



## Christology, Liturgy, Spirituality: Reflections on the Interpretations of their Historical Relationship

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The Second Vatican Council recommended that theologians, in their exposition of the major themes of dogmatic theology, show how the mysteries explained are to be found in the liturgy.<sup>1</sup> A positive response to this recommendation has been most evident in the field of ecclesiology, where many writers have explored the mutual relationships between liturgy, the sacraments and the formation of the Church. Less attention has been paid to Christology's relationship to liturgy and to their mutual interaction with the spiritual lives of the faithful, that is, to the relationship between the celebration of the Christian mystery, the theological discourse about Christ as it has been developed in the Church, and the impact of these two elements on the spiritual relationship which the faithful establish with Christ. This relationship requires close scrutiny insofar as the liturgy presupposes Christ and the Incarnation and is the means of the faithful's participation in His filial worship of the Father. As this liturgical participation is the principal means through which Christians obtain salvation in Christ therefore the concept which we have of Christ will inevitably have consequences for our liturgical participation and our spiritual orientations.

The relationship between Christology, liturgy and spirituality can be treated on several levels; one possibility is to examine their mutual influences throughout history and see how the different christological concepts have affected liturgy, spirituality and *vice versa*.<sup>2</sup> Another level would explore the liturgical texts so as to draw out the underlying chris-

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<sup>1</sup> *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 16; *Optatum Totius* 16. See also *Ratio fundamentalis* 79.

<sup>2</sup> Cfr. J.A. JUNGSMANN, *The Place of Christ in Liturgical Prayer*, Geoffrey Chapman, London 1989; S. MARSILI, *Cristologia e liturgia*, Panorama storico-liturgico, in AA.VV., *Cristologia, e liturgia*, EDB, Bologna 1980, pp. 17-64; P. POURRAT, *Le Christ dans la Prière de L'Eglise et dans la Piété des Fidèles*, in G. BARDY - A. TRICOT, *Le Christ*, Bloud et Gay, Paris 1932, pp. 572-598.

tological concepts and ascetic principles. This article will concentrate on the first level, presenting a brief historical overview of the relationship between the theological and spiritual concepts of Christ and its influence on the liturgy as well as offering some reflections on the interpretations which some theologians have made regarding this relationship.

## 1. Christology and Liturgy in the Early Church

The earliest Christologies are those contained in the New Testament, whose authors moved in a liturgical *ambience* rooted in the Judaic concepts of memorial in which it was perfectly normal that a past salvific event would be celebrated in view of a future and fuller realization.<sup>3</sup> The disciples saw the fulfillment of all the ancient promises of salvation concentrated in Christ and consequentially, faithful to their historical-salvific concept of worship, made Christ the center and principal reason of their worship, baptizing in his name and celebrating his memorial with the «breaking of Bread». They adored and thanked God because the promise of salvation contained in the ancient liberation and the prophets had been finally realized in Jesus of Nazareth, who according to God's plan had been crucified and raised from the dead. In such a vision of faith the figure of Christ entered with relative ease into the worship of early Jewish Christians.

Yet it is one thing to establish the existence from the beginning of a relationship between Christ and liturgy and another to another to establish the level of this worship. Salvatore Marsili for example, holds that, in the Judeo-Christian context it would be possible to render thanks and praise to God for Christ's work without necessarily giving direct worship to his person. Even, as in the case of baptism and Eucharist which are celebrated in his name and in virtue of his command, it is difficult to determine whether they were considered as simple signs of faith or if they were already seen as a participation in Christ's salvific mystery.

The importance of relating Christology to liturgy stems from difficulties such as these because Christology is not simply the proclamation of faith in Christ's existence but an interrogation regarding his identity and what his coming into the world means for the believer. As Joseph Ratzinger points out, the fundamental question continues to be

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<sup>3</sup> Cfr. S. MARSILI, *Continuità ebraica e novità cristiana*, in, AA.VV., *Anámnesis 2*, Marietti, Casale Monferrato 1978, pp. 11-39.

«Who do the people say that the son of Man is?» (Mt 16:14f), and a productive development of the theology and practice of liturgy can come about only through close connection with Christology<sup>4</sup>. The response to the faith-question—who is Christ?—has historically come in two distinct trends: one concerns Christ's identity on the ontological plane, and the other takes place on the soteriological plane and expresses the Church's faith in Christ's universal saving mission in relationship to its perception by each individual believer as the fulfillment of his deepest hopes of salvation. Both trends have always been present in the Church, yet Christian authors have tended to privilege one or the other according to prevailing circumstances of the times. Each one of these trends relates to liturgy and to the spiritual lives of Christians in a different way.

This soteriological approach to the faith-question, which sees Christ above all in relation to his saving mission, is typical of the New Testament and the early Church. Its expressions include such titles as Messiah, Son of Man, Son of God, Lamb of God, Word of God, God with us, Savior, high priest, prophet, shepherd, and God's servant, and a marked tendency to pray to the Father through Christ and in the Holy Spirit in public and, to a lesser extent, private prayer. Almost all of these titles have their roots in the Old Testament and were readily assimilated into the early Christian liturgy since Christians knew that everything written about him in «the Law of Moses, in the Prophets and in the Psalms» had been fulfilled (*Lk* 24,44). An examination of some of these titles and their use in the early liturgy will permit us to detect the underlying Christological principles and to witness how the gradual shift in emphasis in Christological reflection from the soteriological to the ontological level influenced liturgy and spirituality.

### **Jesus Christ, God's Servant:**

In the early Church, Christians saw in Christ the messianic figure described in Psalm 2 (see *Ac* 4, 26-30) yet also identified him as God's servant, and thus as the Prophet Isaiah's suffering Servant (*Is* 42,1-6; 49,1-6; 50,4-9; 52, 12-53). In similar fashion, the other New Testament references to Christ as God's servant fall within the context of his passion, death, and resurrection (*Ac* 3,13-26; 4,27-30 *Ph* 2,6-11). The underlying Christological vision in this identification of Jesus with the suffering servant derives Jesus' role as Savior from his identity as the

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<sup>4</sup> J. RATZINGER, *Sing a New Song to the Lord*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco 1997, pp. IX-X.

