

## ABSTRACT

### Participating Phenomena, Participating the Spirit: Implications of a Sacred Semiotic Theory

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In this thesis I attempt a theological reading of the ramifications of Owen Barfield's theory of the evolution of human consciousness as articulated most fully in his book, *Saving the Appearances*. Barfield hints at a connection between the sacramental liturgy and the evolution of consciousness but does not go on to develop it. I argue that Barfield's hope for the culmination of the evolution of human consciousness is correlative to the Christian eschatological hope in the deification of man. Furthermore, the Christian sacramental liturgy is the vehicle by which man is drawn into this stage of human consciousness, because it bears in it the seeds of the Kingdom of God. I attempt this reading with the aid of St. Augustine, whose faith in the Incarnation of the Word enabled him to develop a semiotic understanding of the sacramental liturgy.

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PARTICIPATING PHENOMENA, PARTICIPATING THE SPIRIT: IMPLICATIONS  
OF A SACRED SEMIOTIC THEORY

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For Mom and Dad

## INTRODUCTION

This thesis is an attempt to synthesize and develop what I believe to be a fruitful conversation between the theories of Owen Barfield and St. Augustine's meditation on the role of the sign, or image, in the Church's liturgical worship, as well as Christian salvation history. By way of introduction, Owen Barfield, who lived from 1898 to 1997, was a poet, philosopher, author, and critic. Barfield was a member of the famous Oxford Inklings, garnering the respect and friendship of C. S. Lewis, who called Barfield the "wisest and best of my unofficial teachers."<sup>1</sup> He was a believing Anglican Christian as well as a disciple of Rudolf Steiner, the founder of the esoteric religious system of anthroposophy.<sup>2</sup>

In his book, *Saving the Appearances: A Study in Idolatry*, Barfield articulates what he calls a theory of the evolution of human consciousness, by which he describes a gradual, though radical, change in the way that Man has seen the world from his earliest stages until now. Chief among the differences is how man relates to the phenomena that he perceives. The evolution of Man's language, the vehicle by which he reads and speaks the world that he sees, reflects this change. This evolution as it is reflected in language can be further studied in his book *History in English Words*, and C. S. Lewis' *Studies in Words*. Barfield's theory of the evolution of human consciousness is necessarily semiotic, which is to say, a study of signs and their interpretation, or simply, a study of meaning, because he argues that phenomenal reality is, in essence, a reality

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<sup>1</sup> Lewis, C. S. Dedication. *The Allegory of Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition*. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1958)

<sup>2</sup> Homepage. *Owen Barfield Literary Estate*. Web.

comprised of signs and images. It is a *meaningful* reality. The relatively recent enterprise of cognitive linguistics is born out of this same realization that there is a necessary relationship between experience, conceptual systems, and the semantic structures encoded by language, though as a characteristically modern science it refrains from making the judgment that reality is *meaningful*.<sup>3</sup>

Though Barfield does not primarily deal with the theological aspect of his theory, the role of the Judeo-Christian faith necessarily plays a fundamental role in what he sees to be a long and slow evolution of Man's consciousness. It is this aspect that I wish to explore further in this thesis. In particular, I argue that there is an important connection to be made between Barfield's vision for the future of Man's consciousness, or what he believes to be its fullest potential, and the Christian eschatological hope for the deification of Man. The technical term that Barfield uses to describe this stage of human consciousness, which I will explain in the body of my thesis, is *final participation*. I hope to show that there is a connection between this final participation and the Christian hope of the participation in the divine nature, described in 2 Peter 1:4, which is most recognizable in the East by the term *theosis*, and in the West, *deification*. In addition, there must be a further connection to be made between Barfield's semiotic theory and the revelation of the Judeo-Christian faith, which is a revelation that is comprised of signs. It is thus also a semiotic system. I focus specifically, however, on this semiotic system as it is experienced in the Christian liturgy. The worship of the Church trains the Christian to read and understand the language of God as it is mediated through the signs that he gives,

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<sup>3</sup>Evans, Bergen, and Zinken 7



as recorded in the Scriptures, and so, I argue, it is what affects both final participation and participation in the divine nature.

In order to establish the synthesis between Barfield and a Christian meditation on signs more cohesively, a significant portion of my thesis is dedicated to looking at St. Augustine's semiotic theory. In *De Doctrina Christiana*, the bishop of Hippo develops his theory of semiotics, seminal for the Western Christian tradition, partly in establishing a methodology for reading Scripture. Augustine continues his reflection on signs and their interpretation by looking at the nature of the sacrament, defined broadly as a sacred sign. I deal briefly with Augustine's own eschatological vision, as well as what he describes to be the conditions of the deification of man.

In the first chapter, I give an overview of Barfield's technical vocabulary to give a broader context to his ideas with which I am concerned, and to introduce the central points of his theory of the evolution of human consciousness. In addition, I also use this chapter to give a cursory description of Augustine's semiotic theory, in order to establish that for both Barfield and Augustine, phenomenal reality is imagistic, symbolic, and therefore, readable. In my second chapter, I go on to describe how Augustine's semiotic theory is extended into his sacramental theology. In my third chapter, I present my main argument, which is that final participation, that hoped-for stage of human consciousness as Barfield describes it, is correlative to the Christian concept of deification, or participation in the divine nature. In my fourth chapter, following Augustine's intuition to translate his semiotic theory into a sacred semiotic theory, I attempt to take the synthesis further by discussing the role of Christian liturgical worship in the achievement of participation, both in the Barfieldian sense and in the Christian theological sense.

## CHAPTER ONE

### Language and Phenomena in Barfield and Augustine

I will devote the first part of this chapter to giving a review of the foundational and technical vocabulary needed to understand Barfield's studies in the relationship between language and phenomena. I will introduce, as well, the semiotic theory of Augustine, central to Western sign theory, with which some points of useful comparison will be forthcoming. I will explain Barfield's assertion that there is an extra-sensory link between human language and phenomena. This extra-sensory link is one that is ignored by modern man, but experienced to such an extent by primitive man that it brought him into what Barfield says was an idolatrous relationship with phenomena. Augustine's semiotic theory is also a necessary prerequisite to understand before proceeding to examine how the theory of signs extends into discussion about liturgical worship.

The field of semiotics, in the oldest sense, is a philosophical study of sign and symbol systems in general. Because of this generality, the linguistic, psychological, philosophical and sociological characteristics of communication can be studied together (for example, Augustine uses his theory of semiotics to develop a general theory of culture). Modern semiotics is usually divided into the study of semantics, the study of the relations between linguistic expression and the objects to which they refer; syntactics, the study of those relations to each other; and pragmatics, the study of the dependence of the meaning of expressions on their users (including the social contexts surrounding

them).<sup>1</sup> The first of these modern distinctions within semiotic theory (semantics) is closest, though not equivalent, to what Augustine addresses in *On Christian Doctrine*.

Barfield introduces his book, *Saving the Appearances*, by defining the technical terms for three operations that the percipient person performs when thinking and speaking: figuration, alpha-thinking, and beta-thinking. *Figuration* is a work of construction done by the percipient mind that converts sensations into “things,” first by relating to phenomenal reality through the sense-organs, and then by combining and constructing these sensations into recognizable and nameable objects.<sup>2</sup> This operation turns the world of particles, also known as the “unrepresented” world, into the world of private and collective representations. Though the schema of the natural world is something we perceive as individuals, the world that we perceive collectively is the world that we know and the world that we are most certain we perceive correctly. We understand the world with others and so regularly confirm our understanding in communication. It is this world of collective representations that we talk about in any field of investigation, including the natural sciences.

The second operation to which Barfield calls attention is called *alpha-thinking*. In this operation, the percipient ‘theorizes’ or speculates about the relationships of phenomenal representations with each other. While this operation is a ‘thinking about,’ it is still as unconscious as the operation of *figuration* (it might even be more unconscious) about the intimate relation between the perceiver’s mind and phenomenal reality. This

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<sup>1</sup> Crystal, David. *A Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics*. (MA, USA; Oxford, England; Victoria, Australia: Blackwell Publishing), 431

<sup>2</sup> By phenomenal reality, and as I say later, phenomenal representations, I mean the world as it appears to us. It is synonymous with “nature”

operation sees and reflects upon representations as mind-independent and in so doing is able to think theoretically about the representations of the phenomenal world in how they relate to each other apart from and independent of the perceiver. Barfield notes that it is this operation that takes place in methodological inquiry, though it would be too narrow to restrict it to that use because it is an operation that everyone performs at least in some degree from childhood onward. When modern man thinks about ‘thinking’ and ‘perceiving,’ he is referring to *alpha-thinking*, the operation by which he sees phenomena independent from himself.

