Spirit—these comprise the complex of activities, variably realized in different contexts—that James D. G. Dunn has astutely argued the New Testament authors, reflecting conventional language of the earliest communities, render altogether as "baptism."[9]

The word baptism functions as what Dunn calls a "concertina" term, comprehensively symbolizing the entire process of "conversion–initiation." Dunn proposed the concept of "conversion–initiation" as a corrective to the mutually exclusive positions of twentieth-century New Testament scholars who, driven by their own theological ideologies, had been manipulating the textual details of the canonical corpus to prove that primordial Christianity was either a matter only of sincere personal conversion, for which various ritual symbols were mere, even expendable expressions, or, alternatively, of submitting to the metaphysically effective ritual as the sole referent of the sacrament. Dunn's hyphenated joining of the two terms asserts that neither conversion nor initiation were (or, thus, now are) expendable for Christians, that the ritual gestures that become the repertoire of symbols for Christian identity function, to employ Seligman's more recent terminology, in the subjunctive mode, creating and sustaining "an order that is self-consciously distinct from other possible social worlds."[10]

Returning one more time to Acts 2, we find Peter contrasting the call of Christ to the social order of the day, which he characterizes as "this corrupt generation" (v. 40). The power in Luke's story at this point resides in the extent of its explicit articulation of the consequences of undergoing the ritual action of baptism, a reminder to Christian readers of how that by-then conventional Christian symbolic activity, which by nature of its physicality and repetition would function in ways open to or even at times devoid of any number of meanings, is meant to frame a sincere, that is to say reflexive, way of life. And, indeed, the pericope concludes by describing a ritual pattern to which the first believers were devoted: the apostle's teaching and fellowship, the breaking of the bread, and prayers (2:43). The description is elaborated in the chapter's remaining passage, describing sincere social and interpersonal ethical behavior (e.g., the sharing of possessions and goods in common) ritually framed with practices sustaining the moral character (and reputation) of the body: "Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people" (2:46-47a).

[9] See James D. G. Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit: A Reexamination of the New Testament Teaching on the Gift of the Spirit in Relation to Pentecostalism Today* (London: SCM Press, 1970).

[10] Seligman et al., *Ritual and Its Consequences,* 20.

An alternate and probably more accurate rendering of the Greek the New Revised Standard Version translates as breaking bread "at home" would be "from house to house," better capturing the extent to which early Christianity took shape through social experimentation framed within the standard ritual patterns of the Hellenistic meal gathering. The evening meals' typical features of reclining several hours over food and drink partaken according to a set order and allowing for conversation, a ceremonial libation ushering in a symposium period of discourse and/or entertainment, and the presence of a variety of marginal personages served altogether to express and consolidate the values of community (*koinonia*), equality and friendship (*isonomia* and *philia*), and grace/generosity/beauty (*charis*) expressed as utopian socio-political values.[11] These dynamics are what Seligman means by the subjunctive character of ritual, how ritual patterns create an experience *as if* the world were so. Repeated ritual enactment shapes or frames the identity of its participants so that, in this case, they become conditioned to acting *like* a Christian.

The extent to which the meals, as well as the ritual enactment of baptismal symbols, affected the apostolic leaders' desired sincerity among the members and thus the genuineness of the community was, of course, always a mixed result, necessitating the ongoing dynamic tension of ritual and ethics (and, indeed, the ethical in ritual activity). Clearly, Luke presents at the outset of his Acts of the Apostles the ideal performance of Christian identity as a social body and in its members. The letters by and attributed to Paul, on the other hand, as well as the pastoral letters and even the gospels, attest to the Christian communities' needs for explanation and exhortation to correlate their attitudes and daily behavior with the rituals they perform. In Galatians, as Paul labors to explain the new identities of the members of the Christian community, he turns to baptism and the imagery of taking on a new garment—Christ himself—to whom they now belong, making them all heirs of Abraham, regardless of ethnicity, free/slave status, or gender (Gal 3:27-28). He arrives at a similar (subjunctive) leveling of statuses by referring the Corinthians back to their baptism "in the one Spirit" to explain how they *should* consider themselves "one body" (1 Cor 12:13), respecting and exercising their various yet mutual gifts accordingly in service to the benefit of all. My point here (without any pretention to an exhaustive list or study) is that Paul enlists baptismal symbols to teach believers what their attitudes and actions should be like. Likewise, at the outset of 2 Corinthians, Paul asserts both his authority and sincerity

[11] Hal Taussig, *In the Beginning Was the Meal: Social Experimentation & Early Christian Identity* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009) 26-27. For these points Taussig draws upon Matthias Klinghardt, *Gemeinschaft und Mahlgemeinschaft: Soziologie and Liturgie Frühchristlicher Mahlfeiern* (Tübingen: Francke, 1996).

by having the community recall with him their baptismal identity: "But it is God who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us, by putting his seal on us and giving us his Spirit in our hearts as a first installment" (2 Cor 1:21-22). That last explanation of the baptismal Spirit-gift, however, points to the ambiguous eschatological tension in which Paul (and the rest of the New Testament) perceive Christians—and indeed, the whole creation—to be living.