“suffering servant,” in fulfillment of God’s will. This soteriological Christology will influence Christian worship in one of its earliest formulas: «Through your servant Jesus Christ» (διὰ τοῦ παιδὸς σοῦ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ) which we find in use from the earliest times in such works as the *Didache* (9,2.3), the *Martyrdom of Polycarp* (14,1.2.3; 20,2) and again in the third and fourth centuries in the *Traditio Apostolica*, of Hippolytus and the apostolic Constitutions.

### **Christ, Lamb of God:**

St. John the Evangelist also associates Christ with Isaiah’s suffering servant when he introduces him at the beginning of his Gospel as the «Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world» (1,29.36; *Is* 53,7.12), and once more at its culminating moment when he is pierced by a lance so that, like the paschal lamb sacrificed the same day, «not a bone of his should be broken» (19, 36; *Ex* 12,46). John’s Christology thus blends the soteriological image of Christ as «God’s Servant» with that of the paschal lamb. According to Marsili, it was precisely its union with the liturgical vision of the paschal lamb which brought the Christology of «Christ, God’s servant» into the liturgical sphere in the first place, and this liturgical adoption of the image of Christ as God’s servant constitutes the earliest development of a liturgical-paschal Christology.<sup>5</sup>

The fusing of the theology of Christ the lamb with the theology of the paschal lamb in a liturgical context is also clearly expressed by Paul in *1 Cor* 5,7-8 «Christ, our Passover, has been sacrificed; let us celebrate the feast, then, by getting rid of all the old yeast of evil and wickedness, having only the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth», and above all by John in the book of Revelation. In this book we find the Lamb placed beside God at the center of a series of visions of evident liturgical stamp as the paschal redeemer: the Lamb «sacrificed yet standing» (*Rv* 5,6; 13,8), victorious (17,14), upon Mount Zion followed by the 144.000 of those marked with his sign (14, 1-4). The lamb is guide and shepherd (7,17), and has written in the book of life (13,8; 21,27), all those who have been redeemed by him (5,9), who have triumphed through his blood, (12,11), washing their garments in his blood (7,14; 21,14). These shall share in the wedding feast of the Lamb (19,7-9), which celebrates the marriage between the Lamb and his bride the Church (21,9).

<sup>5</sup> S. MARSILI, *Cristologia e liturgia*, Panorama storico-liturgico, in AA.VV., *Cristologia e liturgia*, EDB, Bologna 1980, pp. 29-31.

Marsili points out that the liturgical matrix of the New Testament Christology of Christ-Lamb is of even greater importance if one takes into account that the twin themes of liberation-redemption and kingdom-priesthood (*cf. Rv* 1,5-6; 5,6-12; 14, 1-4) are also constitutive elements of the Pasch as found in Exodus 19, 5-6. Likewise the «new song» with which the Lamb is exalted for the redemption obtained through his blood (*Rv* 5,9), is identified with the «song of Moses, the servant of God and the Lamb», sung by those who have triumphed over the beast (15,3), and this identification with the Exodus canticle (*Ex* 15,1-21), clearly means that the victory of Paschal Lamb-Christ is that which fulfills the victory obtained by the paschal lamb of the Exodus. This means that the great hopes expressed by the Jewish paschal liturgy of being able to sing a new song of redemption find fulfillment in the Christian liturgy.

The Christology of the Lamb, therefore, encapsulates and holds up before the faithful God's saving work. Christian liturgy will thus always be essentially paschal, a liturgy in which all those saved by his blood are able to intone the new song because all of God's promises have been fulfilled in Christ.

### **Christ the Lord:**

This second element of New Testament Christology, that of Christ's lordship, is also singularly liturgical. The profession of faith that Christ is Lord (*ICo* 12,3) acknowledges Christ's divinity as well as his universal sovereignty, since the title of "Lord" was commonly attributed to God. That this title is of Judeo-Christian origin can be shown by the use St. Paul makes of the Aramaic formula *Marana tha*, (Lord, come!) in *ICor* 16,22, an expression also found in Greek in Revelation 22,2 and again in the Aramaic in the *Didache* 10,6 at the end of a liturgical prayer related to the «breaking of bread».

This title also bears a relation to the Christ as Servant and Lamb, for Jesus becomes Lord and Christ insofar as he assumes the figure of the servant who obediently accepts the cross for our redemption (*Ac* 16,22; *Ph* 2,6-11). Considering these relationships, Marsili states that it was inevitable that in the liturgy, the Christology of the «Servant» and that of the «Lamb» would lead towards the Christology of the «Lord». This passage is evident in Revelation 17,14 where the Lamb's victory over his enemies is assured because he is «*the Lord of*

*lords and the King of kings*».<sup>6</sup> The integration of the Christology of the humiliation of the cross with that of the resurrection and glorious sovereignty is that suggested to us by *1Co* 11,26. Here Paul presents the Eucharistic celebration as the proclamation of «the Lord's death until he comes». The celebration makes Christ's death present, but now and forever bathed in the light of his resurrection.

Little by little the Christology of Christ God's Servant disappeared from the liturgy because of its association with those who defended the Son's subordination to the Father, and the formula is rarely found after the Council of Nicea. The content of the Christology of «Christ, God's Servant» does not, however, disappear as it was completely absorbed by the Christology of «Christ the Lord», above all in regions and epochs where the primitive Judeo-Christian world-view no longer held sway.

This synthesis can be best appreciated by examining the related formula «Through Jesus Christ Our Lord», in which the «Lord» is presented in the liturgy not only as God to whom worship is directed but above all as Mediator, thus carrying out the same function as that realized by Christ as «God's servant». Understood in this way, the formula forms a complete Christology, uniting the divine title «Lord» with the symbolic name «Jesus» (Savior) and the messianic title «Christ». The formula affirms Christ's divinity without forgetting that Christ's essential role is that of «Mediator» as expressed in such expressions as to «Pray in the Lord's name» (e.g. *Jn* 14,13-14; 15,16; 16,23.24.26; *Ep* 5,20), or, more commonly, to «Pray through Christ» (e.g. *Rm* 1,8; 15,30; 16,27; *Col* 3,17).

