
LITURGICAL HOSPITALITY WITHIN DEEPLY ROOTED LEADERSHIP: POSSIBILITIES AND PITFALLS IN “EUCHARISTIC INDWELLING ENGAGEMENT”

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Abstract

This essay brings the contributions of the discipline of Christian spirituality into covenantal companionships across faith traditions by way of formation and encounter, both confessionally Christian and liturgically hospitable. “Spirituality” may bring a heavy sigh or rolled eyes within critical discourse, surrounded as it is by populist speculation and self-help volumes aimed at the fascinations and inconveniences of the human condition. Spirituality as “eucharistic indwelling engagement” may not fare much better, given it errs in the other direction. The argument here reviews Sandra Schneiders’s methodological work in Christian spirituality, in conversation with the thought of professed Anglican solitary, Maggie Ross. Both voices, aligned with and deepening my own contemplative empiricism within an artisanal way, bring challenge and confirmation to a case-study of liturgical hospitality, a multifaceted event of table fellowship co-led by a Modern Orthodox rabbi and a Presbyterian (USA) minister of Word and Sacrament. The thesis: God’s way of relating to creation in a kenotic, eucharistic, indwelling engagement—made known to Christians through Jesus Christ in the power of the Spirit—not only challenges functional understandings of ordination (Reformed) with clear implication for leadership formation. Ross’s telos of spiritual maturity and its ever-presence in the covenant of beholding suggests an example of transfiguration in this case-study, but more importantly, of invited transfiguration of all of

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us as religious leaders in the pluralistic challenges of companionship today.

Introduction

“Spirituality” may bring a heavy sigh or rolled eyes within critical discourse, surrounded as it is by populist speculation and self-help volumes aimed at the fascinations and inconveniences of the human condition. Spirituality as “eucharistic indwelling engagement” may not fare much better, given it errs in the other direction. Even so, I invite you to read along, at least into the academic discipline of Christian spirituality and its methodological tools for religious leadership studies. There is so much here for cross-disciplinary deepening. I should also say I am a trained practical theologian who has moved sideways into the discipline of Christian spirituality, largely because of what was made available to me within its integrative methods and immersion in critical-self-interiority. What I offer for our consideration today, however, comes through this problematic of spirituality challenged and nuanced a bit. Ultimately, I’m moving toward a way of formation or method of encounter at once confessionally Christian and liturgically hospitable unto covenantal companionships across faith traditions. A lot of folks will not come with me where I’ve found myself, but many of us can testify to the fruitfulness of this work and its potential for deeply-needed responsiveness to deepening, church-stasis confrontive challenges.

The argument begins with a bit of overview of the now established “academic study of Christian spirituality,” specifically, Sandra Schneiders’s now classic methodological contributions and her contributions to my own *contemplative empiricism within an artisanal way*, familiar in JRL context. A bit of introduction to Ross’s work then allows us to bring all these voices to a case study of liturgical hospitality, a multifaceted event of table fellowship co-led by a Modern Orthodox rabbi and a Presbyterian (USA) minister of Word and Sacrament. The thesis: God’s way of relating to creation in a kenotic,

eucharistic, indwelling engagement—made known to Christians through Jesus Christ in the power of the Spirit—not only challenges functional understandings of ordination (Reformed) with clear implication for leadership formation. Ross’s *telos* of *spiritual maturity* and its ever-presence in the covenant of *beholding* testifies to the kin-dom of God both now and not yet, suggesting an example of transfiguration in this case-study, but more importantly, invited transfiguration of all of us in the pluralistic challenges of companionship today.

Spirituality—Disciplinary Frame and Difficulties

As with any guild that’s been around for over 25 years, much effort has been spent in the Society for the Study of Christian Spirituality toward defining its problematic over and against theology, religious studies, and the like. Bernard McGinn traces the trajectory and potential of spirituality in conversation with other scholars such as Jean Leclercq, Walter Principe, Hans Urs von Balthasar, and Sandra Schneiders.¹ A large influence in my own work, Schneiders has defined the term with clear attention to cross-disciplinary concerns. However, the voice of Maggie Ross suggests unexpected and congruent tools necessary for considering this case study in liturgical hospitality within deeply-rooted leadership. Ross is a professed Anglican solitary responsible to the Archbishop of Canterbury and author of, among other volumes, *Pillars of Flame: Power, Priesthood, and Spiritual Maturity* and *Writing the Icon of the Heart: In Silence Beholding*. She demurs from most words in this area of inquiry—spirituality, mystic, transformation, transcendence—arguing a path of *spiritual maturity* rooted in “God’s *kenotic* (self-emptying),