*Beta-thinking*, the third operation, is one in which the percipient person thinks about the relationship of collective representations to the perceiver’s own mind. It is thinking about perceiving. It can be called reflection, as Barfield says that it is the type of thinking that is performed in physiology, psychology, and philosophy. He also makes sure to clarify that the difference between *alpha-thinking* and *beta-thinking* is not one in kind but one in subject-matter. To give an example, it would be fair to say that his book, *Saving the Appearances*, is an exercise in *beta-thinking* on the relationship between *figuration* and *alpha-thinking*.<sup>3</sup>

I will also focus on the relationship, often confused, between *figuration* and *alpha-thinking*, in order to highlight the differences between modern and pre-modern operations in thinking about the relationship between man and the natural world. Anthropologists of the 19<sup>th</sup> century assumed that the primitive mind thinks and perceives the same way that we do, but that they “think incorrectly.” In other words, according to these “idolaters of the study” as Barfield calls them, the *alpha-thinking* of primitive man,

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<sup>3</sup> Barfield, *Saving the Appearances: A Study in Idolatry* (Middletown: Wesleyan UP, 1965), 22-27

or their “thinking about” the phenomena in a way that isolates them from the same phenomena is different from ours, or perhaps less evolved. Barfield says that the anthropologist of the 19<sup>th</sup> century thinks that primitive man must be wrong. This assumption led anthropologists to name the primitive mind *animistic*, as it had the tendency to see the world of natural causes as being peopled by spiritual forces or *anima*. This, to the anthropologist, must be incorrect *alpha-thinking* because the enlightened and educated modern ‘knows’ that the world is not peopled with spirits, but is rather the product of lifeless mechanical processes (this, at least, is modern man’s collective representation). Barfield goes on to say that this assumption misses the point, which is that not only do we have a different *alpha-thinking* from the primitive mind, but we also operate with a different *figuration*. The disagreement between the modern and the pre-modern mind on what is behind phenomenal reality is a disagreement that is found in a mental operation prior to alpha-thinking, which is what we had previously assumed. As such, the collective representations themselves, and phenomenal reality itself, i.e., the world that we see, hear, smell, taste, and touch will be different because it is perceived by a different process of figuration. This leads to the most striking difference between primitive thinking and modern thinking, which Barfield calls the primitive awareness of *participation*. He defines this as the “extra-sensory relation between man and the phenomena” that he perceives. This extra-sensory relationship is one that primitive man assumes and that modern man has completely forgotten, though Barfield insists that for phenomena to exist, participation is an operation that is necessary and indeed inevitable in language, whether primitive or modern. Another name for this extra-sensory link, which he learns from Rudolf Steiner, is “atavistic clairvoyance”; this is the awareness of

the invisible substance of which the visible phenomenal object is an image. For Steiner, this stage of human consciousness consisted in the fact that the human soul once participated in the soul-life of nature.<sup>4</sup> In order to make this idea, which has been forgotten by modern man, more intelligible, Barfield points out that there is no such thing as an unheard sound, an unseen sight, or even, though it is more difficult to imagine, an unfelt solidity. It is impossible to describe the represented world of phenomenal reality without implying a subjective, percipient, participating observer. We cannot talk about how the tree looks unless there exists someone *to whom* the tree looks like it does. The scientific model of atoms, particles, electrons, and neutrons constitute the world of the unparticipated, but it is in the world of the collective representations of sight, sound, smell, touch, and taste that man participates. More importantly, it is the latter world in which man actually lives. Man is necessarily implicated in the phenomena that he observes, and cannot pretend for long that he is insulated from the outside world as a passive observer fully capable of describing things as they are without him. Scientists working in particle physics have also been led by their own observations at the quantum level to question the “externality of the experiment [...] man’s independent and objective function as reflective observer.”<sup>5</sup> As physicist F. Helitzer says, “I think the word ‘observing’ is inadequate. A better word is ‘participation.’”<sup>6</sup> For the particle physicist as

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<sup>4</sup> Barfield, Owen, “Israel and the Michael Impulse”, *Owen Barfield Literary Estate*, 1956. Web.

<sup>5</sup> Jeffrey, David. “Conclusion and the Form of the Personal in Modern Poetry,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 43 (June, 1975), 153–63.

<sup>6</sup> Helitzer, F. “The Princeton Galaxy,” *Intellectual Digest* (June 1973), 32

well as for Barfield, human consciousness and phenomena are linked in ways that have been denied by the modern world. Barfield summarizes this:

It is indeed possible, when thinking of the relation between words and things, to forget what 'things', that is phenomena, are; namely, that they are collective representations and, as such, correlative to human consciousness. But those who decline to adopt this expedient, will find it impossible to sever the 'thing' by a sort of surgical operation from its name. The relation between collective representations and language is of the most intimate nature; and if charges of muddled thinking are to be brought, I do not hesitate to say that the boot is on the other leg. Those who insist that words and things are in two mutually exclusive categories of reality are simply confusing the phenomena with the particles. They are trying to think about the former as though they were the latter. Whereas, by definition, it is only the unrepresented which is independent of collective human consciousness and therefore of human language.<sup>7</sup>

Barfield goes on to show that in the history of man's consciousness, there have been differing degrees of participation in man, though in all cases, including modern man's, actual participation is a fact of human language. The difference between the participation of modern man and that of primitive man is so striking that Barfield names the participation of primitive man *original participation*. This denotes the earliest kind of participation; one in which primitive man was acutely aware of the fact that he was participating in the collective representations of phenomenal reality, and not just the theoretical awareness that modern man can arrive at through beta-thinking. Rather, it was an awareness that came through immediate experience. For us, the only connection that we are aware of between us and phenomena is the external sensory connection, but this is not so for the originally participating consciousness.<sup>8</sup> Nineteenth century anthropologists, who were not aware of original participation, gave rise to the myth,

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<sup>7</sup> Barfield, *Saving the Appearances*, 82

<sup>8</sup> Ibid 31

which is still present except for in more specialized circles, that the primitive mind looked upon natural phenomena like ours with his mind as blank as we think ours is, and then explained the world by peopling it with the characters of mythology, in the same way that we conduct science through the mode of alpha-thinking. When men first began to actually exercise alpha-thinking on nature for the purposes of natural philosophy, they exercised it upon the participated collective representations of primitive man, and not on our collective representations, which came late on the scene. The mental operation of alpha-thinking, as Barfield defines it, is a ‘thinking about’ collective representations, but any such thinking about must necessarily be accompanied by the awareness of ourselves as separate from the representations. Alpha-thinking by its nature excludes participation. The evolution of man’s consciousness is thus a record, according to Barfield, of the gradual destruction of participation by alpha-thinking.<sup>9</sup> As will become clear later in my thesis, Barfield does not consider this a complete evil. He is very intentional about the fact that he does not advocate a return to original participation, when man was ‘unsullied’ by the dominance of alpha-thinking. Rather, his hope for man’s participation in the phenomenal world is that man will learn how to participate *rightly*. The name that Barfield gives for his hope of participation in all its potential is *final participation*. I will give significant attention to this concept in later chapters.

When Barfield speaks of the evolution of consciousness, he is not speaking of the same thing as evolution of meaning. By the latter, he means the semantic approach to history that he investigated in his *History in English Words*, and that C. S. Lewis investigated, as well, in his *Studies in Words*. Lewis showed historically the interplay

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid 42-43



between what Barfield calls the lexical meaning of a word and the speaker's meaning of a word. The difference between the two aspects of meaning is important because it provides a key to studying the history of the human mind and civilization, as well as a history of ideas.<sup>10</sup> Barfield provides what he believes to be a good method for studying the evolution of meaning in language. He calls it "an impenetrable jungle" because of the constant give-and-take between words' lexical meaning and speaker's meaning. This method studies the dynamic between the two functions of *communication* and *expression*, which act as two polarities in language function. He emphasizes the 'dynamic' quality of the relationship between these functions because they are exclusive of and counter to each other, though they are both necessary.<sup>11</sup>

Neither of these is identical, however, to the evolution of consciousness, which is directly correlated to the evolution of phenomena, or collective representations. The evolution of consciousness is related to the disappearance of original participation in man's mental and linguistic operations. Here, Barfield's studies set himself against what he calls the presuppositions of the evolutionists, who only study the development of the "outer" world, without studying the development of the "inner" world, or the world of thought. This focus on the "outer" world is a consequence of the increasing dominance of alpha-thinking, which takes the "outer" world as a given without paying attention to the perceiver's participation in the evolution of phenomena. Since, for the evolutionist, the world began with nonconsciousness, with a world of "existential objects chronologically anterior to any existential subject (and therefore supposedly more

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid 19

<sup>11</sup> Ibid 21

“real”),”<sup>12</sup> then consciousness must have begun at one point and then expanded to the point of becoming the species *Homo sapiens*, and continued expanding further throughout prehistory and into history. The evolutionists, Barfield says, purport an evolution of expansion of meaning only. Barfield, however, having investigated the evolution of meaning, the interplay between lexical meaning and speaker’s meaning, and between expression and communication, finds that language has experienced more of a process of contraction of meaning. Barfield sees obvious implications in the relationship between consciousness and phenomenal reality for how to talk about the natural sciences, particularly in how to talk about the supposed model of the world before consciousness. He thinks about this within the context of semiotic theory:

Once the fact of participation is granted, the connection between words and things must, we have seen, be admitted to be at any time a very much closer one than the last two or three centuries have assumed. Conscious participation, moreover, will be aware of that connection; and original participation was conscious.<sup>13</sup>

To put it more simply, Barfield says that the world that we see is different from the world of scientific models of phenomena. Not only that, but the world that we see must be different from the world that primitive man saw. He notices that the scientific models used for pre-history describe the world with the collective representations of modern scientific man, when there are ages of collective representations to choose from, some of which may be better apt in their descriptions than our own. By way of brief example in the philosophy of science, Craig Holdrege notes that the Darwinian language of “struggle for existence” is a metaphor that does not do justice to the phenomena that we see. It is

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid 79

<sup>13</sup> Ibid 84

an impoverished and even inaccurate collective representation for the way that the plant and animal kingdoms exist. Holdrege says, “it makes all the difference in the world whether one uses the first expression [struggle for existence]... or whether one uses language that stays as close to the phenomena as possible.”<sup>14</sup> In other words, speaking about the phenomenal world differently will produce different scientific models, and will actually create different collective representations. Harvard biologist, Richard Lewontin, noted that the re-growth of an excised limb in an amphibian embryo is “less like a machine than it is like a language whose elements... take unique meaning from their context.”<sup>15</sup> Again, this shows that the collective representation of the man of post-Industrial Revolution has chosen his metaphor for phenomena to be a machine, but this figuration might not actually be seeing the phenomena adequately.

A brief example of how modern cognitive linguistics also corroborates Barfield’s postulations is appropriate here. In her article, *Sex, Syntax and Semantics*, Boroditsky’s research shows the very proximate relationship between language and phenomena. She focuses on several examples of linguistic competency bleeding over and across languages into how we construe the world. She says that, “a body of evidence suggests that people’s thinking about objects can be influenced by aspects of grammar that differ across languages.” Furthermore, “considering the many ways in which languages differ, our findings suggest that the private mental lives of people who speak different languages

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<sup>14</sup> Holdrege, Craig, “Where Do Organisms End?” *natureinstitute.org*, 2000. Web.

<sup>15</sup> Lewontin, Richard C., “The Corpse in the Elevator”, *New York Review of Books* vol. 29, (1983), 34-37

may differ much more than previously thought.”<sup>16</sup> The evidence to which Boroditsky refers is a group of studies that show how differences in thought can be produced by grammatical differences alone. Grammatical gender, for example, affects how people see things in the world of phenomena, even though the gender allocation, lost in the past of the language, may be arbitrary.

Modern cognitive linguistics and avenues of modern philosophy of science seem to corroborate what Barfield says, but this is not the focus of my study. Rather, I will investigate how Barfield’s terms can be applied to the sacramental liturgy as a semiotic reality, and what that implies for a theological reading of Barfield’s evolution of consciousness. In order to do this, I now turn to St. Augustine’s theory of semiotics before considering his sacramental theology and his eschatology. As said before, Barfield believes that the proximity between words and things must be closer than modern man has imagined. It is precisely this proximity between words and things, as well as between the “outer” and “inner” world of phenomena, that Augustine is interested in, 1600 years previous to Barfield. Augustine gives his most systematic treatise on his theory of signs in *On Christian Doctrine*. His definition of a sign is a “thing which, over and above the impression it makes on the senses, causes something else to come into the mind as a consequence of itself.”<sup>17</sup> This recalls Barfield’s accusation of the modern world in which man assumes that words are simply “mere” words. For Augustine, this cannot possibly be true. To see words as “mere” words, and similarly, to see only the

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<sup>16</sup> Boroditsky, Lera, Schmidt, Lauren A., and Phillips, Webb. “Sex, Syntax, and Semantics”, *Language in Mind*, (MIT Press, 2003), 77

<sup>17</sup> Augustine. *On Christian Doctrine*. Ed. Paul A. Boer. (N.p.: Veritatis Splendor, 2012), 2. 1

outer meaning of phenomena without an eye for the inner, is for Barfield the essence of our modern idolatry, and Augustine would agree with him. Augustine sees the confusion of treating signs as if they were things, or as Barfield would say, treating collective representations as if they were the unrepresented, as in effect the “death of the soul” in which human understanding is subordinated to the flesh:

Nothing is more appropriately called the death of the soul than this, that the thing in the soul which puts us above the beasts, the understanding, should be subjected to the flesh by following the letter... In the end it is a wretched slavery of the soul to take signs for things; one is not able to lift the eye of the mind above the bodily creature in order to drink in eternal light.<sup>18</sup>

This “death of the soul” is, I take it, essentially what Barfield means by the modern idolatry of confusing alpha-thinking with figuration, and a denial of the fact of participation. An example of this “death of the soul” is when the unspiritual reader might see the Sabbath as a mere day of the calendar, when in fact it is a literal sign of a spiritual event, as well as a figurative sign whose meaning cannot be terminated in earthly experience. A literal sign represents a simple indicative relationship between sign and referent, whereas a figurative sign occurs when the things signified by literal words are also employed for signifying other things.<sup>19</sup>

In his theory, Augustine distinguishes within the genus ‘signs’ between the two species of “natural” and “given,” or in some English translations, the two species are labeled “natural” and “conventional” signs. Natural signs include the smoke that is the sign of a fire, the tracks that are the sign of an animal, or involuntary facial expressions

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid 3.5.9

<sup>19</sup> Fitzgerald, Allan D. *Augustine Throughout the Ages: An Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999), 796

that are signs of the emotions of fear and grief. Augustine classifies given signs as signs that are of a voluntary production, which proceed from the presence of the will to signify. In his semiotics, words are the most important kind of sign because all culture and learning is dependent on them. They serve to “give” something from one soul to another soul through the medium of corporeal signs. The words as signs are ontologically different from the thing that they signify, analogous to the difference between the body and the soul.<sup>20</sup>

It is important to note that the majority of translations of *On Christian Doctrine* make a grave error in dividing the species of Augustine’s signs into “natural” and “conventional,” rather than “natural” and “given.” Not all of what Augustine calls “given” signs can be called “conventional,” which is a term chosen to contrast “natural” in the disagreements between Plato and Aristotle over the nature of language (for Aristotle the distinction is simple; if it is not natural, or if it is not the same for everybody, then it is conventional). Rhetorical gestures as well as the human gestures by which children learn how to speak are “given” for Augustine, though they would not be conventional because they are natural, or universal.<sup>21</sup> To reiterate, Augustine says that given signs are signs that are made by a voluntary will or intent to communicate. Because of this, Augustine is able to say that when the “poultry-cock has discovered food, he signals with his voice for the hen to run to him, and the dove by cooing calls his

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<sup>20</sup> Cary, Phillip. *Outward Signs: The Powerlessness of External Things in Augustine's Thought* (N.p.: Oxford, 2008), 69-77

<sup>21</sup> Ibid 77-78

mate, or is called by her in turn...” this is called a ‘given’ sign, which the translation just cited wrongly translates as ‘conventional.’<sup>22</sup>

For Barfield, the dynamic interplay between expression and communication is a source of the imperfection of language and its consequence of the constantly shifting movements of lexical and speaker’s meaning, while for Augustine this is a sign that human language as we know it is wounded because of the Fall of Man. Language’s inherent conventionality is a sign of it being fallen because it fails to fulfill its “original function as the outward sign of inner unity.”<sup>23</sup> Augustine sees, like Plato, something natural (in Augustine’s technical sense) behind the conventional and arbitrary nature of language, and thus, asserts that signs have a pedagogical function. Signs, because they are sensible, occupy the lowest rung of the three-tiered ontology that forms the foundation of his theory of semiotics, with souls being in the second tier, making the signification as a voluntary act, and then God as Truth occupying the highest tier.<sup>24</sup> Within his theory of semiotics, Augustine speaks about the unity of sign and sign signified, especially here as it pertains to what language would have looked like before the Fall of Man, when the three tiers would have been unified, and man would have offered up intelligible and fitting worship to God. Interestingly, Augustine’s answer is that before the Fall of Man, there would have been no sensible language. Rather the movement of our souls would have been so apparent to each person that we would not need the use of communicative signs because of the unity between the inner and the outer

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<sup>22</sup> Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, 2. 2

<sup>23</sup> Cary 80

<sup>24</sup> Ibid 80

man.<sup>25</sup> Our fallen bodies are opaque to the movements of the soul. In Heaven, though the saints will not need to use their words to praise God, they will be able to use their words, if they so desire, when the inner and outer self come together to praise God. Still, outward signs are insufficient in our current condition because they are not the inner power that unites humanity. Human souls, when freed from sin, “are not divided from one another into a multitude of private inner spaces but united in a public space of inner vision.”<sup>26</sup> This is very important to Augustine’s eschatological vision for man as it correlates to Barfield’s, which I will return to in later chapters. The language of man before the fall does not figure into Barfield’s evolution of consciousness, since his description of original participation, which is the first stage of man’s language, is that stage after the fall, in which the idolatry of primitive man is the norm. Barfield is not outside of the lines of Christian orthodoxy in treating it thus, since many before him have said that history began at the fall of man, which does not automatically equate to a denial of the reality of the events of the fall of man (for example, the Venerable Bede says that man fell from immutability into locomotion,<sup>27</sup> and Maximus the Confessor said that man’s fall was co-temporaneous with his creation<sup>28</sup>).