True to all human ritual, baptism negotiates ambiguity without completely resolving it, as would, in contrast, a discursive explanation. Indeed, the ambiguity that haunts all boundaries in life—physical, social, traditional—is, as Seligman asserts, the very reason for ritualizing.[12] Ritual is the way we humans hold the many irresolvable ambivalences of life in a *both–and* tension that orients and, with repetition, reorients a person's identity and agency amidst the ambiguities of social relations and the individual life-cycle—with death looming large over it all. Paul's most extensive commentary on baptism, Romans 6:1-14, bespeaks the ambiguous, permanent liminality (an oxymoron) into which a Christian is initiated for the duration of one's earthly life.

What occasions Paul's treatment of baptism in Romans is his need to deal with the ambiguity in the Christian message as discussed in the letter's preceding chapter 5, namely, the seeming conclusion that if God meets humanity's increasing sinfulness with a greater abundance of grace in Christ, then Christians can "continue in sin in order that grace may abound" (Rom 6:1). In support of his emphatic denial of that view, Paul turns first to baptism:

> Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. (Rom 6:3-5)

On the basis of the inextricable connection between the one and the many—within the corporate or inclusive person of Christ[13]—Paul can say that we have died with Christ (Rom 6:8a). Just as Christ's once-for-all death and resurrection was in history and yet also was eschatological, so the individual believer becomes part of the eschatological dominion of Christ by his or her decision to become subject to

[12] Seligman et al., *Ritual and Its Consequences,* 41-47.

[13] See Robert Tannehill, *Dying and Rising in Christ* (Berlin: Verlag Alfred Topelmann, 1966) 20-30.

Christ in baptism.[14] The fundamental decision of dying to sin was made by Christ (Rom 6:10). The believer participates in the decision of that inclusive person now claimed as Lord.

The decision that has happened *to* humanity is the death and resurrection of Christ. The definitive character of that event as already past Paul indicates in Romans 6:4 by using the aorist tense of the verb—"we have been buried with him"—in describing each believers' baptism as death in the completed past. Christ alone, however, has experienced the completeness of physical death and the totality of the resurrection. In verse 5, Paul places union with the resurrected Christ in the future tense. Dunn notes the striking fact that Paul does not link baptism with the idea of resurrection, even though the actual ritual would lend itself well to that.[15] Similarly, Günther Bornkamm explains that the sense of verse 4 is not mystical initiation; rather, Paul is stressing the future character of the believer's resurrection as already present by conducting one's life as a person freed from sin.[16] Paul's use of the perfect tense in verse 5—"we have been united with him in a death like his"—indicates action continuing into the present. Paul has established a tension between the degrees to which one can identify with Christ's death and resurrection, and out of this tension arises Christian ethics and conduct, which Paul develops in the next three chapters of Romans. Baptism is the decisive event in a Christian's past that made it possible for him or her to "walk" (the subjunctive in verse 4), that is, to act morally under the inclusive lordship of Christ toward the future glory of the resurrection.

My point in this exegesis of Romans 6 is to highlight how even in bringing what Seligman would call the non-discursive, performative ritual practice of baptism into discursive explanation, even to the point of fixing the meaning of the water ritual as the indicative manifestation of one's union with Christ's death, Paul's understanding of baptism nonetheless frames a still ambiguous existence for Christians. As Dunn states, "The whole of life for the believer is suspended between Christ's death and Christ's resurrection. . . . The very dying of believers is a lifelong process."[17] This liminal state of Christian life, one might add, John likewise depicts through the ambivalent, boundary-bending image of being reborn or born from above, "born of water and Spirit" (John 3:3, 5), the very things that later in John's narrative flow from Christ's side in death and from his breath in resurrection. The First Letter of John spells out the implications for those who have

[14] See Günther Bornkamm, *Early Christian Experience* (London: SCM Press, 1969) 75-76; and Tannehill, *Dying and Rising in Christ,* 73.

[15] See Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit,* 143.

[16] See Bornkamm, *Early Christian Experience,* 74.