¹ Bernard McGinn, “The Letter and the Spirit: Spirituality as an Academic Discipline,” in *Minding the Spirit: the Study of Christian Spirituality*, eds. Elizabeth A. Dreyer and Mark S. Burrows (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 2005), 26–27. See also John LeClercq, “Spiritualitas,” *Studi medievali* 3 (1962), 281–284; and Walter Principe, “Toward Defining Spirituality,” *Science Religieuses* 12 (1983), 127–41; Hans urs von Balthasar, “Spirituality,” in *Explorations in Theology I: The Word Made Flesh* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1989), 211–26; and Sandra Schneiders, “Spirituality in the Academy,” *Theological Studies* 50 (1989), 676–97.

eucharistic, indwelling *engagement*, the love shown to us in the priestly humility of Christ.”² As our conference examined *spirituality as a way of engaging*, my contention is that Ross’s work not only expands current spirituality-scholarship with poignant critiques of transcendence and transformation; she also offers a desperately needed lens within which to conceive religious leadership formation in today’s pluralisms. This section will bring these voices into conversation, with their provocative leadership questions in tow.

Spirituality, in Schneiders’s view, is “the actualization of the basic human capacity for transcendence...the experience of conscious involvement in the project of life-integration through self-transcendence toward the horizon of ultimate value one perceives.”³ Spirituality here is not a catch-all term for the unclassifiably sacred or the inarticulate mysteries of human experience. Rather, it is a conscious and deliberate way of living within an integrative knowing, an ongoing project that orients a human being toward growth and learning beyond private gain, toward a perceived good or horizon of value. Christian spirituality study investigates both the *material* object—spirituality as an existential phenomenon—and the *formal* object—spirituality as religious experience.⁴ The material object, so defined, allows inquiry into an overwhelming diversity of spiritualities expressed within the global community, refusing to universalize any into a descriptive category conditioned by one culture. The formal object focuses critical attention on the lived faith of concrete believing subjects, the “lived experience of the Christian faith.” Experience here is not an end to itself or an abstracted object of study, but the *experience of* or *subjective awareness of* a particular person of articulate

² Maggie Ross, *Pillars of Flame: Power, Priesthood, and Spirituality Maturity* (New York: Seabury, 1988, 2007), 3.

³ Sandra Schneiders, “Approaches to the Study of Christian Spirituality,” in *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Spirituality*, ed. Arthur Holder (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005), 16–17.

⁴ Schneiders, 16-17.

faith.⁵ Religious consciousness of all kinds re-emerges here as a focus of analytical effort and discriminating interpretation, if only within the artifacts of persons in historical contexts.

Christian spirituality in this sense focuses its analytical and constructive tools on specific “texts,” articulations of particular individuals on their own experience(s) of lived Christian faith. Schneiders brings Paul Ricoeur’s imagery to mind when she calls this “the science of the individual,”⁶ which opens doors into deeper and deeper understandings of the human condition in every particularity that we have time and effort to research and describe. This is not “spiritual experience” or the human condition as an absolute or universal, but a combination of concrete events and human awarenesses that draws us forward into self-implicating learning toward communally-shaped life-integration.

Lastly, “the horizon of ultimate value” articulated by Schneiders in her organizing definition establishes an end-state for spirituality’s formal study free from emotive referents, free for multidimensional interpretation and invitation toward ultimate value. For example, the horizon of ultimate value for *Christian* spirituality is described as “the triune God revealed in Jesus Christ to whom Scripture normatively witnesses and whose life is communicated to the believer by the Holy Spirit...” Schneiders describes this horizon more concretely to include being made a child of God and living a new life celebrated communally, sacramentally, and in mission in the world toward God’s reign.⁷ Note the traditional theological formulations *and* the intimate reliance upon a received “new life” that has descriptive shape. Theological specificity *and* particular faith commitment are held together in a critical awareness that is at once self-implicating and historically concrete for collective investigation. Thus, spirituality becomes particular yet

⁵ Schneiders, 17–18.

⁶ Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 78-79, cited by Schneiders, 18.

⁷ Schneiders, 17.

collectively accessible, dependent upon the artifacts of its concrete participants engaged in the project of life-integration toward the horizon of ultimate value.

