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**Wittgenstein and Worship:
Investigations of Liturgical Language-Games
and Their Formative Role in Christian Identity**

by

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A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the School of Theology of Saint John's University,
Collegeville, Minnesota, in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
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**WITTGENSTEIN AND WORSHIP:
INVESTIGATIONS OF LITURGICAL LANGUAGE-GAMES
AND THEIR FORMATIVE ROLE IN CHRISTIAN IDENTITY**

Description: I argue that the Christian community's religious language games, particularly liturgical action (*theologia prima*) and theological reflection (*theologia secunda*), mutually shape and correct one another. I demonstrate this using Wittgenstein's philosophical method, adapting his approach to philosophy for theological use. The first part of this essay explains and demonstrates Wittgenstein's philosophical method. The second part is an application of his method (with my own adaptation of this method for theology) with Christian liturgy as its subject. The third part of this essay discusses ways in which Wittgenstein's approach might be adapted further in a fruitful way for theological reflection and catechesis.

This paper may be duplicated.

Michelle Kathleen Weber

Date

*For Joe,
sine qua non.*

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PREFACE

OUTLINING THE THESIS

Since the close of the Second Vatican Council in 1965, division has arisen in the Roman Catholic Church over questions about liturgy and liturgical theology. Debates go on about the roles of rubrics versus spontaneity, rules versus inspiration of the Spirit, rigidity versus laxity. Regardless of where any individual stands, it is clear that Roman Catholics, insofar as they are divided against one another, are in crisis. It is the opinion of this author that a lack of excellent catechesis, for children and adults alike, is at the heart of this crisis. Catechesis for college students especially is lacking, coming in the form of religion or theology classes that polarize the differences between academics and faith and choose one or the other as the protagonist. This thesis is a two-fold response: first, it is a response to religion and theology courses in liturgy that fail to integrate academic study with the development of faith. Second, it is a response to parishes in which liturgy and liturgical catechesis are, in some way, deficient. This thesis is not an attempt to give an exhaustive answer to any questions pertaining to liturgy. It is rather an attempt to provide one new, fruitful approach to the subject of Christian liturgy, especially Roman Catholic liturgy, by integrating wisdom from two academic fields: theology and philosophy. It is the hope of the author that this approach will be useful both to academics and catechists, and that each type of reader will have gained a greater appreciation of the other by the end.

This thesis is a philosophical and theological venture. I will argue that the Christian community's religious language-games, particularly liturgical action (*theologia prima*) and theological reflection (*theologia secunda*), mutually shape and correct one

another. I will demonstrate this using Ludwig Wittgenstein's philosophical method, adapting his approach to philosophy for theological use. I will consider the role of liturgy as a formative act of the Christian community; this itself will be an act of theological reflection. The first part of this essay will consist in explaining and demonstrating Wittgenstein's philosophical method. The second part will be an application of his method (with my own adaptation of this method for theology) with Christian liturgy as its subject. The third part of this essay will be a discussion of ways in which Wittgenstein's approach might be adapted further in a fruitful way for theological reflection and catechesis.

PART I

INTRODUCING WITTGENSTEIN'S LATER METHOD

Systematic theologians often adopt a foundational approach to theology: starting with a basic premise, they build a theo-logical fortress, that is a logical tree of premises and conclusions about God, usually as God relates (or does not relate) to humanity.

Fergus Kerr suggests that the desire for foundations, or a system that claims objective truth in a logical pattern, is a by-product of Descartes' ego-centric philosophical legacy.¹

The Cartesian mythology's genesis assumes that what the self perceives (out there, in the world) is alien and misleading. This is a mythology to which the larger part of the occidental world has been subject for several centuries, and the desire for an objective, foundational system is evidence for this. I will argue that the foundational approach to liturgy is theologically problematic insofar as it encourages idolatry: the idolatry of one system, one construct, one image of God, over all others, as if God could be captured in the box of human concepts.

The approach taken here will be an attempt to play a different philosophical game: rather than forming a system, I will engage in Ludwig Wittgenstein's later method of inquiry. Whether or not Wittgenstein's approach to philosophy can be applied to theology is part of the question; I will argue that it can. Let us proceed then to examine Wittgenstein's approach. To do this, I will first examine his early philosophical method in order to show where Wittgenstein thought he went wrong although his purpose remained the same.²

¹ Fergus Kerr. *Theology after Wittgenstein*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: SPCK, 1997): 23.

² Marie McGinn. *Wittgenstein and the Philosophical Investigations* (New York: Routledge, 1997): 2, 10.

CHAPTER 1

WITTGENSTEIN'S EARLY PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATIONS: THE *TRACTATUS*

Ludwig Wittgenstein was born in 1889 to a wealthy, Viennese, Catholic family of musicians. He studied engineering at the Technische Hochschule in Charlottenburg and continued on to Cambridge where he met and was mentored by Bertrand Russell, an eminent mathematician, logician, and philosopher of the early twentieth century.³

Wittgenstein wrote and sent the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* to Russell while interred in an Italian prison camp following the First World War. Russell read it and responded with comments and questions, to which Wittgenstein responded in a letter,

Now I'm afraid you haven't really got hold of my main contention, to which the whole business of logical propositions is only corollary. The main point is the theory of what can be expressed (*gesagt*) by propositions—i.e. by language (and, what comes to the same, what can be *thought*) and what cannot be expressed by propositions, but only shown (*gezeigt*); which, I believe, is the cardinal problem of philosophy. . . .⁴

Russell's subsequent introduction to the *Tractatus*, while written to lend credence to the value of and notoriety to the author's work, proved as distressing as Russell's original comments. "There's so much of it that I'm not in agreement with, both where you're critical of me and also where you're simply trying to elucidate my point of view."⁵ After a failed attempt to have it published in German without the introduction, the *Tractatus* was published with the introduction in English.

³ Philosopher Ray Monk, author of Wittgenstein's authoritative biography, *Ludwig Wittgenstein: The Duty of Genius* (New York, Penguin, 1991), also published a two-volume biography of Bertrand Russell. The details of the lives of each of these men (and their mutual influence on one another) are masterfully narrated in these works.

⁴ GEM Anscombe, *An Introduction to Wittgenstein's Tractatus*, 2nd ed, rev. (New York: Harper & Row, 1959): 161.

⁵ Monk, *Ludwig Wittgenstein*, 183.

The *Tractatus* was a system comprising seven major propositions, with sub-propositions following all but the final proposition. They are brief and worth providing here as a picture of the philosophical system Wittgenstein had made:

- 1) The world is all that is the case.
- 2) What is the case—a fact—is the existence of states of affairs.
- 3) A logical picture of facts is a thought.
- 4) A thought is a proposition with a sense.
- 5) A proposition is a truth-function of elementary propositions. (An elementary proposition is a truth-function of itself.)
- 6) The general form of a truth-function is $[\bar{p}, \bar{\xi}, N(\bar{\xi})]$.
This is the general form of a proposition.
- 7) What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence.⁶

The propositions were designed to say all that could be said about language; more importantly in the eyes of the author, however, they were designed to *show* that which could *not* be said.⁷

With regard to what could be said, Wittgenstein introduced a picture theory of language. His claim was that we become ensnared by knots in which we tie ourselves through the misuse of language; thus, “Philosophy is a battle against the bewitchment of our intelligence by means of language.”⁸ This bewitchment could be exorcised by picturing a given proposition and comparing it with the “picture” of the world. If the pictures were not identical, then the original proposition would be recognized as either false or nonsensical. Philosophy’s purpose, rather than attempting to construct a system

⁶ Translated by D.F. Pears and B.F. McGuinness.

⁷ This distinction, and the failure to take its implications seriously, is a frequent error among philosophers studying Wittgenstein. The Vienna Circle, for example, took Wittgenstein to mean that facts (all that is the case) alone were of import. Even Russell read the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* as though Wittgenstein thought what he had managed to *say* was the source of his greatest concern. On the contrary, Wittgenstein considered that it was that which could not be said (*das Mystisch*, ethics, God, music, etc.) that was most important. This, he wished to claim, was that which could only be shown (TLP 6.51, 6.521, 6.522, 6.53, 6.54).

⁸ Ludwig Wittgenstein. *Philosophische Untersuchung*, 3rd ed., trans. M. Kate Weber (Malden: Blackwell, 2001): §109.

in which all reality might be rightly understood, is rather to unwind the knots in the systems in which one is caught. Wittgenstein reconsiders and critiques his picture theory in his later philosophy, but his concern with *das Mystisch* is already evident in the early work.

“That which cannot be said, one must pass over in silence” (TLP 7).⁹ The content that *could not be said* was of foremost concern to Wittgenstein. This was *das Mystisch*, the transcendental, the place of ethics (TLP 6.421). In the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein both said that there was a difference between saying and showing and proceeded to demonstrate the difference. After all his saying, he chose to remain silent about that which he claimed could not be said—what the naïve observer might miss is that Wittgenstein grants what may be shown a higher rank than what may be said. He is quite clear in his preference, however. “My propositions serve as elucidations in the following way: anyone who understands me eventually recognizes them as nonsensical, when he has used them—as steps—to climb up beyond them. (He must, so to speak, throw away the ladder after he has climbed up it.)” (TLP 6.54).

Wittgenstein nudges us toward his understanding of ethics and aesthetics by remarking that ethics clearly cannot be said (TLP 6.421). This seems a strange claim at first, since volumes have been written on ethics and, in this very proposition, Wittgenstein himself is putting into words a position on ethics. He continues in the same proposition, “Ethics is transcendental. (Ethics and aesthetics are one and the same.)”

⁹ “Wovon man nicht sprechen kann, darüber muss man schweigen.“ All quotations of Wittgenstein in this essay are translated by M. Kate Weber except where noted.

(TLP 6.421).¹⁰ This claim is the ladder one must climb, for one may fail to understand that the transcendental cannot be said until someone makes that much plain—and generally, this entails some form of verbal explanation. There is a reversal of this in the practice of Christian mystagogy, for silence is not the ultimate response of a Christian: the Word enfleshed, praising God and sharing the good news, is the ultimate response in which Christians participate as Christ’s Body on earth. Integral to this participation within liturgical traditions are ritual actions accompanied by ritual tropal or figurative language. These actions and language they are subsequently talked out—said—in catechesis and faith formation for the sake of deepened understanding. The practice of mystagogy and Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus* are alike in that they attempt to put into words that which has been made manifest. What remains clear is that the words do not—cannot—replace that which is transcendental (namely, ethical, aesthetic, etc). “There are, indeed, things that cannot be put into words. They *make themselves manifest*. They are what is mystical”¹¹ Whereas the *Tractatus* discusses what is the case in the world (facts lacking transcendent value), theological reflection has to do with that which has value, is transcendent, and about which Wittgenstein claims we should be silent. Theological reflection is distinct from the sort of discourse found in the *Tractatus*; it is multivalent, tropal, and rooted in that about which Wittgenstein claims we must be silent.

The question of ethical value appears in Wittgenstein’s well-known lecture on ethics: Wittgenstein speaks of what he means by absolute or ethical *value*. “I believe the best way of describing [absolute or ethical value] is to say that when I have it *I wonder at*

¹⁰ Here Wittgenstein does not appear to be making a Kierkegaardian distinction between ethics and aesthetics; rather, beauty, and the ethical decision both belong to the transcendental plane, not subject to the criteria and analytical methods of the scientific plane.

¹¹ 6.522.

the existence of the world."¹² Wonder and awe, to use grammatical terms, are first-person attitudes rather than empirically verifiable states. Value is not subject to empirical, non-subjective analysis. The subject—the agent—encounters something and reacts to it, and the reaction is the manifestation of ethical or absolute value. Value *cannot* be said precisely because it *can* be shown.¹³ His awe resides in a question asked by Leibniz two centuries before him: "Why is there something rather than nothing?"¹⁴ That there is something rather than nothing, and that this is the source of my awe, is the starting point for ethics. "It is not *how* things are in the world that is mystical, but *that* it exists,"¹⁵ Wittgenstein writes. This attitude presupposes the empirical world, namely the "how" that constitutes the way the world is—and jumps to the non-empirical marvel *that* the world exists. How does one then step from the attitude of awe to ethical decision-making? The answer, perhaps, lies in this: in considering with wonder what one usually takes as granted and ordinary (e.g. the existence of the world), the ethical agent may be moved to make a choice that is not based on the ego. If I acknowledge splendor outside myself, my ethical decisions are different than if they were ego-centric. My decisions, as an acknowledgement of what is beyond myself, cannot be said in the same way empirical facts in the world are said: they must be made manifest.¹⁶

Thus, rather than an ideal to be discussed in abstraction, Wittgenstein discusses *das Mystisch* as the ongoing crossroads between ethical agent and ethical situation. The

¹² Ludwig Wittgenstein. "A Lecture on Ethics." *Philosophical Occasions*. Ed. Klagge, James and Alfred Nordmann (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1993): 41.

¹³ *Tractatus*, 4.1212.

¹⁴ In his argument for the existence of God, Leibniz asks, "*Why is there something rather than nothing?* For nothing is simpler and easier than something." Taken from "The Principles of Nature and of Grace." *From Descartes to Locke*, Ed. Smith, T.V. and Marjorie Grene (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1940): 324.

¹⁵ *Tractatus*, 6.44.

¹⁶ My words point back to me and my virtue and therefore serve only to puff me up; words in this case demonstrate the opposite of moral virtue. Recall Jesus' admonishment of the scribes, Mk 12:38-40.

agent shows her ethical position in every decision, whether it is the decision to act for change or the decision to withdraw. These decisions are not said; saying them entails nothing. The ethical decision occurs in action, in the manifest choice of acting or declining to act.

Maurice O'Connor Drury, a friend of Wittgenstein, recalls him saying the following with regard to Christianity and religiosity: "If you and I are to live religious lives, it mustn't be that we talk a lot about religion, but that our manner of life is different. It is my belief that only if you try to be helpful to other people will you in the end find your way to God."¹⁷ Søren Kierkegaard, whom Wittgenstein held in high esteem,¹⁸ wrote theologically for an audience he labeled "Christendom." Distinguishing between Christendom (Christian identity by geographical accident) and Christianity (Christian identity by intentional choosing), Kierkegaard sought to turn the members of Christendom into Christians by gradually retelling the gospel of Christ in a manner that would draw attention to the lived message of Jesus, rather than drawing attention to details about the messenger Jesus. Kierkegaard complains of the desire he notes in others to go beyond faith, as though faith were already present in the members of Christendom and there were something more to gain.

It was different in those ancient days. Faith was then a task for a whole lifetime, because it was assumed that proficiency in believing is not acquired either in days or in weeks. When the tried and tested oldster approached his end, had fought the good fight and kept the faith, his heart was still young enough not to have forgotten the anxiety and trembling that disciplined the youth, that the adult learned to control, but that no man outgrows—except to the extent that he succeeds in going further as early as possible. The point attained by those

¹⁷ Maurice O'Connor Drury. "Conversations with Wittgenstein." *The Danger of Words and writings on Wittgenstein* (Bristol: Thoemmes, 2003): 114.

¹⁸ M O'C Drury records Wittgenstein saying that Kierkegaard "was by far the most profound thinker of the last century. Kierkegaard was a saint." *Ibid.*, 36.

venerable personages is in our age the point where everyone begins in order to go further.¹⁹

It is the case that, in acquiring knowledge, I start where other thinkers have left off; but Kierkegaard's point here is to contrast knowledge and faith. I do not pick up where other faithful persons have left off; rather, I begin in the very same place where those other faithful persons started: in fear and trembling. To be a faithful person is to appropriate one's identity as a Christian, given at baptism: to face the Word of God as an individual. What this means in practice is that relationship with Christ does not mean idolization of Christ through knowledge about him; to be in relationship with Christ is to acknowledge and respond to Christ's call. This does not happen on a merely intellectual level. To think about acting in a particular way is not equivalent to acting in a particular way. For a Christian to act or not act is to make a choice, either for or against the call of Christ. These notions of Kierkegaard are prominent in the backdrop of Wittgenstein's ethical concerns.

It is worth noting that Wittgenstein's "Lecture on Ethics" was the only public presentation he ever gave.²⁰ In this very action we must *see* what Wittgenstein shows: that ethical action itself is not a matter of saying, but we talk about it nevertheless. Some Wittgensteinians have argued that Wittgenstein considered it inappropriate ever to talk about ethics. In fact, by his own talking of it, he shows that he considers it a right topic for discourse. Talking about ethics and acting ethically thus have their own places in human interaction, neither replacing the other, but both important. I will argue similarly

¹⁹ Kierkegaard, Søren. *Fear and Trembling*. Ed. Hong, Edna H and Howard V. Hong. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983): 7.

²⁰ Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Occasions*, 36. Wittgenstein delivered this lecture to the Heretics Society (a cohort of students without any particular investment in the study of philosophy or ethics) of Cambridge University on 17 November 1929.

that talking about God (*theologia secunda*) and interacting with God (*theologia prima*) are distinct but theologically important activities.²¹ I will describe the kinds of importance that should be ascribed to each and the necessity of distinguishing between them in the second and third parts of this paper.

²¹ I will not argue that the existence of God must be established; in the case of believers interacting with God, existence is assumed. I will discuss the notion of interacting with God presently.

CHAPTER 2

FROM PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATIONS TO PHILOSOPHICAL GRAMMAR

When Wittgenstein wrote *Philosophical Grammar* (PG), he was in the process of moving away from the picture theory of the *Tractatus*. What Wittgenstein began to realize was that his picture implied a certain kind of philosophical foundationalism: one's picture, if proper, logically and fundamentally matched that which was "real" in the world.²² This, Monk writes of Wittgenstein, had been shown to him to be erroneous, "and there was no point in publishing a work that simply repeated the old mistakes. The *Tractatus* analysis of the proposition must be replaced by a 'perspicuous representation' of grammar which would throw overboard 'all the dogmatic things that I said about 'objects,' 'elementary propositions' etc.'"²³

What Wittgenstein had effectively implied in the *Tractatus* was two-fold: 1) we could get outside our language to point at some-thing not subject to it²⁴, and 2) there was a dichotomous gulf between language and states of affairs.²⁵ Private language is possible within such a system; a person can certainly have words that only she knows—and that only she can understand—that refer to objects, given that objects do not have any necessary connection to the language used. That is, if language is on some level arbitrarily assigned to objects, then it is possible for an individual arbitrarily to assign other words, private words, to objects. If one can arbitrarily name objects, it follows that

²² *Tractatus* 2.1514: "The pictorial relationship consists of the correlations of picture with things." 2.1515, "These correlations are, as it were, feelers of the pictures elements, with which the picture touches reality."