For Augustine the difference between meaning and sign is as stark as the difference between body and soul, though they can be unified in redeemed man. For Barfield, as quoted above, with the fact of participation having been granted, the

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<sup>25</sup> Fitzgerald 794

<sup>26</sup> Cary 83

<sup>27</sup> Bede, *On Genesis*. Trans. Calvin B. Kendall. (Liverpool: Liverpool UP, 2008), 87

<sup>28</sup> Von Balthasar, Hans Urs. *Cosmic Liturgy: The Universe According to Maximus the Confessor*. Trans. Brian E. Daley, S.J. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2003), 5. 3



connection between words and things must be much closer than the centuries of the scientific revolution have imagined them to be. According to Barfield's research, Augustine would still be living within a system of collective representations in which participation, though not original, was still a foundational aspect of language.

Augustine's semiotic theory came from a participating consciousness. Indeed, Augustine sees within the three-tiered ontology of his semiotic theory that signs are participations in the movements of the soul, which are participations in Truth, which is God. Augustine's language of "being united in a public space of inner vision" sounds like what Barfield describes to be happening within participation, though the latter is only happening to an imperfect extent.

In conclusion, there seems to be substantial agreement between Barfield and Augustine in that both think there is significant proximity between language and phenomena, or between the sign and the thing signified, though perfect unity between sign and thing signified does not now exist because of the fallen nature of language (according to Augustine). The discontinuity between sign and thing signified is equal to the discontinuity between fallen man's body and soul, which no longer exist in a harmony of corporeal subordination to the spiritual.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Sacrament as Visible Word

In my first chapter I gave an overview of the technical vocabulary used by Barfield and St. Augustine when speaking about language and phenomena, or sign and thing signified, and it should now be clear that for both of them there is in fact an intimate relation between language and phenomena, or between sign and thing signified, that is closer than modern man's figuration leads him to believe. Because of the fact of participation, there is an extra-sensory link between language and phenomena; in fact the two must be correlative because speech and nature, or phenomena, came into being along with each other.<sup>1</sup> For the participating consciousness, this is easily intuited because language and phenomena both belong to the genus of "image." This statement of Barfield is striking to modern man, so used to thinking only of the evolution of the 'outer,' and to conflating the phenomena with the unrepresented, as Barfield would say, but it must be a true statement given the fact of participation. Meaning "derives from and expresses a qualitative *inwardness*."<sup>2</sup> This means that phenomenal reality for Barfield and for Augustine alike is one that is intelligible and one that communicates. This provides the basis for showing how the liturgy as a semiotic reality, and as a meaning-governed activity, might appear to a participating consciousness, and how it might draw man's consciousness into what Barfield believes to be the right direction of participation,

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<sup>1</sup> Barfield 123

<sup>2</sup> Talbott, Stephen L., "From Physical Causes to Organisms of Meaning" *natureinstitute.org*, 2011. Web.

or final participation. To clarify this, I turn again to Augustine, and in particular to his sacramental theology. In order to see Augustine's theory of semiotics as it is relevant to the liturgy, it is necessary to investigate how his understanding pertains to the Christian reading of Scripture and the celebration of the Christian sacraments, since both Scripture and Sacrament are sign and symbol. The reason for this is that in Augustine, and in Christian theology in general, there is a symbiotic relationship between Christology and language because the Word of God has become incarnate in the flesh, the world of appearances (or to be Barfieldian, the world of phenomena). For Augustine, the worship of the Church as it is centered upon the mediated Word of God participates—or communes—in the signs that God has given in order to understand him. In this second chapter, I will look to Augustine's sacramental theology in regard to his theory of signs, and in particular at how he understands the semiotic nature of God's communication with man through the sacramental liturgy as an extension of his communication through the mediating signs of Scripture. This analogy will be relevant to demonstrating my thesis that the liturgy has been a cornerstone in the development of man's consciousness, as he understands his relationship to God and to the phenomenal world, with final participation corresponding to man's participation in the divine nature, which is one of the explicit *teloi* of the worship of the Church.

Augustine's meditations on the Word of God in the prologue of John's Gospel, in his sermons, tractates, and other works, emphasize the difference between God's word and ours, especially in that His is unchangeable, while ours is changeable. In his sermons, he says that he will give a word about the Word: "But what sort of word about what sort of Word? A dying word about the undying Word; a changeable word about the

unchangeable Word; a transitory word about the eternal Word.”<sup>3</sup> In *On Christian Doctrine*, the foundation for Augustine’s semiotic theory is the Word that has become flesh and the Wisdom of God that has become incarnate. Again, he finds it beautiful and necessary to meditate upon the unchanging nature of the Word against the changing nature of human language:

In what way did He come but this, ‘The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us’? Just as when we speak, in order that what we have in our minds may enter through the ear into the mind of the hearer, the word which we have in our hearts becomes an outward sound and is called speech; and yet our thought does not lose itself in the sound, but remains complete in itself, and takes the form of speech without being modified in its own nature by the change: so the Divine Word, though suffering no change of nature, yet became flesh, that He might dwell among us.<sup>4</sup>

The mode of God’s speech juxtaposed with human speech is central to Augustine’s work on signs: “But what the Son speaks, the Father speaks, because in the speech of the Father, the Word, who is the Son, is uttered according to God’s eternal way—if we can use the term ‘way’ in describing God’s utterance of His eternal Word.”<sup>5</sup> Augustine meditates on God’s utterances, like the wise man praised by the psalmist, but he specifically asks the question of how the eternal utterances enter into the temporal world. This is a different question from how it is that particular instances of a thing are derived from their Platonic form. Augustine wants to know how it is that God’s word is made known not just in Creation but in history (though the two are not unrelated). It is in Augustine’s sacramental theology that he develops this semiotic theory of divine

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<sup>3</sup> Augustine, *The Works of Saint Augustine: Sermons III/4 (94A-147A) on the New Testament*. Trans. Edmund Hill, O.P. (Brooklyn: New City Press, 1992), 232

<sup>4</sup> Augustine, *On Christiana Doctrine* 1.13.12

<sup>5</sup> Augustine, *De Genesi ad litteram*, 24

utterance, which focuses on the event of the Incarnation and how the divine utterances of the old and new covenants are related to it. The Divine Word has been “gradually clothing itself with the humanity it first created—so that what was first spoken by God may eventually be respoken by man.”<sup>6</sup> Learning to read the words of God prepares man to speak the Word of God in a way that both Barfield and Augustine would recognize as the goal of Man’s creation and redemption.

Here it is necessary to explain what Augustine means by *sacrament*. Augustine initially uses a much broader definition for the word *sacrament* than what eventually became restricted to the seven great mysteries of the Church, although his sacramental theology is fundamental to its development in the later Medieval Western Church. For Augustine, a sacrament is a sacred sign,<sup>7</sup> and to recall from *On Christian Doctrine*, a sign is a “thing which, over and above the impression it makes on the senses, causes something else to come into the mind as a consequence of itself.”<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, “the visible manifestation of God’s saving presence in the historical Christ and within the church is the *sacramenta* whereby one comes to understand and participate in the divine mystery.”<sup>9</sup> Augustine sees the visible world as a manifestation of a deeper inner reality, and as such, it can be a sign that reveals the inner world. When he speaks about the reading of the revelation of Scripture and the revelation of Creation, he develops a similar method because they are both constituted with signs that are revelatory; in fact, revelation

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<sup>6</sup> Barfield 127

<sup>7</sup> Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*. 3.9.13

<sup>8</sup> Ibid 2. 1

<sup>9</sup> Fitzgerald 742

is by nature manifested in sign and symbol. Augustine's attitude is summarized by C.