As JRL readers may recognize, the theological method engaged for my own work has been called a *contemplative empiricism*⁸ underlying a larger movement toward a non-sectarian “horizon of ultimate value,” what I’ve called “an expressive theological delight able to companion the suffering of self and others.” The monograph for this *artisanal way*, this practical theological contribution to Christian spirituality, was published as *Learning in a Musical Key: Insight for Theology in Performative Mode*. The work roots insight and its transformative fruit in covenantal and radically covenantal companionships stewarded by historical faith traditions.⁹ It is a radically sensate approach to theological knowledge received, released, and renewed within this covenantal inquiry and graced awareness. Learning becomes reoriented toward *embodied* insight, modeling and fostering an epistemological vulnerability,¹⁰ a professional humility or willing surrender to a lively Subject beyond preferred disciplinary precision. I’ve begun to speak of this work as a *companionable way*, a way of engaging living traditions within and beyond their narrowly textual confines. It was *theo*-logical fidelity to God in this method, within my own rooted tradition of Reformed (Presbyterian Church USA) Christianity, that landed me in the event of liturgical hospitality to be examined below. Before we get there, however, let us turn to the substantive challenge to spirituality’s problematic offered by professed solitary Maggie Ross.

Ross opens her 1988/2007 volume, *Pillars of Flame*, claiming: “God is related to the creation in kenotic (self-

⁸ Lisa M. Hess, “A Contemplative Empiricism: Methodological Musings for an Artisanal Theology in Religious Leadership Formation,” *Journal of Religious Leadership* vol 8, 1 (Spring 2009).

⁹ Lisa M. Hess, *Artisanal Theology: Intentional Formation in Radically Covenantal Companionship* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2009).

¹⁰ Timothy J. Gianotti, “The Tests of Poverty: Qur’anic Perspectives,” in *Crisis, Call and Leadership*, eds. Peter Ochs and Stacy Johnson (Palgrave-Macmillan, 2009), 124.

emptying), eucharistic, indwelling *engagement*, the love shown to us in the priestly humility of Christ.”¹¹ Unlike just about anyone I’ve read within Christian theology, except perhaps a few Eastern-oriented theologians, Ross simply *refuses* the dialectical compromises made by a worldly church besieged by or enslaved to power. She names in a preliminary “theological abecedary” multiple myths within which this kenotic engagement has been refused:¹² the myth of *healing and wholeness*, which undergirds (among other things) the temptation to focus solely upon healing in exclusion and denial of the centrality of woundedness for participating in God in the flesh; the myth of *baptismal magic*, which continues to allow the ritual to bestow a vaguely social and even more vaguely religious magic stamp on uncomprehending babies; the myth of *two-level obedience*, where some of us have privileged access to the higher wisdom of God, enacted weekly, if not daily, in religious habits across the world; myths of *uniformity, immortality, power* (which I won’t take space here to define more fully).

Amongst other words, she demurs from the word *spirituality* to urge, instead, an immediacy and deepening within the kenotic, indwelling, eucharistic God toward a spiritual maturity available to all “in silence beholding.”¹³ In multiple places, Ross therefore takes notions of *transformation* and *transcendence* to task for their unavoidable *dis-incarnation*, distraction, even idolatry. It is not the transcendence of our condition in which God meets us, but in its darkness, its deepening woundedness confronted. It is not our condition that transforms into the image of God, but God’s woundedness lived in us that transfigures us, our here-and-now, into the kingdom of God. Both transformation and transcendence distract our participation in God’s willing woundedness within and all around us. Ross also thereby confronts any notion

¹¹ Ross, *Pillars of Flame*, 3.

¹² Ross, *Pillars of Flame*, xvi-lvii.

¹³ Maggie Ross, *Writing the Icon of the Heart: In Silence Beholding* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2013).

of a horizon of ultimate meaning, but for that available within the Silence of God, deeply within the bodies of each of us. The way to a life of integration courses not through self-transcendence but in *self-care* (asceticism), *self-confrontation*, and *self-forgetfulness*. In the ten beatitudes, in the three evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience, Ross outlines what she would call *spiritual maturity*, rooted in *priesthood* available to all in “opening to and living out [divine] Humility within our brokenness, Christ’s outpouring and indwelling that engages, transfigures, and re-creates.”¹⁴ It is this spiritual maturity and its corresponding call to priesthood within each of us that draws my attention forward.