²³ Monk, *Ludwig Wittgenstein*, 319-21.

²⁴ *Tractatus*, 4.01: "A proposition is a picture of reality. A proposition is a model of reality as we imagine it."

²⁵ Wittgenstein considers states of affairs to be things, objects, configurations: "A state of affairs (a state of things) is a combination of objects (things)" (*Tractatus* 2.01). Between the words we use and the objects to which language refers, there is an irreducible chasm.

one can easily and arbitrarily attribute new meaning to words. Radical relativism—and the idea that all communication is actually translation—follows from this.²⁶

Wittgenstein shifted from the picture theory of the *Tractatus* to a method of philosophizing that made room for all actual uses of words in a language. By considering the actual uses of language rather than its idealized uses, Wittgenstein began to tap into a revolutionary notion of logic reflected and expressed in (though not contained or trapped by) language. “The idea that explanations of meaning don’t take us outside language at all,” writes Felicity McCutcheon, “is vital to Wittgenstein’s concept of grammatical explanations and the way in which they are distinct from empirical explanations. Meaning does not lie *behind* the signs we use,” McCutcheon claims.²⁷ Two philosophical tricks are trumped: out goes the idea of a platonic realm of forms which mold materiality in the imperfect likeness of an idea; along with it goes the idea of language as a tool that one uses and then sets aside when some other medium—or immediate access—is more appealing. In other words, the way in which objects mean is not separated from language as photographs are separate from the objects whose images are captured. The picture and object analogy is subverted.

²⁶ Willard V.O. Quine’s philosophy contributes to the notion that we engage in translation in ordinary communication. He sets this up in his discussion of radical translation in *Word and Object* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1964): 39: “For the stimulus meaning of an occasion sentence is by definition the native’s total battery of present dispositions to be prompted to assent to or to dissent from the sentence; and *these dispositions* are just what the linguist has to sample and estimate” (emphasis mine). Quine ends this work with the solution of semantic ascent: if we agree in what we *mean* by our terms, we will understand each other. Translation of what we mean is the key, then, whenever ordinary discourse fails. Quine’s argument is both brilliant and useful—yes, clarification is key—but it betrays his underlying distrust of ordinary language and shared discourse. To clarify one’s use of terminology is to demonstrate that one’s use is somehow deviant from that which one finds ordinarily within the context of the language game at hand. But unless there is an established use, an established ordinary language game, there can be no such deviance from it, in which case all communication is translation. This is what Quine unfortunately points to in his notion of semantic ascent. Quine does not go so far as to say, however, that all communication is translation; Donald Davidson, pushing Quine’s logic, does draw this conclusion. See Davidson, Donald. “Radical Interpretation.” *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation*. 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001): 125-140.

²⁷ McCutcheon, Felicity. *Religion within the Limits of Language Alone* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001): 73.

Although Wittgenstein later moved away from a systematized approach to philosophy, he coined new terms and made unique use of ordinary terms, such that he worried that the only seed he was likely to sow was a new jargon.²⁸ A review of some of these terms will be helpful, if only to avoid unnecessary confusion.²⁹

The Language-Game One of the most important of Wittgenstein's terms to understand is *das Sprachspiel*, the language-game. The German term *Spiel* lends itself to many associations: sports, dramatic productions, puzzles, and board-games, to name a few. The concept "language-game" shares these associations. At the beginning of his *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein gives a definition for the term: "I shall call language and the acts into which it is woven the language-game."³⁰ His philosophical interest is not in manipulating words as though they were arbitrary or detached from meaning. Rather, he recognizes the craft of using language (including words, spoken or written) in the context of act-ing. By "acting" I do not mean the sort of acting that players on a stage do; nor do I mean acting in the loaded sense of asserting one's power or authority as an agent. I wish to refer to the ordinary act-ing of quotidian life. I wake up, I shower, I call my best friend, I chat with my neighbors, I walk to the refectory for lunch, I ride the bus into town for a cup of coffee: these are examples of what I mean by act-ing. In the specific contexts of waking, showering, calling, chatting, walking, riding,

²⁸ Malcolm, Norman. *Ludwig Wittgenstein: A Memoir*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001): 53.

²⁹ Wittgenstein's philosophical purpose was not to create an arcane vocabulary; it is fair to assume that he had something clear in mind when he used unusual terms or phrases. Some, however, he used so infrequently that it is debatable whether we can figure out what he intended at all. The key, I contend, is to look at the method and approach of his larger corpus of writings, rather than chipping away at tiny remarks. Taking any of his remarks out of the greater context of his collected writings will serve only to reflect what we wish to see, rather than what he meant to convey. It is well and good to make use of individual insights that may arise from Wittgenstein's remarks, but the aim of this paper is to appropriate Wittgenstein's approach, rather than any of his individual comments.

³⁰ Wittgenstein, *Philosophische Untersuchungen*, §7.

sipping, etc., I may speak or write (i.e. use words), just as in the context of writing this essay I have formed a list of examples of ways in which I act.

Second, a word about “using words.” If one were to ask what it meant to “use words,” one might answer simply by using words (as I am using them now to write this essay). One might also consider other examples of what it means “to use.” This verb is transitive: it demands an object. One “uses” some *thing*; one does not merely “use.” There are also various “uses” of words to consider, uses situated within language-games. Words are like tools in that they may serve a variety of functions in given sentences.³¹ Confusion about “using words” or “uses of words” might arise if one imagines words having an arbitrary, static connection to meaning. Words mean dynamically according to their uses in language-games, rather than bearing meanings arbitrarily attached to them. This is connected to a third point, that human action is social and linguistic, even when one is alone or when one does not speak. That is, it thrives and lives in the context of ongoing human interaction.³² For example, Person A—I will call him Joshua—may speak. Joshua’s speaking is an act. Person B—I will call her Olivia—may listen and respond. Olivia’s listening and responding is a reaction. This exchange constitutes Joshua and Olivia’s interaction. Insofar as Olivia goes beyond what Joshua says to initiate a topic of discussion, she acts (in addition to her reacting). There are of course many ways for two persons to inter-act, and inter-act-ion may or may not include the use of spoken words. My point here is to remind the reader that act-ion done by a linguistic actor (a human person) has its roots in social, linguistic inter-act-ion.

³¹ Wittgenstein employs the picture of a toolbox in *Philosophische Untersuchungen*, §11.

³² The ordered pair, “(action, reaction) → interaction” was authored by Joseph A. Buckley, Ph.D., Professor Emeritus of philosophy at John Carroll University in Cleveland, Ohio.

Insofar as we speak or write (rather than abstain from verbal communication), we “use” language as a tool for inter-action. As argued above, however, it would be a mistake to suppose that language is *merely* a tool, one that linguistic persons can set aside at will. To be silent is not to set aside language. It is possible to communicate wordlessly, but not non-linguistically. Any example of a non-linguistic communication would be equivalent to a non-human communication. Human communication is rooted in language-games, language and the acts into which it is woven. Language is not shed as one sheds a jacket. Heidegger wrote, “the human acts as though the human were the shaper and **master** of language, while in fact language remains the **master** of the human.”³³ Language shapes human beings. Language is not something to turn on and off; it is not an opaque bubble outside in which we are caught and outside of which stands “reality.” Language is the mode of human being and interaction; it is the way in which we are human. To get outside language would be, by this definition, to cease human act-ing.

Form-of-Life A second (and much more difficult) term Wittgenstein used was *das Lebensform*, or form-of-life.³⁴ Newton Garver has pointed out that Wittgenstein uses the term a full five times in all his writings without defining it.³⁵ This helps account for the subsequent emergence of widely differing uses of the term, all under the banner of Wittgenstein’s originally intended meaning. Many theologians who examine Wittgenstein’s philosophical method make use of this term, notably John K. Downey, Louis-Marie Chauvet, and Anthony Thiselton. Thiselton follows Wittgenstein’s example

³³ Heidegger, Martin. *Poetry, Language, Thought* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971): 144, my translation.

³⁴ “To imagine a language means to imagine a form-of-life.” Wittgenstein, *Philosophische Untersuchung*, §19.

³⁵ Garver, Newton. *This Complicated Form of Life* (Chicago: Open Court Publishing, 1994): 237.

of using the term without defining it; unfortunately, he does not contextualize the term and thus fails to clarify how he means to use it in his work.³⁶ Downey helpfully takes “form-of-life” outside the role of “enduring theory” and regards it as a tool whose value is its usefulness in a given task.³⁷ For the purposes of this paper, form-of-life will be understood to mean not only unique biological differences between various kinds of creatures (e.g. humans, lions, and walruses) but cultural, ethical, and especially religious differences. To illuminate this use of the term, George Lindbeck’s discussion of the nature of the doctrine³⁸ will be helpful. Lindbeck’s main concern is to get away from an understanding of doctrine that is either merely propositional or that rejects propositions altogether in exchange for symbols that express and religious or liturgical experiences that emblemize, though not explicitly, doctrinal belief. Doctrine understood as merely proposition or merely symbolic experience, he calls extra-textual. To play the language-game of doctrine is to understand doctrine intra-textually. Where doctrine and the living of human life meet, there is form-of-life.

Grammar Wittgenstein’s noted parenthetical remark, “Theology as grammar,” follows a longer general discussion of grammar. In the section preceding that which contains the parenthetical remark, Wittgenstein writes, “*Essence [Das Wesen]* is expressed in grammar.”³⁹ Put another way: “What kind of thing an object is, grammar says.”⁴⁰ Of all the terms specially used by Wittgenstein, “grammar” is probably the term

³⁶ Thiselton, Anthony C. *The Two Horizons: New Testament Hermeneutics and Philosophical Description* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980): 7-8, 33, 37, 164, 360-1, 373-9.

³⁷ Downey, John. *Beginning at the Beginning: Wittgenstein and Theological Conversation* (New York: University Press of America, 1986): 79, fnt 8.

³⁸ Lindbeck, George. *On the Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (London: SPCK, 1984).

³⁹ Wittgenstein, *Philosophische Untersuchung*, §371.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, §373.

most borrowed by Wittgensteinian theologians. Like “form-of-life,” it is employed in a variety of ways.

The first theologian to treat the term “grammar” prominently in a theological work was Paul Holmer in *The Grammar of Faith*. He begins to illustrate his understanding of the term in the preface:

Ludwig Wittgenstein’s careful use of *grammar* in the *Philosophical Investigations* gave a new impetus and a more careful set of considerations to go with the expression. A leading thought of his book suggests that quite primitive instances of the language of faith and the life of faithful believers answer to one another. Both belong to a single grammar.⁴¹

He continues in the same direction in the first chapter: “Most people speak fairly grammatically, long after they have forgotten the grammatical rules.” Holmer continues to the heart of his theology:

In so far as Christianity can be “said” at all, theology and Scripture say it. But what is therein said, be it the words of eternal life, be it creeds, or be it the words of Jesus Himself, we must note that like grammar and logic, their aim is not that we repeat the words. Theology also must be absorbed, and when it is, the hearer is supposed to become Godly.”⁴²

Here Holmer begins to illustrate the difference between theological surface grammar and theological depth grammar. Though a Christian or community of Christians may be following the grammatical rules on the surface, grammatical error may still be present.

I single out Holmer’s theological use of “grammar” not only for its affinities to Wittgenstein’s approach but because it is one that is picked up and adapted by many subsequent theologians, especially philosophical theologians, including Richard Bell,⁴³ E. Byron Anderson,⁴⁴ and others. A close reading of Holmer reveals that his use of

⁴¹ Paul Holmer. *The Grammar of Faith* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978): ix.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 19.

⁴³ *Grammar of the Heart, The*. Ed. Bell, Richard (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988).

⁴⁴ Anderson, E. Byron. *Worship and Christian Identity: Practicing Ourselves* (Collegeville, Pueblo, 2003).

“grammar” has less to do with rules (written, memorized, or classroom-learned) than with theology as a way of living, a way of positioning oneself in relationship to God. Holmer writes to debunk the plurality of mutually exclusive “theologies” that he finds flowing through the Academy and leaking into lay church life.⁴⁵ Like Kierkegaard, Holmer would have theology be understood not as the latest fad that one might espouse or dismiss at one’s leisure, but rather as the foundation of Christian life. This foundation is not of propositions (though it includes these), but of the living relationship between human beings and God.⁴⁶ Theology, both primary (liturgical) and secondary (reflective) is the form-of-life that Christians live.

Grammar, for Holmer, is a doing; to act “grammatically” is to act correctly. He relates grammar to theology and theology to faith; he does not use the term “grammar” in a conventional sense, but analogically. Rule-learning (grammar-learning) is not enough if it is merely a memorization of patterns. However, grammar can be used by grammarians to identify and then help fix a problem. Grammarians serve to assist the majority of folks who, though they have long ago learned their grammar lessons, still make minor and major errors in their grammar. This is more serious than keeping verb tenses straight: theologians as grammarians are concerned with the consistency between word, deed, and attitude. Surface grammar is not the ultimate concern, though right doctrinal wording and right adherence to rubrics is important. The issue here is one that concerns all Christians in every aspect of their lives, individually and shared. If grammar

⁴⁵ Ibid., x.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 13. Holmer understands God to be changeless and humanity to be changing; the burden falls on humanity to respond to God, which means the heavier burden will fall on theologians to reveal this to fellow human beings. Theologians will become the physicians, reading symptoms and diagnosing the illness, in order that sickened humanity might become well rather than die needlessly. Holmer develops this throughout chapter two.

is not consistent between what we say and do in and out of worship, then something is deeply grammatically wrong. When it comes to the grammar of faith, mistakes can be fatal, because the grammar of faith forms the axis of human life. How a person lives and approaches God is determined by the grammar one has been taught, but memorizing it does not mean one speaks (read: lives) grammatically.⁴⁷

A further discussion of Wittgenstein's use of grammar may further illuminate the contrast between surface and depth grammar. When Wittgenstein identifies theology as grammar, he does not refer merely to the sort of grammar one learns as a child in school but rather a deeper concept of grammar, one that bears the logic of the language and its connection with form-of-life.⁴⁸ For example, a child learns to speak well before any required formal schooling; youngsters are typically fluent in their native language by age three or four, able to speak easily with other native speakers in a way with which those acquiring it as a secondary language have difficulty. This phenomenon is especially evident when one visits a foreign country and listens to young children speak. A four-year old child in Vienna talks a mile a minute with ease of expression; this is imprinted on the ears and eyes of the proficient, but not fluent, visiting student of German. Lessons in grammar succeed fluency in one's vernacular; they are given as an integral element of a child's formal education. The primary purpose of these lessons is not to teach a child to communicate linguistically, for he has long been able to do this, and would be ineligible for grammar classes (as well as other classes suited to his age-group) if it were otherwise. Imagine teaching a non-linguistic child about the declension of nouns, the appropriate

⁴⁷ I owe my on-going rethinking of Holmer to Dr. William Cahoy.

⁴⁸ Wittgenstein distinguishes between "surface grammar" and "depth grammar" in *Zettel*, §664. The latter points to the coherence of a proposition within a language's rules; the latter refers to its coherence within the context (or language-game) in which it is used. "Arbeit macht frei" is a coherent German sentence, but within the context of the concentration camp in which it stood, it was and is incoherent.

placement of apostrophes, or the conjugation of verbs. One might imagine a non-linguistic child, much as any other animal that lacks facility with language, staring at the teacher attentively, at least for a moment or two, before letting her eyes and ears attend to some other sensory stimulant. The lesson in the language's grammar, if offered to a child who had not already mastered the language, would be rendered impotent. The only persons capable of learning the grammar of a language before the language itself are those who are studying a language *other* than their own.⁴⁹

The sorts of grammar lessons one learns as a child are not lessons in acquiring language, but in refining and honing it through recognition of linguistic patterns (rules) as well as deviations from those patterns. Grammar lessons are tools for learning how to articulate the patterns with which one is already familiar. They also become useful as means of establishing common usage. In countries where dialects of a language are ubiquitous, grammar rules form the standard which prevents the dialects from evolving into unrecognizable—in effect, new—languages.

The grammar with which Wittgenstein is concerned is not primarily the surface grammar one finds in a youngster's grammar book; this would make him a copy editor, rather than a philosopher. His concern with grammar has to do with the sorts of questions (and subsequent arguments) a philosopher might pose when taking a statement outside of its grammatical context. To look at grammar in this instance is not simply to examine verb endings or agreement in number, even though an aberration in either would have to be examined; looking at grammar means here to consider the way a phrase or sentence is used in an everyday context (which was developed from everyday, common

⁴⁹ Grammar is taught first only in foreign language classes, and even then it is most useful as a supplement to immersion in listening to and speaking the language.

activity) in order to see how a question enters the absurd. This sort of concern resides at the depth, not the surface, of grammar. Any professional philosopher, for example, would be familiar with Plato's realm of ideas or forms: a system defining reality, from which all material things are comparatively lesser, imperfect replicas. What would cause one to assert such a realm? Philosophers are also familiar with Descartes' six *Meditations*, a philosophical search for certitude. Descartes develops an epistemology based on a basic denial of all things exterior to himself; when he gets to the core of his doubting of all things, he realizes that he cannot doubt that he doubts; therefore, he must be a thinking thing. He develops the basis for certitude about the "exterior world" from there. What would give a philosopher reason to think that such an approach was appropriate? Why would one consider doubting of all things necessary to establish certitude? These latter questions are Wittgensteinian in that they put stock in common sense and suspect *prima facie* any method of philosophical inquiry that leads to artificial, albeit brilliant, constructs.⁵⁰ To talk about the grammar of a thing is to place the thing in context. Phrases that employ terms like "real" and "certitude" need to be considered in their ordinary contexts. These two terms may both be defined by what they are not: what is real is not inauthentic, fake, or illusory; certitude is the opposite of doubting. The term "real" is so flexible in its range of contexts that it does very little to clarify any matter. "Certitude" is useful here, however. Imagine how a child might learn to be certain. To be certain is to be certain *that something is the case*; certitude is not a thing existing as an abstract concept. It requires an object. What might be the occasion for learning the concept of certitude? Certitude is not something one seeks in normal circumstances; if

⁵⁰ Those who author or subscribe to such constructs are sometimes referred to as foundationalists. Foundationalism is not embraced as widely as it once was; one notable instance of this is a contemporary collection of essays titled *Theology Without Foundations*.

something is common and familiar, one need not say one is certain of it—one need not say anything of it. The question of certainty instead arises when something unusual—that is, outside the ordinary—emerges. When a rule or custom or pattern is bent or otherwise overstepped in an ambiguous fashion, such that it is not clear how (and thus even whether) the rule, custom, or pattern has been ignored, one may then speak of a lack of certitude. One does not speak of certainty of the rules, but of the way in which they are followed (or not). One may seek certainty about whether a wall is made of wood or merely painted to look as though it were; one does not seek certainty about whether the wooden-looking wall looks wooden. One may ask for certainty about whether the hand that wears a glove with room for a thumb and five fingers indeed has five fingers and a thumb; the bearer need only remove the glove to clear up the matter. One does not, however, seek certainty regarding the fact that the glove has room for five fingers and a thumb—not, that is, unless the glove in question has been known to have these characteristics and one cannot tell upon first inspection whether it still has them. Certainty is the consequence of some method of clarification; this is how it is learned, and that is the context in which it makes sense to use the term. Examining the depth of grammar is a method for revealing how superficially correct uses of language in ordinary exchanges may be wrong.