Characteristically, through its use of the preposition «through» (διὰ in Greek and *per* in Latin), Christian liturgical prayer expresses the two aspects of Christ's liturgical role as Mediator: the mediation granted him in virtue of his humiliation as God's Servant, and the mediation based on his sovereign dignity as Christ the Lord.

### **Per Iesum Christum Catholicum Patris Sacerdotem:**

The sense of mediation carried by the «through», coupled with the influence of the Epistle to the Hebrews, naturally brought out Christ's role as a priestly mediator. We find expressions of this reality in liturgical contexts already towards the end of the first century and the

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<sup>6</sup> S. MARSILI, *Cristologia e liturgia*, pp. 35-37.

beginning of the second. In his first epistle (no.61 and 64), Clement of Rome refers to Christ as Mediator in both senses:

May God who seeth all things, and who is the Ruler of all spirits and the Lord of all flesh—who *choose* our Lord Jesus Christ and us *through Him* to be a peculiar people—grant to every soul that calleth upon His glorious and holy Name, faith, fear, peace, patience, long suffering, self-control, purity, and sobriety, to the well-pleasing of His Name, *through our High Priest and Protector, Jesus Christ, by whom* be to Him glory and majesty, and power, and honour, both now and for evermore. Amen (64).<sup>7</sup>

Similar references can be found in *Martyr. Polyc.* 14; Tertulliano, *Adv.Marc.* 4,9; Origen, *Contra Celsum* 8,26; *De Oratione* 15-16.

This formula fell into disuse, however, for reasons similar to that of Christ «God's Servant». Some claimed that attributing the priestly office to Christ could weaken the unity of the natures in the divine person. As a result of this fear, the 10th *anathema* of the Council of Ephesus', while recognizing the title's biblical foundation, condemns those who says that: «*it is not the Word of God Himself who, when He became flesh and man like us, became High Priest and our Apostle, but another distinct from Him, who properly speaking is a man born of a woman...*» (Dz 261). There is a certain irony in the fact that the hermeneutic difficulties regarding this point experienced by the Councils of Ephesus and Chalcedon—called to reaffirm Christ's supreme role as mediator—in the end contributed to veiling his function as *priestly* mediator. Thus they not only struck the death knell of the formula's liturgical use, but also effectively eliminated the theme of Christ's priestly mediation from Christological reflection and spirituality for centuries.

Ephesus also made a fundamental contribution to the Christology of the liturgy through the solemn proclamation of Mary as Θεοτόκος, which was incorporated into the *Communicantes* of the Roman Canon at the beginning of the VI century: *In primis gloriosae semper virginis Mariae genetricis Dei et Domini nostri Iesu Christi.*

After the period of the major Christological controversies, and with the formation of the principal feasts of the liturgical year, few novelties appear in the major euchological texts. Among the details and additions that can be detected, apart from the *genetricis Dei*, are other insertions

<sup>7</sup> CLEMENT OF ROME, *The First Epistle*, in J. ROBERTS ALEXANDER & DONALDSON, *Ante-Nicene Fathers, Volume I*, Hendrickson, Peabody, Massachusetts 19952, p. 21. (My italics)

into the Roman Canon, such as the reference to Melchisedek's sacrifice as *sanctum sacrificium, immaculatam hostiam*, and the *Mysterium Fidei* of the consecration—probably introduced by Pope St. Leo the Great to combat Manichean tendencies in Rome<sup>8</sup>—and in the strong anti-Arianism of the Ambrosian Rite<sup>9</sup>. Simultaneously, as Jungmann analyzes in great detail in his «*Place of Christ in Liturgical Prayer*», later writers tended to reinterpret many of the older formulas and doxologies in a Trinitarian sense while abandoning the original sense of mediation. This leads to what Jungmann considered a one-sided emphasis on the divinity of Christ that gave a certain monophysitic element to later Christian prayer and especially to popular piety. Otherwise the liturgy, along with the Christology expressed in its major formulas, became fixed and generally immune to the changes in focus arising from the Christological considerations of later theological and spiritual currents.

## 2. Spirituality and Liturgy from the Middle Ages

The multitude of spiritual movements emerging from the Middle Ages and even to the present were characterized by an intense devotion to Christ's humanity. Such piety often found expression in extra-liturgical practices such as the dramatic mystery plays and the traditional processions of the image of the dead Christ. Marsili terms this devotion «minor Christology», in contrast to the «major Christology» of the early centuries.<sup>10</sup> This «minor Christology», is, according to Marsili, no longer the Christology «from above», which speaks of what Christ has done for man through the salvific mystery relived in the liturgy, but rather the Christology «from below» which presents an image of Christ created from the psychological affective reactions to the Bible tale. Christ's humiliation is no longer the obedient self-abasement found in the Christological hymn of *Phil* 2,6-11, but the vivid and graphic representation of the humiliation and suffering inflicted upon Christ by the vileness of man. Thus the liturgical Christology of the «*beata passio*» and the «*passio vivificatrix*» gives way to the devotional Passion of the «*caput cruentatum*». In this way, while Christ's

<sup>8</sup> See: C. FOLSOM, *Mysterium Fidei and St. Leo the Great (440-461)*, in «*Ecclesia Orans*», 15 (1998), pp. 289-302.

<sup>9</sup> See: A.M. TRIACCA, *La Liturgia ambrosiana*, in AA.VV., *Anámmesis* 2, Marietti, Casale Monferrato 1978, pp. 88-110.

<sup>10</sup> S. MARSILI, *Cristologia e liturgia*, pp. 43-51.



life stands as a model to live by, his death becomes above all a mirror reflecting man's sinfulness in which each particular suffering is an expression of a different species of sin.

