OPEN QUESTIONS IN WORSHIP

volume 6

What are the ethical implications of worship?

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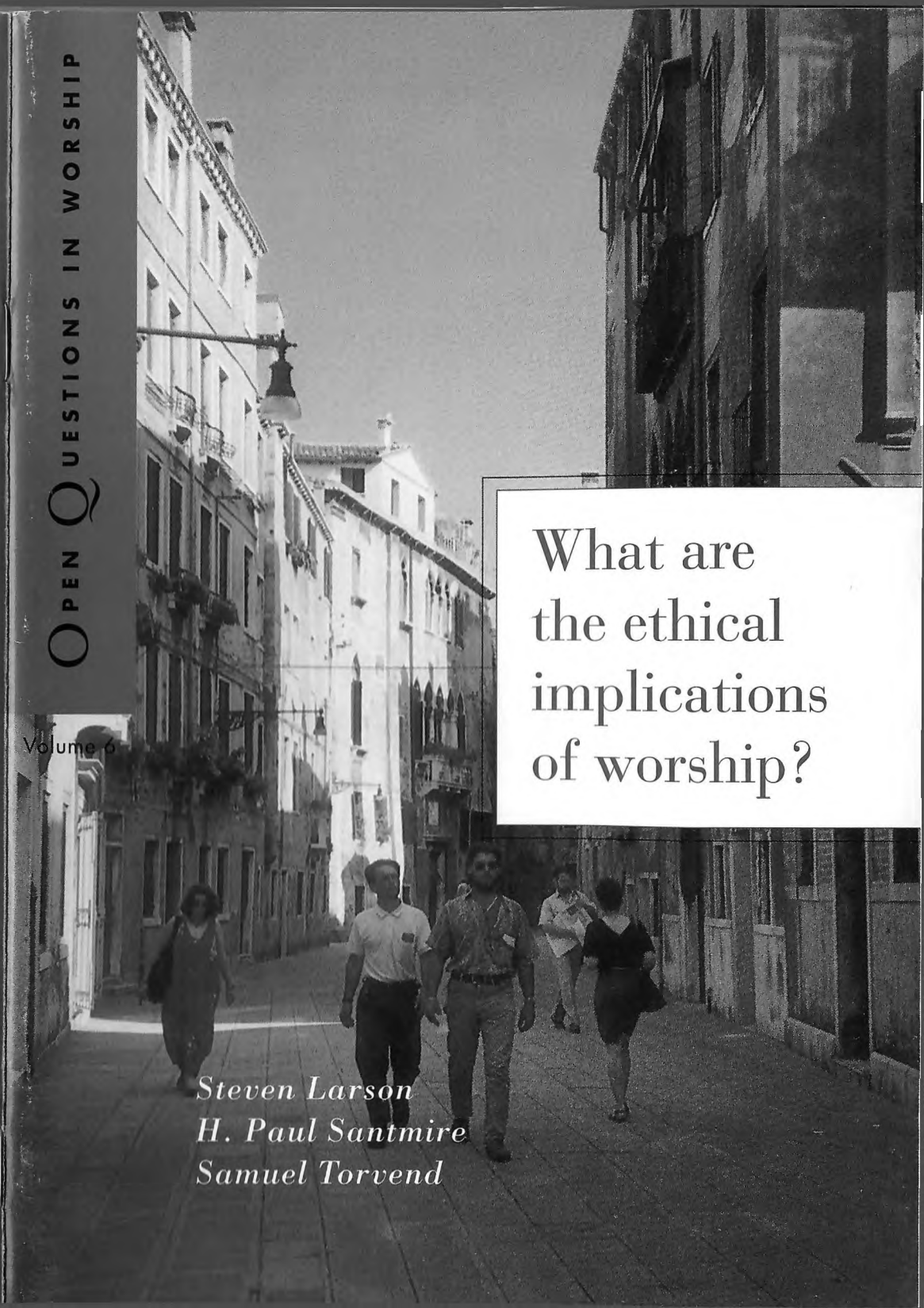

Steven Larson
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How does the liturgy relate to the cosmos and care for the earth?