For the purposes of this paper, grammar will be understood as a corrective tool that is formed on the basis of language, which is prior to formal grammar. Right language is determined on the basis of a given language—that is grammar. Obvious grammatical errors are easy to spot and would fall under the purview of surface grammar. Errors may exist, however, even though the surface grammar is technically correct. Such

errors occur on the level of deep grammar (or “depth grammar”). A liturgy, for example, may be executed perfectly according to provided rubrics, and yet be thoroughly ungrammatical on the level of religious form-of-life. Discerning rightness of grammar at a deep level, both in terms of liturgical action and theological reflection, will be explored throughout this paper. Form-of-life will be closely tied with the discussion of grammar, as the latter will both flow out of and serve to critique the former. While form-of-life will here mean liturgical life and theological reflection, grammar will be the rightness inherent in each that propels the other to correct itself.

Static grammar, or surface grammar, tempts theologians: it seems pastorally and academically fitting to deal solely with such issues as liturgical rubrics and doctrinal phrasing and systematization, especially by appealing to a prior “tradition” or other apparently unchanging authority. The deeper grammatical problems, however, may require theologians to take their eyes off texts and look in a mirror instead, a mirror that reflects firstly themselves, and then the communities surrounding them. Deep theological grammar is a question of human living that is consistent in both saying and doing. This sort of grammar requires exploration not simply of texts and actions, but texts and actions situated within Christian living according to the Way. In the coming chapters I will use the distinction and dynamic between depth and surface grammar to illumine the incongruities that sometimes arise between *theologia prima* and *theologia secunda*.

In this chapter, several Wittgensteinian terms were introduced and brought into the theological arena of this paper. “Language-game,” “form-of-life,” and “grammar” were introduced as conceptual tools with which to understand how *theologia prima* and

theologia secunda may mutually shape and correct one another. The next chapter will examine both instances of theology more closely in order to see whether and how Wittgenstein's methodological approach may be adapted for theological use.

CHAPTER 3

MIGHT WITTGENSTEIN'S APPROACH BE ADAPTED FOR THEOLOGICAL USE?

1. In transit from philosophy to theology

Wittgenstein was a philosopher; he was not a theologian. As such, the theological insights one might gain from his method are elusive at first glance. Rather than discouraging the theologian, however, this lack of directness with regard to theological language should serve as a theologian's humble starting place. If Wittgenstein's work is to be appropriated, it is appropriate that the theologian should start wherever religion is, rather than where Wittgenstein started (namely, where philosophy was). Theologians would do well to follow Wittgenstein's example: Wittgenstein was not interested in creating a cult for himself by way of an exclusive system or vocabulary but aimed instead to demonstrate how one might think critically and carefully for herself, within the context of a community in which language games were played. I am concerned with theological language games as they are played in the context of early twenty-first-century United States culture.⁵¹

One task of this essay is to apply Wittgenstein's philosophical method to theology. This will be a grappling with theology not as a general idea, but as theology is manifest particularly: in theological language games. These include, but are not limited to, language-games in scripture, creed, liturgy, and devotion. All these in-form the way religious language-games are used in non-religious contexts.⁵² In the next section I will

⁵¹ My caveat is an acknowledgement that "U.S. culture" is useful as a category only in a limited way. The U.S. contains numerous unique sub-cultures. A look at the variety of dioceses (and parishes within them) in the United States Roman Catholic Church illustrates this pluralism of cultures. When I speak of U.S. culture, it is a simple way of pointing to a broad societal ethos that contrasts with those of other societies.

⁵² Non-religious contexts also in-form religious language games; Paul Tillich discusses this usefully in *A Theology of Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959).

highlight differences in the ways we engage in the language-games mentioned above.

Seeing their differences will be a step in understanding how, when, and why theological language games may or may not be governed by theologians.

2. Tricky tropes

ὁ τροπος: a turn, direction, course, way⁵³

trope, n.: **1.** *Rhet.* A figure of speech which consists in the use of a word or phrase in a sense other than that which is proper to it; also, in casual use, a figure of speech; figurative language.⁵⁴

“Trope” finds its etymological roots in the Greek verb “to turn”; in contemporary usage, “trope” refers to any figure of speech, including simile, analogy, metaphor, etc. This is the language of symbol and of religion; religious language is inherently tropal: its language turns in a variety of ways not merely to give information (although it may do that), but to engage the Christian imagination. The Roman Rite is laden with tropes of all kinds, tropes that include not only vivid words but material things, all of which we interact with ritually. The Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults (RCIA) includes the following words to accompany the presentation of the baptismal candle to each of the newly baptized: “You have been enlightened by Christ. Walk always as children of the light.” This trope recalls scripture, particularly the gospel of John, in which Jesus refers to himself as the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6) and the light of the world by which all who follow him will not walk in darkness but rather have the light of life (John 8:12). Light and dark are associated with life and death respectively even in ancient

⁵³ *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon*. Ed. Liddell, H.G. 7th ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1889): 821.

⁵⁴ http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/50258680?query_type=word&queryword=trope&first=1&max_to_show=10&sort_type=alpha&result_place=1&search_id=o5C1-xFKdNN-6184&hilite=50258680. Accessed 15 December 2006.

Hebrew scripture. Night is a time of potential danger—insofar as one cannot see, one's safety is compromised by animals that prey in the cover of darkness (Ps 91:5).

Hellenistic culture, influenced by Plato, also bore the themes of light and darkness, with light as that which was most desirable and darkness as that to be disregarded, even disowned. Hebraic and Hellenistic understandings of light and darkness are held in tension during the post-baptismal presentation of the lighted candle. The candle indicates the breaking of darkness by new light from the original source of light (namely, the fire of the Easter candle, the light of Christ's resurrection), and it ascribes this light to the one who has just died and been reborn through the waters of baptism. The one given that candle is thus symbolized by that candle—what has happened to the candle is what has happened and what must in the future happen to the one who has been baptized. The handing of the candle to the baptized person is no trivial exchange—it is the handing on that forms the etymological basis for “tradition.” The tradition of Christians is that which is handed on from generation to generation; it is no more or less than the Christian story, the story of salvation that Christians proclaim in word and deed (or, to use Wittgenstein's coinage, in the language-game). Many mnemonic layers of the story are invoked, not merely in words but in the very bodily interactions and exchanges that take place. Liturgical action should not then be understood to be empty or robotic gesture—indeed, liturgical action is rife with meaning. What Gordon Lathrop calls the holy things of liturgy (people, gestures, movements, texts, objects, etc.)⁵⁵ are the constitutive elements of liturgical action, language-games played in a liturgical context.

The difficulty in incorporating Wittgenstein's method here lies in Wittgenstein's omission of tropal language-games from his investigations. Often, when dealing with

⁵⁵ Lathrop, Gordon. *Holy Things* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998): 10-11.

words associated with several language-games, his aim is to single out one of the word's uses. Tropical language, however, allows multiple uses of a term (as well as its homonyms, etc.) to mean under the umbrella of a single language-game, as I have shown above; Wittgenstein rarely touched on this. Multiple "ordinary" language-games are invoked in the theological language-game, just as multiple language-games are invoked in the poetic language-game.

Insofar as this essay continues as a theological investigation, then, it departs from the way previously cleared by the one who inspired it. Before any abrupt departure, however, gaining footing in some trickier toe-paths will be helpful. Given the multivalence of theological tropes, how is it possible to avoid the possibility that each Christian may interpret the symbols in completely different ways from one another? More specifically, can the development of a private, individualized Christianity be avoided? My question is not so much about individual devotion as about privately determined meaning—the notion that Christian meaning and life may be determined according to the authority of an individual, unmediated by the shared story of the Christian community. The temptation to privatize meaning by claiming immediate access to God on the one hand and private interpretation of Christian symbol on the other is not uncommon. I hope to show in the next few pages, through a Wittgensteinian examination of these temptations, why they are theologically problematic.

(a) Against the notion of a private language

A person is *imprisoned* in a room in which the door, that opens towards the person, is unlocked; as long as it does not occur to that person to *pull* rather than push it.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Vermischte Bemerkungen* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1977), 42.

One of Wittgenstein's foils in discussing the way human beings become linguistic is the notion that a person can have her own private language. Consider sensations of pain—when I feel a painful sensation, is there not a word or written sign I could make up to refer to my sensations such that only I would know? If so, would this not then constitute part of my own private language? “The words of this language are intended to refer to what can only be known to the speaker; to the speaker's immediate private sensation. So another person cannot understand this language.”⁵⁷ The possibility of private language ramifies in a Cartesian way. One may for argument's sake take the thinking subject as a starting point. If one permits the notion of private language, there is no way to disprove that each person who speaks doesn't have her or his own language. Thus words may mean whatever I want them to mean when I want them to mean. Having my own language and meanings, it follows that every time I interact with another, I am translating the other person's language. Linguistic meaning is therefore absolutely subject to relativism.

The above argument is a philosophical knot. It is a picture in which one may be caught, and one in which extraordinary thinkers *have* been caught. The solution, Wittgenstein suggests, is not to think about how the words here *might* be used, but to look at how the words *are* used.⁵⁸ Translation is the sort of activity that involves a *common* understanding of the way words are used and a recognition that what one wishes to translate is un-common. One translates foreign languages and thick dialects, not the vernacular tongue. The commonality of a vernacular language is key; it suggests shared rules and understandings. Translation happens when deviations from the rules occur, but

⁵⁷ Wittgenstein *Philosophische Untersuchung*, §243.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, §66.

if one does not know the shared rules, one cannot recognize that there are deviations in the first place; additionally, if one does not know the rules, then translation becomes impossible. Language is necessarily common; “private” is not an appropriate predicate for “language.”

The picture of private language is one of many false pictures that spring up in ordinary language. These are the object of Wittgenstein’s concern. The concern of this paper is the possibility of false pictures in tropal language. Wittgenstein’s remedy for false pictures in ordinary language is to *look*, but one does not “look” to see if love is a red, red rose. Determining the appropriateness of a metaphor is a different game than determining the appropriateness of an ordinary sentence. Those who hear the metaphor may intuit whether it is appropriate or inappropriate; but in the case of all tropes, unlike ordinary language, the multivalence of the words involved is part of the game. Not considering a trope to be appropriate could be a matter of not having the imaginative capacity or knowledge to see the many layers of meaning involved. The question then is not simply one of the trope’s inherent appropriateness; it is also a question of who has the authority to make such a determination. What are the criteria for establishing a trope’s appropriateness? In terms of theology and liturgy, is holding an advanced theological degree requisite to bearing the authority to determine those criteria?

It is fitting to assume that those who have the greatest level of understanding of the tropes are the best suited to claim authority to determine criteria for tropal appropriateness. One ought to hesitate, however, to assume that academic theologians or ordained clergy have the greatest grasp of theological tropes, whether in *theologia prima* (liturgy) or in *theologia secunda* (theological reflection), by virtue of their degrees or

orders. Their familiarity with academic theological works is no guarantor of rich theological understanding. Theological study may well be supplemental to primary theology, which is the collective act of liturgy.

Liturgy is a wellspring no more static than a living language. Rich theological understanding cannot be found or had primarily in books, even liturgical books—it must be had in enacted liturgy itself. The authority to determine criteria for “good” or “bad” liturgy belongs primarily to those who participate in it. This is not to imply that the quality of liturgical action and its complementary understanding are a matter of majority opinion. Criteria may be found in the shared story enacted by the living Christian community. Prophetic voices may arise to remind us of these criteria; whole communities may stand up as witnesses to others of these criteria. In any case, the quality of the liturgical act is objective; it is immeasurable quantitatively, but its qualitative value can and must be determined. Those who are baptized in the story and rise up to proclaim it, whether in large or small ways, are the ones given the gift of naming criteria for good liturgy. Paul emphasizes the importance of every member of the Body of Christ in one of his letters to the church at Corinth. No member is too small or insignificant (1 Cor 12:22-25) to have a role to play in caring for the other members. In the same way that a three-year old can respond more appropriately in her own tongue than a novice speaker of a foreign language, one who has been initiated in liturgy is better fit to be theologically sound than the person who has learned it as a second language—for example, in a book. Likewise, the mature speaker is able to appreciate multiple uses of a word, phrase, or gesture, grasping overtones and even metaphoric entailments (e.g. “God is Light—therefore, walk in the Light”); a less mature speaker might wag a finger and

point at the rule book, failing to appreciate the flowering of meaning that the bent rule created.

Bending a rule is precisely what it means to employ a trope. To the extent that theological language-games are tropal, they bend non-theological, non-tropal rules. This is clear in discussions about knowledge of God: according to the *via negativa*, what we affirm about God we also deny. Still, there is a discernible difference between bending a rule and simply breaking from it. I have shown above the dangers of the notion of private language, revealing the necessarily shared (that is, social) character of all language, including and especially theological language. Criteria for linguistic correctness are not determined in isolation (e.g. in a hermitage filled with old grammar books), but in the context of their common, shared use in the language. In the next section I will discuss the difference between bending a rule and breaking it. I will discuss theological rules using the analogy of grammar and illustrate the importance of technique in theological language games.

(b) Grammar, rules, and technique

When liturgical theologians examine ancient liturgical traditions, often what they have before them are surviving texts bearing the tropes of specific communities in ancient settings. These texts reflect moments in liturgical development, demonstrating at least that a uniform liturgy was not always the case. What the liturgical theologian remembers is that the text is limited in what it may reveal—it is not proof that the words of the text were used, nor is it an indication of how exactly ritual acts were carried out (for example, what sort of ritual actions, gestures, objects, worship spaces the texts were

part of). In other parts of the theological tradition, theological tropes are examined in their final textual form: the text's crafting, and the cultural context from which it emerged, is primary. The work and fruits of the Ecumenical Councils (Nicea, Constantinople, Ephesus, Chalcedon), especially the ecumenical creeds, reflect an effort to sort through what may be said from what ought not to be said, the latter comprising controversies which are regarded now as heresies. I contend that the ecumenical creeds provide rules (analogous to grammatical ones in any language) which rule out the possibility of some statements and make room for others. These rules are foundational to the Christian tradition, but they were in orthodox (*ortho-doxa*, "right praise") use long before they were articulated. This is what Lindbeck points to in his distinction between intratextual and extratextual meaning.⁵⁹ Their articulation in the first centuries of the Christian tradition may necessitate adaptation for contemporary use, but to stand outside them would be to stand outside the language of Christianity altogether.

Within the Roman Rite, rubrics serve to standardize liturgical content and form while leaving room for variation and creative choreography with regard to style and inculturation. The same rites in two different buildings are likely to send two different messages. Architecture (whether Baroque, Romanesque, or some version of contemporary), the arrangement of furniture (namely, the baptismal font, the Eucharistic table/altar, the ambo/pulpit, the pews/chairs, the organ/piano, etc.) and other sacred objects (the crucifix, the Paschal Candle, icons, the tabernacle, etc.) are in a dynamic relationship with one another. The seating and standing arrangement for those gathered is of special importance, as it communicates and reinforces an order among those gathered.

⁵⁹ Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, 124.

Given a common set of rituals that includes not only ritual words but ritual objects and guidelines for their arrangement, a basic level of communal understanding could be achieved. Yet it is possible that a liturgy executed exactly according to standard rubrics could communicate a message quite contrary to the one intended, whether to the presider, to other ministers, or to the assembly as a whole—to all, perhaps, except the few who authored the ritual. This is the difficulty of all tropal language and its characteristic multivalence. The primary message in a liturgy executed in exacting accordance with the rubrics might be about the importance of rubrical perfection! A defining of classes according to those who act perfectly with knowing and those who act imperfectly with ignorance might be the ultimate message, and one that might be called Pharisaical according to the New Testament tradition. At the same time, a liturgy executed with clear departure from standard procedures of the Roman Rite could be a sign of egocentrism on the part of the community, a turning away from the God and a turning towards themselves. Such a departure risks not only alienation from the broader church, but a radical embrace of the status quo within the community.

The liturgical trope, then, should include not more or less than the appropriate words, gestures, and sacred objects (symbols), as well as charity, reverence, energy, and sincerity. The communication of the latter may very well be affected by the former, if handled poorly by the presiding minister or other ministers. If there is something lacking in the quality of the liturgical trope, it may be brought to attention by members of the liturgical community—or consultants to that community—in theological reflection.

A theological trope, even one found in official ritual texts, may be misleading if the technique with which one uses it is inappropriate or unfitting. One may compare poor

technique used with a theological trope to the extrapolation of heterodox theological propositions or systems. Arius developed just such a heterodox understanding of who Jesus was based on an inappropriate conceptual scheme. He based his understanding of Jesus on a Hellenic cosmology in which Jesus could neither be equal to God nor equal to humanity; within this system Arius concluded that he was a demigod, of divine lineage but in no way equal to God. Athanasius and the Council at Nicea admonished and corrected this view of Jesus, defining Jesus' full divinity in order to offset the understanding of Jesus as somehow super-human and less than God. The Council at Nicea supplemented the defining of Jesus' divinity with a fuller creed, a list of propositions designed to state simply what orthodox believers did and did not subscribe to. The Nicene creed played a role analogous to Wittgensteinian grammar: it examined a common language and extrapolated rules from it in order to standardize the language. The purpose of this standardization was to safeguard against the sorts of heterodox conclusions one might reach by pushing the use of common sense patterns of speech (in Arius' case, pushing the notion that since Jesus, the Logos, was human, the Logos was therefore a created being). Whereas the ordinary grammarian is concerned with preserving language from degeneration through improper use and style,⁶⁰ theologians are concerned with the degeneration of orthodoxy into heterodoxy. The ordinary grammarian's concern is of using language for the sake of being able to communicate correctly, well, and beautifully; the theologian's concern is to ensure that the Christian story, as told in the gospels and enacted in worship, is not ensnared in a particular

⁶⁰ See Strunk and White's *The Elements of Style*, 4th Ed. (Needham Heights: Allyn & Bacon, 2000). These grammarians give an example of seeking to preserve language from degeneration—symptoms of this might include verbosity, repetitiveness, use of slang, etc. Theirs is a manual on quality of writing; the excellence of their work is given testimony by the many English teachers and writers who have referred to it in the since its original publication in 1935.

ideology, whether it be a philosophy, a cosmology, or any other system with which to view the world.