In this ambience, contends Marsili, the idea that Christ's death is a salvific mediation which necessarily implies the resurrection is no longer grasped. Thus the «Way of the Cross» can only end in the darkness of the tomb, while each aspect of the Passion is exalted to the point of eventually being transformed into an independent liturgical feast.<sup>11</sup> For Marsili these feasts are not true celebrations of Christ's Paschal mystery but what he terms a pseudo-liturgical efflorescence of the minor Christology «*dolorosa*», attempting to project its sorrowful mentality into the liturgy. He likewise attributes to this mentality the creation of the reparative devotion and iconography of the Sacred Heart in which the soul seeks to become a willing victim in order to console Christ. The importance of this phenomenon and of other lesser trends such as the devotion centered on the «Person of the Word» and on the «Interior life of Jesus», advocated by Cardinal De Berulle (1575-1629), does not lie in their concrete effects on the liturgy—most of the feasts they encouraged, such as the «Feast of the interior of Jesus and Mary» had brief life spans and were circumscribed to small groups—but in showing that liturgy, spirituality and Christology are intimately related and that a certain mode of thinking about Christology necessarily leads to a corresponding liturgical expression.<sup>12</sup>

### 3. Reflections on the Historical Interpretations of the Christology-Spirituality-Liturgy Relationship

The broad outline of the historical development of these elements put forward by Jungmann and Marsili is certainly correct, and their analysis and interpretation of the history of the liturgy – Christology – spirituality relationship is fairly representative of liturgical scholars generally, especially regarding the earlier centuries and somewhat less

<sup>11</sup> The feasts of the Crown of Thorns, the Lance and Nails, the Shroud, and the Agony in the Garden, for example, were celebrated during lent after the seventeenth century.

<sup>12</sup> He makes the same point in other writings for example: S. MARSILI, *Liturgia*, in AA.VV., *Dizionario del Concilio Ecumenico Vaticano Secondo*, Roma 1969, 1336ff; IDEM, *Liturgia*, in D. SARTORE - A.M. TRIACCA, *Nuovo Dizionario di Liturgia*, Paoline, Cinisello Balsamo (MI) 19956, pp. 690-691.

so in the medieval and modern periods. Moreover, the outline of these interpretations demonstrates a clear relationship among the three elements, although the authors rightly tend to concentrate on the relationship between Christology and liturgy for the early centuries and between Christology and spirituality in the later. In the earlier period, the battle to resolve the major Christological questions was, in fact, the primary influence on liturgical development, while the possible interaction between liturgy and a more popular spirituality during the same period has yet to be fully explored. For the later period, the general stability of the liturgy, and the absence of major novelties in Christological studies meant that for any Christological innovation to influence the liturgy, it would have to spring from spirituality.

Not every aspect of these interpretations of the history of liturgy, spirituality and Christology can be accepted without comment. As Cardinal Ratzinger observes, and as Jungmann himself admits in the later editions of his work, modern research has attenuated his theories regarding the prevalence of prayer to the Father and the absence of liturgical prayer to the Son before the fourth century. While his fundamental intuitions remain intact, it has since been shown that Jesus Christ has been invoked both in the liturgy and private prayer from earliest times. Likewise, the monophysistic tendencies in popular piety that caused Jungmann such apprehension appear to have been unfounded. Indeed, Cardinal Ratzinger believes that today the opposite danger of a neo-Nestorianism in Christology and spirituality offers far more pressing concern<sup>13</sup>.

In a kindred manner, though Marsili's considerations contain intuitions worthy of exploration, one tends to balk at his reduction of more than a thousand years of theological, spiritual and liturgical reflection to the status of «minor Christology». In order to evaluate the merits and possible defects of such interpretations it is necessary to examine the underlying suppositions of critiques such as Marsili's, which are rooted in the very concept of liturgy itself and of its role in the spiritual life of Christians. Among these suppositions, perhaps never consciously articulated, is a tendency towards a unilateral view of liturgy. This view elevates particular aspects to the level of basic principles and converts accidents of history into fundamental liturgical laws, subsequently using them as benchmarks for determining what is and is not

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13 J. RATZINGER, *Sing a New Song to the Lord*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco 1997. p 7-10.

liturgical<sup>14</sup>. For Marsili, liturgy should express the salvific reality of the paschal mystery, and that alone, and whatever fails to express this reality is not truly liturgical<sup>15</sup>. He would thus exclude from the category of liturgy any celebration of what he considers marginal elements or theological ideas such as that of the devotion to the Sacred Heart. He furthermore supposes that the only valid liturgical spirituality is that of the early centuries, and thus tends to see later developments as deviations rather than developments.

To determine the value of this analysis, one must ask whether this so-called «minor Christology» is really a degeneration, or whether it does not in fact constitute legitimate development which builds upon the dogmatic foundation of patristic Christology. It might also assist our evaluation of Marsili's suppositions to distinguish between the liturgy's inner reality as salvation in act and its external manifestation of this reality in rites and prayers. In this light, we can examine to what extent the different spiritualities might have obscured the importance of the liturgy, and also to what extent a spirituality may contribute to the development of liturgy, or to its degradation.

With this in mind, it appears that while the historical presentation that these authors make of the medieval period is basically solid, it should be more closely examined to refine theological Christology's indirect influence on liturgy. Many of the great Scholastic theologians were also masters of the spiritual life and while the teaching method in vogue in the universities precluded spiritual reflections it is unlikely that their Christological speculations were divorced from their prayer and their preaching. Since the major dogmatic questions had long since been settled by the great Councils, the Medieval Schoolmen unsurprisingly turned their powerful speculative skills towards drawing out the implications contained in Scripture and dogma regarding such questions as Christ's psychology, his knowledge, sentiments, sanctity, power and (above all in St. Thomas Aquinas) the salvific powers of the mysteries of his life especially his Passion. These were themes that had

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<sup>14</sup> This tendency towards a certain unilateralism is seen in other authors. Even such a non polemical writer as M. Righetti, although using different criteria, could define as non liturgical the introit of the feast of Our Lady of Sorrows: *Stabant iuxta crucem...*, on the technical grounds that as a gospel text instead of a psalm it did not conform to traditional liturgical laws. The liturgical reform has shown that many such supposed laws are not essential to the liturgy. See: M. RIGHETTI, *Storia liturgica I*, Introduzione generale, Ancora, Milano 19983, p. 19