Harrison:

Creation, therefore, like scripture, assumes the nature of a book, witnessing to its author: like scripture and the incarnation of the word of God, it contains and engenders symbols, allegories, and, indeed, sacraments, which enable its invisible, spiritual sense – its Creator – to be seen more clearly through and in the visible.<sup>10</sup>

Scripture is also filled with signs that are either literal or figurative.<sup>11</sup> Augustine uses *sacramentum*, *mysterium*, *figura*, *prophetia* to denote the symbolic nature of Scripture, using three Pauline texts in particular to connect sacrament with mystery: 1 Corinthians 13:2 (“understanding all mysteries”), Ephesians 5:32 (“this is a great mystery”), and 1 Corinthians 4:1 (“stewards entrusted with the mysteries of God”).<sup>12</sup> Reading Creation in general and Scripture in particular through this paradigm provides the basis for Augustine's identification of *sacramenta*, or *mysteria*, with the objects, rites, and symbols of Israel and the Church. Not limited to Baptism and Eucharist, or the sevenfold Medieval list, Augustine's list of sacraments extends to the Old Testament as well, including the Sabbath, circumcision, the temple, sacrifice, sacrificial victims, altars, priesthood, Passover, unleavened bread, among others. These are signs that reveal God's mystery to Israel, and they serve as types for the realities that would emerge in the Church through the saving action of Jesus Christ.<sup>13</sup> In his correspondence with Januarius, Augustine says that in contrast to the Old Testament, Christ “has laid on the society of

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<sup>10</sup> Fitzgerald 743

<sup>11</sup> Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine* 2.10.15

<sup>12</sup> Fitzgerald 742

<sup>13</sup> Ibid

His new people the obligation of sacraments, very few in number, very easy of observance, most sublime in their meaning...”<sup>14</sup> Similar to his listing of the Old Testament *sacramenta*, Augustine’s list of those of the New Testament comprise liturgical observances, such as Easter, the octave of Easter, Pentecost, the sign of the cross, spiritual songs, and the list goes on.<sup>15</sup>

Common to all these observances is that they are spiritually important and externally visible. This would distinguish a sacrament as a sacred sign from the signs of Creation. Augustine further elucidates in his correspondence with Januarius when, talking about Easter, he says, “and therefore the Holy Spirit, drawing a comparison from visible to invisible, and from corporal to spiritual realities, has wished that passing over from one life to another which is called pasch, to be observed from the fourteenth day of the month...”<sup>16</sup> Even the weather of the Easter season is able to convey a spiritual reality: “if these allegories, taken not only from heaven and the stars, but even from the lower creation, are adapted to the dispensation of the sacraments, they became a sort of eloquence of redemptive doctrine fit to win the affection of its disciples from visible to invisible, from corporeal to spiritual, from temporal to eternal things.”<sup>17</sup> The sign is properly called a sacrament, though, when it corresponds to and has some similarity to the spiritual reality it signifies. Augustine would increasingly reserve the idea of

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<sup>14</sup> Augustine, *Letters*. *New Advent Catholic Encyclopedia* 54

<sup>15</sup> Fitzgerald 742

<sup>16</sup> Augustine, *Letters*. *New Advent Catholic Encyclopedia* 55

<sup>17</sup> Ibid

sacrament for a thing in which the sign and its reality intimately meet together in strict predication.<sup>18</sup>

Augustine's sacramental theology is important in his theory of semiotics because it is the ground in which he works out his theory of signs and symbols and their interpretation. Augustine says that, "material symbols are nothing else than visible speech."<sup>19</sup> The sacrament is the space where the Church encounters the events of the sacred history recorded in Scripture, which is itself veiled in symbols both literal and figurative. For example, he shows that in 1 Corinthians 10:4 Paul "did not say, 'The rock signifies Christ,' but rather, 'The rock was Christ,'" comparing it to the copula that Christ Himself uses in the Institution of the Eucharist. This shows that in Scripture and in sacrament, the mysteries of God are bound to a sign in such a way that the understanding of that eternal reality, unbound as it is in its own nature, is bound to that particular sign, e.g. *this* rock bears Christ's presence, or *this* bread offers Christ's body. The *sacramenta* of the Old Testament anticipate the redemption of Christ, and the *sacramenta* of the New Testament recall it. The Incarnation shows the possibility of the "uncreated and supratemporal to 'dwell' in the created and temporal," and thereby offers a unique understanding of signification in which "the sign not only represents but mediates the reality it signifies."<sup>20</sup> Thus the sacred sign is more than natural signs or given signs among men, which bring to mind something other than itself because it makes that other reality present. In his meditations on the Word of God in his Tractates on the Gospel of

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<sup>18</sup> Fitzgerald 795

<sup>19</sup> Augustine, *Contra Faustum*. *New Advent Catholic Encyclopedia*, 19. 16

<sup>20</sup> Ibid



John, Augustine speaks about how it is in the operation of the word, specifically the word of Christ through the ministry of the Church, that the performance of a sacrament is efficacious. In speaking about Baptism in particular, he says, “Take away the word, and the water is neither more nor less than water. The word is added to the element, and there results the Sacrament, as if itself also a kind of visible word...” Much of Augustine’s work intuits how the Hebrew word for ‘word’ is used, though it is probable he was not actually aware of the Hebrew meaning.<sup>21</sup> דָּבָר (*dabar*) can denote word, thing, or event.<sup>22</sup> The polyvalence of this term is put to full advantage in the Hebrew text when describing the word of God, which is, unlike human speech, a perfect unity between sign and thing. God’s speech is also his deed. Creation is the language of God, or to use later Christian Trinitarian terminology, it is His thought actualized through the power of his Word. In the ministry of the Church, the word of celebrant becomes something similar to the *dabar* of God, in that it is constituted of a unity between word and deed, though it is only the *dabar* of God that can create anything *ex nihilo*. Man’s word in the sacred sign becomes a participation in the sacred word of God.

There are many theological ramifications of Augustine’s work on signs that can be seen when looking at Israel’s reflection on the word of God, which is one of the Old Testament’s key theological concepts. God manifests His revelation to Israel either in word or vision, or, what Augustine might call symbol. He also creates by His word, which is a theme of great interest to Augustine. More than just sustaining Creation by

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<sup>21</sup> Michael Cameron, *Christ Meets Me Everywhere: Augustine’s Early Figurative Exegesis*, (n.p.: Oxford UP, 2012), 301

<sup>22</sup> Strong 1697

His word, however, He also speaks regularly through natural, meteorological phenomena.<sup>23</sup> Psalms 147 and 148 are special examples of Israel seeing that Creation as well as the revelation of the God of Israel come from the same source, and even in the same medium of symbol:

He sendeth forth his commandment upon earth: his word runneth very swiftly. He giveth snow like wool: he scattereth the hoarfrost like ashes. He casteth forth his ice like morsels: who can stand before his cold? He sendeth forth his word, and melteth them: he causeth his wind to blow, and the waters flow. He sheweth his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any nation: and as for his judgments, they have not known them. Praise ye the LORD.<sup>24</sup>

The psalmist praises God for his word in creation, and then more particularly, he praises God for showing Israel his word through his statutes and his judgments. Later theological reflection would categorize these two separately as natural revelation and divine revelation, though in the mind of the psalmist it seems clear that they are both revelatory, they are both “his word.” In several instances, the Ten Commandments, which are the special revelation for which the people of Israel never cease expressing their gratitude, are simply called עשרת הדברים or ‘ten words,’ in Hebrew.<sup>25</sup>

That the psalmist reads even meteorological events as being revelatory shows a belief in the symbolic and revelatory nature of history as well as that of nature. Israel sees the signs of divine revelation in historical events as well as nature. This method of reading is present in the New Testament’s reading of the events of sacred history, in which it views these events sacramentally, or visible events that convey invisible truths.

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<sup>23</sup> Bromiley, Geoffrey, W., ed. *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*. (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1979-1988), 1102

<sup>24</sup> Psalm 147

<sup>25</sup> cf. Ex. 34:28, Deut. 4:13, Deut. 10:4

Such is the case when St. Paul says that the rock in Exodus is Christ, or when St. Peter says that the waters of the great Flood are the waters of Baptism, or when the Lord Himself teaches the disciples on the way to Emmaus that the history of Old Testament all points to Him. In another very pertinent example, Jesus seems to make the injunction to read history as a sign when He rebukes the Pharisees for being able to read the weather, but not the “signs of the times.”<sup>26</sup> Jesus himself expresses that history, as well as creation, can produce intelligible signs for the one who is able to read.

Augustine’s sacramental theology can be deduced from the Scriptures’ own method of reading revelation. His vision is one that is practiced in discerning the inner meaning of outer things, both in the revelation of Creation, and of Scripture. It is a vision that is better able to avoid the rebuke of Christ’s anger against those who have “eyes but fail to see, and ears but fail to hear.”<sup>27</sup> At least, this is how Barfield interprets the opened sight of which Christ speaks. It is a sight and a hearing that pays attention to the symbols that are truly there in reality and that is aware of the representational nature of phenomena, which allows the percipient person to search the “inner” meaning of the phenomena. This would be confirmed by reading John 6. Jesus, who, after the Eucharistic discourse, says that it is the “Spirit who gives life, and the flesh avails nothing,” as if in condemnation for not hearing the inner and sacramental meaning of his words. It is also the Spirit, according to Barfield, in whom man will one day learn to *finally participate*, of which I will speak more in subsequent chapters.