Indeed, comparing the creeds with grammar is a more fitting analogy than the analogy of the theologian as a grammarian. Wittgenstein's parenthetical remark, "Theology as grammar," lends itself to the notion that a particular kind of theology (namely, that found in propositional creeds) is akin to grammar in that it reminds one of what may and may not be said within the logical bounds of orthodox theological thought. The creeds, like grammar, are not the beginning or end of the Christian life. They are limited in their usefulness, and they are not much help to the one who tries to learn them without using theological language. Using theological language (or, to borrow Wittgenstein's terms, "playing" theological "language-games") is the more important task. That is, *living the Christian form-of-life*, as learned and challenged liturgically, scripturally, and in Christian rearing, is the task of Christian individuals and communities. To speak of employing theological language in a grammatical fashion suggests that theological language revolves around its grammar, since the coherence of theological language is rooted in its grammar. The reverse is the case. Grammar is rooted in living theological language, the language-games of Christian living. In practice it is clear that the creeds play no great role in the imparting and learning of theological language games; they serve to correct propositional mistakes, but they are not nearly as helpful in either modeling or correcting the proper use of theological language-games. Proclaiming a triune Godhead (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) in word and deed is creedally appropriate, but the creed cannot tell Christians *how* to do that—the

propositions of the creed, when placed in a vacuum apart from the dynamics of Christian life and worship, may therefore be emptied of meaningfulness.

A distinction may now be made between theology as surface grammar (e.g. creeds) and theology as deep grammar, namely the right playing of the theological language-game in word and deed woven together. The former remark points to what can be said and not said; the latter points to what is prior to what is said—and done—in the context of human interaction.⁶¹ Goethe claims that in the beginning was the deed,⁶² and this is clear when one observes an infant at play or in the arms of a parent. Actions and reactions constitute the interactions through which language is practiced, learned, and gradually mastered.⁶³ These interactions are not haphazard but dynamically and organically ordered, in the sense that repetition and other elements of everyday ritual are involved.⁶⁴ They are the means through which human beings develop both corporate and individual identity. In the same way, these familiar interactions both trigger and sustain shared memories. Groups and individuals retain memories as integral elements of their identity. The more ordered the interaction (for example, a birthday party, or a Thanksgiving dinner), the likelier one is to recall minor variations from one instance of the interaction to the next. Changes in age, situation, relationships, etc. are particularly notable and therefore memorable in ritual interactions that vary little from repetition to

⁶¹ The distinction between surface grammar and depth grammar is fitting here. See *Zettel* §664.

⁶² Goethe, *Der Tragödie erster Teil*, trans. M. Kate Weber, line 1239.

⁶³ See footnote 32.

⁶⁴ Gerard Pottebaum offers this definition of ritual in *The Rites of People* (Washington, D.C.: Pastoral Press, 1992): “the dramatic form through which people in community make tangible in symbol, gesture, word and song what they have come to believe is the hidden meaning of their experience in relationship with the world, with others, and with their God” (6). Pottebaum goes on to discuss the split between the sacred and secular in the contemporary world, claiming that the split is artificial and relatively new in the history of the world. Ritual, according to Pottebaum, is characteristic of human experience (1). This view will be helpful in understanding language-games as something not arbitrary but the direct outcome of repeated, shared interaction.

repetition. “Rituals are not only repetitive; they also happen between people who are deeply involved with one another. Rituals are binding. What’s more, rituals are a medium through which people share meaning and communicate values.”⁶⁵ From fourth of July parades celebrating national identity to football games celebrating team allegiances to birthday parties celebrating the life of person and those who have shared in it, rituals of all kinds bring persons together, giving them a commonality that they might not otherwise share.

The theological significance of interactions, particularly those with strongly ritualistic characteristics, must be examined more deeply by theologians. What is done—and how it is done—is as theologically and humanly significant as what is said, if not more so. For what is done—and how—provides a meaningful context for what is said. What is shown in what we do is as important as, if not more important than, what we say. Since liturgical language is tropal language, the way liturgical interactions are carried out is of utmost importance, for the primary meanings of the tropes used will be highlighted in the way the liturgy is carried out. Given that liturgy spills over into everyday Christian life, the way ministers of the liturgy interact with other Christians outside of the context of liturgy imbues liturgical tropes with meaning. Liturgical ministers, as leaders of Christian ritual gatherings, have a crucial role to play in the development of the assembly’s common life and, therefore, the collective imagination of the Christian community. Often this role is overlooked or ignored, either because of ignorance or differing priorities. In part two, I will take a closer look at specific religious language games, especially prescribed texts and their corresponding movements and symbols, in order to demonstrate their theological characteristics and importance.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 81-2.

PART II

RELIGIOUS LANGUAGE GAMES: LITURGY AND THEOLOGY

In the last section, I reviewed the development of Wittgenstein's philosophical methodology, emphasizing both his terminology and his later philosophical methodological approach. This led to a discussion of how Wittgenstein's method might be appropriated for theology. I began to touch on the distinction between ordinary language games (the subject of Wittgenstein's discourse) and tropal language games (the genus of theological and religious games). Finally I discussed the most common theological language games, including those found in ritual, scripture, and creed. Just as Wittgenstein started with commonly used language games, a Wittgensteinian approach to theology must start with theological language games currently in use.⁶⁶

⁶⁶ It is beyond the purview of this paper to discuss religious language games of personal devotion. I do not wish to suggest by their omission that devotional language games lack either importance or theological value. They are suited especially for individual use and are subject to considerable variation and purposes as a result. This essay is concerned primarily with the common liturgy of the church, rather than the many forms of personal devotion.

CHAPTER 4

THE CHICKEN AND THE EGG:

KNOWING *HOW* AND KNOWING *THAT*

Debates erupt in theology classrooms about how and when tradition (including ecclesiological and liturgical structures) and scripture emerged in relationship to one another. The question is one of fundamental importance with regard to authority. To what authority can and should Christians, both communally and individually, hold themselves accountable? Is it appropriate to rely on scriptures, penned by human beings in the context of Christian communities after Jesus' death, or to rely on the forms of worship that emerged contemporaneously with the oral and written traditions? Are the earliest known theological practices and understandings the most authentic practices and understandings, or should greater weight be attributed to gradual revelation? Above all, who has the right to answer such questions?⁶⁷

My claim, in the spirit of Wittgenstein's methodology, is that anyone who has mastered a language game thus knows the rules of the language game; knowledge here is not simply propositional, but skillful. One's mastery of the game (including the proper following of the game's rules) is not shown simply by articulating the game's rules, but

⁶⁷ Melanie Ross, then a doctoral student of liturgical studies at Notre Dame, took Gordon Lathrop to task in the November 2006 issue of *Worship*. Lathrop and his sympathizers, she writes, criticize the worship structures of Free Churches (528). In response, she criticizes what she called Lathrop's "theology of *ordo*," the product of a theological method of structuralism (529). She contends that the right method for worship is a matter of "right fit" and that the structured understanding that leads to a "theology of *ordo*" is not one-size-fits-all. It does not fit Free Churches, she claims, and an honest discussion about method and its variability is necessary if theologians hope to be on the same page. "Liturgical theology must learn to account for the fact that every theologian's choice of method is subjective and in potential competition, both with other methodologies and the experiences of primary theologians themselves," she writes (529-30). What Ross seems to be suggesting, and what becomes useful to remember in this essay, is the danger theologians face of asserting their positions and methods in such a way that excludes the possibility of other positions and methods. Ross' insight is valuable insofar as it identifies an abuse of authority: the filtering of a different context through one's own lens rather than the lens of that context. Ross, Melanie. "Joseph's Britches Revisited: Reflection on Method in Liturgical Theology." *Worship*. Nov 2006, Vol 80, No. 6: 528-550.

more (even primarily) by *playing* the game properly. Consequently, such a master has the authority, if not the capacity, to articulate the rules of the game. An academic degree in religion or theology, then, is not a necessary prerequisite either to playing or speaking accurately about religious language games; nor is an academic degree in religion or theology a sufficient condition for doing the same. There is no internal (i.e. logical) relation between them. In order to substantiate this claim, I would like to illustrate the distinction between knowing *how* and knowing *that*.⁶⁸

1. Knowing how: liturgy

Lex orandi, lex credendi.

The law of prayer [precedes] the law of belief.

To know *how* to do something is to acquire a technique; to know *that* is the ability to point at characteristics of a thing.⁶⁹ The one entails subjective engagement with the object; the latter is the subject's abstraction or detachment from the object. For example, I might know that this painting includes certain hues of red or that that musical score has 8,000 notes and 1,200 measures. I do not, however, know how to play those 8,000 notes, having never been trained on an instrument; nor do I know how to mix oil colors in order

⁶⁸ This distinction is based on chapter 2 of Gilbert Ryle's *The Concept of Mind* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1949): 25-61.

⁶⁹ Ryle's examples of similarities between knowing how and knowing that bear repeating: "We speak of learning how to play an instrument as well as of learning that something is the case; of finding out how to prune trees as well as of finding out that the Romans had a camp in a certain place; of forgetting how to tie a reef-knot as well as of forgetting that the German for 'knife' is '*Messer*'. We can wonder *how* as well as wonder *whether*."

"On the other hand we never speak of a person believing or opining *how*, and though it is proper to ask for the ground or reason for someone's acceptance of a proposition, this question cannot be asked of someone's skill at cards or prudence in investments" (Ibid., 28)

Ryle goes on to observe that knowing how does not merely consist in doing something correctly or flawlessly; knowing how has to do with skillfulness and the intelligence required to improve by learning from the examples of others.

to develop the hue of my best friend's hazel eyes. The one requires facility to use words and make objective identifications; the other requires skills I lack.

The distinction between knowing how and knowing that also applies to theological knowing. What is often emphasized in religious catechesis is knowing *that* at the expense of knowing *how*. To know *how* in terms of theology is to acquire certain skills, techniques for embodied interaction; to know *that* is to gain conceptual information—about God, about institutional organization and law, about scripture, etc. The former entails engagement in religious language-games; the latter might entail only familiarity with religious vocabulary. The contemporary French theologian, Louis-Marie Chauvet, charges Westerners with logocentrism, a millenia-long tradition that has us caught in the illusion that in ritual we are seeking, or supposed to seek, the idea that ritual signifies rather than the work involved in the rite itself. “We must therefore rid ourselves of an a priori deeply rooted in our culture and recognize that ritual is by its nature *less mental than behavioral*. It functions *at the level of the signifying* and the patterns it forms, *and not primarily at the level of the signified* and ideational ‘contents.’”⁷⁰ Chauvet moves from a static theology of reification to a dynamic theology of action; and not just any action, but ritual action which is thus shared and linguistic. Chauvet, like Lindbeck and Holmer, points toward a Christian form-of-life that is deeply grammatically consistent. Making a play on the maxim, *lex orandi, lex credendi*, he names the following as the basic law of liturgy: “Do not say what you are doing; do what you are saying.”⁷¹ If one declares the Mass to be a gathering of the members of the Body of Christ, for example, it is more fitting to arrange for the congregants to face one another,

⁷⁰ Chauvet, Louis-Marie. *Symbol and Sacrament* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1995): 326.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

rather than arranging them so that they stare at the backs of one another's heads; the former arrangement will then give life to homilies, hymnody, and other forms of catechesis emphasizing the *communal* identity of those gathered. If one says that the altar is a table designed for the Eucharistic meal, then it should be adorned simply as a table for eating would be, rather than piled high with trinkets, papers, books and other varied objects. If one wishes to say that Eucharist is a sharing, then allow the priest to be fed by someone else, rather than taking the first bite for himself.⁷² These are but a few examples of ways in which what one says is drowned out by the roar of symbolic action; one's way of acting may not only confuse but contradict what one is saying, as illustrated above. Attentiveness to actions is attentiveness to the way in which one delivers the theological trope. When word and act are not in harmony, they ring out harshly and embarrassingly like a discordant fumble at the piano. The one listening stops listening and likely feels some mixture of pity and annoyance at the way in which what is on paper and what is carried out in action are made incompatible. Poor technique blotches the brilliance of a trope; good technique allows the trope to resound, complementing any accompanying words with flavor.

It would be a mistake to assume that technique has to do primarily with aesthetic concerns. The aesthetic technique with which one enacts a theological trope is of secondary importance; superficial ugliness can be overcome by the beauty of the organic coherence of word and deed. Superficial beauty, on the other hand, can mask incoherence, leading to ritualism, obsessive attention to minutiae, inordinate conservatism, and so on.⁷³

⁷² Ibid., 326-7.

⁷³ Ibid., 340.

Liturgy—that is, sacred, communal, ritual action—is not primarily logocentric. Words—ideas—assume a secondary (though integral) role in liturgy. The patterns of action and behavior enacted in the ritual context shape the behavioral patterns of participants. This is not solely (or even primarily) an intellectual formation but a formation of living, a shaping of a religious form-of-life. If participants do not have the opportunity to look at one another during liturgy, they may be shaped to mimic the pattern of not looking at those who neighbor them. Many other examples of the consequences of technique, whether poor or good, are easy to imagine. Liturgy may be classified as “good” or “bad,” not in virtue of its aesthetic appearance (which is superficial) or accordance to the specifications of each rubric (which is also superficial), but according to the way in which the gathered assembly, both lay and ordained, enact theological tropes in such a way that word and deed match one another. When what is proclaimed in words, the good news of salvation as recounted in scripture, is united with the proclamation by action, the theological trope is freed to speak on its many levels. The coordinator of liturgy must seek deep grammatical consistency within the rite and its ritual elements; liturgical participants must likewise seek deep grammatical consistency between their playing of liturgical language-games, for these are the same language-games that constitute the Christian form-of-life.

Liturgy forms participants insofar as playing liturgical language games makes participants fit to play similar games in the world. Christian liturgy arose from the form-of-life that Jesus led—he shared this form-of-life with his disciples, and generations of disciples have passed it on ever since. We acquire vocabulary and dance steps with which to woo the world to the wonders of God. We who follow Christ now are

constantly renewing liturgical as we are renewed by it; the language we learn from it is the language we pour back into it. Our engagement is our invitation to the world to join this love-dance of praise and thanksgiving to God.

The dance is the worshipping community's. If the choreography permits little movement, one becomes out-of-shape and stiff. If there is constant movement, one might never quite get the steps. If the dance is simple but sophisticated, neophytes may catch on while others are developing a nuanced expression. To know what it means to dance is simply to dance; to know God is to love God and one's neighbor, as told to us by Jesus the Christ.

If liturgy is the enactment of the Heavenly Banquet, then those who choose to drink Christ's cup and eat Christ's bread commit themselves to the life commanded by Christ. In the very way Christ serves me, I must serve my neighbor.⁷⁴ Christ's love to me must be followed by my love to the world. Insofar as Christ has embraced me, I must embrace others. Christ welcomes me—us—fully, and insofar as I recognize that, I must respond to others likewise, out of gratitude.

Those who have not encountered the love of God sacramentally—that is, in their flesh—aren't likely to know God's love. Insofar as one has been shown that she has not been redeemed, that she is paralyzed without hope, she cannot be blamed for her inability to dance. Insofar as she is reasonable, however, and insofar as she recognizes God's love rationally, she *is* accountable—because even though she has never been led out to dance, she has been told how to step.

⁷⁴ The use of the first-person singular is not meant to be a step towards an individualistic understanding of Christ's love; it is meant to do two things: 1) follow in the style of the rest of this essay and 2) illustrate the individuality that characterizes ethical and moral conscience.

Putting aside human judgment of the fallible individual, it is useful to step back to examine liturgy as a formative player in the ethical and religious development of communities and individuals therein. Liturgy is done in as many ways as there are Christian communities that gather. Inasmuch as liturgy varies from one community to the next, one community's dance will differ from that of the neighboring community's dance. Different learning styles may be more or less supported in a given community's liturgy. While the rubrics may be consistent across a given denomination (e.g. Roman Catholicism), how they are utilized in actuality may vary a great deal. Consider the way plays, ballets, and poetry are performed. Tempo, volume, and even the space surrounding the event play a role in how the art is manifest. Consider also what it is like to encounter a poem in a foreign language. If one has no facility with that language, hearing the poem may simply be an experience of mellifluous sounds; nothing more. If one is given a literal translation of that poem into his native tongue, the poem will be accessible, albeit in a jagged and perhaps univalent fashion. The poem's resonance, when sounded on a strictly literal level, will undoubtedly lack its full harmonious resonance. To read a poem in its own language is to hear its full resonance; the one who is able to do this is a master of that language. Similarly the one who is fluent in Christian language-games, baptized in the images, words, and deeds of scripture and liturgy, living out the promises and hopes imagined therein, is a master of Christian language-games. Such a person would be clearly recognizable as a servant, just as Christ was.

(a) Christian rites

The liturgies of Christians, in their manifold forms and manifestations, shape Christian identity.⁷⁵ The *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, composed by members of the Second Vatican Council and promulgated by Pope Paul VI in 1963, describes the liturgy as “the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; at the same time it is the font from which all [the Church’s] power flows” (§10). The *Constitution* also encourages “full, conscious, and active participation...which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy” (§14). What the *Constitution* seems to propose is that those participating should understand what it is that they are doing ritually and that the liturgy, including all its rituals, is the summit and source of that understanding. Understanding is not to be confused here with exhaustive factual knowledge. Understanding is rather that from which one grows and to which one returns over and over, whereas factual knowledge may be referred to in a book: it is one’s form-of-life. Ritual understanding is not simply intellectual, but embodied. Riding a bicycle, for example, may be introduced to a young person in a book, but learning it is no more or less than the acquisition of a skill: namely, riding the bicycle. It requires climbing onto the bicycle, sitting, pedaling, and maintaining one’s balance, all while in immanent danger of falling off and skinning one’s knees and elbows. Ritual understanding has to do with the embodied action of linguistic creatures. Theological language-games emerge from ritual actions that teach and reinforce ritual understanding. The Christian who has heard Christ’s parable of the Samaritan, who has participated in the footwashing of Holy Thursday, who has fed a homeless person is the one who has ritually participated in Christ’s servanthood—that

⁷⁵ Although liturgy across denominations is characterized by some form of ritual, Roman Catholic liturgy is standardized in the Roman Rite. The Roman Rite comprises the official rituals (also known as rites) currently in use in the Roman Catholic communion. Richard McBrien distinguishes between a Rite (a family of liturgical rituals) and rites (the rituals contained within a given Rite). “Rite.” *Encyclopedia of Catholicism* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1995): 1118.

participation may lead to the embracing and understanding (or understanding and embracing) of Christ's ways.