Ross describes spiritual maturity with a cluster of ideas at the conclusion of her *Pillars*, though ultimately, she places it in what she calls a covenant of beholding, *Writing the Icon of the Heart*. Spiritual maturity, she begins, is “our coming to be, our confluence with God, self and community in ungrasping, eucharistic engagement... We move from dependence to independence to interdependence,”¹⁵ she suggests, aligning with a recognizable human developmental pattern (i.e., Robert Kegan). In this movement, “God’s *kenosis* is received and confluent with our kenotic response, which is co-creation.”¹⁶ Receiving God’s self-emptying Spirit results in co-creation, fruit of the Spirit. Additionally, individuality is no longer mistaken for authenticity, but self is not neglected. The goodness of creation is respected, cared-for, confronted in its separations, and ultimately relinquished, forgotten within the ever expansive and vulnerable joy of God. “We are able to live in ambiguity without leaning on props or propositions,” she continues. “We have deepening love for Scripture and symbol and liturgy, but realize that they are feeding us only so that we may go into the desert and wait, watching in the dark.”¹⁷

¹⁴ Ross, *Pillars of Flame*, lvii.

¹⁵ Ross, *Pillars of Flame*, 188.

¹⁶ Ross, *Pillars of Flame*, 189.

¹⁷ Ross, *Pillars of Flame*, 190.

Theology's apophatic invitations, sustained paradoxes, and challenging risks infuse everything for Ross. The spiritually mature “are quick to realize and acknowledge when [they] do not know, when [they] cannot know, and when [they] presume....[They] are willing to live in the ambiguity of not knowing without trying to manufacture a surrogate, a graspable substitute. [They] know that by remaining in unknowing, a truer, deeper engagement and insight will be given [them]: [they] will more deeply come to be....[They] are willing to live in the tension of sustained paradox, in engagement with I WILL BE without trying to posit and determine and therefore control and make an idol of God.”¹⁸ Long-term aspiration and a willingness to suffer for God’s life to grow within them mark this path, which brings “greater single-heartedness and transfiguration.” And, of course, “All of this involves risk.”¹⁹ Not only in a secular or civic world in which politics and polarizations reign are these risks felt, but most especially in an ecclesial world organized for centuries to compromise with a notion of power “resolved” in a displaced and meta-narrative dialectic. Ross concludes, “Ours is an age for which the only hope is the kenotic wisdom of engagement—in the deepest sense of biblical knowing—with God, whose single movement of self-emptying and transfiguring Love enables us to live in creation through the wholeness of paradox.”²⁰

The most contemporary work of Ross places spiritual maturity in what she calls a covenant of beholding, begun with creation. In “Behold Not the Cloud of Experience,” Ross argues for a retrieval of “the biblical word *behold* and the work of silence—the model of the mind—it entails as crucial to understanding ancient, patristic and medieval texts.” It is “a liminal word,” she argues, “signaling the threshold of contemplation where the self-conscious mind stops analyzing and becomes attentively receptive, open in

¹⁸ Ross, *Pillars of Flame*, 190-91.

¹⁹ Ross, *Pillars of Flame*, 191.

²⁰ Ross, *Pillars of Flame*, 192.

an ungrasping and self-emptying way to irruption from the deep mind.”²¹ In the introduction to *Writing the Icon of the Heart*, Ross observes that *behold* has more than thirteen hundred occurrences in Hebrew and Greek, though critical study un-immersed in silence and its “deep mind” often translates it otherwise, such as *remember* in Matthew 28:20.²² Most startlingly, Ross argues this “in silence beholding” to be “the first covenant, and the only one necessary.” My eyes widened in recognition and possibility as she concluded: “the later covenants are concessions to those who will not behold.”²³ In stark contrast to my habitual and familiar conceptual residence in the power of the Word, received in its Hellenistic cosmic intentions, Ross has reminded me that the Word cannot pretend to be silence or its surrender. As she writes, “silence is actually the context and end, with beholding the means. This silence is not the absence of noise; it is the vast interior landscape that invites us to stillness.”²⁴ In all I have been trained to profess, within which to stand, I return to my youngest critiques that have been distracted for decades now. In a world increasingly distracted and divided, Ross’s work challenges us with persistent return to the body, persistent challenges of entering into silence, and consistent wisdom that arises when beholding is the means of receiving, *theological* inquiry, and self-restrained action.

What all this means I have yet to fully integrate into my work, but it has fundamental challenges—and resonances, I might add—for understandings of religious leadership in (and out of) faith communities today. *Priesthood*, for Ross, has no necessary relation to the power structures of any church today, nor does it come into being/expression via ordination. It is “the eucharistic being of the creature in confluence with the eucharistic

²¹ Maggie Ross, “Behold Not the Cloud of Experience,” *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England VIII* (Boydell, Brewer, and Houston, 2013).

²² Ross, *Writing the Icon of the Heart*, xviii.

²³ Ross, *Writing the Icon of the Heart*, xviii.