H. Paul Santmire

One can imagine some sixteenth-century scholarly detractor of Martin Luther complaining to a colleague about the "faddishness" of the reformer. That detractor could be someone as sophisticated as an Erasmus. Such an eminent critic could easily observe that few of the great theologians of the church have found the idea of justification by faith *everywhere* in scripture, as Luther has been wont to do. Nor for a thousand years has the church taught anything resembling Luther's prized and passionate rendering of the idea, "justification by faith *alone*." Hence, this imagined scholarly critic might easily conclude that Luther has become the captive of some alien spirit, call it the spirit of the untutored masses or the wiles of their fellow-traveling, popularizing teachers, who only seem to want to change catholic truth into some heresy pleasing to themselves.

The analogy is precise. In our time, scholarly detractors and other theological critics have confidently announced that the theology of the cosmos and environmental ethics represent a *fad*: that theologians and other church spokespersons who talk about the cosmic dimensions of the faith and about care for the earth have allegedly capitulated to some popular culture of "political correctness" or some alien popular faith, a new age spirituality.

On the contrary, the theology of the cosmos and environmental ethics are as critical for us, in our time, as the theology of justification by faith alone was for Luther in his time. The spiritual and social crises of his time—the bankruptcy of a piety and a public ethos that had celebrated justification by works—drove Luther to scripture with a fresh urgency. We would not have had the theological breakthroughs of the Reformation era, surely, were it not for the spiritual and social crises of those times.

Today, driven by the global spiritual and social crises of the environment in our time, some have been led by the Spirit to discover afresh the cosmic scope of biblical faith, and the biblical concern for care for the earth, aware-

ness of which has been more or less eclipsed in modern times. Theological interest in the cosmos and care for the earth can be judged to be a fad only by those who have failed to see that that interest is predicated on a *fundamentum* of the classical theological tradition, to which numerous thoughtful people of faith have attempted to return, driven by the spiritual and social threats posed by the late-twentieth-century global environmental crisis.

Much has already been accomplished, in this respect, theologically and ethically. Once the church is ready to be tutored, many biblical and theological works in "ecological theology" and "environmental ethics" are at hand to shape the mind and the heart of the church. But it is sobering to notice that such works and numerous church social statements have been available for more than two decades. The impact of these works and ecclesial statements on many parish leaders and congregations appears to have been marginal, at best. Why?

Could it be that one of the reasons for the continuing eclipse of the cosmic in Christian life and thought in our time is rooted in the our *liturgical praxis*? While twentieth-century liturgical scholars like Alexander Schmemann and theologians of Christian spirituality like Teilhard de Chardin have depicted the church's liturgy as a cosmic liturgy, their writings appear to have had little substantive impact, in this respect, throughout the church.

Nor has it always been salutary in recent years when local congregations have improvised liturgically on their own in response to the environmental crisis. A large Episcopal cathedral in the Midwest, for example, has taken to celebrating "St. Bernard's Day." The St. Bernard in question, however, is not the medieval luminary, but the popular canine. St. Bernard's Day, in this instance, turns out to be a day for the faithful in that parish to bring their dogs to church for a blessing.

The Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York City has been much more theologically and liturgically sophisticated in this respect, with its lavish celebrations of the day of St. Francis. This cathedral congregation seems to have taken earth-care with a real seriousness, too, as is evidenced by the church's various task forces geared to impact on the congregation's own impoverished urban environment. But even in this case, the liturgical activity itself appears to be problematic. Bringing a whole entourage of animals, large and small, into the worship space once a year can seem to suggest that a single liturgy, whether done in the name of St. Bernard, St. Francis, or somebody else, *is* the cosmic liturgy of the church.

Once-a-year celebrations of a day set aside to give thanks for the fruits of the earth, "Rogationtide," a festival which some earnest Protestant activists have been attempting to revive, seem to be even less promising, for the same reasons. Where is the cosmic dimension of the church's worship the rest of the year?

The time is surely at hand to discover or to rediscover the cosmic dimensions of the church's worship life and the ethos of earth-care that the liturgy fosters, so that the cosmic roots of the classical liturgy can bear fruit and thereby shape the life of the faithful *every day* in this era of global environmental crisis, not just on yearly liturgical occasions.

Those roots are readily accessible, for anyone who has eyes to see. What we need is a liturgical praxis, in word and sacrament, that will allow those roots to grow and to flourish for all to see. Consider what might happen to the ethos of the church if large numbers of the faithful deeply experienced the cosmic dimensions of the church's own liturgy on a regular basis.