The rites of initiation (baptism, confirmation, and Eucharist) offer numerous examples of ritual understanding enacted. In the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, candidates for the catechumenate (which is the process preceding initiation by baptism) are to be offered the sign of the cross on the forehead by their catechists and sponsors (§55).⁷⁶ An extension of the ritual allows for the "Signing of the Other Senses."

While the ears are being signed, the celebrant says:

**Receive the sign of the cross on your ears,
that you may hear the voice of the Lord.**

While the eyes are being signed:

**Receive the sign of the cross on your eyes,
that you may receive the glory of God.**

While the lips are being signed:

**Receive the sign of the cross on your lips,
that you may respond to the word of God.**

While the breast is being signed:

**Receive the sign of the cross over your heart,
that Christ may dwell there by faith.**

While the shoulders are being signed:

**Receive the sign of the cross on your shoulders,
that you may bear the gentle yoke of Christ.**

[While the hands are being signed:

**Receive the sign of the cross on your hands,
that Christ may be known in the work which you do.**

While the feet are being signed:

**Receive the sign of the cross on your feet,
that you may walk in the way of Christ.](§56)**

This ritual of signing manifests several messages: the relationship between the candidate and the community into which she is to be initiated, the importance of the candidate as a

⁷⁶ The Catholic Church. *The Rites*. Vol. 1 (Collegeville: Pueblo, 1990).

whole person in contrast with a disembodied intellect, and the value of the various functions of the body in connection with Christ Jesus. First, the relationship of the candidate to the rest of the community is at first one of reception; the community has something to give which the candidate presumably does not have. Here the baptismal participation in Christ's body as priest, prophet, and king (§228), ecclesial fellowship (§233), and Christ's presence communicated in the sacraments (§243) are anticipated. The signing is an offering. Secondly, the signing of the senses may be ritually understood through touch to acknowledge and honor the many parts of the body as that which will be redeemed, healed, and strengthened in baptismal anointing. Such an acknowledgment in this context attributes a sacredness to the bodiliness of human persons. Thirdly, the signing of the senses anticipates for the candidate and recalls for the community the living symbol of the human body as Christ's Body, a Body that is a unity of many members with many gifts (cf. Rom 12:4-8; I Cor 12:12,14,17-27). The phrases that accompany each sign of the cross may be seen as supplementary to the ritual understanding communicated in this ritual. They give verbal expression to what is already clearly shown, reinforcing the act in illustrative words.

The question of technique emerges here. Consider the American custom of the handshake. One is supposed to be able to "read" a person by the manner in which she shakes hands. Does she have a firm grip? Are her palms sweaty? Does her hand fall loosely into the other person's hand? Additionally, does she make eye contact with the person whose hand she is shaking, or does she look at her hand, or perhaps somewhere else? All these details may communicate a great deal about this person. Similarly, any ritual gesture, whether it is signing parts of the body with the cross or soaking the one to

be baptized in water or laying hands on one's forehead, communicates a great deal with or without verbal cues. Is the sign of the cross a feathery touch with the tip of the thumb, or is it a heavy pressing of the sign with most of the thumb or other fingers? A feathery touch could communicate either gentleness or standoffishness; a heavy touch could communicate the gravity of commitment or harshness. Something in between could communicate the best of both: the kind offering of gentleness in combination with the challenging weight of accepting Christ's cross with one's entire self. Technique determines the difference of the above meanings that may be communicated non-verbally.

(b) *Good Shepherd Catechesis*

One method of religious catechesis takes one's technique in the theological trope or language-game seriously. Dr. Sofia Cavalletti, modeling her catechetical method after the Montessori approach to education, sought to simplify and thus amplify the essential signs and symbols of the Christian story. "The language of liturgy—signs or symbols—is one that speaks to the learned and unlearned, to adults and to children."⁷⁷ Her method takes into account the communicative power of what is linguistic but at the same time prior to any intellectual reflection. This communication is the means through which the child begins to orient himself in the world, both imagining it and establishing his proper relationship to it. "Work is the means by which the child comes to explore the world, and, at the same time, the means with which the child takes possession of it."⁷⁸ The same

⁷⁷ Cavalletti, Sofia. *Living Liturgy: Elementary Reflections* (Chicago: Catechesis of the Good Shepherd Publications, 1998): 4.

⁷⁸ Cavalletti, Sofia. "Religious Formation and Later Childhood." *Journals of the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd* (Chicago: Catechesis of the Good Shepherd Publications, 1998): 4.

may be said of adults who continue in the on-going process of faith formation. Cavalletti's reflections on the learning and imaginative engagement of children provides ample material for consideration in both the practical and speculative aspects of liturgical theology. She extends those reflections to the church as a whole, however, including children and adults. She discusses what she calls elementary themes, themes that she considers essential to faith. "If we were to focus on the fundamental elements of the liturgy and to contemplate them in themselves without allowing ourselves to be distracted by peripheral matters, then they would disclose to us unfathomable depths capable of nourishing our Christian life with the most nutritious food."⁷⁹ Cavalletti's distinction between "fundamental elements" and "peripheral matters" of the liturgy deserves further attention. As a catechist, one who coordinates experiences of the sacred for both children and adults, Cavalletti leads her audience to make a value judgment about what is truly important, what is essential. The process of making a value judgment requires entertaining the possibility that not all that is present in a liturgy is essential, and not all that is essential in a liturgy is present. The process of making such value judgments is a process of theological reflection (*theologia secunda*).

Cavalletti illustrates this need for value judgments, and points to the criteria for making them:

Certain elements call forth a response of theological depth and serious joy in children and are received with delight, thereby becoming the inalienable inheritance of their spiritual lives. This is how young children have come to be my guides, exacting and rigorous guides who constantly challenge me, in Dante's words, to "Let your words be counted," and who withdraw their attention the instant I distance myself from what is essential.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ Cavalletti, *Living Liturgy*, 2.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 3.

What is essential, in Cavalletti's self-reflective view, is the sign or symbol that is primary to faith and, most importantly, tangible. Abstractions are brought back to earth, so to speak, through the forging of tangible signs. Christ's priesthood might be connected to the pericope in the gospel of John in which Jesus calls himself the vine, and his church, the branches; that passage might be connected then with the wine of the covenant, God's promise; God's promise might be connected to the ark of Noah, which might be connected to the rainbow and the dove that bore the olive branch, which might be connected to the hope of new life, which might be connected to Christ's rising from the dead, which might be connected back to his priesthood. This is one of innumerable examples of the connections one may make with rich primary symbols, what Cavalletti calls essential elements. These elements play a pivotal role in theological tropes; they are the catalyst for reflection on many interconnected layers of meaning.

The efficacy of theological tropes relies heavily on the indispensable elements Cavalletti writes about; she calls them the "ABC's of Christianity,"⁸¹ likening them to alphabet which comprises basic elements, namely, letters. These elements, when encountered and embraced by young children, indelibly shape the imagination of the children. "I have seen with joy how young children, Christianity's newest recruits, spontaneously insert themselves into the rich river of tradition *while directing me to it as the source from which to draw sustenance for our lives.*"⁸² Any liturgical theologian may beneficially draw upon the wisdom presented here; one is forced to consider what is best for the community in front of her while realizing that the community is the starting and ending point for all criteria. The community's life together is the context out of which

⁸¹ Ibid., 4.

⁸² Ibid.; emphasis mine.

any judgment must be made. The mandate of the liturgical theologian (and the catechist, as the case may be) is to recognize the story of the people in front of her and to identify those symbols that will boldly and vividly bring forth narrative intersections between the story of salvation in Christ and the community's already extant story. The child or adult's realization of having a living role to play in this story becomes the occasion for Christian evangelization.

(c) Christian evangelizing

*While the liturgy daily builds up those who are within into a holy temple of the Lord, into a dwelling place for God in the spirit, to the mature measure of the fullness of Christ, at the same time it marvelously strengthens their power to preach Christ, and thus shows forth the church to those who are outside as a sign lifted up among the nations under which the scattered children of God may be gather together, until there is one sheepfold and one shepherd.*⁸³

It would be misleading to say that liturgy teaches new language-games. Liturgy provides participants with more than some new vocabulary. It provides a new context for the familiar vocabulary and actions.⁸⁴ That context is the story of humanity's salvation through the life, death, and resurrection of Christ, told and shown ritually through liturgy.⁸⁵ Those who participate in Christ as his Body—namely, the baptized—enact familiar language games that are transformed by the ritual context of liturgy. The language games of liturgy are theological tropes that, like all multi-faceted language games, point in many ways to the story in which they are situated. Christians learn to enact a set of common language games in ritual; these language games, like the language games of any ritual, become ingrained in Christian communities and bear fruit in the life

⁸³ *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, §2.

⁸⁴ Liturgical language games occur in sacred space and time; I shall refer again to this point presently.

⁸⁵ The Catholic Church, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, §6.

of those communities. This fruit, in its many forms, may serve as evangelization; one must ask, however, what fruit is being born and whether the resulting evangelization is the good news proclaimed by Christ or rather the good news proclaimed by someone else.

The language games that are practiced ritually in Christian communities have the power to determine whether and how Christian identity coheres among members of the communities and whether and how that identity is enacted outside the ritual context: namely, in contexts fit for evangelization. Mary Douglas, a contemporary anthropologist with demonstrated interest in religious ritual, borrows Basil Bernstein's notion of "group and grid" to illustrate this point. Group and grid are visualized on horizontal and vertical axes respectively. The stronger the group, the more likely the individual ego is to be subsumed under it. The weaker the group, the more likely the individual ego will flourish independently of the group. In the same way, the stronger the grid (i.e. the system of classifications of the group), the more likely the group is to bear shared classifications; the weaker the grid, the more likely a private system of classifications is to be used by members of the group.⁸⁶ This charting of group and grid characteristics is useful in identifying how an organization may be classified in terms of identity (whether strongly communal or individualistic) and practices. This information may subsequently be used to determine whether an organization's place on the group and grid axes is the best place for it.

The ideal vision of what Christianity should look like in this regard has varied historically. A theologian's analysis of scriptural evidence (from the Pauline corpus and the Gospels) and liturgical texts might envision the ideal place of Christians virtually

⁸⁶ Mary Douglas. *Natural Symbols*. 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 1996): 64.

anywhere on the group and grid axes. The contention of this author is that, regardless of where Christians ideally envision themselves on axes like these, they are responsible for any lacunae between the Christian story as presented in scripture and the Christian story as presented in the manifestation of actual Christian communities and individuals. As pointed out above, the language-games adopted by a community in its ritual context of liturgy or worship will shape the way in which a community understands who it is and how it is supposed to reflect that identity in daily life. How worship translates into daily life is precisely a question of evangelization. The purpose of this paper is not to argue for any particular quadrant on the group and grid axes as the ideal place for Christians to be. Rather, the point is to demonstrate the impact that the language-games of worship have on Christian identity and thus evangelization. Language-games involving table fellowship may or may not translate into table fellowship in the world; if it does not translate as such in the world, then evangelization is deficient or, worse, fails to take place. The Christian form-of-life is not a one-day-a-week commitment—eight days is more like it. In creation seven days were made, and in Christ a new day has been proclaimed. The Roman Rite calls for table fellowship in the Eucharistic celebration, but it is clear from a glance at newspaper headlines that Christians often fail to evangelize by means of that table fellowship, whether politically, judicially, or personally. Perhaps it is also more accurate to say that Christians enact the table fellowship they have learned often in the world; that the technique with which they share in liturgical table fellowship fails to live up to the standards of the Reign of God. The eighth day, for Christians, is the symbol of ultimacy and new beginning: it is both the end (the goal) and the beginning (the starting point) of the Christian form-of-life.

The language-games played in liturgy may unwittingly be affected—and may effect those who play them—as a result of poor technique. Technique has to do with the way something is done—it is a reflection of *how* we know something.⁸⁷ Language-games shift from their usual meaning only when their context changes; however, one’s technique in carrying on these language-games may change the games altogether, even though the games remain the same nominally. One example of such a shift may illustrate this point. Chess boards are identical to checker boards; one knows which game is being played not because of the board, but because of the pieces and, more importantly, the manner in which the pieces are moved. Suppose a set of game pieces were devised such that both checkers and chess could be played with them; the difference would then rely entirely on the way the pieces were moved. Suppose also that a person had learned the rules of both chess and checkers and was given a set of chess pieces. If the other player began to play according to the rules of checkers with pieces designed for chess, how would the other player know? If she were attentive, she would recognize that the game her partner was playing was checkers, not chess, and might rightly ask why the other player had arbitrarily attempted to change the game. If her game partner insisted that the game was still chess by virtue of the game pieces, she could either concede the name, recognizing that the rules remained those of checkers, or she could abandon the game as an exercise in nonsense.

Table fellowship is just such a common game whose name remains the same even when the rules belong to another language-game. The technique with which one plays the language-game of table fellowship may very well make the difference between that game and an entirely different one. Is table fellowship in liturgy genuinely the fellowship

⁸⁷ See above discussion of knowing how and knowing that in chapter three.

of a community around a common table, or is it more akin to a contemporary cooking show in which select members of the audience (who may or may not know one another) will get to taste the end result?

In churches where there is strong ritual formality, evangelization is a skill that communities and individuals acquire according to the language-games shared in their liturgical context.⁸⁸ Indeed, it could hardly be otherwise in a highly formalized context which omits most forms of spontaneity, especially on the part of congregants.

A community's methods of evangelization thus spring largely from the technique with which practices are learned in their liturgical context. The linkage of rules and practice resides in technique. Knowing how to do something, however, is not the end of the matter; as discussed above, the story of salvation, the context in which actions are committed, is as important as the actions themselves. The next section will offer a discussion of how Christians "know that" with regard to their shared faith.

2. Knowing that: theology

Knowing how and knowing that are not mutually exclusive means of knowing, but they may be usefully distinguished from one another. In scripture and in mystagogy we are faced with written and oral words, articulations of embodied faith. These articulations grow out of and give expression to our knowing how, but they can be distinguished from them, just as speaking of music or art can be distinguished from playing a violin or painting a portrait.

⁸⁸ It may be argued that those churches with weak ritual formality evangelize according not to skills they adopt in the ritual context, but according to the verbal admonitions they find in scripture and in the preaching they hear from week to week. Evangelization in such cases may be a matter of spontaneity, or may have its own set of ritual rules quite distinct from patterns found in worship.

(a) Scripture

The gospels and letters of the New Testament were the work of communities who had long been followers of Jesus and proclaimed him as their Christ.⁸⁹ The stories they recounted in writing were those they remembered and perhaps considered essential, even foundational, to their understanding of Jesus as the Christ. Consider the stories of eating (the Last Supper, the multiplications of loaves and fishes, the meal hosted by Simon the Pharisee, the meal with Zacchaeus the tax-collector, the post-Resurrection meal at Emmaus, the wedding feast at Cana), healing (the blind man at Bethsaida, the mute, the centurion's servant, Lazarus, the woman and boy with unclean spirits, the Canaanite woman's daughter, blind Bartimaeus, the sick at Gennesaret, Jairus' daughter, the woman who touched his garments), teaching (the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus' reading at the synagogue, Jesus' telling of parables), and time spent with his friends (fishing with the disciples, the post-resurrection appearance of Jesus in the upper-room, the transfiguration of Jesus). Each of these stories constitutes an exchange between Jesus and someone else: Jesus interacts with those around him. He speaks, they hear; he touches them, they heal; he hosts them, they dine. All these are common activities; but because these are the activities remembered of the one who is proclaimed as Lord, they are considered holy activities. They are incorporated in a sacred context; what remains is the task of enacting in a way that reflects their sacred character. To say they are sacred is not to say they are dramatic and full of pomp; nor is it to say they are carefree and sloppy. Sacrality is given in the faithful enactment of the language-games in which Jesus himself engaged based on the context in which he played them. Familiarity with scripture clearly becomes crucial

⁸⁹ Raymond Brown. *An Introduction to the New Testament* (New York: Doubleday, 1997): 109.

at this juncture, for without a sense of what Jesus did, how he did it, and why, it is impossible to translate that into vernacular forms of worship and evangelization.

The letters of Paul and the gospels reject all manifestations of hypocrisy. Paul scolds the church at Corinth for allowing itself to be divided in its table fellowship (at the expense of the poorer members of the church). The gospels also reveal Jesus as a scolder of hypocrites. “And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites,” says Jesus (Mt 6:5). These hypocrites like to pray in public; they have their reward, which is temporal and fleeting. Jesus tells his disciples to pray in private (Mt 6:6). He proceeds to warn them, “And in praying do not heap up empty phrases” (Mt 6:7). Jesus quickly offers them a new prayer as an alternative to empty phrases. The “Lord’s Prayer,” as it is commonly known, addresses God as a father and makes specific requests. A potentially condemning request is buried in the list: “And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors” (Mt 6:12). The persons who utter this prayer are asking God to forgive them in proportion to the way they forgive others. This prayer is uttered every time Roman Catholics gather for liturgy, but knowing what the prayer is does not entail knowing how it is meant. If one knows the words and can repeat them perfectly, does this mean one also realizes the condemnation she asks for herself if she does not carry through with her end of the bargain? Liturgy that demonstrates in technique what it is to forgive one’s neighbor may make the praying of this prayer less perilous, if it reveals in word and deed both *that* and *how* it is the Christian’s call to forgive.⁹⁰

⁹⁰ This is not to deny the basic Christian tenet that God is the first one to forgive; indeed, without God’s forgiveness, forgiveness of any kind would be neither fathomable nor possible according to a properly Christian understanding. The issue here is not God’s forgiveness, but the forgiveness to which the pray-er makes himself accountable when he prays the Lord’s Prayer.

More than knowledge of the stories in general, knowledge of the differences in accounts of the same story may become crucial. The four evangelists recount the same events in different ways (consider the multiplication of the loaves and fishes, for example), and some stories are recounted in one gospel that make no appearance in the others (for example, the narrative of the birth of Jesus appears only in Matthew and Luke). That certain details or whole stories are changed from account to account indicates that uniformity of thought is not of primary importance; unity of action, based on the shared context of language-games made sacred by the Lord who engaged in them, is primary.