[17] James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1–8* (Dallas: Word, 1988) 331.

been born from above: to say one loves God while showing contempt for neighbor, whether in word or deed, is to walk (i.e., ethically act) blindly in darkness (1 John 4:11). We note, here again, that John's exhortation comes to those already baptized. Baptism frames Christian identity and action in the way, truth, and life of Christ, but this as a project fraught with ambiguous tensions ("No one has ever seen God, but if we love one another"—1 John 4:12), requiring constant recourse to word and sacrament. Likewise, in returning to Paul, we learn that the "death" the new Christian experiences in baptism is the beginning of an ongoing process of "dying" that is the vocation of the Christian life. This "dying" is only salvific (life-giving) because it is inextricably linked with the resurrection which Christ, the source of life, himself alone now fully lives, yet shares with believers through his Spirit "as a first installment" (2 Cor 1:22). Ritually, communally shared knowledge of this future destiny assured in the risen Christ draws believers' lives forward on a course characterized by words and deeds, both ethical and ritual, revelatory of his redeeming power.

Christians need constant symbolic, ritual contact with both poles—the ethical and the ritual/symbolic—of this dialectic we liturgically identify as the paschal mystery. The regular, weekly way (from scripture and earliest, continuous tradition) this happens is through celebration of the eucharist. So we can note how Paul's method for correcting the Corinthians' ethically deficient parody of the Lord's supper was by handing on the tradition (1 Cor 11:23) that identified the bread and cup as a proclamation of the Lord's death until he comes (11:26). Moreover, the church year also provides the annual experience for the entire community to participate in and reflect upon the ritual and symbols of baptism at Easter, especially if there are adults or children to be baptized at the vigil, as well as to participate in occasions of baptism for infants whenever these might be held in the community. Still, the timing and consistency of these practices within and across churches and ecclesial communions in the contexts of late modernity pose distinctive challenges and opportunities for baptismal identity-formation today.

PART II : Philippe Bordeyne

I. Fundamental Agreement with the Propositions Offered in Part I

There are three major trajectories in what Bruce Morrill has presented with which I unreservedly concur:

(1) The links between ethics and liturgy go back to an irreducible and fruitful tension that runs through the whole of Christian history. "What should we do?" is a question the disciples of Jesus can answer with neither purely ritual nor purely

ethical responses. Far from suppressing ethical questioning, liturgical experience makes it all the more acute, and Christian worship awakens the innate human call to do good while never providing ready-made solutions.

(2) This tension means that we are obliged to face the question of inserting Christianity in its cultural contexts, where it finds itself in competition with non-religious rituals often more influential than Christian rituals on ethical behavior, as Don Saliers has asserted.

(3) There is really nothing new in such competition. Biblical exegesis and socio-historical studies of early Christianity, as with multidisciplinary analyses of the impact of ritual practice on human behavior (Seligman), enables us to affirm the influence—limited but not insignificant—of Christian practices on believers immersed in their complex cultural environments. Today, as in the past, Christianity creates itself anew, inventing a range of original community practices, including liturgical celebrations. The latter function in the subjunctive mode ("the subjunctive character of ritual"), opening up new ways of being. Given the constitutive ambiguity of these Christian experiences, the apostolic and patristic tradition carefully worked from within baptismal symbolism to make the most of this tension between ethics and liturgy. It is in these terms that we should understand Paul's recourse to the baptismal symbolism of dying to sin in order to stimulate moral life (Rom 6:4).[18] Contemporary reflection on the links between ethics and liturgy belong to this living tradition.

II. Application in the Context of Catechesis in France

However, despite the continuity that definitely exists between the past and present, we should not underestimate what is new in ultra-modernism for Christianity today. It is not only that Christianity has to confront different cultural models, but rather it is facing a generalized crisis that affects all forms of transmission, the collapse of the systems of legitimization and the weakening of all the institutions that are supposed to form people: school, the state, institutional religions, the community network.