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<sup>26</sup> Matt. 16:3

<sup>27</sup> Mark 8:18

An integral demonstration of Augustine's semiotics, as well as the semiotics presented in Scripture itself, is the theological treatment of the 'name,' and most especially of the divine Name. The 'name' in the Bible, most self-consciously in the Old Testament, acts as synecdoche for the whole person.<sup>28</sup> The name can also act as a reference to that person's part in the larger story in which he plays, whether it is his destiny, his origin, or his function. In fact, the name acts as a revelation of a person's character. In Augustinian language, the name is a sign. It is a signification of the person's 'inner' reality, a sign that "causes something else to come into the mind as a consequence of itself." A classic example would be the name of Israel's patriarch, Isaac, who is named for the Hebrew word for 'laughter,' because of his mother's laughter at the prophecy of his birth.<sup>29</sup> Names in the Bible (in both New and Old Testaments) are frequently given prophetically, and they assume theological meaning. Likewise, and with greater relevance, the divine names are expressive of God's presence, person, and character, none of which can be comprehended, but all of which are concentrated in His name.<sup>30</sup> His name signified His presence, but was at the same time not the whole of God. This resonates quite harmoniously with Augustine's understanding of a sacrament, which is a temporal sign to which an eternal reality is bound (bound by Him who is the only one who can bind it), without its reality being exhausted by the sign. This is also the difference between the divine Name, and a human name, the latter being merely a sign, with the former being a sacred sign. The name of the Lord was also the focal point of

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<sup>28</sup> Bromiley 504

<sup>29</sup> Gen. 21:6

<sup>30</sup> Bromiley 504

Israel's cultic worship, with Solomon building the temple "for the name of the Lord." Being the focal point of their worship, the divine Name was also the focus of their hope and love. The ability to call upon the name of the Lord was something with which God had gifted Israel, a grace that was incomparable in all the earth and was not to be abused by using His name for magic or selfish ends, as forbidden by the Third Commandment.

Israel's hope in the name of the Lord is powerfully expressed in the psalmist's cry; "our help is in the name of the LORD, who made heaven and earth."<sup>31</sup> It is noteworthy that the psalmist does not say, 'our help is in the LORD,' but rather, in his Name. God is known where His name is known, which Israel understood when the priest would invoke God's blessing when he "put God's name upon the people."<sup>32</sup> God promises to give his people "an everlasting name that will not be cut off,"<sup>33</sup> and to blot out one's name from the book of life is synonymous with removing them from the land of the living. In the Old Testament, it is not true that simply naming something gives one dominion over it, as in the Man of Genesis naming the Woman as well as all the beasts. Rather, it is putting ones own name over a place or a person that asserts dominion over it. For example, when King David takes a city, he makes it his possession by putting his name over it, and the LORD lays claim to Israel, Jerusalem, the ark, the Temple, not just by naming them but by calling out his own name over them.<sup>34</sup> Jesus exemplifies Israel's faith in the divine name and hope in the presence that it signifies when He prays in John

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<sup>31</sup> Psalm 124:8

<sup>32</sup> Nu. 6:23-27

<sup>33</sup> Isa. 56:5

<sup>34</sup> Bromiley 481

17, “I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world... while I was with them I kept them in your name... I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.” It is clear that the name of the Lord was placed over Israel with a trust in its efficaciousness. The nascent Church also expresses this faith, transferring it to the name of Jesus, in whose name the divine Name resided theologically and philologically, insisting on baptism “in his Name,” doing everything in his Name, preaching the gospel in his Name. Speaking the Lord’s name over the newly baptized made that person, along with the rest of the Church, the Lord’s own treasure, his own heritage and is reminiscent of the practice of the Israelite priests as recorded in the book of Numbers.<sup>35</sup> The culmination of ‘clothing oneself with the Lord’ is expressed in Revelation 3:12: “He who overcomes... I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of God, the new Jerusalem... and my new name.” The eschatological omnipresence of God’s name calls to mind Isaiah’s prophecy of the earth being “filled with the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea,” as well as St. Paul’s powerful statement that the Son will subject all things under his feet, “so that God may be all in all.”<sup>36</sup>

The sacraments as visible words would have been for Augustine a powerful reminder of God’s redemption of language as well, as they flowed forth from the mystery of the Incarnation, which was the unveiling of the eternal Word of God. Recall that through Augustine’s conversion, he developed the theory that the origin of language is a

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<sup>35</sup> Bromiley 483

<sup>36</sup> Isaiah 11:9, 1 Cor. 15:28

result of the Fall of man from grace. To reiterate, according to him, man would not have needed the use of the signs of language to mediate communication; instead, communication between souls would have been immediate and intuitive because man lived on a higher plane of existence and his referent point would have been proper communication with God. Because of sin, the relation between his soul and body was ruptured, and so his understanding was bound to the intelligible, changeable, and earthly realm, thus resulting in the use of language. The temporal world is filled with shifting images that only momentarily make known the intelligible world, but cannot embody it except as instances. Now, little is known about God and the eternal without the medium of these changing images. Though Scripture and sacrament still cater to this fallen aspect of humanity through the use of images, they are also used to redeem man's language.<sup>37</sup>

In the sacrament, especially those of the New Covenant, there is a correspondence that is not arbitrary between the sign and the thing signified. Moreover, the sacramental sign is the "new and eternal covenant," though the sign will one day be done away with, and the eternal reality will come to the soul completely unmediated. In the sacramental sign, the word, as it participates in the word of Christ, is given abiding power and, thereby, so is the image. The grace that is finally imparted to the Christian is inaudible, for example in the bathing of the catechumen, or the reception of the consecrated bread and wine. It becomes a visible word, read and spoken inaudibly, much in the same way that the signs of nature were to be read by man before his fall from grace.

All of phenomenal reality is imagistic. This is what the fact of participation in the Barfieldian sense means because it shows that the world of representations is the world

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<sup>37</sup> Fitzgerald 794-95

that we schematize through our senses and through our language. The sacred signs are signs that deal with realities that are less knowable than the realities to which the rest of the imagistic world points, and they are an integral part of worship. With these observations, I can investigate how the sacramental liturgy, as a semiotic reality comprised of sacred signs, can affect final participation as well as participation in the divine nature.



## CHAPTER THREE

### Final Participation and the Deification of Man

In this chapter, I will explore the relationship between Barfield's concept of final participation and the theological concept of participation in the divine nature. Barfield's definition of participation is not equivalent to its signification in its theological context, though I argue that it should indeed be taken in that direction. Up to this point I have equivocated between the use of the word 'participation' in the Barfieldian sense and its usage in the theological sense. Though they are distinct concepts, at the root they both mean what the etymology signifies, which is a 'taking part' in something. For Barfield, this means a 'taking part' in the phenomena we perceive, for theology this means a 'taking part' in the divine nature that we confess to be God. Though I have tried to use them distinctly, in this chapter I seek to unify them, in order to show that the evolution of human consciousness has been a slow drawing out and reorientation of man's participation from the phenomenal world to God. In the first part of the chapter I will explain Barfield's concept of final participation, and how it is different from original participation, after which I will briefly look at the eschatology of Augustine, with the important concept of the deification of man.

At the outset, the most important distinction that Barfield makes for our purposes is that original participation is, in fact, idolatry, though a different sort from the idolatry which modern man has fallen into through his faith in alpha-thinking alone. For the participating consciousness that sees nature as image, it is all too easy to make images, as

the countless ages of man have done who have not had traffic with the God of Israel. As I have already expressed, Barfield does not advocate a return of man's consciousness to original participation, which is the sort of idea advocated by Arcadian men like Jean-Jacques Rousseau, whose concept of ideal man was primitive, pre-logical, and even bestial.<sup>1</sup> A comparison between original and final participation will help elucidate more clearly what the latter means. Barfield himself admitted that any definitive explanation of final participation "is quite beyond me,"<sup>2</sup> though I will attempt to provide as close to an explanation as possible with the clues that he gives. Original participation produces totemism (whose similarities and differences to the sacramental liturgy I will explore in my last chapter), in which man predicated himself with the totem, not by the law of identity, but by the law of participation.<sup>3</sup> Original participation was the time when man, in not only his body but also his soul, was a part of nature in such a way that he could not yet call his soul his own (hence the practice of totemism, or of identifying oneself and one's group with another object, animate or inanimate). The self, as much as there was one, was still aware that it and the phenomena it perceived came from the same supersensible source. According to Barfield, man has, through alpha-thinking, evolved into a sense of self-awareness as completely separate from the world of phenomena, and final participation would involve a reunion with nature, a return to conscious

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<sup>1</sup> Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. "Discourse on the Origin of Inequality", *Jean-Jacques Rousseau: The Basic Political Writings*, Hackett Publishing Company, Part Two, p 64

<sup>2</sup> *Owen Barfield: Man and Meaning*. Prod. G. B. Tennyson. OwenArts Productions, 1996. VHS.