(b) Mystagogy

The Christian tradition of mystagogy, an element of Christian initiation already well-developed in the late-fourth century C.E.⁹¹, etymologically relates to “mystery” and liturgically refers to part of the ritual of initiation by baptism, preceded by Eucharistic initiation.⁹² Some early Christian writers in whose writing mystagogical reflection appears include Nicholas Cabasilas, Cyril of Jerusalem, Maximus the Confessor, and Ambrose of Milan, Theodore of Mopsuestia, and John Chrysostom.⁹³ An example from one of these will suffice to shed light on the function and form of mystagogy in the early church.

Five *Mystagogical Catecheses* are attributed to Cyril of Jerusalem. They were liturgical discourses given by Cyril, who was then bishop of Jerusalem, to those who had

⁹¹ The *Mystagogical Catecheses*, if indeed authored by Cyril of Jerusalem, may be dated to about 350 C.E. See Whitaker, E.C. *Documents of the Baptismal Liturgy*. Ed. Johnson, Maxwell. 3rd ed. (Collegeville: Pueblo, 2003): 26.

⁹² Louis Bouyer. *Dictionary of Theology* (New York: Desclee, 1965): 313.

⁹³ See Enrico Mazza's *Mystagogy* (Collegeville: Pueblo, 1989).

just been baptized. Prior to baptism, the uninitiated were not told what to expect, and thus were provided with catechesis on the mysteries they had just experienced liturgically. Cyril reminded the newly baptized step by step what had happened in conjunction with its “spiritual and celestial” significance.⁹⁴ The second of his catecheses synchronizes with the day following baptism. Cyril begins this catechesis with actions that followed the entrance into the baptistery; his reflections are also related to a passage from the letter of Paul to the Romans that coordinates with the theme of his catechesis. Section two of the catechesis is a theological reflection on holy Word (scripture) and holy deed (liturgical ritual): “Upon entering you took off your clothing, and this symbolized our stripping off of ‘the old nature with its practices’. Stripped naked, in this too you were imitating Christ naked on the cross, who in his darkness ‘disarmed the principalities and powers’ and on the wood of the cross publicly triumphed over them.”⁹⁵ Cyril’s catechesis weaves the familiar words of scripture into wordless ritual action: in this he points bluntly to what in this essay has been called a theological or tropal language-game.

Cyril tells the newly baptized in his third mystagogical catechesis that they are all images of Christ, and as such all ritual actions performed over them are symbolic.⁹⁶ The baptized have not engaged in meaningless actions; by virtue of the ritual actions to which they have submitted themselves, they have been baptized into a new context, a living story. Cyril’s practice of mystagogical catechesis is an integral element of this initiation into new life. Actions that are otherwise commonplace are made into a new creation, as are those who perform them.

⁹⁴ Whitaker, *Documents*, 30.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 32.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

The practice of mystagogy, along with the practice of adult initiation, fell into disuse until the revisions of the ritual books during and after the Second Vatican Council. Now the final step of initiation for adults (following baptism, confirmation, and Eucharist), postbaptismal catechesis or mystagogy is a time when neophytes are “introduced into a fuller and more effective understanding of mysteries through the Gospel message they have learned and above all through their experience of the sacraments they have received.”⁹⁷ The “main setting” for this mystagogy are the so-called Masses for the neophytes, or the Sunday Masses of Eastertide.⁹⁸ This does not preclude the possibility of mystagogical reflection outside the context of liturgy, and in practice it seems fitting that a time should be set aside precisely for the articulation of experience of the sacraments of initiation, not just on the part of the pastor, but on the part of the neophytes and the community. A dialogue that encourages the drawing of connections between ritual action and theological story is a dialogue that allows theological language games to gel and renew the theological imaginations of those who participate.

Kathleen Hughes identifies two indispensable foci of mystagogy: 1) the community’s sacramental life, which is primary, and 2) personal experience. Each feeds the other. She describes mystagogical reflection as subjective rather than objective; it is not propositional theology, but theology that allows for a conversation to occur between participants in the rites. “Mystagogy is dialogical,” Hughes writes. “It relates experience

⁹⁷ The Catholic Church. “Christian Initiation of Adults.” *The Rites*, Vol. 1 (Collegeville: Pueblo, 1990): §245.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, §247.

and symbol and it takes both utterly seriously.”⁹⁹ The mystagogical method, as Hughes calls it, in contrast to other methods used in liturgical studies (e.g. historical, comparative, philological, juridical, dogmatic¹⁰⁰), engages both the communal (and thus, individual subjects) in breaking open the symbolic deeds and words encountered in the richness of shared ritual; it examines theological tropes on their own terms. It is invaluable for neophytes and long-standing members of the community as a means of stirring memory. It is a way of connecting what the community does with what has been done and what will be done, all in relationship with God. The rites and the tropes they bear mediate the presence of God; if it is to be a dynamic, living relationship, there can be no other choice than to actively engage the rites in both deed (the enactment of the rites) and word (the articulation, especially through mystagogical reflection, of what has happened).

Schools of theology often allow concentrations in the areas of biblical theology, ethical or moral theology, systematic theology, and historical theology; mystagogical theology, which Enrico Mazza argues is a distinct form of theology rooted in liturgy, has not received the sort of attention that other theologies have.¹⁰¹ The next section will draw out the ramifications of overlooking and thus diminishing the role of mystagogy in academic and pastoral reflections.

3. The edge of dualism: word and deed, mind and body

The distinction between knowing how and knowing that may lend itself to a radical divide between what one says and what one does, between what a person thinks and how

⁹⁹ Hughes, Kathleen. *Saying Amen: A Mystagogy of Sacrament* (Chicago: Liturgical Training Publications, 1999): 14.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 4-5.

¹⁰¹ Mazza, *Mystagogy*, 6.

that person acts. Several patterns of understanding may follow from this, each leading to the possibility of an unorthodox extreme:

Word as Act: In this case, the speaking of words effects the end originally sought by the act. Words become magic in effecting a certain end, taking the place of other action that was integral to the language-game originally; the speaker will become the sole actor, detached from the object over which she speaks.¹⁰²

Act as Word: In this case, the act becomes primary and words ornamental. The emphasis is on acting in very particular ways, especially in observable settings. Whatever articulation made is of little importance; saying the words becomes a secondary part of a greater drama. Instances of this are found in so-called high-church ritual, in which words might not even be vernacular; ritual gestures involving props, and plenty of both, are primary. Act becomes its own form of magic, again one in which the acting subject is detached from and in control of the object of her attention.

¹⁰² This is not to be confused with the performative utterance, as described by J.L. Austin in *How to Do Things with Words* 2nd Ed. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975): 6. A performative utterance is an utterance that constitutes an act—for example, the act of vowing or promising. Uttering the words in the appropriate context (e.g. to one's future marriage partner during one's wedding in front of witnesses) is the performance of the act—in this case, a promise or vow—itsself. Merely saying the words, however, does not make it so—the appropriate context is required.

In the case of liturgical acts, catechesis might help many assembly members realize that the church—every part of it—must assemble in order for an act to be liturgical. Then they may realize that it is not sufficient for a priest to be present and say the words; the *assembly* must assemble and respond! Catechesis for persons of all ages would make a genuine difference, in addition to regularly engaging in good liturgical practice (i.e. liturgical practice that itself catechizes by showing what Christian life is and ought to be if it follows Christ).

Word and Act Mutually Detached: Disenchanted with the apparent hypocrisy found

in the above approaches, one might choose word or act as his banner, denying that the one he chooses has or ought to have any relationship to the other. Word-oriented Christians after Luther have claimed that all acts for good (by humans) are inefficacious; the Divine Word (Jesus, the Christ) is the only one with a right to claim agency. Christians with a more positive anthropology, however, recognize in creation and in fellow Christians the revelatory power of those made in the *imago dei*; words, then, may be silenced to make room for such a Christian to model the life and love of God revealed. The extreme position of acting without including the Word might be embraced by everyone from humanists to Christians uncomfortable with spoken evangelization.

The distinction between knowing how and knowing that loses its usefulness whenever it deteriorates into one of the above extremes. Both word and act require an active engagement with each other. Christians are called to be neither automatons nor talking heads. Christians are rather called to be counter-cultural when the culture of which they are part promotes polarization. Descartes' mind-body dualism is one benign but pervasive example of cultural polarization. Rather than accepting the notion that we are either merely acting bodies or merely thinking minds, we are to recognize that we are living bodies. Wittgenstein calls language and the acts into which it is woven the language-game;¹⁰³ analogously, human beings are living bodies¹⁰⁴ and their linguistic

¹⁰³ *Philosophical Untersuchungen*, §7.

¹⁰⁴ *Philosophical Untersuchungen*, II, iv.

(i.e. word-ed) interactions result in their becoming agents (i.e. act-ors).¹⁰⁵ Only with both word and deed are our language-games—the stuff of our Christian form-of-life—whole.

¹⁰⁵ In other words, linguistic interaction is constitutive of human identity; thus human identity never is nor can be strictly egocentric. It requires the presence of the other, the community into which an individual is reared.

CHAPTER 5

THE LITURGY STUDENT'S QUANDARY:

DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN THE CHICKEN AND THE EGG

Given a stack of texts, the student of liturgy has the daunting task of sorting through various significances. How and in what way is a text important? The classroom setting itself can be deceptive—texts concerned with liturgy, whether academic investigations or liturgical texts (e.g. the Roman Rite) themselves, have at least two purposes: to teach, and to guide. The liturgy student looks back at history with a careful eye, but what to make of the material is not always clear. One's evaluative stance with regard to any liturgically-oriented text is a theological one, whether it is informed or uninformed. Becoming informed is an important part of being a learner; it is arguable whether and how one's being informed makes one's stance better theologically. This is where the distinction between knowing that and knowing how is especially helpful. I will illustrate this distinction in four genres of texts that a liturgy student would study.

1. Scripture

Scripture, as discussed above, is foundational in understanding the Christian story. Any liturgy student well-versed in scripture may see, hear, taste, touch, and smell references to scripture. The person who has read, heard, proclaimed, and prayed scripture bears it lovingly, but not blindly. Someone intimately familiar with scripture cannot ignore differences in accounts of how this story or that happened. Nor can this person ignore the apparent contradictions. In one instance Jesus says peacemakers are blessed and that they shall be called sons of God (Mt 5:9); in another he who has been

called God's son (Mt 3:17) asserts that he has not come to bring peace, but a sword (Mt 10:34). Increasing one's familiarity with scripture increases one's danger of discovering inconsistencies; but it is only that thorough familiarity with scripture that can remedy the apparent gaps. Indeed, one may find that the best remedy to these lacunae is located in the mutual tension between them. Tension serves as a pulling force whose resistance from one side increases as pulling occurs to the other side. Balance and genuine understanding may be found not on one side, but from an angle that leaves all sides in view. This balancing means knowing how to reconcile two or more incompatible differences that one identifies. Other examples of knowing how, in conjunction with but also beyond knowing that, may help here.

The story of the Samaritan is a parable that appears only in Luke's gospel (10:25-37). The parable is Jesus' response to a lawyer's question, "Who is my neighbor?" (10:29). The parable is not primarily about a man from Samaria, but about a man who was beaten, robbed, and left in a ditch to die. A priest sees the man but passes by on the other side of the road; likewise, a Levite (one of the sons of Levi, the third son of Jacob [Gen 29:34], and whose forebears bore the priestly task of carrying the ark of the covenant [Deut 31:9]) passes by him on the other side of the road. A third person, a Samaritan (with whom Jews do not associate; cf. Jn 4:9) stopped next to the man and "bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; then he set him on his own beast and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, I will repay you'" (Lk 10:34-35). After offering this parable, Jesus asks the lawyer which of the three figures proved himself to be the man's neighbor.

According to ritual law and local custom, the priest and Levite would have qualified as his neighbor in light of their purity, their belonging. The man from Samaria, an alien and unwelcome town, would not have. But according to the command of love, the Samaritan (as the lawyer replies) is the only one fit to call himself neighbor of the injured man. Neighbor has at least two meanings here—one according to social order, and one according to one's attitude toward another as manifested in deeds. When the two do not coincide, the parable implies that it is one's attitude (as manifested in acts) toward the other that matters more than one's social status in connection to the other.

This is a simple exegesis of the parable of the Good Samaritan based on knowledge of related texts. Knowledge of who the priest and Levite are with regard to the Jewish mythos is crucial; important also is remembering that Samaritans are by no means friendly with those who claim King David (cf. 2 Sam) as a forebear. The question the lawyer poses has an easy answer when one is merely exchanging ideas of what is right and well; but Jesus paints a picture for the lawyer that manifests something else. There is incongruence between what the lawyer already considers to be right and what Jesus shows to be right.

The most notable characteristic of this parable-telling is that Jesus does not once comment on the virtue of any of the characters in the story. He allows the lawyer, who asks his question with a judgment already formed, to re-evaluate the question in accord with the parable.

Knowing *that* someone is my neighbor may not be sufficient; I may very well be misled, according to this account. Knowing *how* I may be someone's neighbor is a matter not only of idea but manifestation. Knowing how is a matter of manifestation, of

showing. Knowing *how* one is my neighbor may enrich and correct my knowing *that* one is my neighbor. My knowledge that one is “neighbor,” once manifested in the *how*, may change. The saying, subjected to showing, may be altered. The sort of saying that follows manifestation includes Christian mystagogy, a subject to which I shall turn presently.

2. Creeds

The Roman Rite prescribes the affirmation of the creed (usually the Nicene creed) during the baptismal ritual and the Sunday liturgy. The saying of it is an affirmation of doctrinal content. Propositions are carefully laid out to indicate what may and may not be said about God in relationship with God’s people. This is a tricky business on several fronts. One issue that a creed might raise is idolatry: is a creed meant to encapsulate or otherwise limit God? The church fathers who debated the natures of Christ and the persons of the Trinity subsequently provided definitions such that opposing standpoints (that Jesus was only human, only divine, or only part of each; that the Trinity was three gods, one slightly less divine than the next) would no longer be tolerated within “orthodox” or authentic Christian belief. The creeds were not an attempt to encapsulate God, but to establish rules of belief by which the theological articulation of Christians could be distinguished from the theological articulation of non-Christians. The creeds were the product of a Christianity for which Hellenic philosophical concepts served as underpinnings; the propositions they contained were theological tropes, determined to be right articulations of what Christian belief—springing from Christian worship—comprised.

A relationship exists between the development of the creeds and the mystagogical articulation of other theological tropes. The authors of the creeds were attempting, in the context of ecumenical councils, to pull together all they knew from the tradition and scripture and boil it down into precise theological statements. Mystagogy is similar and different: similar in its pulling together of elements from tradition and scripture, as encountered by the ones engaged in the mystagogical process, and different in that there is no linear *telos* involved. The creeds were an accomplishment in time that have, in some sense, been cast in stone; the fruits of mystagogy are fluid in contrast, developing and emerging according to the on-going and developing lives of those who participate in worship. Mystagogy is a theological method that meets participants at every moment in the motley situations of their lives.

Mystagogy is an investigation of deep grammar when it makes a connection between what has happened ritually and what it entails in the Christian form-of-life. The process of mystagogy is both a collective and personal process of appropriating the Christian story within the context of one's entire life, based on *theologia prima*, liturgy itself. Mystagogy is a matter of theological conversation. In mystagogy theological language arises, sometimes borrowed from liturgy and sometimes developed from an extra-liturgical vocabulary. Out of mystagogy, grammatically correct formulations (e.g. creeds, catechetical materials, gospels, and various modes of evangelization) arise from deeply grammatically appropriate liturgical actions,.

As Wittgenstein wished to pull philosophers out of the systems created by them and governed by rules of their own making, this author wishes to move theologians away from the illusion that the systems and jargon they create in the academic sphere somehow

govern or step above the conversation that happens in local churches. That is not to suggest that theological reflection is just as well handled by the church member without theological training as the theologian herself. It is to suggest that mystagogy, because it theological reflection done through a liturgical lens, is the most important of theological methods. The mystagogical conversation of the community should of course be led by someone with theological training to insure that all the bases of the Christian story—and each of the theological methods—will be brought into the conversation. But the leader of that conversation must not be a figure detached from the community; rather, the leader should be a member of the community who seeks to benefit from the mystagogy as much as any other participant in the process. The phrases “bottom-up” and “top-down” apply here—mystagogy takes a bottom-up approach, from liturgical action to theological reflection, while traditional academic theology is top-down and may only give liturgy a cursory glance. Somewhere the two must merge to unite in a hypostatic union, without anyone forgetting that revelation, the Word, the articulation of faith, started among ordinary people—theologians and their elite work emerged later.

One final point of interest with regard to the creeds is the way of the negative, the *via negativa*, popularized by Thomas Aquinas in the thirteenth century. The *via negativa* theology is one that necessitates humility, for it admits that no proposition or formulation or image will suffice to capture God. Aquinas takes up this question in his *Summa Theologica*, I.13. One may affirm one’s understanding of God if one equally affirms the insufficiency of that understanding: that is, one should take care to recognize that tropes contain both truth and falseness. God is a shepherd, but is not. God both is and is not a king. One might also employ contrasting images: God is both judge and comforter. That

is, God is both utterly immanent, familiar, and utterly transcendent, other. All Christians, theologians or not, would do well with a healthy diet of the *via negativa* in order to avoid any trace of idolatry in traditional theology and mystagogy. Theological discussions on every level should be able to say yes and no, this and that. This is the beauty of theological tropes, which in their turning of phrase and act may hold all poles in tension. The next section will review liturgical manuals and consider how well the theological tropes contained in them hold these opposites in tension.

3. Liturgical manuals

A study edition of the rituals of the Roman Rite has been published by the Liturgical Press and is easily accessible to any student of liturgy in the United States. The question for liturgy students, especially those involved in the regular preparation of these rites, is one of interpretation. Is the letter of the law as important as the spirit of it, or is it more or less so? Additionally, how does one go about identifying “the spirit of the law?” As with scripture, reading the rites at face value lends a superficial understanding of what is at work. The liturgy student should be familiar with the content (the words of the rites, the instructions that accompany them) and possess competence as an exegete of the rites. The skilled liturgist will be able to examine the rites (for example, by looking over given rubrics and observing various enactments of the rites) and make an evaluation on the grounds of the rites themselves. The liturgy student should be able to evaluate whether and how a given rite effects what it is meant to signify, especially in light of the theological *praenotanda* that precede the individual rituals. Within the bounds of the rite, then, the competent ritual exegete will be able to prepare it for liturgical use with greater

faithfulness than the person who prepares it without reading the lines and what lies between them. Such preparations will be made in light of both the written rite and the ethnographic context in which it is performed.