However, even in this context the fundamental lines of French catechesis have not abandoned the formational tool that is offered by Christian initiation. In fact, quite the opposite: they have tried to elevate it to the status of model for a diversified catechesis for all ages. We should note the appearance of a new expression in the orientations for catechesis issued by the French bishops; never precisely

[18] The liturgy of the paschal vigil has this insistence, where the baptismal liturgy is preceded by the liturgy of the word, during which we hear Romans 6:3b-11 before the proclamation of the resurrection gospel (Matt 28:1-10; Mark 16:1-7; Luke 24:1-12).

defined, this invites Christian communities to ensure that, by means of appropriate initiatives, the *catechizandi* are plunged into a "bath of ecclesial life."[19] What are we to make of this rather enigmatic formula? First and foremost, that Christian initiation is not concerned only with rites, however well fleshed out these may be in multiple celebrations in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults: it also needs an ensemble of references, of stories, of practices, of visions of the world in order to shape and reshape the identity of the disciples of Christ, in dynamic relationship with ethical behavior and its spiritual importance. The French bishops thereby refer, as did the early church communities, to a diversified ensemble of practices which Dunn calls "baptism–conversion." Moreover, the expression "ecclesial bath" echoes the use that Paul makes of baptismal symbolism to express how the Christian must break with his or her former ways of living. It is about offering a taste of new ways of living that are sufficiently attractive to launch the desire to build a new identity, one that is precisely in interaction with these community practices.

Secondly, the call by the French bishops to ensure that there be such a formative ecclesial bath signals the Catholic Church's desire to share in the building of subjective identities in a context where the task facing subjects is thought of as "quest"[20] rather than as inheritance. It means building "a dialogical identity" which is "the result of an interaction between how a person understands his or her role and the validation that he or she receives from others."[21] In such a context, each person has a keen sense of his or her responsibility for two reasons: firstly, because of our condition as beings within history, having to contend with what is "irreversible" and what is "unpredictable";[22] secondly, because we are faced with the multiple consequences of personal action, which, despite always being part of a complex web of interactions, nevertheless remain imputable to "me" as a determined actor.[23]

[19] Conférence des évêques de France, *Texte national pour l'orientation de la catéchèse en France et principes d'organisation* (Paris: Bayard/Cerf/Fleurus-Mame, 2006) 40.

[20] Ibid., 27.

[21] Jean-Louis Souletie, "Catéchèse, initiation chrétienne et formation éthique des sujets: 'le bain de vie ecclésiale,'" in *Les communautés chrétiennes et la formation morale des sujets,* ed. Philippe Bordeyne and Alain Thomasset (Paris: Cerf, 2008) 165.

[22] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition,* 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998). For the concept of "irreversibility," see section 33 ("Irreversibility and the Power to Forgive"), pp. 236-43; and for that of "unpredictability," see section 34 ("Unpredictability and the Promise of Power"), pp. 243-47.

[23] Paul Ricœur, *Oneself as Another,* trans. Kathleen Blamey (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992) 141-46 [published version of the Gifford Lectures, delivered at the University of Edinburgh in 1986 under the title "On Selfhood: The Question of Personal Identity"].

Anchoring any catechetical outreach in the "ecclesial bath" in this way underlines the ecclesial dimension of faith,[24] and at the same time it signals that due attention be paid to the various different ways there are today of linking with the Church: by celebrating the important moments of human existence (birth, marriage, death), by the silent prayer of open churches on the tourist trails, by the renewal in the age-old tradition of pilgrimages,[25] by the happy coming together in small communities of shared life. One might, however, regret the almost exclusive insistence in the text on the "maternal function" of the Church: the "ecclesial bath" is presented as "the nourishing milieu where the experience of faith takes root."[26] It is true that other passages make implicit reference to a more paternal type of ecclesial function, when it concerns "the first proclamation" that "awakens interest and debate."[27] For a community to be truly catechetical, it needs to learn to leave behind maternal security to live "in the dry," out of the bath and away from the community practices, within the complexity of social life. To stretch the baptismal metaphor, the plunge into the baptismal bath is, in fact, brief! Nostalgia for stable traditions is illusory, given how each human person in today's world must affront their solitude, and given how they are called to show new personal capacities. One of the major challenges facing Christian ethics is to mobilize these resources of faith which can enable our contemporaries to traverse this solitude as happily as possible, in faithfulness to Jesus Christ.

III. The Strengths and Limitations of Ritual Repetition as Operator in Shaping Identity

From this point of view, I wonder whether it is correct to consider, as Bruce Morrill seems to do, *repetition* as the principal vector in the shaping of Christian identity through/in the liturgy.

There is, of course, no doubt that the repetitive character of liturgical participation does contribute to working against the fragmentation of time that is imposed by the acceleration of contemporary rhythms. A recent book by the German sociologist Hartmut Rosa (recently translated into English and French) brings into focus the problem of the construction of time in the modern world, which he believes

[24] Jean-Louis Souletie, "Le catéchumenat des adultes, un modele pour la catéchèse," *La Documentation catholique,* no. 2453 (October 3, 2010) 847-49.

[25] Witness the popularity of the *Camino* to Santiago de Compostela for very diverse kinds of people, for some of whom the link with the Church is very tenuous.