²⁴ Ross, *Writing the Icon of the Heart*, xvii.

God. The relationship is one of equipoise, the always-seeking-balance of ready response or *apatheia*.²⁵ Individual kenosis enables eucharistic community. Kenotic life in common—the Kingdom—cannot be accomplished without the commitment of each member to this aspiration that mirrors God’s *kenosis* and [transfigures] us into God’s image.²⁶ In this lens, “all are called to deepest priesthood. We are called to be, to the glory of our creaturely engagement in the Love of God that is the humility of Christ....Priesthood *is* a commitment to a way of being; it is not ministry....If ministry does not arise from and communicate Christ’s life-enhancing sacrifice...ministry makes object of those it purposes to serve, *destroying their engagement*, draining away the very life it says it wishes to enhance.”²⁷ Priesthood is the willingness to sustain in ourselves the tension of the paradox of self-emptying love.²⁸ “Christian priestly power is the self-emptying, self-restrained, concentrated power of love (love is by definition ungrasping) commingled with the self-emptying, self-restrained concentrated outpouring Love that is its source and model and sustains the life and coinherence of the divine with the creation.”²⁹ As such, religious leadership—particularly that of ordination in functional terms, like the PC (USA) proffers—needs to reconsider its practice and its theology (it matters not which comes first, finally) surrounding sacramental celebration and being “set apart” for the right administration of the sacraments. Which brings us to the event of liturgical hospitality within deeply rooted leadership.

An Event of Liturgical Hospitality

The observations of event(s) are these: An invitation to Shabbat was tendered and accepted between two

²⁵ Ross, *Pillars of Flame*, 15.

²⁶ Ross, *Pillars of Flame*, 19-20.

²⁷ Ross, *Pillars of Flame*, 21, italics mine.

²⁸ Ross, *Pillars of Flame*, 21-22.

²⁹ Ross, *Pillars of Flame*, 33.

leaders in Chabad and two Presbyterian ministers. All gathered at the Shabbat table where the *kiddush* was sung over a cup of kosher wine, filled to overflowing just as the Psalmist describes. The testimonial blessing was offered and received, and the Sabbath began, observed and kept holy within observant Jewish practice and hospitable welcome of two Christian companions. An implicit teaching was also received in this table liturgy, as two weeks later, one of the Presbyterians knew a Modern Orthodox rabbi and Presbyterian minister would be leading a largely Methodist Christian community in a practical theology course and then liturgy, followed by a Common Meal. After those two weeks, the rabbi arrived from out-of-town to teach on his book.³⁰ Class ended, and a Christian order of worship began, shaped in Psalmic order and heritage of Reform Jewish liturgy. The Christian liturgy was overtly concluded (spoken “With our liturgy concluded, let us proceed to Common Meal”), and the rabbi stood at a small table alongside his Christian companion to teach, via modeling, the Shabbat table practices of his own community. While he sang the blessing over the cup, both rabbi and minister filled two separate chalices to overflowing—just as the Psalmist describes—the former with kosher wine, the latter with grape juice. A loaf of bread was distributed to those gathered amidst a wordless song, and then the community’s Common Meal began—a roomful of Christians and an (admittedly unusual) Orthodox rabbi, who was offered his own kosher meal. Not insignificant for hospitality, the location of all events in the seminary setting was a multi-purpose auditorium, not a sanctuary.

A poem emerged, not long afterwards, with a playful challenge to religious leadership in its various entitlements (roshi-Zen Buddhist; rebbe-Hasidic Jewish; pastor-Protestant Christian; rabbi-Jewish):

³⁰ Brad Hirschfield, *You Don't Have to Be Wrong for Me to Be Right: Finding Faith without Fanaticism* (New York: Harmony/Random House, 2007), 1-127.

Two cups filled to overflowing.
 Roshi observes that fullness obstructs
 Rebbe shows a fullness that welcomes
 Roshi pours hot water from teacup to table.
 The student awakens, disturbed to learn emptiness.
 Rebbe pours a care-full wine, just as the Psalmist says.
 The student awakens, startled with Life set apart.
 Such liturgical hospitality disturbs and disrupts
 What we cannot abandon or alter,
 Healing through yearnings well met,
 Blessing the unbidden tears.
 A pastor and rabbi attended a table,
 Two cups filled to overflowing.