The cosmic liturgy as experience

Consider first the praxis of baptism and eucharist, already given at the heart of the church's liturgy. For the moment, let these be seen as ministrations of the cosmic Christ, illumined by a theology of the cosmic Word. From among the many ecumenical liturgical expressions of those sacraments, past and present, let us look at two particular rites, both accessible in representative contemporary form in *Lutheran Book of Worship*.

To describe how these rites are to be rightly celebrated, we must first identify a theological assumption and then its christogical corollary. This is the assumption: baptism and eucharist are indeed to be understood as *visible words*, but only if the Word is interpreted as the cosmic Logos made flesh, in the sense of John 1:1 and 1:14, only if the Word is interpreted as the immanent Principle or Matrix of all things, in the sense of Colossians 1:15ff. All too often this Augustinian sacramental affirmation has been understood in platonic terms. It has been assumed that the Word that is made visible in the sacraments is the *word of doctrine*. As a result, for some communions, the sacraments have tended to become *illustrations of an idea*, dispensations announcing the unmerited grace of God, surely, but basically understood to have been instituted by God for the sake of simple, even illiterate souls in order to *teach* them about what God has revealed more directly in the written Word, in immediate revelations to the soul, or by the dogmatic authority of the church. So we must state resolutely at the outset that the sacraments of baptism and eucharist, as "visible words," are indeed sacraments of *the real presence of the cosmic Logos made flesh*.

Then the corollary of the theological assumption. It is this: the risen Christ is everywhere. This might sound like an obscure point in sacramental theology, but it is not. It goes to the heart of the matter. This doctrine of the ubiquity of Christ, a teaching most strongly pressed by Martin Luther, has been something of an embarrassment to even the most enthusiastic of Luther's followers. It has scandalized many others.

Luther understood space, paradoxically, first and foremost as *God's space*, then the world's. So Luther could readily suggest that the whole of the Godhead is present in the baby on Mary's lap. He could make the same affirmation about a grain of wheat! God's space is not limited by the space of this world. On the contrary, God's space envelops, dwarfs, indwells, overwhelms, and caresses the space of this world.

Luther's sense of God's immediate presence in the creation has been given dramatic expression in our time by the theologian Jürgen Moltmann, with the latter's statement that God creates the cosmos *within* the Divine Being. For Moltmann, God's presence envelops and permeates the world. On the other hand, Luther was more dialectical than Moltmann. Luther would *also* have said that the cosmos is "outside" God's being. For Luther, no single spatial preposition, including "within," can describe the power and the mystery and the radical immediacy of the divine presence. For similar reasons, Luther would have rejected, as simplistic and undialectical, the assertion by some theologians in our time that the cosmos *is* God's body. For Luther, God's glory is too great and God's immediacy in all things is too mysterious to allow such a one-dimensional, literalizing theological predication.

Further, when Luther stated, concerning the ascension of the risen Lord to the right hand of the Father, that "the right hand of God is everywhere" (*dextera Dei ubique est*), the reformer was simply giving his rich theology of the divine immanence what is for him an appropriate christological concreteness. Since God the Father, for Luther, is, as a matter of course, "in, with, and under" all things, so is the ascended Son of God. This christological qualification of the divine immanence then makes it possible for Luther to develop his rich sacramental theology. The same God who was and is in, with, and under all things is also fully present in the child on the lap of Mary, and therefore also fully present in the waters of baptism and in the bread and the wine of the eucharist, at all times and in all places, and so known by the faithful, whenever those sacraments are celebrated according to the selfsame cosmic Word.

Why, then, we must ask theologians who back away from this cosmic theology of Luther, are you so embarrassed or even scandalized by the doctrine of the ubiquity of the risen Christ? Is not the risen Christ who reigns throughout the cosmos (1 Cor. 15; Col. 1) really present at any time and any place in baptism and eucharist when he discloses his presence as *for us*? Is he not really present, as he promised, where ever two or three are gathered in his name? And is this not the same Christ who appeared to Mary at the tomb and Thomas behind closed doors?