[26] *Texte national pour l'orientation de la catéchèse en France et principes d'organisation,* 30-32.

[27] Ibid., 29.

has been too neglected by the social sciences.[28] These have focused on the conditions of production (Marx), the structures of discourse and communication (Foucault, Habermas), and the social processes of recognition (Honneth), but have shown little interest in the social structuring of time in as much as this is a factor of alienation. Yet, Rosa observes, people often express exactly this sense of alienation: "We don't have time for what really matters!" Or comments such as: "When I am really myself I am very different; but that happens only very rarely" (Odon von Horvath).[29] These ordinary experiences show that the construction of subjective identity, which we have seen is an inherent necessity for the modern world, runs into the problem of the social fragmentation of time, which is the source of this alienation. The sacraments of initiation, which stretch throughout the whole of a person's lifetime via participation in the Sunday liturgy, have the potential to resist this—a potential of which we could be taking greater advantage. Religious practice restores a more balanced relationship with time. It demands of people that they regularly dedicate time off for community prayer, and that they allow themselves to be worked by the long, unaccelerated pace of liturgical time.

However, in the social context of Western Europe and diminishing Sunday practice, a person's relationship with Christian worship is more and more elective, and consequently, it has to be said, episodic. This means that the insertion of people into the repetitive character/nature of the liturgy seems to be becoming increasingly problematic. This is both a cultural challenge and a missionary challenge. There are a good number of neophytes who, after being very assiduous throughout their first initiation into the Christian faith, then abandon the life of the Christian community—just like the great numbers of "non-practicing" who only show up at church for the few solemnities that still have a strong appeal: Christmas, Palm Sunday, All Saints.

We find the opposite in regions where religious practice is still firmly anchored in social rhythms, such as certain areas more recently converted to Christianity, and where it is self-evident that the beneficial impact of ritual repetition seems to have little or no effect on ethics. How is it possible to argue for the influence of the liturgy on the ethical formation of subjects when there is such a gaping and regrettable disconnect between, on the one hand, massive and assiduous religious practice, and, on the other hand, such repeated ethical transgressions that we are obliged to recognize a grave absence of any shaping of moral conscience? These

[28] Hartmut Rosa, *Accélération: une critique sociale du temps* (Paris: La Découverte, 2010); English = *Alienation and Acceleration: Towards a Critical Theory of Late-Modern Temporality* (Malmö: NSU Press, 2010). [Original text = *Beschleunigung: Die Veränderung der Zeitstrukturen in der Moderne* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2005).]

[29] Rosa, *Accélération,* 367-68.

contradictions feature as an oft-repeated refrain in laments by the bishops and theologians of Africa. Contradictions like this led the second Synod of Bishops for Africa to speak up for formation in reconciliation, in justice and peace, which is not limited to the immediate preparation for the sacraments of initiation, but flows through all of the life of dioceses.[30] Parallel provisions would be appropriate elsewhere in the world.

IV. The Social Dimension of the Liturgy as the Central Operator of Moral Identity

I would like to offer the hypothesis that the ethical fruitfulness of the liturgy, over and above its irreducible ambiguity, is to be found not so much in the structuring of time through *repetition* (which, as we have just seen, can be quite random), but rather in the celebrating community *serving the link between the believing subject and society* (the community, and through the community, all of humanity). I echo here what Bruce Morrill describes as "the inextricable connection between the one and the many." Drawing on the work of Bernd Wannenwetsch,[31] I would like to give due weight to two additional anthropological characteristics of rituality that explain how liturgical celebrations are a place of bodily and total apprenticeship into ethics, through time and space. There is, of course, first and foremost, *the repetitive character* of the liturgy, which prevents ethics from being locked into precomprehensions and a concept of time which are too human. This is because no one can live through liturgy without being inhabited by the hope that the God of surprises will break through into the banality of time. The second element is the fact that the place of worship anchors subjects in a *spatial and corporal exteriority* which mediates their appropriation of the faith. This corporal anchoring in the cosmos and in social space helps the believer to resist the temptation to construct ethics in a purely rational and subjective way. And there is also a third element: the liturgy offers a *social space of initiation* where the subjects are in permanent apprenticeship. I want to develop this last aspect in particular because it goes to the very heart of the challenge of ethical formation in our highly individualized

[30] "Each bishop must put issues of reconciliation, justice and peace high up on the pastoral agenda of his diocese. He should ensure the establishment of a Justice and Peace Commission at all levels. We should continue to work hard on forming consciences and changing hearts, through effective catechesis at all levels. This must go beyond the 'simple catechism' for children and catechumens preparing for the sacraments. We need to put in place an on-going formation programme for all our faithful, especially those in high positions of authority" ("Message to the People of God of the Second Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops" §19 [October 23, 2009]).