<sup>15</sup> See: E. McNAMARA, *Liturgical Theology According to Salvatore Marsili*, Roma 1997

barely been touched upon in the first centuries.<sup>16</sup> Such theological ponderings were undoubtedly brought before God in prayer and to the faithful in sermons and, just as the Eucharistic controversies provoked by Berengarius' doctrine fomented Eucharistic piety, their Christological reflections contributed to the creation of the medieval spiritual mentality centered on Christ's humanity. This eventually led in later centuries to the liturgical celebrations which Marsili and many others lament, such as the somewhat cerebral feast of Christ's interior and its more popular counterpart in the feast of the Sacred Heart. Thus, rather than a degenerate «minor Christology» we could perhaps speak of what Cardinal Newman would term an authentic development of principles. At the same time one must acknowledge that not all of these developments were of equal and lasting value, and in some cases they even obscured more essential aspects of the Christian mystery.

With respect to the awareness of the liturgy's innermost reality, even a superficial probe of the major spiritual movements over the centuries will show that no matter what accentuations taken by the many trends in spirituality, the notion of the liturgy as a salvific reality remained constant, especially regarding the Eucharistic celebration. The early centuries were acutely aware of the centrality of the Eucharistic celebration without excluding other forms of personal relationship with Christ. It is true, as Marsili and others point out, that this awareness was dulled in later centuries, yet at the same time it never quite lost its edge. Even the most exaggerated—from our point of view—Medieval Mass allegories could only see symbols of Christ's passion in every detail of the ritual because of the deep-seated awareness that the Mass itself *was* that sacrifice. Otherwise the allegories would have been no more than useless and empty symbolism. This awareness was especially keen among the saints and the most enduring spiritual authors. Even saints steeped in medieval «dolorific» spirituality such as St. Catherine of Siena or, in the meditation-centered prayer life of a later epoch, as in the case of Teresa of Avila, were characterized by the practice and recommendation of frequent liturgical and Eucharistic participation. Moreover, they lived in times when such practice was deemed unusual or exaggerated.<sup>17</sup> Even common folk, who in Marsili's eyes

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<sup>16</sup> See. P. VIGUÉ, *Le psychologie du Christ*, in G. BARDY Y A. TRICOT, *Le Christ*, Bloud et Gay, Paris 1932, pp. 400-517.

<sup>17</sup> St. Catherine was noted for daily Communion and recommended the practice to her disciples. See for example *The Dialog* chapters 66 and 110-113 and the conclusion to prayer no. 14 composed on January 1st 1380. Saint Teresa also advocated frequent communion and

incorrectly celebrated the different moments of the Passion as being a mirror reflecting their own sins, were nonetheless acutely aware that those sins were redeemed in the Passion and that this redemptive Passion was in some mysterious way relived in the liturgy. This alone can explain why the faithful never totally abandoned the liturgy, in spite of its being monopolized by clerics, its recondite language and the profusion of folkloric alternatives in the popular devotions.

If the multiple spiritual and theological Christologies present in the Church can be regarded as development rather than degenerations, then Marsili's observation that a certain way of looking at Christ leads to a precise liturgical expression can be seen, in spite of his reservations, as a positive and not as a negative value. While it remains true that the liturgy's inner reality is the realization of salvation, this does not necessarily imply that, in its external manifestation, the liturgy must exclude every other aspect. The very fact that the Church has officially approved many of the feasts denounced by Marsili indicates that his criteria are, to say the least, not universally accepted. The Mystery of Christ has manifold aspects and Christians can never exhaust the many possible approaches to his person. This being true, the Church as a living organism does well to allow for the liturgical expressions of the many legitimate and orthodox facets of Christ which have arisen over the centuries. This flexibility is good for the liturgy as it draws Christians back to the source and summit of the Christian life while permitting them to hold fast to the intuitions opened to them by their Christological reflections. The various spiritualities benefit as well, since the demands of a genuine liturgical expression in the composition of prayers, hymns, and other texts, as well as the necessary encounter with the salvific reality celebrated in the liturgy encourages them to weed out possible exaggerations or less desirable aspects of the spirituality.

Naturally, not every attempt to give liturgical expression to a spiritual current, even when officially approved, has been successful. History abounds with examples of liturgical dross and drivel, yet this does not *per se* invalidate the idea of openness to new trends. The very fact that many of these less felicitous ideas were eventually expunged

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describes in her *Autobiography* how her proposals often met with resistance from her confessors. See for example the *Autobiography* chapters 6, 7, and 25 as well as the *Book of Foundations* chapter 6 and *The Way of Perfection* chapter 34.

See: CATALINA DE SIENA, *Obras, El diálogo, Oraciones y Soliloquios*, BAC, Madrid 1980; TERESA DE JESÚS, *Obras completas*, BAC, Madrid 1986; S. UNSET, *Catherine of Siena*, Sheed and Ward, London 1954.

from the liturgy is indicative of the essential vitality of the principle. There exists in the history of spirituality, and hence in its liturgical expression, a phenomenon which we could call a «spiritual Darwinism» in which more robust spiritualities thrive while the less fit fade quietly into extinction. Thus, when the Church, in its periodic pruning of the liturgical calendar, elevates certain celebrations to universal status while confining the celebration of others to particular calendars, if not eliminating them altogether, it usually does no more than recognize the success or failure of a spirituality to establish itself within the wider body of the Church.