In light of these considerations, the theological burden of the proof would seem to rest squarely on the shoulders of those who would minimize or reject an assertion of the ubiquity of the risen and ascended Christ. In this respect, as in many others, Luther's theological affirmations seem to have been not only appropriate, but commendable interpretations of the witness of Holy Scripture. It remains, then, to explore the rich and deep connections between this theology of the cosmic Word and the liturgical praxis of baptism and eucharist.

The baptismal liturgy

The ancient church testified to the cosmic meanings of baptism in numerous ways, especially in the architecture of baptisteries. Often those free-standing structures were designed to represent the whole cosmos, with domed ceilings for example, representing the heavens. Their octagonal shapes, moreover, told the story of the universal history of salvation, for all who had eyes to see. The "eighth day" of creation was, for the classical Christian mind, the day of the resurrection, the restoration, and the perfection of the whole creation, first shaped by the Creator through a history of seven days. Recent church architecture has

sometimes moved in the direction of restoring that kind of cosmic symbolism for the baptismal font, through the introduction of living waters in some magnitude, by the incorporation of cosmic imagery on the font and its setting, and by the placement of fonts near or at the center of public liturgical action. But generally, it would appear, those suggestive architectural expressions have not been maximized as they might have been in any ecumenically consistent fashion.

Still, there are many structures that cannot be rebuilt or replaced, for all manner of architectural and financial reasons. But what cannot be accomplished by architecture can surely be accomplished in the baptismal rite itself, with the use of ample water and with a baptismal prayer of cosmic amplitude, and with other appropriate liturgical enactments, such as enhanced musical settings.

This is the celebratory baptismal prayer over the font set forth in *Lutheran Book of Worship*. Notwithstanding certain limitations, in particular its muted eschatological witness, it is a powerfully suggestive cosmic prayer:

> Holy God, mighty Lord, gracious Father: We give you thanks, for in the beginning your Spirit moved over the waters and you created heaven and earth. By the gift of water you nourish and sustain us and all living things.
>
> By the waters of the flood you condemned the wicked and saved those whom you had chosen, Noah and his family. You led Israel by the pillar of cloud and fire through the sea, out of slavery into the freedom of the promised land. In the waters of the Jordan your Son was baptized by John and anointed with the Spirit. By the baptism of his own death and resurrection your beloved Son has set us free from the bondage to sin and death, and has opened the way to the joy and freedom of everlasting life. He made water a sign of the kingdom and of cleansing and rebirth. In obedience to his command, we make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
>
> Pour out your Holy Spirit, so that those who are here baptized may be given new life. Wash away the sin of all those who are cleansed by this water and bring them forth as inheritors of your glorious kingdom.
>
> To you be given praise and honor and worship through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, now and forever. Amen.

This prayer tells "the mighty acts of God" in impressive trinitarian terms. Unfortunately, however, it understates the eschatological promise for the renewal of all things given with baptism. This is the theme: that whoever is baptized is united with the death and resurrection of the one who will come again to make all things new. For example, reference could easily have been made in this prayer to the river of the City of God, set in the midst of the new heavens and the new earth (Rev. 22:1-2). Still, this prayer does suggestively profess the fullness of the acts of God in creation, redemption, and consummation, culminating with its muted but evident witness to the glorious kingdom of God that is yet to be fully realized.

Anecdotal evidence suggests, sadly, that even in communions that do have access to baptismal prayers of such cosmic plenitude, the use of such prayers is minimized, often for reasons of "saving time." Thereby the grace of the one who has *saved all of time* is minimized and marginalized, in favor of other a-theological and mundane concerns. Here is an ancient image for the contemporary church: the great bronze-based pools of water placed centrally in the ancient temple of the Hebrew people, where issues of chaos and cosmos, nonbeing and being, death and life, were evidently at stake. Here is a task for church musicians: the creation of powerful works for the baptismal liturgy, giving expression to the cosmic plenitude of the death and resurrection of Christ. Here is a challenge for priests and pastors: that they would allow the liturgical imagination to find ways to draw on such creations, precisely in order to *save* time.