[31] Bernd Wannenwetsch, *Political Worship: Ethics for Christian Citizens* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

societies. This will include some brief comments on certain ecclesiological positions presented by Wannenwetsch.

Wannenwetsch combines the theory of action of Hannah Arendt with the theory of language of Wittgenstein. Borrowing from Arendt, Wannenwetsch sees Christian worship as a shared common action, as "politics" in the original sense the ancient Greeks gave to this word: the action of the people of the New Covenant is made possible by the inaugural event of the action of God in the assembly that he convokes, calls together. Borrowing from Wittgenstein, Wannenwetsch also treats liturgy as a "form of life" and as a "grammar" of the Christian life under the power of the Holy Spirit. However, Wannenwetsch underlines that worship is not spontaneously experienced as "political": to combat the passivity of an assembly who remain mere spectators, the *participation* of all must be promoted; to combat the break up in forms of life and community divisions, *reconciliation* must be promoted; and to combat clericalization, the *ministry* of each must be promoted. These options, despite their suggestive and stimulating character, lead to wiping out what is a structuring difference between the ordained ministry and the other ministries, and to overvalue the influence of worship to the detriment of other aspects of the ecclesial bath. I would like to show how the other ecclesial practices that surround baptism provide a first-class laboratory in which *to put to the test* Wannenwetsch's proposition, a test that demonstrates both its strengths and its limits.

The total participation of the assembly is encouraged by what the RCIA proposes, to the extent that it can call on the non-ordained ministries that are featured by the ritual. Let us take the example of the rite of entry into the catechumenate, where the rite explicitly provides for the catechists or those lay people who are accompanying the candidate(s) not only to make the sign of the cross on the candidates' forehead, but also to sign their other senses.[32] This is a way of showing the contribution made by the different ministries in the verification of the authenticity of the path of conversion on which the candidates are engaged. It also shows how the candidates will continue to need to be strengthened by the sign of love that is the cross of Christ (as the words accompanying the signing say: see *RCIA* 55), already at work in the attentive and considerate action of the community in their regard. The social diversity of the newcomers to the faith, in terms of age, social milieu, and nationality, also manifests in a very concrete way the work of reconciliation that Christ is fulfilling in the community, without effacing their differences. We can see a similar dynamic at work in the celebrations of the baptism of children when families with very different profiles come together to prepare one

[32] *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* (*RCIA*), trans. International Commission on English in the Liturgy (Washington, D.C.: ICEL, 1985). "The signing is carried out by the catechists or the sponsors" (*RCIA* 56).

single celebration, helped by the lay ministers of the baptismal preparation team. All of these community experiences, which go with the celebration of baptism yet are not limited to the ritual moment, operate as founding experiences for ethical life, because through the mediation of quite distinct roles within the Christian community, they allow access to a more universal, a more *fully-reconciled* vision of humanity. The reverse is also true: these celebrations come as "interruptions"[33] to ordinary life for the community as, for example, when baptisms are celebrated during the Sunday mass. In this way, the community is challenged to face up to the perennial temptation to passivity, and is re-launched into a more active participation in shared liturgical action.

In this sense, Christian liturgy, because it involves the mediation of the faithful marked with the sign of the cross of Christ and of the social body of the gathered community, and because it inserts the participants into liturgical space within society and the cosmos, can serve as an introduction—even if the person's participation is merely episodic—to the mystery of the human being as "a social being" (*Gaudium et spes* 12 §4). We should not forget that a good number of adult catechumens ask for baptism after having participated at the baptism of a baby or an adult, or after having attended a mass or marriage celebration. From this point of view, there are fruitful relationships that can be drawn between Vatican II's two conciliar constitutions, *Gaudium et spes* (*GS*) and *Sacrosanctum concilium* (*SC*): in modern-day society, where access to what is social necessarily passes via the individual, "full, conscious and active participation in liturgical celebrations" (*SC* 14) goes hand in hand with the formation of interiority. It is within such interiority that discernment sees beyond even the most intimate of sentiments ("joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties" [*GS* 1]) to perceive that other humanity—to perceive the mystery of the God-given vocation and "noble destiny" of every human being (*GS* 3) that begins with our origin as male and female, that "companionship" which is "the primary form of interpersonal communion" (*GS* 12 §4).