In attempting to evaluate the reasons why some spiritualities thrive while others languish I believe that Marsili points in the right direction by placing the onus on a given spirituality's closeness to the liturgy's inner reality as celebration of the paschal mystery. Even a cursory look at the history of spirituality reveals that the more easily the particular aspects of a spirituality can be related to the objective mystery of salvation celebrated in the liturgy, the greater its chances of survival and flourishing. Thus the spirituality born of the Ignatian exercises has flourished because, while not liturgical in itself, it shares the major themes of the Christian mystery. In an analogous manner, devotion to the Sacred Heart continues to prosper while the celebration of De Berulle's «Feast of Jesus» and Olier's «Feast of the interior of Jesus and Mary» never progressed far beyond the Sulpician environment. One notes that the latter were abstract feasts with little direct relationship to the mystery of salvation, while the former was intimately related to the paschal mystery and directly encouraged the participation of the faithful in the liturgy. Devotion to the Sacred Heart also proved more flexible in adapting its forms to the sensibilities of different eras. This intuition based on Marsili, while not a hard and fast rule, seems to promise an interesting line of investigation of the history of spirituality.

The question remains open, however, as to what degree these spiritualities may be expressed in the liturgy. We have seen that despite appearances to the contrary the crucial awareness of the liturgy's inner reality as the celebration of Christ's salvific mysteries has remained constant, and it would seem that when the external manifestations of the liturgy's rites and prayers are intimately bound up with this reality, these remain immune from the influence of theological and spiritual speculation about Christ. This means that there is little room for developing the preferred themes of certain spiritualities within the major eucharistical texts, and especially in the Eucharistic prayer, as this

must necessarily express the salvific mystery that is being celebrated. Even when the spiritual theme may be touched upon in the preface, such references must be related to the central mystery of salvation.

From a historical perspective, however, it would appear that this rule need not hold for the minor euchological texts, for the divine office and for the calendar. Historically, prayers like the collects, a communal liturgical prayer in which the priest gathers together the prayers of the community, developed later than the Eucharistic prayers along with the formation of the major feasts and celebrations of the liturgical year. From their inception, these forms of prayer consistently reflected the theological interests of their composers, the particular qualities of the feast or saint celebrated, and even the transitory needs and petitions of the faithful<sup>18</sup>. To take just one early example, some of the prayers for the advent, Christmas and lenten cycles betray their inspiration in St. Leo the Great's theology of mystery and sacrament. While it is true that St. Leo's theology springs from the nature of the liturgy itself and hence his prayers also express the liturgy's inner reality, this does not deny the principle that these prayer forms are more susceptible to the influence of theological and spiritual trends than the major euchological texts.<sup>19</sup> This factor becomes even clearer if we examine even more flexible prayer forms such as the Church's treasury of hymns for the divine office, one of the few areas where totally new compositions have been incorporated into the liturgy throughout its history.

#### **4. A Test Case: The Prayers and Hymns of the Feast of the Sacred Heart**

It should suffice for our purpose to examine the prayer texts and hymns associated with the feast of the Sacred Heart over the centuries to see this flexible process in action through the remote preparation of

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<sup>18</sup> J.A. JUNGSMANN, *The Mass of the Roman Rite. Its Origins and Development I*, Christian Classics, Westminster MA 1986, pp. 359-390

<sup>19</sup> See: S. MARSILI, «Parusia» e Adventus Domini. Note per la storia delle Domeniche d'Avvento, in «Rivista Liturgica» 21/12 (1934), pp. 373-378; IDEM, I sacramentari e la questione del Natale e dell'Epifania a Roma (I-II), in «Rivista Liturgica» 22/12 (1935), pp. 355-358 and 23/1 (1936), pp. 10-17; IDEM, Il postcommunio della Messa di Natale all'aurora, in «Rivista Liturgica» 23/12 (1936), pp. 269-273; IDEM, Sacramenta Paschalia, in «Rivista Liturgica» 27/2-3 (1940), pp. 17-22; 33-37; IDEM, Mistero di Cristo e liturgia nello Spirito, Teologia Sapienziale 1, Vaticano, Roma 1986, 119-165

this feast its acceptance of sometimes exaggerated formulas and its return to a message more directly centered on the paschal mystery.<sup>20</sup>

The prayer texts traditionally used for this feast have often drawn inspiration from the liturgy, centered as it is on the paschal mystery. Many of these formulas, used especially in Holy Week, were inspired by the traditional link between *Jn* 8,38 «Let anyone who believes in me come and drink! As scripture says, "From his heart shall flow streams of living water"», and *Jn* 19,34 «One of the soldiers pierced his side with a lance; and immediately there came out blood and water». In spite of their antiquity, these liturgical formulas often dwell on Christ's inner sentiments and other themes normally associated with the more recent devotion to the Sacred Heart. The offertory antiphon used for Palm Sunday in the tridentine missal, «*Improperium exspectavit cor meum et miseriam, et sustinuit qui simul mecum contristaretur, et non fuit; consolantem me quaesivi, et non inveni...*», for instance, was later incorporated into the feast of the Sacred Heart. The liturgy of the paschal triduum tends to unite texts which emphasize both the triumphal character of the Savior's death and the reality of his human suffering, above all his interior rather than his physical suffering. The latter can be seen, for example, in antiphons such as those for Evening Prayer of Good Friday: «Look, all you peoples, and see my grief» and «My spirit fails; my heart is numb within me» which express Christ's loneliness, whereas the Office of Readings for Holy Saturday sets a more hopeful tone «Now I will lie down in peace and sleep comes at once» and «My body shall rest in hope». Also during the *Improperia* of the Adoration of the Cross we hear the reproach: «I opened the sea before you, but you opened my side with a spear». These liturgical expressions of Christ's inner sufferings influenced the incipient devotion to the Sacred Heart in the medieval monasteries,

<sup>20</sup> W. BAIER, *Puntos candentes de la devoción medieval al Corazón de Jesús*, in L. SCHEFFCZYK, *Cristología y devoción a Cristo*, Instituto Internacional del Corazón de Jesús, Bogotá 1982, pp. 69-89; I. DE LA POTTERIE, *Il mistero del cuore trafitto, Fondamenti biblici della spiritualità del cuore di Gesù*, EDB, Bologna 1988; M. GARRIDO, *El Corazón de Cristo en los himnos litúrgicos*, in R. VEKEMANS, *Cristología en la perspectiva del Corazón de Jesús*, Instituto Internacional del Corazón de Jesús, Bogotá 1982, pp. 412-434; F. MARIETTI, *Il Cuore di Gesù, Culto, devozione, spiritualità*, Ancora, Milano 1991; T.T. O'DONNELL, *Heart of the Redeemer, An Apologia for the Contemporary and Perennial Value of the Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco 1992; J. RATZINGER, *Behold the Pierced One*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco 1986, pp.47-71; Vv. AA., *Teologia e spiritualità del Cuore di Gesù, Atti del I Convegno Nazionale (Roma 21-25 aprile 1980)*, ED, Roma 1983; Vv. AA., *Towards a Civilization of Love, A Symposium on the Scriptural and Theological Foundations of the Devotion to the Heart of Jesus*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco 1985.



especially in writing related to the piercing of Christ's heart, as can be seen in writers such as the Venerable Bede, Gertrude the Great, Bernard and the Carthusian Ludolph of Saxony.