The eucharistic liturgy

A similar, expansive use of the catholic imagination, in the name of the cosmic Word of God, should be brought to bear on the church's eucharistic celebrations in these times of environmental crisis. As Robert Jenson, Gordon Lathrop, and others have convincingly argued, when our Lord said "do this" with reference to the institution of the eucharist, he meant what he said, which was to give thanks. Some churches have opted, in contrast, merely for the repetition of the Words of Institution as the essence of the spoken eucharistic rite. However much that liturgical truncation may have been motivated by a commitment to evangelical simplicity, it has been sustained, surely, by the drive to "save time"—because "time is money"—that has dominated bourgeois Christianity in the modern West. On the contrary, these times require something counter-cultural, and much more biblical: taking the time to give thanks, as our Lord commanded us to do.

The Great Thanksgiving, given a place of prominence in numerous ecumenical liturgies in our time, is an appropriate and urgently needed liturgical matrix. Like the celebratory prayer over the font we have already considered, this prayer of thanksgiving is a narration of the mighty acts of God, beginning with creation, focusing on redemption—where the Words of Institution have their fitting and irreplaceable place—and coming to rest in the vision of the consummation of all things which is yet to come. So, after the Sanctus, the Great Thanksgiving in *Lutheran Book of Worship* continues:

> Holy God, mighty Lord, gracious Father: Endless is your mercy and eternal your reign. You have filled all creation with light and life; heaven and earth are full of your glory.

This recapitulates the witness of Genesis 1, which is further adumbrated in Psalm 104 and brought to christological completion in Colossians 1:15ff. and Revelation 21, that the God of this holy meal is the one who, from the very beginning, had a purpose for all things, not just humankind, and that this God is indeed in, with, and under all things, and will one day bring all things to fulfillment in the day of the new heavens and the new earth.

Then follows the narration of the history of salvation, beginning with Abraham and coming to fulfillment "at this end of all the ages," in the Son sent by the Father, who proclaimed the kingdom of God and instituted his holy meal. This Son is further identified, eschatologically, as the one who will come in power "to share with us the great and promised feast," when he comes again "as victorious Lord of all." These liturgical meanings reflect the testimony of Colossians and Revelation, that the Lord who is host at this banquet is the very Lord who, as Lord of lords and King of kings, will come again to judge the world in righteousness and will inaugurate the great and eternal cosmic day of peace, when God will finally be all in all. The Lord who is host at this eucharistic feast, then, is the Lord of all, the *Pantokrater*, in whom and by whom all things consist.

Seen from this angle of vision, traditional reflection about the real presence of Christ in the elements can both be reaffirmed and transvalued, cosmically. Of course, from the context of the catholic faith, the crucified and risen Lord is *truly and really present*, in, with, and under the eucharistic elements. But that is not all, by any means.

Paradoxically, we may learn from one of the early testimonies of the sixteenth-century Protestant reformer Ulrich Zwingli. In rejecting what he then had received as the normative catholic doctrine of transubstantiation of the eucharistic elements, Zwingli said, in effect: no, it is not the elements, it is *the people* gathered who are transubstantiated into the body of Christ. While holding to the witness of the church catholic about the real presence of Christ in the eucharistic elements, it is certainly possible and, in a certain sense, mandatory also to teach what Zwingli taught, that the crucified and risen Christ is truly present, embodied, in the company of the faithful who gather around the eucharistic table in order to lift up the bread and the wine in thanksgiving and to receive those elements in return as the true and real body and blood of Christ. Paul's theology of the church as the veritable and visible body of Christ mandates that we at least say this much about the real presence of Christ in the people of Christ, so that we might fittingly "discern the body" (cf., 1 Cor. 11:29).

With eyes of faith thus illumined, one can further see the figure of the crucified and risen Christ in, with, and under the liturgical actions of the priestly celebrant, in particular, the one who is called by God to offer the Great Thanksgiving and to administer the bread and the wine to the faithful gathered around the table.

With this vision of the fullness of the cosmic Christ, really present in bread and wine, offered and distributed, and really present in people singing and praying and in priestly ministrations, it is possible to witness, in faith and hope, a kind of *massive unfolding and overflowing revelation of the glory of the ubiquitous Christ.* Beginning with the bread and wine, eyes of faith may see an ever-expanding concentric circles of *divine energy*—like ripples in a smooth pond, driven by a single, centered entrance of a new reality into the whole interrelated universal system—flowing from this food to the people, then encompassing the whole house where the people have gathered, and, still

more, ever expanding to the whole earth and then to the entire cosmos. The faithful participants in this eucharistic feast in some measure experience the great cosmic banquet yet to come, when God will indeed be all in all.