The phrase “liturgical hospitality” is meant to juxtapose things we usually try to keep separate—like I enjoy doing—to see if their encounter and perhaps living relationship might beget, even in-form, new life. The daring act of liturgical hospitality was actually offered by a colleague of mine who, as musician, served simultaneously a Roman Catholic parish, a Reform Jewish Temple, and a Methodist seminary community, created the innovative liturgy. Had I known what was coming, I probably would have urged him against it, with fear of yet-again a Christian imperialism of Jewish observance/prayer. But his expertise allowed him to make judgments respectful of, yet innovative within, historical traditions for purposes of praise, proclamation, teaching, and encounter with a living wisdom, made bodily present in a practitioner of contemporary Judaism. *Liturgical hospitality* as a term is also meant to encourage deeply rooted traditional rituals to come in closer proximity to one another—not diffused, but held in tension—to see how and what they speak within covenantal relationship across faith traditions.

For our purposes, I’m asking a variety of questions these next several years: What may such an event have to teach faith communities, deeply rooted in an historic tradition of faith but open to the Spirit in discernment with others who have become companions in faith? How may we understand the role of particularity and difference in opening to sacred encounter within and beyond our

defined sense(s) of tradition toward transfiguration of our wounds, deepening of spiritual maturity of all engaged? Within Christian terms, does *koinonia* refer to communion only between Christians and their (understanding of a) Triune God? Does *leiturgia* extend far enough to refer to such an event of liturgical hospitality, where orthopraxis was maintained AND two irreconcilable traditions could speak? How does spirituality actualize into transcendence and conscious involvement in life-integration toward a Christian horizon of ultimate meaning—the Triune God made known in Jesus Christ in the power of the Spirit—while actualizing into transcendence and conscious involvement by another in life-integration toward his/her tradition’s horizon as well? Or is this better engaged as a *beholding* in multiple covenantal fidelity to the One who self-empties *even at table* so that spiritual maturity will beckon to all who have ears to hear, eyes to see? I will narrow our attention to these last two, the contrast between spirituality (Schneiders) and spiritual maturity (Ross), for sake of discussion.

Deeply Rooted Leadership—Acts of Commission and Omission

Prior examination of this event in a paper entitled “A Liturgical Hospitality Project: an Experiment in Comparative Theology,” offered the following thesis, expanded just a bit now with use of *leiturgia* and *koinonia*: “a Jewish logic of sanctification, offered in a modeled teaching of the Shabbat Eve *kiddush*, coincided and was interwoven with a Christian sacramental logic upon the conclusion of a formal, Christian “order of worship,” thereby creating a liminal liturgical space (or event of “liturgical reasoning”³¹) in which neither rooted

³¹ Steven Kepnes, *Jewish Liturgical Reasoning* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). “...liturgy is not a passive recipient or mere vessel of reason but...in liturgy, the...light of...reason fans out into a spectrum of colors and hues so that its concepts and ideals are clothed in particular images and displayed in ritual actions. ...The clarion call of reason becomes a melody that is varied, repeated, submerged, and revealed anew as in a musical fugue. ...[T]he reason of liturgy is temporal and spatial...it is never the same. Because liturgy

practitioner in leadership released his/her own theological particularity and both manifested, publically, a tenacious commitment to lived interdependence in difference, an “intimacy of difference”³² conceivable in both Chalcedonian Christian and non-sectarian terms alike. As such, I proposed that two irreconcilable, wounded traditions “spoke” amidst their tradition-specific *leiturgia*, extending traditional wisdom and its fruit, not least of which was, potentially, a cross-traditional *koinonia*.

The traditions each offered their voices—each lent their ‘logics’ of sanctification and sacrament—because *both positive and prohibitive actions were engaged* coincident with halakhic discourse and Presbyterian (PCUSA) doctrine and practice. Attention was devoted equally to the actions able to be enacted and those that were forbidden within halakhic and polity traditions. Those positive acts taken, *and those acts omitted in honor of particularity*, enlivened a Jewish and a Christian awareness of a cup, filled with the “fruit of the vine,” blessed and offered to all as testimony, as an act of sanctification, remembrance, event fulfillment of an obligation to God and all humanity. This “non-observant” analogical form of a Shabbat Eve *kiddush* upon conclusion of Christian liturgy assumed (if unintentionally) “the character of a sacramental act,” to use Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz’s words; “a sort of communion, in the performance of the mitzvah of union of the soul, the body, the food, and the essence of holiness.”³³ The “liturgical reasoning” resourced here by observant Jewish practice and specified Presbyterian law arguably engaged two distinct but coincident traditions enlivened to offer

is a living performance...., it always varies from its script. Thus, liturgical reasoning is always new. It is neither preexistent nor static; it is discovered and revealed in every liturgical performance.” 3ff.