One also detects this devotion's dependence on the liturgy in the liturgical productions of the epoch. Although until the XVII century there are no hymns explicitly in honor of the Sacred Heart, before this date there are numerous other hymns, sequences and other texts for feasts which reflect a similar theological content and spiritual sentiment, such as the feast of the Holy Lance granted to Germany by Pope Innocent VI in 1354 at the request of Emperor Charles IV. On the other hand, some of the hymns composed for the feast of the Sacred Heart include themes which are found in earlier hymns going back to the VIII century.

The principal theme from earlier hymns applicable to the Sacred Heart is that of the piercing of Christ's heart, a biblical theme whose importance to the spirituality of the Sacred Heart has received great stress in recent decades. The hymns which refer to this episode sometimes unite it with expressions regarding Christ's love and reparation for him, and even link this passage with Isaiah 11,6 «Joyfully you will draw water from the springs of salvation».

The earliest known testimony of a hymn referring to Christ's pierced side is from a composition of Paulinus of Aquileia († 802) for the feast of St. Lazarus. In one of its 280 verses, the hymn describes Christ as the true rock struck by Moses from which flowed something far superior to the water of Horeb: the blood of redemption and the water of baptism. The same idea is repeated in a multitude of liturgical hymns from the tenth to the sixteenth centuries, which take up this essentially patristic theme of the redemptive and sacramental value of the piercing of Christ's side. For example the following verse is frequently found in the Divine Office *De Passione Domini* in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries:

Latus apertum lancea  
 cruore manat et aqua  
 quae sacra stillicidia  
 dant vitae beneficia.

Simultaneously other hymns anticipated the devotion to the Sacred Heart by adding the themes of Christ's love, his heart, and even the idea of reparation, to the traditional redemptive and sacramental motifs. For example the sequence *Latex silice*, found in several thirteenth-century manuscripts seems to prefigure the exhortations to

make reparation of St. Margaret Mary Alacoque or of several twentieth-century Papal documents. The first verses paint a picture of the suffering Christ while stressing that he has accepted this situation for us in order that such a clear demonstration of love should move our souls to react by freeing the heart of all hardness and give due regard to the one being offended by our sins.

In supplicilis -haec suplex hostia - dum stat in ostiis  
 petit haec stipendia, - ut de beneficiis - recens sit memoria,  
 quia pro te natus, - pro te perforatus - manus, pedes, latus.  
 Quid cor asperum, cor saxo durius, -tot fructus operum  
 quid reddis melius? -Ne dolore vulnerum -frangar Del Filius  
 vicem. quam rependis? - Quare non attendis, quid est, quem  
 offendis?...

The hymns of another frequently used office *De armis Domini*, found in at least 19 different XIV to XVI century liturgical books expresses similar sentiments as do the so called *Psalterium de Passione Domini* which were very popular in central Europe during the XIV century and which express almost all of the themes typical of Sacred Heart spirituality. The following verses illustrate this fact and express a truly committed spirituality and not mere religious sentiment.

Tibi cordis flumina - sanguinis et undae - meum. cor circumfleant,  
 influant et munde - abluant, inebrient - penetrent profunde,  
 ut te plene diligit, - serviat incunde ...  
 Tui cordis scissio - Iesu, scissionem - cordi mea ingerat - vulnera-  
 tionem  
 ex amore sentiat - cor et passionem - tuam suam faciat - per com-  
 passionem...  
 Paratum cor, Domine, - neum cor paratum - sit ut ibi serviat...

These liturgical witnesses show us that the spirituality and feast of the Sacred Heart acted as a conduit which channeled preexisting spiritual trends, and was in no way an absolute novelty. Once this feast was instituted, the number of works composed for its celebration multiplied from that of St. John Eudes (1668) until today<sup>21</sup>. These hymns and sequences in part reflected the development and history of the devotion

<sup>21</sup> Most of these hymns can be found in: U. CHEVALIER, *Repertorium hymnologicum*, Louvaina 1897; and especially: N. NILLES, *De rationibus festorum SS. Cordis Iesu et purissimi Cordis Mariae II*, Innsbruck 1885<sup>5</sup>.

to the Sacred Heart. Early compositions, such as the sequence *Gaudeamus exultantes* based on St. John Eudes and the hymns of his contemporary P. J. De Galliffet *Cor, digna sedes numinis*», *Iesu, voluptas cordium*; and «*O Cor Deo par victima*» echoed the aforementioned themes of Christ's Incarnation and Passion as the manifestation of God's love for us which demands a response of love and honor as well as a spirit of reparation for ones own and others ingratitude and offences against this love. To this they add a greater stress on the Eucharist as the synthesis of all the marvels that God has worked before his people as in De Galliffet's verse, «*O Cor, Deo par victima—altare sacratissimum—in quo perennis hostia - culpas piat mortalium*».