As we witness this vision of the cosmic Word embodied in the sacramental praxis of the church, we may take it for granted that the architectural and artistic setting of these sacraments will need to enhance rather than inhibit the liturgical celebration. We have already had occasion to observe how important the right kind of architectural setting is for the celebration of baptism in accord with the cosmic Word. This is all the more the case for that sacrament which is the culminating center of the church's sacramental ministries, the eucharist.

Great liturgical music that lifts up the cosmic universality of the eucharist is readily available, even in the smallest of parish settings. Great liturgical iconography and architecture that serves and elaborates the cosmic universality of the eucharist is often more difficult to put in place, for a variety of typically pragmatic reasons. But this should be the goal: the congregation lives in a church house that attests the multicultural dimensions of the human family and the multidimensional aspects of the cosmos—wild nature, cultivated nature, and fabricated nature—and that does not mask those riches by artificial or "supernatural" esthetic elaborations. This should be the vision: the bread and the wine on the table are, for those eucharistic moments, positioned *at the center of the cosmos*, and the divine energies of the crucified and risen cosmic Christ, in whom all things consist, radiate from that center to touch peoples of every nation, male and female, Jew and Greek, slave and free, and indeed every dimension of the cosmos.

To this end, those who lead the liturgies of the people should make every effort to find imaginative ways to enhance the organic and physical textures of the worship space, as well as to give space for various forms of iconography, both classical and contemporary. Given the global scope of human civilization today, moreover, those artistic and architectural dimensions of the worship space can fittingly be enhanced by motifs from many cultures, in appropriate ways. Likewise, given the cosmic scope of human experience today, symbolized by journeys to the moon and constant scientific probes of the galaxies, artists who serve the church should be encouraged to find ways to give testimony to the glories of our multi-galactic universe, as well as to the beauties of the good earth, nearer at hand.

That the eucharistic life of the church should overflow beyond the bounds of the house of the church, however, is clear. This should be so not only in the ministries of the people, but also in the witness of the house of the church and its grounds. Inner city churches, in particular, should seek to find ways to demonstrate the promise of the gospel by the cultivation of flowers and trees and gardens, and, wherever possible, by the introduction of fountains and hidden, shaded walkways, where the homeless and the disenfranchised can find some secure moments of rest and the birds of the air can find some safe places to nest. Icons of urban elegance, moreover, such as a large polished brass crucifix in the simple but transfixing style of a Brancusi should also be given

liturgical prominence as an affirmation of the renewal of all things through the mission of the cosmic Christ, a renewal that will include the world of fabricated nature as well as cultivated and wild nature. All this is a testimony to the renewal of the whole cosmos celebrated in word and sacrament.

The cosmic liturgy as ethos

Theologians and other church leaders in pragmatic, practical, and utilitarian North America do not readily find themselves attuned to such theological reflections about the liturgy. Theologically informed North American Christians may wistfully refer to the cosmic insights of Eastern Christianity, as exemplified by Alexander Schmemann. They may express admiration for the cosmic spirituality of Teilhard de Chardin and even for his witness to the cosmic liturgy of the church catholic. But the wistfulness and the admiration, typically, soon give way to the pragmatism. The real spiritual business of the day, for many American Christians, is ethics. Which, in turn, for the same theologically informed people, characteristically means either attending to the communal inculcation of values (character ethics) or lifting up a prophetic call for social change, sparked by the Christian gospel of liberation (political ethics).

What those who follow the pragmatic way characteristically miss, however, is that neither the communal inculcation of values nor the prophetic proclamation of justice emerges out of nothing, nor can either way be sustained *ex nihilo*. This is because the mission of the church is not first and foremost *doing*. The mission of the church is first and foremost *being*.

This is why the foregoing explorations of the cosmic liturgy of the church are so critically important for the life of the church in this era of global environmental crisis. For, *liturgy is the being of the church*. Liturgy is, thereby, the church's mode of identity-formation. This point has been made by many different phenomenologists of religion, past and present. It is a truism of the church's life that is too often overlooked, especially in pragmatic America.