³² Lisa M. Hess, “Toward an “Intimacy of Difference: Philosophical and Theological Resources for Human Connection Through Difference,” in *Alienation and Connection: Suffering in a Global Age*, ed. Lisa Withrow (Lexington Books, 2011), 97-114.

³³ Steinsaltz, 154.

Shabbat holiness *and* sacramental union.³⁴ But how may we understand a liturgical event in which two irreconcilable traditions speak at the same time? How does *leiturgia* expand in a multiply-covenantal gathering of thanksgiving, or can it? How does *koinonia* express itself, or *does* it in such a multiple-covenantal belonging?

Spirituality and/or Spiritual Maturity as “Eucharistic Indwelling Engagement”

I have much critique to bring to the work of Maggie Ross—her strident polarizations of intensely complex socio-cultural and theological realities, her unflinching tenacity to what she knows as *true* Christianity amidst such complexities (which implies *false* for all others), even her audacious suggestion to reverse the primacy of baptism with the formative power of eucharist—but I cannot but be overwhelmed by recognition and invitation into what she calls God’s kenotic (self-emptying), eucharistic indwelling engagement for the questions at hand. The entire thrust of a contemplative empiricism within an artisanal way has been to return *theological inquiry* to the spacious and excruciatingly slow-paced wisdom of the body that is *relationally-formed, explicitly embodied, multidimensional, and centered around insight* (that arrives without control or demand). The observation of commission *and omission* for what I mean by *deeply rooted religious leadership* leads inexorably to *in silence beholding*

³⁴ The event examined here certainly offers the hallmarks of “liturgical reasoning”—primarily temporal and spatial, communally-enacted, ritual actions, a living performance of two traditions’ wisdom(s), simultaneous yet distinct. Kepnes responded to the original paper well, though with some reservation given the wounded/wounding relationship between Christianity and Judaism. I take courage in his approach, as he describes it. “In light of the plethora of dead signs that now litter the sacred spaces of synagogues, liturgical reasoning is an act of breathing new life into old signs. In Jewish liturgical terms, this can be referred to as an act of [*Techiyat hameitim*] reviving the dead.” (Kepnes, 19). The text read *Mehiat ha Matim*, but one rabbinic companion to whom I am grateful corrected my prose. The Christian Church is no less littered with “dead signs,” and so I pursue this work as a form of “apophatic resurrection life” made available to Protestant (and other interested) Christians within my tradition(s).

within which to deepen and receive *spiritual maturity* in a covenantal, companionable way, all of which was previously rooted in Schneiders's methodological work in *spirituality*. So, let us examine this event of liturgical hospitality in the lenses of *spirituality* and *spiritual maturity* to see what we learn.

Schneiders's work focuses our attention, in my view, to nodes of discourse including the human capacity for *transcendence* (self-transcendence), conscious involvement in integration (project of life-integration), and a horizon of ultimate value (perceived variously). This lens urges us to see these events of liturgy and table fellowship in terms of the capacity of those present to rise above their prejudices, self-identities, and formed practices of praise and proclamation. Most students had been prepared for the event, but a couple students did refuse to attend "because Christ was not central without the Christian liturgical service in the traditional form of Protestant Christian practice" (a respectful paraphrase). Varying levels of conscious involvement manifested themselves during the teachings, liturgy, and table fellowship, though it's unclear how to assess or track this criterion of spirituality in practice. The "horizon of ultimate value" then urges us, at least in contemporary practices of such things, to specify ourselves in tradition-articulate language highlighting irreconcilable difference. The Christian horizon, as per Schneider's writing noted above and my own convictions, is "the triune God revealed in Jesus Christ to whom Scripture normatively witnesses and whose life is communicated to the believer by the Holy Spirit..." Schneiders describes this horizon more concretely to include being made a child of God and living a new life celebrated communally, sacramentally, and in mission in the world toward God's reign.³⁵ I would have to inquire with my rabbi-companion how he might describe his tradition's "horizon of ultimate value," as Jewish articulations of such a concept would vary dramatically. (Three rabbis, five opinions, as the joke

³⁵ Schneiders, 17.

goes.) Suffice it to say it would *not* be what my Christian articulation is. It is this traditional-difference within the concept of a horizon that encouraged my own work's impulse to a non-sectarian "horizon" palatable to all those I've been in companionship with so far: an expressive delight able to companion the suffering of self and others. All these nodes of discourse are to provide avenues to deeper understanding of particular human experiences (though McGinn resists that term, sometimes used by Schneiders) within concrete contexts of history and tradition.