Many other similar hymns and offices were composed for different orders and convents and received various degrees of official approval. Most of them express a sincere and fervent piety, though they suffer from theological and poetic poverty. Some hymns, however, conserved a less sentimental piety, rooted in the earlier traditions such as the magnificent *Summi Parentis Filio*, from a Dominican breviary in 1757, and the three hymns composed by F. Bruni (1771), which Manuel Garrido considers the best hymns composed for this feast of which two are still in use in the present Liturgy of the Hours: *En ut superba criminum, Auctor beate saculi*, and *Cor arca legem continens*. This last hymn, still used for the Office of Readings, contains the traditional themes of Christ's heart pierced by a lance according to biblical images and hail this heart as the Arc of the new law—the law of grace, of pardon and of mercy—and later presents it as the new sanctuary of the eternal covenant wounded out of charity. His opened flesh remains visible so that we may honor him. Such images serve to underscore Christ's love for man and how this love requires a corresponding love—*Quis non amantem redamet*—as a sign of reparation.

Cor arca legem continens  
 non servitutis vetéris  
 sed gratiae, sed veniae,  
 sed et misericordiae  
 – Cor sanctuarium novi  
 intemeratum foederis  
 templum vetusto santius  
 velumque scisso utilius  
 – Te vulneratum caritas  
 ictu patenti voluit  
 amoris invisibilis

ut veneremur vulnera.  
 – Hoc sub amoris symbolo  
 passus cruenta et mystica,  
 utrumque sacrificium  
 Christus sacerdos obtulit  
 – Quis non amantem redamet?  
 quis non redemptus dilifgat,  
 et Corde in isto seligat  
 aeterna tabernacula?

The present selection of hymns for the feast of the Sacred Heart shows that from the mass of compositions created for this feast over time and used in the liturgy in many different contexts, the more sentimental and theologically inferior have little by little been expurgated from the liturgy, leaving those which best capture the essence of the biblical and sacramental foundations of the devotion to the Sacred Heart and which existed even before the modern version of the devotion. This can also be seen in that the hymn presently in use for Morning prayer, *Iesu auctor clementiae* was not composed for the feast at all but is taken from the Medieval «*Jubilus*»: *Iesu dulcis memoria*, which hails from the twelfth century and is attributed to a follower of St. Bernard of Clairvaux, and yet fits perfectly into the context of the Sacred Heart without mentioning it explicitly:

Iesus, auctor clementiae,  
 totius spes laetitiae,  
 dulcoris fons et graiae  
 verae cordis deliciae.  
 – Iesu, spes paenitentibus,  
 quem pius es petentibus,  
 quam bonus et quaerentibus;  
 sed quid invenientibus?  
 – Tua, Iesu, dilectio,  
 grata mentis refectio,  
 replet sine fastidio,  
 dans famen desiderio.  
 – O Iesu dilectissime,  
 spes suspirantis animae,  
 te quaerunt piae lacrimae,  
 te clamor mentis intimae.  
 – Mane nobiscum, Domine,  
 mane novum cum lugime,

pulsa noctis caligine  
mundum replens dulcedine.  
– Iesu, summa benignitas  
mira cordis iucunditas  
incomrehensa bonitas  
tua nos stringit caritas.

Thus, in this hymn, Christ is presented in loving terms as the author of mercy, hope and joy, the source of peace and delight for all those who invoke him and who trusts in him while turning away from sin. Later verses express the ardent and passionate desire of the soul for complete union with Christ as the ultimate goal of man's life.

Many other hymns could be presented but these should suffice for our purpose in supporting our position regarding the reasons why some elements survive in the liturgy while others disappear. The hymns which we have examined and which continue in use tend to share certain common elements and themes which are also found in the principal magisterial teachings regarding the true sense of the devotion to the Sacred Heart and which show that this devotion as a true development in the Church's reflection upon Christ. These themes, such as the biblical foundation of the devotion in Christ's Passion, especially in the episode of the piercing of his Heart; the emphasis on the reality of the divine humanity insofar as these hymns are a profession of faith in the Incarnation of the divine Word. The hymns also speak of Christ's love for man which requires a corresponding love and, while they do not generally use the word reparation, they certainly treat this theme, so common in papal teachings, inasmuch as they contemplate Christ wounded for our sins and ask that we do all that is in our power to satisfy the offences which caused his sufferings especially by refraining from all further sin and by offering our lives to Christ. These hymns also touch on other themes, such as the relationship between the Eucharist and the devotion to Sacred Heart, Christian service and charity, and consecration etc.

## 5. Possible Future Applications of these Reflections

The example which these hymns give us of a robust spirituality which from the earliest times has forged the principal themes of the devotion to the Sacred Heart into lasting liturgical formulas while leaving aside less felicitous expressions can offer us some pointers in dis-

cerning which of the liturgical expressions of the numerous new movements and other realities which have sprung up in the Church in recent decades are destined to survive and be incorporated into the Church's living liturgy and which will probably fall by the wayside. The experience of the Church in the birth, growth and establishment of earlier spiritual movements and theological trends shows that over time those aspects with the firmest roots in the objective mystery of salvation are most fitted for survival, while those aspects based upon the sentiments or other subjective elements will eventually become extinct. While the Church may not tolerate any theological aberrations in its official prayer life, at times it may tolerate temporary mutations which may be of spiritual benefit for certain times and places, confident that the natural selection of «spiritual darwinism» will eventually eliminate the less desirable elements and restore the liturgical organism to health.

**Sommario:** *Muovendo dal principio generale che i diversi modi di fare cristologia ispirano una corrispondente spiritualità cristologica, l'articolo intende riflettere sulla storia del rapporto fra cristologia, liturgia e vita spirituale dei fedeli e sulle interpretazioni date a tali rapporti. Dopo aver esaminato alcune recenti interpretazioni sulla relazione tra antico, medievale e moderno, si prendono le distanze da taluni giudizi negativi sulla cristologia e spiritualità medievali. Si propone inoltre di sviluppare dei criteri per spiegare la sopravvivenza di certe spiritualità e la scomparsa di altri e la loro possibilità di influire sulla liturgia della Chiesa.*

**Parole chiave:** Titoli cristologiche liturgici, "Cristologia minore", spiritualità medievale, Darwinismo spirituale, Banca di prova il Sacro Cuore

**Keywords:** Liturgical Christological titles, "Minor Christology", Medieval spirituality, Spiritual Darwinism, Test case Sacred Heart