V. The Socializing Effects of Liturgy Need to be Underpinned by Working to "Appropriate" Worship and Other Community Practices

The importance of baptism for the formation of moral identity is effected by an *appropriation* of liturgical and community practices which surround the Christian initiation of adults and the baptism of children. I am borrowing the term "appropriation" from Dominique Barnerias, a young French theologian. In a study of the

[33] Wannenwetsch, *Political Worship,* 130. See also Lieven Boeve, "The Sacramental Interruption of Rituals of Life," *Heythrop Journal,* 44.4 (2003) 401-17.

renewal of parishes, he shows how the dynamic of diocesan synods has opened the way to the baptized no longer being content "to benefit from parish services or to take part in celebrations": they now consider "the parish is 'their parish,' that they are its members and have responsibility for it. They have a duty to make it live and so it is something which they value as belonging to them, as well as feeling that they belong to it."[34] This process flows both from a sociological transformation and from a spiritual commitment by which the relationship with the Church is interiorized. Barnerias draws on the work of Marcel Légaut, a great spiritual writer of the twentieth century, who saw appropriation as that essential activity by which the human being builds his or her personal identity by welcoming "what is presented to him from without and comes from his origins," and then reworking this in an absolutely unique way.[35]

From this point of view, we should not be scandalized when parents who are presenting a child for baptism invest the ceremony and all that surrounds it in an original way. This is not to say that all such initiatives are acceptable from a pastoral perspective. However, what is at play in the "sacramental negotiation"[36] is decisive from the point of view of appropriation. In a society where the full glare of the media exposes individual lives with no concessions to modesty, it is not surprising that parents should want to film the complete celebration or produce a magnificent booklet for the baptism that can then become a souvenir for their child. The aim of the negotiation, then, is to ensure that the beauty and the simplicity of the celebration can be preserved, and that the other families whose children are being baptized are not deprived of involvement in putting together the booklet. This is the price to pay if people are going to be able to let themselves be touched from the inside by the celebration, and if they are to be able to discern within the baptismal rites the figure of humanity reconciled in Christ where differences are no longer an obstacle to an encounter with the other. Initiation into the meaning of the liturgical gestures of baptism is a real service to interiority, and utterly decisive for an ethical and spiritual appropriation of Christian rites. Pronouncing the name at the door of the church has huge ethical significance to the extent that what is a divine prerogative is entrusted/delegated to the parents when, in the second creation narrative, Adam is given the task of naming all things. This is an affirmation of the value of parental responsibility, endowed with a spiritual perspective. The gesture of laying on of hands relativizes this, since it proclaims the primacy of divine protection and commits the parents to an infinite respect for

[34] Dominique Barnerias, *La paroisse en mouvement: l'apport des synodes diocésains français de 1983 à 2004* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 2011) 342.

[35] Marcel Légaut, *Devenir soi et rechercher le sens de sa propre vie* (Paris: Aubier, 1980) 27, quoted by Barnerias, *La paroisse en mouvement,* 349.

[36] Francis Deniau, *Mariage: approches pastorales* (Paris: Éditions du Chalet, 1984) 24.

the dignity of their child, who becomes their brother or sister through the sacrament of baptism. Learning to appreciate the ethical meaning of the celebration presupposes that people are welcomed in a way that respects whatever their cultural points of reference may be. The way of symbolizing respect for the child varies a great deal, in fact depending on the social milieu of the family and on the parents' understanding of educative responsibility, about which there can be no a priori judgment as to pertinence.

So, too, today it would be well worth deepening the links between the baptism of children and marriage. It is evident that the two sacraments are very different, yet we should not overlook how, in contemporary experience, the baptism of a child can be a decisive step toward marriage. In France, fifty-seven percent of first-born children are born outside marriage. The inability of young people today to imagine themselves mutually capable of assuming parenthood must surely be counted as one of the cultural obstacles to marriage, all the more so if those concerned have themselves suffered from their own parents' immaturity. In this context, the baptism of a baby can help overcome these interior obstacles, because the couple discover, often with awe, both their own ability and that of their partner to be mother or father. This ability is expressed by ritual symbols in a way quite different from the way it is expressed in daily life, but thereby the latter is given a renewed meaning.[37] As a result, the concrete experience of infinite responsibility in face of the helplessness of a newborn child[38] can lead to the discovery, both for marriage and for being a parent, of the meaning of the commitment to total self-giving when it proceeds from love. Moreover, the couple can begin to understand that, contrary to the prevailing cultural notion that parenthood should take precedence over conjugality,[39] the mutual commitment of husband and wife precedes their commitment to their offspring in the logics of love.