In the rite of baptism for children, the words of baptism are accompanied by water, either in the form of a sprinkling or the child's immersion in a pool. The two baptismal actions, sprinkling and immersion, communicate somewhat different messages, and it is for the one preparing the liturgy to evaluate which is more faithful to the rite itself. In a sprinkling, the water used is applied to the child; in immersion, the child is applied to the water. In a sprinkling a little bit of water touches the child; in an immersion, the child is touched—indeed, surrounded—by the water. Simple questions about the implications of each will draw out the multivalent message that the water sends. If the water is less substantial than the child, is water even necessary? Or is it necessary for a reason that is not clear? What is the purpose of the water? If the water is greater than the child, is this a sacred form of bathing? Where else in the Christian story does water appear? Peter nearly sinks into the stormy waters, to be saved only by Jesus' command. The Sea of Reeds in Exodus is parted for the Israelites, then closed to swallow up the Egyptian Pharaoh's men. Water in the Bible, when it envelops a person, means death. So baptism, if done by immersion, communicates dying. What does it communicate by pouring or sprinkling?¹⁰⁶ Oil is often poured as a healing balm or as a balm for the dead, but that is not the same as water poured. Water is necessary, however,

¹⁰⁶ Ezekiel 37:25 indicates a sprinkling of water as a means of cleansing the people Israel: "I will sprinkle clean water upon you to cleanse you from all your impurities, and from all your idols I will cleanse you." The function of the sprinkling—cleansing from ritual impurity for the purpose of uniting Israel with God—is explicated. Sprinkling may have referred to rain from the heavens or to a liturgical sprinkling from ministers of an entire assembly; in any case, the sprinkling would have been made upon the entire group, rather than on an individual as in baptism.

for all things to live—water gives life when it is consumed in small quantities, or when combined with wheat or other ingredients for food. Water both gives and takes life, depending on how it is used. Water is also used for washing—the tears of the woman who washed Jesus’ feet at Simon’s house were water. The Samaritan woman Jesus meets at the well is seeking water, and Jesus assures her that he is living water and that all who drink of the living water will not thirst (Jn 4:13). Water gives life when it is consumed, cleanses when used for washing, and takes away life when it surrounds a person. The more water there is to consider, the more likely a person is to consider the water.

The process above, though more akin to stream-of-consciousness writing than systematic thought, is valuable for the one who prepares liturgies. The reflections inspired by each practice, whether they are haphazard or logical, are good possibilities for the sorts of thoughts that will cross the minds of those who participate in the rites. Whatever provokes the sort of reflection that is turned toward the shared story of the community should be deemed good; whatever does less than this should be looked at carefully for its intrinsic value and compared to other practices (or words) that may be more evocative. Knowing the contents of a rite, or performing a rite in exact accordance with the rubrics, is at best a minimal start. Knowing how to do the rite such that the performance is faithful to the intent of it is clearly preferable. Adherence to the rubrics should follow from this faithfulness to intention; intention is perceptible not by rubrics alone, but by the entire dynamic context of liturgy.

4. Theological treatises

Most academic essays and volumes, as well as conciliar and papal documents, fall under the category of the theological treatise. They are carefully composed, systematic presentations of theology. Their value may be evaluated according to their adherence to scripture and tradition as well as the logical validity of their arguments. Theological treatises are treated as foundational to an academic theological education—few students of theology, even at the undergraduate level, would be eligible for graduation without having read many thousands of pages of them. An introductory course in theology alone would require hundreds of pages of such treatises. There is little debate in academic theological circles that theological treatises are fundamental to a sound academic theological education. How the academic theological education of professional theologians impacts the vast majority of Christians is debatable. If professional theologians are to be more than classroom academics—if they are to be genuinely concerned both about theological reflection and theological action—then finding a way to translate difficult theological treatises into useful theological insights that may impact the theological acts of Christians is key.

The usefulness and proper function of theological treatises therefore deserve scrutiny. They are the best example of theological language-games in danger of losing sight of their original context. They say much, but their original tropal context (namely, worship) may be lost in the format with which they are presented. Academic essays are arguments designed to persuade a reader to accept this distinction or that one, this train of thought or that. The purpose of the academic essay is to prove something, to make some point, to lay a new claim and provide support for it. This is a broad generalization of academic work, but it is the standard by which “academic” work (in contrast to “pastoral”

or parish-based work) is judged. This perceptible dichotomy between academic theology and pastoral theology classes is a false one, but it is perpetuated by the lack of connection between the theological treatise and its application in the parish community. It is as though two theological conversations are going on: one among the academics, and one among the faithful. And although brilliant ideas may appear in the academic conversation, insofar as they fail to refer back to the liturgical participation and lived experience of the faithful and the conversation happening in that realm, they are self-silencing. The burden of communicating academic theological ideas then falls on the relative few members of parishes who have academic theological training. The burdens of parish life often end up muting whatever theological training the pastoral figure has had, if that training has not had a chance to flourish in conjunction with pastoral application.

CHAPTER 6

LIMINALITY, *COMMUNITAS*, AND CHRISTIAN EVANGELIZATION: PLAYING CHRISTIAN LANGUAGE-GAMES IN THE WORLD

*Preach the gospel; when necessary, use words.*¹⁰⁷

What, then, does it mean to play Christian language-games in the world? “The world” must be defined, firstly. It has been common to place Christianity, the Reign of God, or the Church in opposition to “the world.” Gerard Pottebaum marks the distinction as that of the sacred and the secular.¹⁰⁸ Augustine of Hippo, in his opus, *The City of God*, contrasts the city of God with the city of humanity. The Gospel of John distinguishes between being in the world and being of the world (Jn 17:16-18). It may also be said that the world is the *via* which Christ is not. In referring to the world as a path rather than a society, it is possible to sidestep the country club mentality which accompanies some brands of thought on Christianity. Such a sidestepping is important, given Jesus’ company of sinners, the lepers, prostitutes and tax collectors who were ranked among the lowest of society in first century C.E. Palestine.¹⁰⁹

If the world is a way that Christ is not, then, it follows that Christians are defined in some manner in light of that *via*. Setting aside the strong image of the Body of Christ (I Cor 12:12-14) for the moment, Christ as the way (Jn 14:6) implies that Christ is found in the steps one takes on this path rather than the steps of a “worldly” path. Christians take these steps in the sacred time and space of liturgy; they also take these steps as evangelists outside of liturgy. Rather than evangelists for those who are “outside,”

¹⁰⁷ Attributed to Saint Francis of Assisi.

¹⁰⁸ Pottebaum, *The Rites of People*, 7.

¹⁰⁹ Eugene Laverdiere. *The Eucharist in the New Testament and the Early Church* (Collegeville: Pueblo, 1996): 84-7.

Christians are evangelists for all, including one another. The Christian form-of-life is distinct from other forms-of-life, an Other-oriented living that gives praise to one God and makes service to neighbor a priority. Self-centeredness, so characteristic of U.S. culture, is not a trait of the Christian form-of-life.

The work of the Scottish anthropologist, Victor Turner, may shed light on the idea of Christ as the way. Two terms commonly associated with Turner are “liminality” and “*communitas*,” both of which refer to ritual. Rituals involve liminality, the being-between of here and there, before and after, this and that.¹¹⁰ The roles of those involved in the rituals become necessarily ambiguous, Turner claims. How this ambiguity plays a role in liturgical rituals is not clear until Turner refers to his notion of *communitas*.

“What is interesting about liminal phenomena for our present purposes is the blend they offer of lowliness and sacredness, of homogeneity and comradeship.”¹¹¹ *Communitas* is, for Turner, a shifting of social relations for participants in the ritual. As the participants prepare to engage in the ritual, there is initially a period of separation, followed by the liminality of the ritual itself, followed by a period of reaggregation.¹¹² One steps away from what was, enters into a liminal ambiguity of status and social roles, and exits the ritual to re-enter the structure of life—complete with a new place in that life, whether or not one immediately perceives or articulates that new place.

Turner’s point is to demonstrate that rituals are the media of change in the traditional societies he observes. The participant does not return to the person he was when he first entered it; he is, in a sense, a new creation. Gerard Pottebaum goes beyond

¹¹⁰ Turner attributes the origin of this concept to Arnold van Gennep. See *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1969): 96.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² The process of separation, liminality, and reaggregation was identified by van Gennep. Ibid., 94-95.

Turner to examine the liminal stage as one that is both ambiguous and formative. What participants do in religious ritual is practice, rehearse, who they are. For Christians, this means the telling—and showing—of the Christian story each Sunday. Participants in religious ritual engage their *mythos*, their collective story.¹¹³ These language games are then brought to the world, not in the form of jargon but in translation to fit the situations that ritual participants meet. The acts may stay the same while the context and words differ. By enacting ritual behaviors (such as standing together around one table) outside their ritual contexts, one may bring the liminal, ambiguous encounter of the sacred to another. This liminality becomes a potential occasion for transformation, both on the part of the one being introduced to it and the one doing the introducing. None of this requires the sharing of the *mythos* at first. For Christians steeped in structured ritual, it is sensible for the story to follow the action in which it is immersed. This penetrates the core of Christian identity: who Christians are is wrapped up in the story of the work of salvation, a work accomplished for all through Jesus Christ in order that those who encounter that work through Christ (as manifested in Christ's Body) might proclaim it to the world and one another. Additionally, if Christians can articulate what it is that they do together and why, they can find ways to do the same things in different venues. Evangelizing may mean sharing story only later; showing the fruits of it first in acts, then revealing the story in words.

Numerous theological language-games have been identified above; the tropal character of these language-games has been illustrated. The next task will be to draw out general principles for approaching theology with a Wittgensteinian methodology. This will be done in Part III.

¹¹³ Pottebaum, *The Rites of People*, 7.

PART III

WITTGENSTEIN'S METHOD AS A THEOLOGIAN'S TOOL

In part one I discussed Wittgenstein's philosophical method, introduced several key terms, and highlighted how his approach and terminology might be appropriated for theological use. In part two I discussed many kinds of religious language games, identifying their tropal character. The challenge of part three is to depart from the place at which Wittgenstein claimed we should be silent. This is the potentially perilous role of the artist, the ethicist, the musician, the poet, and the theologian. Here I exit the domain of ordinary language and step into Alice's Wonderland, in which a new logic, a new set of rules, a new criterion for quality, emerge.

One potential difficulty with theological language-games is that they can be both said and shown, as discussed above. Problems emerge when religious persons forget or ignore the difference between these two, a forgetting that easily occurs when ongoing catechesis is absent. I will discuss this further in chapters seven and eight. In chapter nine I will discuss the ways in which Wittgenstein's method may be applied to various theological language-games.

CHAPTER 7

WHAT WE MAY SAY

I showed earlier that language (words) and acts are irreducible parts of a whole; polarizing them is a misuse of the them. Saying and showing are related but distinct. A simple example will illustrate this. A mother says to her daughter, “I love you.” She feeds her daughter, ensures her safety, teaches her, cares for her, goes out on a limb for her. The “I love you” the mother says is layered with every deed that instantiates it. In contrast, imagine an abusive mother: she is often drunk, she brings strangers home frequently without encouraging the fostering of any relationship between the strangers and her daughter, she yells, she curses, she hits, she bruises. And then, in a moment of remorse, the mother says, “I love you.” The phrase is not meaningless; rather, the child is formed in a notion of love that she will later discover to be false. Love, as learned through her mother, is not love at all. One might also wonder what one might learn about “love” is if it were shown by one’s mother throughout one’s childhood but rarely if ever expressed verbally. Would love become an embarrassing thing, even a shameful thing? Saying and showing seem to be inextricably bound up, as pointed out above—if all a child learns about love is what her abusive mother shows her, then that may very well be her expectation of love as an adult and future mother. This would be her mythos of love, a very different account of love than what one finds in scripture. Clearly what is said is illumined by and subordinate to what is shown.

Wittgenstein uses the saying/showing distinction as a tool for revealing the troubles a philosopher creates when construct complex, systematic accounts of the world—what exists and does not, what is real and what is not, etc. Theologically, the

distinctiveness of saying and showing is not as illuminating as the mutual relationship of one to the other. Wittgenstein wishes to debunk the systems that philosophers create to explain the world. Theologians, like the philosophers Wittgenstein critiques, seek ways to support the various elements of their theological tradition. The difference is that the philosopher Wittgenstein critiques creates a construct on which to hang his worldview; the theologian takes what has been revealed in act and recounted in word, seeking ways in which to capture that sacred word-act, the language-game.

The great story-tellers of the Christian tradition are commonly known as evangelicals¹¹⁴—their name is rooted in the Greek word which means good news, and which is translated into English as “gospel” with reference to the first four books of the New Testament. Evangelical Christians are Christians who go out to proclaim the good news of Christ. Often this is done via the medium of words¹¹⁵ crafted in the shape of stories, whether personal narratives of conversion or the shared story of salvation through Christ, or some combination of the above. Biblical passages are frequently quoted in the telling of the shared salvation story, especially sayings, stories (myths), and parables that are ascribed directly to Jesus or constitute self-referential remarks on Jesus’ part. The evangelical way of being Christian is one that all Christians ought to be able to claim, because such proclamation of the good news in word is exceedingly important. Acts alone are not the end of it, because the acts require context. Good deeds, removed from

¹¹⁴ I write “evangelical” with a small “e” in order to capture the broad sense of the term, rather than limiting the connotation to a specific group of Christians who identify themselves as “Evangelicals.” Now and later I mean evangelical in the broad sense, even when the broad sense includes self-named “Evangelicals.”

¹¹⁵ One should not confuse “words” and “language” here. Words are a medium as much as non-verbal symbols are; language is not a medium, per se, but the active form which all human communication takes. Words are part of, but not equivalent to, language.

the Christian (or other religious) context, becomes humanism, a brand of glorified self-centeredness.

A new movement of evangelicalism is emerging in the United States, led by preacher and social activist Jim Wallis, editor of *Sojourners* magazine. He envisions genuine Christian evangelicalism as a reunification of word and deed such that each is faithful to the other.¹¹⁶ This, perhaps, is the sort of proclamation that is the right and duty of each baptized member of Christ. Wallis' vision is a form of mystagogy insofar as the deeds and words of worship or liturgy are brought in union with the words and deeds Christians engage in every other context of life. It is not merely doing deeds or speaking words in worship that makes a community or person a follower of Christ the Way. Learning the story well enough to live it in a different context is a start, however. This is the strength of many evangelical churches—their members are skilled story-tellers, and they are able to spin theological tropes in such a way that they are accessible to those who are “outside” or removed from any church body. The Gospel of Mark is rife with examples of Jesus using parables among crowds in order to “speak the word to them, as they were able to hear it; he did not speak to them without a parable, but privately to his own disciples he explained everything” (Mk 4:33-34). Few United States citizens know anything about planting mustard seeds or cultivating mustard plants, but the use of the mustard seed as an parable for the Kingdom of God was perfectly fitting for the crowds to which he spoke. The authoring of contemporary parables is made necessary by contemporary language games, i.e. societal-cultural contexts—the Christian's job is to find useful parables for contemporary culture. This is part of the purpose of “saying,” as

¹¹⁶ Wallis, Jim. *God's Politics: Why the Right Gets It Wrong and the Left Doesn't Get It* (New York: HarperCollins, 2005): 12, 58.

saying in theological tropes becomes both saying and showing. The language-game of the parable involves deeds wrapped up in the language of new tropes, such that the deeds may better be seen by those who lack a religious context with which to understand them.

Virgil Michel, a Benedictine monk of Saint John's Abbey in the early part of the twentieth century sought to revivify the theological imagination of Catholics in America by producing pamphlets on parts of the Mass, connecting liturgical action with ethical deed.¹¹⁷ He, preceding Jim Wallis, desired a reunion of the story of Christians inside and outside the context of liturgy. The pamphlets he published were designed to help Catholics start talking about their faith in a new way in order that their experience of liturgy might meaningfully be connected with their lives as Christians. It was a massive effort at bringing about the sort of dialogue that one could find in mystagogy after the Second Vatican Council. In addition to the pamphlets he published, Michel published in 1928 the publication *Orate Fratres*, now published under the title *Worship*. The first issue contained a picture of the Heavenly Jerusalem on the cover with words below it in Latin: "INSTAURARE OMNIA IN CHRISTO" ("To reestablish all things in Christ").¹¹⁸ The goal of the publication was clear: Michel recognized a gap between the word and practice of the day, and sought to fill it by engaging all those who called themselves Catholic. As a theologian, he placed the burden on himself to make liturgy and the theology surrounding it accessible to the populace. He was a prophet of his time, speaking in tongues of fire so that all might comprehend and believe the good news. This is the job of any Christian; but first a Christian must discover the story into which he has

¹¹⁷ R. W. Franklin and Robert L. Spaeth. *Virgil Michel: American Catholic* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1988).

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 64.

been initiated. This means involvement in tropal language games, both language and the acts into which it is woven.

Those who use tropal language speak beyond what may be said. Tropal language games often simultaneously say and show what is meant, *saying* something familiar and *showing* something deeper and more subtle in twisting the familiar. When something false is said in a secular context, it may be transformed to truth in the sacred context through sacred acts of ritual. One may, for example, say any number of inauthentic phrases: “I enjoy your company,” “I wish we could spend more time together,” “I think you’re a great person,” etc. Each of these sentences is a first-person declaration about another person. Any of them might be lies—I might very much dislike the company of the person in front of me, I might not wish to spend any time with him, and I might think he is an awful person. Sacred acts—specifically, the table fellowship of Christian liturgy, or the offering of Christ’s peace through the touch of another, may transform a verbal lie into embodied truth. By enacting a sacred deed of hospitality, my attitude and beliefs may be converted to something better. In the next chapter, I will take a step beyond what may be said to discuss these deeds as that which must be shown.