Erik Erikson, for one, argued, from the perspective of developmental psychology, that *ritual is the mode of identity-formation*. The parent, for example, who enters the room where the infant has just awakened and who smiles at the infant, morning after morning, day after day, is engaging in a ritual that inculcates what Erikson called "basic trust." The infant does not develop basic trust, according to Erikson, apart from such rituals. It is all the more so with the cosmic liturgy of the church. Such liturgy is the way the church inculcates and nourishes the ethos of cosmic awareness and of cosmic responsibility in its members. Every viable Christian environmental ethic presupposes the generative matrix of the cosmic liturgy of the church.

The letter to the Ephesians takes this kind of witness for granted. It assumes that God the Father is the one who is "above all and through all and in all" (4:6) and that the Son of this cosmic Father is the one in whom "all things," things on heaven and things on earth, are gathered up (1:10). It further assumes that this cosmic ministry of God the Father and the Son is magnified and celebrated by the strangers and sojourners called together from every

nation (2:19) and inspired by the Spirit of the same God, in one exuberant moment of thanksgiving:

> Be filled with the Spirit, as you sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, singing and making melody to the Lord in your hearts, giving thanks to God the Father at all times and for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. (5:18-20)

That, in broad biblical compass, is *the experience of the liturgy*.

With that experience is given *the ethos of the liturgy*. The church is called to walk "worthy of the vocation" to which it has been called (4:1), to "clothe yourselves with the new self" (4:24), inspired by the selfsame Spirit of God (cf., 4:3). This the church accomplishes by *imitating* what it has been given by God through Christ:

> Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children, and live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. (5:1-2)

This is how the experience of the liturgy is at once the ethos of the liturgy. What is given to experience also transforms the lives of those who have been called together to experience what has been given. *Liturgical imitation is the matrix of ethics.*

With this angle of vision, inspired by the letter to the Ephesians, we can more particularly imagine the cosmic liturgical ethos of the church taking shape in the lives of the faithful in two ways befitting the gifts of grace and the works of grace: *contemplation and caring*. The church first celebrates the cosmic ministry of the triune God and then imitates that cosmic ministry, in appropriate ways, by caring for the earth and all its inhabitants (see further Eph. 2:8-10). In this way the cosmic ethos of the church's liturgy gives birth to an ethic of *loving nature*.

The ethic of loving nature, given birth by the cosmic ethos of the church's liturgy, can be said to be both Franciscan and Benedictine, following here the suggestive insights of the great French ecologist of this century, Rene Dubos. St. Francis stood back from the wonders of nature, awestruck, and contemplated them as revelations of the glory of God. This he expressed most memorably in his great Canticle of the Sun. Francis also stood back from the wonders of grace, awestruck, and contemplated them in the person of the impoverished Son of God, come to redeem all creatures. This vision Francis expressed most memorably in a great act of liturgical imagination: he set up the eucharistic table in the midst of the animals of the barn, on the top of a mountain, and celebrated Mass there, on Christmas Eve. In all this, as anyone who knows anything about the historical Francis will readily acknowledge, Francis, the great lover of nature, made special and consistent efforts throughout his ministry to reach out to the poor of the earth, whom, he believed, were specially beloved by the impoverished Christ.

Benedict of Nursia launched a revolutionary monastic movement whose life was centered in the cosmic liturgy of the church. That movement was also inspired by a vision of responsible labor: *ora et labora*, pray and work. In its

most authentic expressions, the Benedictine movement consistently championed what Dubos called an ethic of "creative intervention in the earth." The Benedictine ethos was one of *cooperation with nature, not exploitation,* for the sake of building a sustainable and just human community, situated harmoniously in its larger natural milieu. One can readily imagine a Benedictine monastery involved in sustainable agriculture, in the invention of humanizing technological and architectural innovations, and in the sharing of the fruits of the earth with the poor.

Such is the shape of an environmental ethic of earth-care born of the ethos of the cosmic liturgy of the church. It is an ethic of love for the entire cosmos, especially for the earth and its inhabitants. It is an ethic of contemplation and caring that inspires all the baptized to imitate the love of God for all things, as the baptized experience the cosmic liturgy of the church catholic, devotedly giving thanks at the center of the universe: at the table of the cosmic Christ, who together with the Father, in the power of the Spirit, is in, with, and under all things. This Christ will one day come again to usher in the glorious new heavens and new earth, when all things will be made new and when God will be all in all.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

H. Paul Santmire is pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church in Akron, Ohio.