<sup>3</sup> Barfield, *Saving the Appearances*, 31

participation in phenomena, without the loss of self-awareness.<sup>4</sup> To do so, man needs to be able to experience the world of phenomena again as a representation, an image, and idol, and not as existential objects without an existential subject, which he is accustomed to doing now. To be able to experience the representations as idols, and then, to be able to perform the conscious act of figuration so as to experience them as participated, that is the act of imagination. In addition, final participation is the acceptance of the fact that man himself now stands in a ‘directionally creator relation’ to phenomena.<sup>5</sup> The systematic use of imagination will be necessary in the future in order to save the phenomena from meaninglessness, and indeed from chaos. Imaginative synthesis overcomes the antithesis that has been sharpened by rational or analytic principle between the inner and outer, and between man and nature. Furthermore, final participation is approached as man goes nearer to conscious figuration.<sup>6</sup> An example that he gives of conscious figuration is the art of the Impressionists, in which they consciously looked upon nature as a representation of Man, something that Barfield asserts our very physics “shouts it at us.”<sup>7</sup> The future of the phenomenal world can no longer be regarded as entirely independent of man’s volition. This is the difference between original and final participation.<sup>8</sup> Barfield notes that the course of history shows a change in relation between the creature and the Creator, and that man’s final participation must consist of

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<sup>4</sup> Barfield, Owen, “Goethe and Evolution”, *Owen Barfield Literary Estate*, 1949. Web.

<sup>5</sup> Barfield, *Saving the Appearances*, 144

<sup>6</sup> Ibid 147

<sup>7</sup> Ibid 131

<sup>8</sup> Ibid 160

the creature being able to “gravitate towards the divine centre, and share the divine view of things. That is the goal; it cannot be the starting-point.”<sup>9</sup> In the religious sense, with which I am concerned, final participation is the “ever-increasing experience of the inwardness of the Divine Name and the Divine Presence,”<sup>10</sup> the epitome of which can be seen in St. Paul’s saying “not I, but Christ who lives in me.” In his article, *Israel and the Michael Impulse*, Barfield provides a further gloss on what he means by final participation. He says that the hope of final participation is the hope that “the Cosmic Intelligence shall gradually become embodied in the human personal intelligence – giving man an intellectual soul at once detached and not detached from its cosmic origin.” Modern man, in order to move towards final participation, must “first... realize that it [the original unity between man and nature] is still there, and then... learn how to get back into it, how to rise once more from thought into thinking, taking with us, however, that fuller self-consciousness which the Greeks never knew.”<sup>11</sup>

Barfield’s image of that final stage of participation, as I read it, must be taken in the direction of the Christian concept of the deification of man, in which man’s *capax Dei* is brought to its fulfillment in a way that “no eye has seen nor ear has heard.” Barfield does not explicitly mention this concept, though his anthroposophical beliefs would have, like any other esoteric religious system, incorporated into itself the hope of man’s becoming and/or returning to the divine. Barfield makes the most explicit connection

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<sup>9</sup> Austin Farrar as quoted in Barfield 160

<sup>10</sup> Barfield 158

<sup>11</sup> Blaxland de-Lange, Simon. *Owen Barfield: Romanticism Comes of Age*, (N.p.: Temple Lodge Publishing, 2006), 61

with Christian eschatology when he says, “final participation is the mystery of the kingdom—of the kingdom that is to come on earth, as it is in heaven.”<sup>12</sup> To a Christian, if this is true, this can only mean that final participation in the Barfieldian sense must have something to do with participation in the eschatological sense, which is participation in the divine nature, that promise connected with the kingdom’s advent in which the Redeemer said: “I will write on them the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God; and I will also write on them my new name.”<sup>13</sup> In this text from Revelation, the vision for this promise is God’s Name filling all things. Though Barfield’s model of final participation came from the anthroposophist Rudolf Steiner, and though his theory could be accused of ontological monism, I believe this vision of the Name is final participation as it can be taken in its most biblical and orthodox sense. Furthermore, I believe that it is in turning to St. Augustine that the key can be provided to understanding what Barfield means by final participation, as it can be understood tethered more closely to orthodox Christian articulations.

Barfield’s concept of man’s relation to phenomena in the stage of final participation is one in which man participates in the creation of phenomena. The book of Genesis displays this conviction in recalling how Adam was commanded by God to name the animals. As already mentioned in the previous chapter, the act of naming does not by itself equate to dominion, but it does show a cooperative performance in the creative process. About this cooperation, Barfield’s words can also be recalled: “Do I echo these

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<sup>12</sup> Barfield, *Saving the Appearances*, 182

<sup>13</sup> Rev. 3:12

words [of praise to God] less warmly, when I recollect that YHWH is creating the rainbow through my eyes?”<sup>14</sup> It is also difficult not to be reminded of the Scripture’s hymn of praise to the Christ, the image of the invisible God, “through whom all things were made.” If man is made in the image of the Image of God, then his role as participant in the creation of phenomena follows quite naturally. In fact, on the level of phenomena, all of creation is made through man and for man in so far as he is the image of the Image. This is in accord with the ancient intuition that man was himself a microcosm of the created order, a metaxis between the heavenly and earthly creation.

The superiority of man to the other creatures is apparent in the very manner of his creation, altogether different from theirs... The body of man is a microcosm, the whole world in miniature, and the world in turn is a reflex of man. The hair upon his head corresponds to the woods of the earth, his tears to a river, his mouth to the ocean. Also, the world resembles the ball of his eye: the ocean that encircles the earth is like unto the white of the eye, the dry land is the iris, Jerusalem the pupil, and the Temple the image mirrored in the pupil of the eye.<sup>15</sup>

Aquinas, in a more philosophical articulation of this rabbinic wisdom, said: “Hence it is said in *The Soul* that the soul is ‘in some manner, all things,’ since its nature is such that it can know all things. In this way, it is possible for the perfection of the entire universe to exist in one thing.”<sup>16</sup> Aquinas, as the great synthesizer of medieval thought, seems to be articulating the potential for final participation. In this vein, what St. Paul says in Romans 8 comes to light in a new way: “For creation waits with eager longing for the revelation of the sons of God... for we know that the whole creation has been groaning

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<sup>14</sup> Barfield 159

<sup>15</sup> Ginzberg, Louis. *The Legends of the Jews*. Vol. 1. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1998) sec. II

<sup>16</sup> Aquinas, Thomas. *de Veritate*. Trans. Robert W. Mulligan, S.J. (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1952), 2, 2.

together in the pains of childbirth until now.” If man is the microcosm of the universe, and if “that which creates all that is familiar and recognisable in the visible universe creates it through the eyes of man...”<sup>17</sup> and man’s eyes are not pure, then the phenomena will not be free either. In his own articulation of this, Barfield says that phenomena depend on man’s figuration.

Because of these observations, it is necessary to examine the eschatology of Augustine, both in how he reads the unfolding of history, as well as how he reads the hope of man’s ‘sharing in the divine nature,’ or his deification. To reiterate, I choose Augustine as my interpreter of Christian eschatology in order to see the evidence of connection between deification and his semiotic and sacramental theories, so that a further connection can be made between Barfield’s participation, a concept that he believes to be a fact of ‘reading the signs,’ and the participation in the divine nature that is promised by the Scriptures. When Barfield speaks about how final participation is the increasing inward presence of the Divine Name, for the Christian this can be nothing less than the *parousia* of Christ, which is the Church’s eschatological hope (*parousia* is translated in the New Testament as presence, but it is also spoken of in connection to the Second Coming of Christ). It must be noted that this hope cannot be reduced to a discussion of *merely* the Last Days, so much of which has been popularized in our own day by reading the book of Revelation through the lens of current events.<sup>18</sup> Because of the Christian cultural climate in recent centuries, the word *apocalypse* has had its

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<sup>17</sup> Barfield, Owen, “Israel and the Michael Impulse”, *Owen Barfield Literary Estate*, 1956. Web.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Hal Lindsey’s *The Late Great Planet Earth*, and Tim LaHaye’s and Jerry B. Jenkins’ *Left Behind* series, among others

semantic field reduced, if not altogether changed, from its original meaning, which in the Greek *αποκάλυψις*, means ‘uncovering,’ or ‘unveiling.’<sup>19</sup> Within the context of the Jewish Temple worship, this word would have evoked the image of the Holy of Holies, which was a veiled presence, and how that presence was to become unveiled. This gives the context for why much of Jewish apocalyptic writing invoked as much cultic imagery as it did, like in the Book of Daniel. A cursory look of the word *αποκάλυψις* in the New Testament also brings evidence to the fore of how the eschatological hope of the Church, which was also present in Israel, was connected to the cultic liturgy. This is evidence that will be invaluable to my next chapter, in which I explore the liturgy’s involvement in final participation. Before I turn to Augustine, for now it will suffice to look at *αποκάλυψις* in the New Testament in its connection to final participation as the *parousia* of the Divine Name.

One use of the word *αποκάλυψις* demonstrates this connection between the Holy of Holies, the presence of the Divine Name, and the presence of Christ, all of which Barfield makes central to his theory of the evolution of human consciousness. In the *Nunc Dimittis*, the canticle of Simeon in the second chapter of Luke, *αποκάλυψις* is mentioned in a very interesting context, with each of these motifs quite glaringly present. Simeon, whom Luke describes as a righteous and devout Jew, comes into the temple “in the Spirit,” and takes the Christ child, who has been brought by his parents to the temple to offer the sacrifices prescribed by the law of Moses, and blesses him saying, “Now lettest thou thy servant depart, O Lord, according to thy word, in peace; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all peoples; a light

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<sup>19</sup> Strong 602



for the revelation [αποκάλυψις] to the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.”