I conclude with a remark about the discipline of access to the sacrament of baptism. The traditional links between conversion and baptism (cf. Dunn) invite

[37] Marguerite Yourcenar, who is known as an agnostic, writes: "My religious education ended very early, but I am glad that I had it, because it is a path of access to the invisible, or if you prefer, to 'the interior.' People who have had no religious education, or who have had a dry secular education, or sometimes one that has been too drily Protestant, are shut off to mythic truths or to the everyday sacred" (Marguerite Yourcenar, *With Open Eyes: Conversations with Matthieu Galey,* trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Boston: Beacon, 1984) 18-19.

[38] "[T]he newborn, whose mere breathing uncontradictably addresses an ought to the world around, namely, to take care of him. . . . I mean strictly just this; that here the plain being of a *de facto* existent immanently and evidently contains an ought for others" (Hans Jonas, *The Imperative of Responsibility: In Search of Ethics for the Technological Age,* trans. Hans Jonas and David Herr (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984) 131.

[39] Irène Théry, *Le démariage: justice et vie privée* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 1993).

us to reconsider the expressions of conversion in our contemporary cultures without thereby abandoning being guided by the witness of the gospels. For example, people who have suffered a great deal because of deficient family relationships bear the scars of affective wounds which makes their access to a balanced life more difficult. Many cannot accede to the sacraments of initiation because of the ecclesiastical discipline which seeks to maintain—quite reasonably—the coherence between marriage, baptism, confirmation and eucharist. However, should we not be according greater weight to the significant witness to conversion made by people who freely grant their forgiveness for faults committed against them, sometimes long ago in their childhood? Such large-hearted pardon testifies to the power of redemptive grace at work in the experience of this person, but also represents a response to the commandment of Christ who calls us to forgive our enemies with all our hearts. Moreover, it bears witness, within individual lives, to the ecclesial vocation to manifest the power of reconciliation won in Christ. To take into account in this way forgiveness that has been granted, when there is no human reason for doing so, might justify a measured access to the sacraments of Christian initiation for people who are in an irregular marriage situation. Especially since the baptismal rites are shapers of new ethical abilities, this practice of *epikie* could make us hope that for those concerned this could be the birth of a deepening of their moral life.

CONCLUSION: Bruce Morrill

Our (necessarily limited) survey of the biblical–traditional roots and contemporary practices joining baptism, Christian identity, and ethical agency accords with the seminal insight of Alexander Schmemann that time is of the essence for understanding how liturgical rites are revelatory of the Gospel's truth in human lives and history. In his foundational work, Schmemann argued persuasively for the "liturgy of time" proper to Christianity, as inherited from biblical and apocryphal Judaism, a cultic "sanctification of time" in contrast to other religions' cultic and mythic sacralizations of nature and seasons.[40] The purpose of the church's liturgy is to make time "eschatologically transparent," that is, to manifest the unfolding of people's lives in cosmos and history in the key of the "eight day," in the light of the crucified and risen one whose Spirit now is working a new creation even amidst the groaning of this passing world. In his day Schmemann sought to correct what he described (and despised) as the long-mistaken piety whereby Christianity

[40] See Alexander Schmemann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology,* trans. Aschleigh Moore (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1966, 1986) 69-80.

came to understand Sunday on a par with all the other days of the week, functioning as the complementary sacred break from the profane workaday schedule, a matter of stepping into church to say prayers before heaven and then stepping back out into this world's mores of commerce, entertainment, and self-realization.

Our pastoral–theological challenge today, however, as Philippe Bordeyne has pointed out, is a social de-structuring of time causing self-alientation in (increasingly globalized) lives devoid of the rhythms of ritual and periods of meditative reflection. The exploitation of Christians' increasingly episodic approaches to liturgical participation in the "powerful moments" of life-passage rites and major calendrical feasts as the key to identity-formation finds confirmation in practical theologian Charles Foster's theory of event-based education. Acknowledging that Christian traditions of daily and weekly worship practices are too weak to reverse the tide of the 24/7 timeless cycling and individual tailoring of time, Foster argues for how believers can nonetheless grow in faith through occasion-based events of worship wherein the interplay of cognitive and affective engagement generate meaning, identity, and purpose in the lives of the participants.[41] Such has been the burden here of our jointly developed argument for how robust pastoral-liturgical practices of baptism for infants and adults afford original opportunities for Christian identity-formation amidst and in service to the undeniably ambiguous viscissitudes endemic to human living and, indeed, to the Gospel as God's kenotic immersion therein.

[41] See Charles R. Foster, *Educating Congregations: The Future of Christian Education* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1994) 12, 49, 68, 89.