Ross's spiritual maturity within a covenant of beholding offers different gifts for consideration. Thinking about my discomfort, post-facto, of standing at table with a rabbi who is singing over the cup and offering us all bread within a wordless song, Ross's work provides new language for the risk and the discomfort. As she began: "God is related to the creation in kenotic (self-emptying), eucharistic, indwelling *engagement*, the love shown to us in the priestly humility of Christ."³⁶ In her tensive contrast between the church enslaved to a non-kenotic model of power and that within the humility of Christ, Ross reminds me that "Sacraments by their nature tend to open systems up."³⁷ Her words resonate with the unintended but deeply traditional innovation in which a pastor and a rabbi stood at table together—not a Eucharistic feast, capital E, nor a Shabbat table, Friday eve—but a deeply indwelt, self-emptying, engaged liturgical action of praise, proclamation, engagement all the same. I find myself wondering whether, in sparse pockets, Jews and Christians can begin to move from Christian dependence upon Judaism, or mutual independence, into an interdependent time of companionship and listening. The event manifested its apophatic invitation—neither my friend nor I know traditional language to use for it but that which we have, halakha and Presbyterian polity that governed our actions.

³⁶ Ross, *Pillars of Flame*, 3.

³⁷ Ross, *Pillars of Flame*, 24.

We are intimately aware of its sustained paradoxes of succession, simultaneity, and mutuality amidst irreconcilable difference. Both of us, and those who participated that day, seem willing to live in the tension of this sustained paradox, in engagement, long-term aspiration, and even a willingness to suffer for God's life to grow more fully in each and all of us.

But mostly, I'm drawn to the possibility that a *covenant of beholding* creates a new spacious way for us to rest firm within our traditionally defined senses of covenant, however singular, however multiple, and *belong deeply to one another across traditionally defined terms*. If my rabbinic companion has any gift I would embarrass him by proclaiming, it would be his observant ability to behold, as Ross describes it. I'll provide an image, to flesh it out. With all of my inter-traditional collaborations across various traditions/non-traditions (Tibetan Buddhism, various streams of Judaism, Divine Feminine, pagan, atheist, Muslim, and more), I have rarely been companioned myself, at the center of *my* tradition, at *Eucharist*, capital E. I have considered this a willing penance, of sorts, as practitioners of my tradition have historically exacted such pain of imposition and/or exclusion in the world surrounding this Eucharistic Meal. One Wednesday morning, after my rabbinic friend and I had sat on a panel discussing relationship across theological difference, we sat in my office as communal worship began. He inquired whether we ought to be present there, and I relented, uneasy with the liturgical focus of the day—evangelism and “Offer Them Christ.” We had laughed about it together, but I was deeply uneasy. As the liturgy moved into the sacramental celebration at table, I mourned that my companion would never be with me at the center of *my* tradition. In sensate grief, I approached the table to receive, to give thanks, to bring my sadness to this center. As I turned to walk back to my seat, my eyes landed on my friend, sitting in a posture of devotion and prayer, deeply present with me, *beholding*. As I reflect on it now, it was the seal to our shared leadership at table together, two weeks prior.

Conclusion

Clearly, this work is not complete, nor does it offer the precision that literate discourse in religious leadership studies will need in the time to come, but I cannot help but smile at the collision of ordained leadership, rigorous attention to traditional specificities, liturgical hospitality, and generative contexts of engagement in which to more clearly conceive God's self-emptying, eucharistic engagement with us, with each other, with the world. As I think about how I've been trained to withhold eucharistic action, I'm challenged to see how this understanding opens up our systems. As Ross writes, "If what is offered is controlled, its creaturely engagement is denied and taken away and it is made object; by being made object its life is encapsulated and destroyed. It is killed, whether or not its throat is cut. God meets us in a *living* sacrifice, a sacrifice that neither denies our creatureliness nor destroys life, but reveals to us the glory of our creatureliness and *enhances* life, unity with life even as it is offered in eucharistic reciprocity, broken and sent forth."³⁸ I still value the Schneider questions: How does spirituality actualize into transcendence and conscious involvement in life-integration toward a Christian horizon of ultimate meaning—the Triune God made known in Jesus Christ in the power of the Spirit—while actualizing into transcendence and conscious involvement by *another* in life-integration toward *his/her* tradition's horizon? Mostly, I am thankful to consider this event of liturgical hospitality as a *beholding*, in multiple covenantal fidelity to the One who self-empties *even at table* so that spiritual maturity will beckon to all who have ears to hear, eyes to see.

³⁸ Ross, *Pillars of Flame*, 29.