CHAPTER 8

WHAT MUST BE SHOWN

*What can be shown cannot be said.*¹¹⁹

Wittgenstein made the claim early on in his work that what could be shown could not be said. After speaking much, he declared that silence was preferable above all else in the face of *das Mystisch*, which for him was of ultimate importance. Christians do not end in silence because Christ did not—indeed, Christians proclaim Christ as the divine *Word*, the Word enfleshed. Silence is, for Christians, a penultimate response to God. For Christians, what can be shown cannot be said univocally: but it can (and must) be said multivalently, as in tropes. The tropes, woven intimately with and enriched by the actions in which they are based, make what is shown available in a new way. Silence is transformed into a new showing, a showing that involves tropal words. Action and multivalent words mutually shape and correct each other, dancing in constant tension so that neither becomes stagnant or faded in the Christian imagination. Wittgenstein's later notion of the language-game paves the way for the trope. The Gospel of Mark models multivalent saying by presenting Jesus of Nazareth as a parable-teller. Jesus offers parables—tropes—so that those who have not been immersed in the story of salvation may hear it and believe. The tropes Jesus uses are iconic, mediating in a common tongue the faith, hope, and love that Jesus and his disciples share. Faith, hope, and love cannot be said; they are not subject to proof or scientific investigation. They are altogether different from anything that could be subject to empirical inquiry. Rather, they are practices, acts which require the subject's change or transformation: change of affections, dispositions, motives for actions, etc. The New Testament is filled with

¹¹⁹ *Tractatus* 4.1212.

admonitions that support the exclusive distinction Wittgenstein makes between what can be shown and what can be said. Paul writes to the church at Corinth that even though he is a master of divine and human language, if he speaks without love, he is no more than clanging instruments (1 Cor 13:1). What one says is devoid of meaningfulness in such a case. What one shows—namely, using tropal theological language-games—allows the activity of God (as revealed through Christ Jesus) to be both encountered and subsequently understood.

What is crucial for the Christian to understand here is that the tenets of the Christian story will not resonate with someone who does not share it if the story is merely said to them. Words find their meaning in context, and the Christian context is one of active, mutual love and self-sacrifice. In scripture Jesus is engaged in many language-games, all which point back to the context of which he is a messenger. Jesus knows that words alone mean nothing and admonishes the Pharisees and others for ignoring that fact. It is the context of words that locates their meaning. Jesus acclaims the poor woman who gives all she has (i.e. two small copper coins) for the temple tax, even though that sum is objectively much less than that of the rich who contribute (Lk 21:1-4). This willingness to give up all one has—one's entire livelihood—is one of which Jesus demonstrates approval. "Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them; for they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all the living that she had" (vv. 3-4). The meaning of this theological trope is located in action: the woman gives all she has, rather than giving what she has left over. This story sheds light on the one that precedes it, in which Luke shows Jesus warning his disciples: "Beware of the scribes, who like to go about in long robes, and love salutations in the market places and

the best seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at feasts, who devour widows' houses and for a pretense make long prayers" (20:46-47). Why be wary? Because the scribes will receive condemnation greater than that which they have inflicted upon others, Jesus says (v. 47). These adjacent passages illustrate how Luke understands what it means to be a follower of Jesus. To follow is to give everything to which one is attached—not for one's own sake or benefit, but for the sake of what is holy and other. To follow is not to be showy or pompous or loquacious; it is to act unassumingly and without concern for social or material gain.

Christian discipleship is less about saying—for example, saying how much one has accomplished—than about showing. By showing, one leaves oneself open to examination and criticism, the seeds of humility and repentance. Theological language-games, like other symbols, communicate many layers of meaning when left to speak for themselves.¹²⁰ When commentaries are imposed by those who engage in the language-games, the language-games are cheapened. Uriah Heep tries to persuade David Copperfield that he is, in fact, an “umble man,” but the content of his speaking shows his humility to be false.¹²¹ What can be shown cannot be said. The mistake of Uriah Heep and the scribes mentioned in the scripture passage above is the notion that virtue or value is verbally self-referential. Saying that “I am humble” is an example of Wittgenstein's claim that what can be shown cannot be said. Humility calls for manifestation; claims about one's own humility may indicate implicit pride, humility's opposite. Discord between what is said and shown is difficult, sometimes impossible, to reconcile.

¹²⁰ Theological-language games are both symbols in themselves and contexts for symbols they contain. Polyvalence, a defining characteristic of symbol, allows this to be the case.

¹²¹ Charles Dickens. *David Copperfield* (http://www.dickens-literature.com/David_Copperfield/39.html, accessed 11 Feb 2007): chapter 39.

Irreconcilability between what is said and shown implies meaninglessness. Anthony Kenny illustrates this in his discussion on the Wittgensteinian picture.¹²² “The proposition that the cat is on the mat says that the cat is on the mat; but it cannot say, but only show, that *that it itself says that* the cat is on the mat.”¹²³ The link between Uriah Heep, the cat on the mat, and the scribes mentioned in the Gospel of Luke is this: what is shown (one’s humility, one’s position on the mat, one’s piety) cannot be said. These values are not self-referential. They must be verified by others, and often any effort to persuade those others that one has great values will serve only to dissuade them. Theological values are manifested. Words, as in Goethe, are enmeshed in actions, not the reverse. Words are not to be exalted as primary, but rather the deeds that they envelop. “There are indeed things that cannot be put into words. They *manifest themselves*.”¹²⁴ The words that emerge cannot replace the deed as the language game involves both. This is where tropal language games have the opportunity to flourish. Liturgy teems with tropal language games.

Through baptismal election into Christ as priest, prophet, and king, the commission to evangelize is bestowed on each Christian. It is a commission to make the sacred context of liturgy merge with the quotidian context. Theological language-games, though based in a shared story, do not need to be accompanied by the same words one would encounter in liturgy. The theological acts manifest themselves; the time for saying is subsequent to that manifestation. The telling of the Christian story, therefore, is appropriately told after the sacred acts have been encountered. This tradition is present in

¹²² A “picture,” for Wittgenstein, is a state of affairs that has a truth value (i.e. true, or false). Its truth value may be verified empirically. See *Tractatus* 2.21.

¹²³ Anthony Kenny. *Wittgenstein*. Rev. ed. (Malden: Blackwell, 2006): 53. See *Tractatus* 4.022.

¹²⁴ *Tractatus* 6.522.

scripture and in the mystagogical tradition of the early Christian churches. More broadly it is a tradition to which each Christian has a right. The deeds are primary, but not sufficient in themselves; tropal language may be secondary, but necessary to enable reflection on what has been experienced.

Importantly, the Christian's task is to remember why she engages in theological actions, lest the actions lose their context. Blind ritualism is not a Christian virtue. Nor is empty talk.¹²⁵ The task is one of creative translation: becoming aware of the sacred context shown through given theological actions and adapted language. The difference between someone who follows Christ the Way and someone who does not is a difference in attitude, of fundamental positioning toward God, rather than propositional belief alone. One's attitude in this sense is the way one positions oneself, either communally or individually, towards the world. A Christian's attitude may manifest itself in many ways, but at the core it is one of radical love, for this is what Christ's attitude to the world was.

If, as indicated above, proper words themselves are not a sufficient condition for authentic Christian proclamation, then some other criterion must be present. That criterion, in a word, is sincerity.¹²⁶ This must be mutually evaluated by the proclaimer and the one who witnesses the proclamation. A community's or individual's conviction may thus be tempered by the way others perceive that community or individual, and the perceptions of those who witness the proclamation may likewise be shaped by the proclaimer's sincere and unwavering convictions. A person who says he loves and often acts in an unloving manner will not persuade many of his loving character, and he should be chided on that basis. At the same time, a person who has not experienced

¹²⁵ Mt 7:15-16: "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Are grapes gather from thorns, or figs from thistles?"

¹²⁶ This criterion falls in line with Austin's criterion of intention. *How to Do Things with Words*, p. 15.

unconditional love may deny the love of the one who proclaims it constantly, until her mistrust gradually crumbles and she is persuaded of the proclaimer's constancy. The proclaimer's conviction and the witness' perception are in a tensive relationship, and it is the proclaimer's duty to accept criticism humbly and to avoid becoming discouraged. The proclaimer's participation in the Christian story is what will hold her firm; and her constancy of loving action is what may convert the hearts of those who witness that proclamation.

There is no upper bound to the number of language-games one might play in the world, bringing theological deed and secular word together to form a new creation—indeed, this is where culture may take root and help in the continual shaping of liturgy. The final chapter of this essay will examine the theological value of continually shaping theological language-games.

CHAPTER 9

POSSIBLE SUBJECTS FOR THIS METHOD'S APPLICATION:

AS NUMEROUS AS THE LANGUAGE GAMES WE PLAY

A theologian or religious believer might ask whether, as with certain systems of thought, this method's application ceases to be useful at certain points. There is a two-fold answer for this. First, this method may be applied to any religious or theological language game. Language and the acts into which language is woven form the language-game, which is dynamic; it changes and acquires variations as often as people grow and progress through the ages. Wittgenstein's method serves as a useful investigative tool into the language games we play and improper uses (i.e. uses that fail to follow the rules) of the games. Thus the first objective of this chapter is to discuss the concept of a false picture in relationship to theological tropes. Second, this method is not a means for demonstrating that a particular language game is or ought to be etched in stone eternally. For the Christian theologian it may serve as a reminder of the *via negativa*, that in everything we affirm about God (and ourselves in relation to God), we also deny. The second objective of this chapter will be to investigate the way in which theological tropes remain and fail to remain dynamic, as well as the ramifications of each. I will take a look at a key concept from the philosophical work of Peter Strawson with the hope of revealing a solution to the apparent gap *between theologia prima and theologia secunda*.

In chapter eight I briefly introduced Wittgenstein's notion of the "picture" (*Bild*). Some further exploration of the idea of the "picture" will help in the transition from the Wittgensteinian picture to the theological trope. One important thing to remember in the discussion of pictures is that they possess an inherent logic, even if they are untrue. "The

cat is on the mat” may be true or untrue, but the picture is not difficult to imagine—cats lay on mats and similar objects with frequency. A false picture, as distinguished from an untrue picture, would be more akin to this: “The mat lays down on the cat.” Mats are not attributed with the behavior of “laying down;” indeed, mats are not attributed with any behavior. They are inanimate. This picture is not empirically false, but sensibly false. That is, the picture itself is inherently illogical. Pictures are states of affairs whose possibility is contained within themselves. It is possible for a cat to be on a mat. It is not possible for a mat to lay down on a cat. The latter is an example of an ungrammatical or illogical picture; the truth value does not apply here.

The key insight contained in the concept of the ungrammatical picture is that it violates the logic of language. This logic is not prior to language, but it is present and discernible in language. Intuition reveals that the idea of a mat laying on top of a cat lacks common sense (it is *sinnlos*). A helpful German distinction exists between something that lacks sense (*sinnlos* or “senseless” is the adjectival word for this) and something that is nonsense (*Unsinn*). An ungrammatical picture lacks sense, like “square circle.”¹²⁷

A nonsense picture, in contrast with the ungrammatical picture, has sense but is not verifiable (true or untrue): tautologies are a logical example of this. Tropes are also included in this category. *Das Mystisch*, what is mystical or transcendent, falls into this category. The nonsense picture is the sort of picture that Wittgenstein touches on only slightly in the *Tractatus*, determining it to be that which must be passed over in silence

¹²⁷ Philosophers and theologians often ensnare themselves in ungrammatical pictures; I will return to this in the second part of this chapter.

because it cannot be said.¹²⁸ And yet, as mentioned above, the nonsense picture is a trope. This is not nonsense in the pejorative sense of silliness or senselessness. It is *Unsinn*, that which does not give empirical information. It bends the rules of ordinary language games in order to image what is not properly fit to be pictured. This is the role of the theological language-game. Theological language-games are tropes involving deed and word; they grow and fade according to variations and developments in human language and, tied into that, culture.

The issue of culture has clearly played an important role in decisions about liturgical renewal in the last century, especially since the Second Vatican Council. The concern for culture is one that requires recognition of how language-games (indeed, how Christian forms-of-life) are played and lived in actual liturgical communities. Peter Strawson makes a distinction between two kinds of metaphysics: revisionary (the more common of the two), and descriptive.¹²⁹ Descriptive metaphysics, he argues, is solely concerned with describing the structure of our thought about the world; revisionary metaphysics seeks a better structure. Revisionary metaphysics, though historically the more popular brand of metaphysics, is at the service of descriptive metaphysics, he argues. The same can be said of theology, especially in light of the distinction between *theologia prima* and *theologia secunda*. Both descriptive and revisionary theology are brands of *theologia secunda* in that they are verbal (usually written), rather than enacted, theology. Descriptive theology is directly concerned with *theologia prima*, the theology that is enacted in liturgy and the lives of the members of the Church; it may be done by

¹²⁸ Members of the Vienna Circle, famous for their Logical Positivism, misjudged the importance of *das Mystisch* and used Wittgenstein's call for silence as an excuse to dismiss transcendental (i.e. non-empirical) propositions altogether. See James Kenneth Wright. *Schoenberg, Wittgenstein, and the Vienna Circle* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2007).

¹²⁹ Peter Strawson. *Individuals* (New York: Routledge, 1999): 9-11.

anyone engaged in the liturgical life, from parishioners to pastors to professional theologians. Revisionary theology seeks a system for organizing theological insight with a tendency toward universalism; the unique characteristics of local communities may get overlooked. The idealism of the latter runs the risk of ignoring vital aspects of *theologia prima* in favor of ones that suit the author's theological imagination. Additionally, the author's concepts may simply be inaccessible to anyone but the most learned, shutting the door on any useful understanding that might be gained for Christians who lack academic theological training. One might include systematic theologians (famous ones include Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Barth, and Rahner as well as many in the College of Bishops) in the category of revisionary theology, whereas theologians primarily involved with "practical" (e.g. liturgical), pastoral pursuits might be included in the category of descriptive theologians. One difficulty with revisionary theology, whether contemporary or ancient, is that theological jargon and propositions easily become embedded in all arenas of theological conversation and eventually become unintelligible to all but the experts. When experts insist that this jargon and these propositions continue to be used, rather than finding dynamic conceptual equivalents from within the culture, revisionary theology becomes arcane. This dilemma of 21st century theology will be a special burden for academic theologians who are well-versed in theological jargon and systems but barely conversant in theology in a parish atmosphere. The recognition will need to be made that revisionary theology, which comprises so much of academic theology, is servant to descriptive theology, which belongs properly to all the faithful. The task to be done is laid out in the following remarks from Strawson. He writes here of metaphysics;

I will insert the term “theology” every time “metaphysics” or “philosophy” appears in the original text:

[Theology] has a long and distinguished history, and it is consequently unlikely that there are any new truths to be discovered in descriptive [theology]. But this does not mean that the task of descriptive [theology] has been, or can be, done once for all. It has constantly to be done over and over again. If there are no new truths to be discovered, there are old truths to be rediscovered. For though the central subject-matter of descriptive [theology] does not change, the critical and analytical idiom of [theology] changes constantly. Permanent relationships are described in an impermanent idiom, which reflects both the age’s climate of thought and the individual [theologian’s] personal style of thinking.¹³⁰

Strawson’s insight is this: many language-games that worked once are still bearers of truth, but with few exceptions only a small elite of well-trained academics comprehend them. The theological tropes found in the creeds, in Augustine, in Aquinas, in the Tridentine Rite, in Rahner, and even in the writings of living theologians are all but impossible to understand without academic theological training. In other words, theological concepts and phrases from history are frequently inaccessible to those who recite them from week to week. Add to that drab and minimized liturgical movement, preaching, and other symbols, and there is little to capture the Christian imagination. Theological language-games have been deadened in a pandemic of tropal stagnation; the role of descriptive theologians is to revivify theological language-games. Descriptive theologians start with the tropes common among the assembly and find ways to integrate the Christian story with those tropes. This is not a move to “make liturgy relevant”—it already is relevant. Rather it is a move to enrich liturgy from the grass roots up such that Christians gain a stronger sense of who they are (collectively and individually) and what they are doing together from Sunday to Sunday. For example, then, opening and closing prayers, collects, and dialogical prayers will need to be multiplied and subsequently

¹³⁰ Ibid., 11.

revised on a regular basis. Liturgical spaces will need to be continually considered in their tropal capacity as media through which the Reign of God is communicated; flexibility in seating and community movement will be key. Changes that occur will need to happen with the permission of a parish community that is well-informed both in terms of the procedures for change and theological justification for change. These are just a few suggestions of what descriptive theological endeavors will look like.

Ultimately descriptive theologians will recognize that in its language-games, for better or worse, liturgy is formative. These theologians will also recognize that the language-games of liturgy—and mystagogical forms of theological reflection—go hand in hand. Acts and their attached ritual words will be accompanied by an on-going tropal, multivalent articulation of what is happening. That is what descriptive theology does for the sake of faith that seeks to understand, faith that seeks to become an embodied, Christian form-of-life.

The theological adaptation of Wittgenstein's philosophical method, as I have demonstrated above, is a medium through which ritual can be critiqued on its own basis and by its own participants, without sacrificing the integrity of the rituals themselves. This dialogical critique, like the pruning of withering branches, has the potential to destroy if overdone; if done properly with concern for and knowledge about the proper care of the plant, it will encourage new life. In this way liturgical action and theological reflection may become deeply grammatical correct.

CONCLUSION

This essay was an effort to accomplish a tri-fold task: first, to introduce the reader to the methodology and thought of the Austrian philosopher, Ludwig Wittgenstein; second, to propose and flesh out the notion of religious language-games; and third, to evaluate Wittgenstein's philosophical method as a tool for theological reflection. Throughout the essay, Wittgenstein's fundamental distinction between saying and showing appeared as a starting point for reflecting on what (and how) liturgy theologically says and shows. Liturgy was discussed as a formative collection of ritual words and deeds: these were named theological tropes, or language-games. Attention was drawn to *via negativa* theology, in which every affirmed theological proposition must likewise be denied due to its inability to capture the essence of God. Finally, based on a helpful distinction by P.F. Strawson, a distinction was made between revisionary and descriptive theology, and an argument was made for a change such that the two would come together; revisionary or academic theology would be placed in an appropriately subordinate place to descriptive or parish-level theology.

The purpose of this essay has been to show that liturgical action and theological reflection mutually shape and correct one another. In Part One, Wittgenstein's method and terminology were examined as tools for theological use. In Part Two, these tools were applied in an examination of both liturgical action and theological reflection. *Theologia prima* and *theologia secunda* were understood in dynamic relationship to one another and were critically appraised in light of that relationship. Part Three of this essay made an effort to show that that process of mutual shaping and correction has suffered from an over-emphasis on theology as done by "experts," especially academic

theologians, at the expense of theology done by the entire church. Strawson's distinction between revisionary and descriptive metaphysics was adapted, inserting theology for metaphysics, in order to bridge the gulf between academic theology, which is one form of *theologia secunda*, and *theologia prima*. I argued that the Christian story is tied up inextricably with the theological tropes Christians use in liturgy and in the world, and that these language-games are the stuff of the Christian form-of-life. Wittgenstein's advice to theologians today would probably have sounded something like this: "Your systems blind you. Do not impose your ideals of theology upon liturgy, but investigate how liturgical language-games are actually played. Look at the way in which language is used; look at the way in which theology is made manifest. *That* is the place to begin."

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