Within the Gospels and the later part of the canon, Jesus is both implicitly and explicitly linked with the Holy of Holies. Thus this passage shows the presence of God, the Holy of Holies himself in the form of a babe, in the outer court of the Temple. Simeon sees this and calls it an apocalypse, or an unveiling, while holding the Holy of Holies, having come out into the profane world, in his arms.

The word *αποκάλυψις* is also used in a Scriptural example already cited, Romans 8, in which the apostle writes that “creation waits with eager longing for the revelation [αποκάλυψις] of the sons of God...” M. G. Kline’s exegesis connects this passage with the oracle of Isaiah 24, in which the earth is obliged to become the netherworld and humanity’s grave. He argues that the unveiling, or apocalypse, of the sons of God here means their resurrection, those who have lived under the ‘veil’ of death, and quite literally, under the covering of the earth.<sup>20</sup> In this sense, death acts as a counterfeit Holy of Holies, which lies at the opposite pole of the true one. It is this counterfeit which man enters through his sin, when his destiny as being made in the image and likeness of God was to enter to the true Holy of Holies, which is that of eternal life. Thus, the resurrection of the sons of God, which is a participation in the resurrection of the Son of God, is an exit out of the counterfeit Holy of Holies, and an entrance into the true one. The biblical motif of apocalypse must involve resurrection because it is a twofold unveiling, that of death and that of the *parousia* of God. To return to the Gospel of Luke, it is written that Simeon was promised by the Holy Spirit that “he should not see death

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<sup>20</sup> Meredith G. Kline, “Death, Leviathan, and Martyrs: Isaiah 24:1-27:1” in *A Tribute to Gleason Archer*, ed. by Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. and Ronald R. Youngblood. Chicago: Moody Press, 1986, pp. 229-249. Web.

before he had seen the Lord's Christ," and I posit that this juxtaposition between death and the Lord's Christ is further evidence of the polarization between death and the Holy presence of God, here made manifest through the Jesus himself.

If final participation is the fulfillment of the destiny of man's language, then it must also involve the unveiling of the Holy of Holies and of death. Barfield would say no less in that final participation involves the presence of the Divine Name, unveiled as it were, in the consciousness of man. This, however, is one significant divergence in Barfield's concept of final participation from traditional Christian eschatology because he does not mention the resurrection. For St. Augustine, taking his cue from the biblical motif, the eschatological hope of the Church must necessarily coincide with the resurrection of the dead.<sup>21</sup> If humanity's final participation is truly as utopian of a reality as Barfield claims, then it must involve a drastic event at the end of time, an event that comes "like a thief in the night." Barfield's utopian vision seems to have an indefinite horizon as grand in the evolution of its temporal scope as the eons of Earth-time before the Incarnation. Barfield's idea of the eschatological filling of all things with the Divine Name does not seem to envision a world that is in some drastic way different from our own. Though of course, to leave it at that would be deceiving, because Barfield would answer that this world of final participation would be a drastically different world from ours, since the world of phenomena evolves with the world of human consciousness. This view is one that has counterparts in the writing of some Church fathers. For example, in the writings of Maximus the Confessor, the martyr and defender of

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<sup>21</sup> Daley, Brian, S.J. "From Exemplum to Sacramentum: Augustine's Eschatological Hermeneutics." (Baylor University. Armstrong Browning Library, Waco, TX. 27 February 2015. Keynote Address in Print), 7

Chalcedonian Christianity, where he speaks about the eschatological realization of God becoming all in all. For Maximus, “the Logos will bring his own totality to fulfillment in the world... the ‘presence’ of the Logos, his *parousia* comes to its fullness to the degree that he brings all things to fulfillment. The *parousia*, then, is not a sudden eschatological appearance of something new, but the gradual process by which eternity, which is always present in the world, becomes evident, a step-by-step actualization of an always-potential immanence.”<sup>22</sup> Maximus articulates an eschatology that is similar to what Barfield would seem to espouse in his vision of the coming of final participation. Maximus also does not here make room in the fulfillment of the divine *parousia* for resurrection, which is not surprising since both he and Barfield are coming from contexts that are originally theosophic (for Maximus this would have been the intellectual climate of Constantinople, still in contact with theosophies of the East). This is not the case with Augustine, however. The difference between the vision of Barfield and that of Augustine lies in the fact that for Augustine this change will involve more than the simple continuation of evolution towards its ‘omega point’<sup>23</sup> (though he would have agreed with the perspicuous Biblical belief that Christ is the beginning and end of the original intent of Creation, and that it was always “for him”), but will rather involve an actual rupture in the events of history, a violent grace that will put to right what is wrong.

Augustine’s account in *De Vera Religione* of what twentieth-century theologians would call “salvation history” shares some noteworthy structural similarities to Barfield’s

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<sup>22</sup> Von Balthasar 6.a

<sup>23</sup> I borrow this term from Teilhard de Chardin, whose work expressed similar ideas to Barfield in that he saw Christ as the point at which the *telos* of the Universe converged, cf. *My Fundamental Vision*, 1948, XI, 191-192

evolution of human consciousness. This is helpful in connecting the thought of Augustine and Barfield for the sake of showing that Barfield's vision of final participation is what Augustine would believe to be the deification of Man. The unfolding of human consciousness for Augustine is a growth out of feeble human inquisitiveness towards a final contemplative wisdom. With the advent of Christ, man enters into a fruitful and inquiring childhood, with reason and longer memory (Barfield says that Israel occupies the place of the world's memory, but it seems that the nascent Church's memory would be blessed with greater discernment after the event of the Incarnation). Next man enters into a kind of adolescence, in which he joins his Biblical faith with reason to produce the fruit of doctrine, and then in adulthood, man becomes ready to engage the public world, and to suffer martyrdom as witness to his faith. The fifth age of man is one of seniority and peace, in which he enjoys the wealth of the unchanging kingdom of Wisdom, and so he is able to engage theological issues publicly and authoritatively, with consensus. The sixth age of man, is when he forgets about doctrinal quarrels altogether, and reaches beyond earthly wisdom for the divine. The seventh age, "eternal rest and everlasting bliss."<sup>24</sup>

### *Deification of Man*

The most explicit Scriptural basis for the Christian belief in the deification of man is 2 Peter 1:3-4: "His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them

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<sup>24</sup> Daley 6

you may become participants of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.” The Greek word for ‘participants’ is *κοινωνοί*.<sup>25</sup> I will return to this word in order to better understand participation as a theological concept, and how it relates to Barfield’s concept of participation in the context of his philosophy of language.

In patristic theology the idea that man might become divine was elaborated as early as Irenaeus of Lyons, though it was present in seed form in the works of Ignatius of Antioch, Justin Martyr, and Tatian. Irenaeus was also the first to make the distinction between image and likeness in the creation of Adam in Genesis,<sup>26</sup> a distinction that became very important to understanding the difference between man constituted in grace (or man as a participant in the divine nature) and man without grace. This distinction claims that man’s fall constituted a loss of the likeness, or a loss of a potential participation in the divine, though even after the Fall he retains the image.

The concept of the deification of man is not as widely known in the modern Christian West as it is in the Christian East. Much of Reformation theology has chosen to express man’s eschatological union with God as legal, rather than ontic, and suspects that the concept of an ontic union collapses the Creator/creature distinction, ending inevitably in idolatry. The main reason for this suspicion could be that the term *theosis* is itself a philosophical borrowing from Greco-Roman culture, in which there wasn’t the Judeo-Christian emphasis on a distinction between Creator and creature. It is in the

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<sup>25</sup> Strong 2844

<sup>26</sup> Marrocco, Mary Noreen Rita. *Participation in the Divine Life in St. Augustine’s De Trinitate and Selected Contemporary Homiletic Discourses*. (Toronto: National Library of Canada, 2000), 1

Eastern Churches that the latter process of St. Athanasius' famous dictum, "God became man so that man could become God,"<sup>27</sup> is most commonly known to have become central to their faith and piety, a common heritage of the Eastern Churches as given to them through the theology of the Cappadocian fathers.<sup>28</sup> *Theosis* is the explicit goal of the Eastern Christian, the focal point of their collective representation. In this thesis, however, I intentionally refer to the Western expression of *deification* as opposed to its Eastern equivalent *theosis*. This is mostly because of my focus on Augustine, the Latin Church Father, but also because I share the Western view that *theosis* as it is sometimes expressed in the East has not been completely drawn out from its Asiatic theosophic context, in which there can be a legitimate ambiguity in that eschatological state between God and man, an assimilation that is reminiscent of the hope of Buddhist meditation, or of Greco-Roman belief in that the material world was an emanation of God. I do not, however, claim to accuse, with Reformed theologians, that *theosis* always breaks down the Creator/creature distinction, though it is clear that this term was a philosophical borrowing from the surrounding Greek world, in which the intellectual environment assumed that man was an emanation of the divine, or that he contained within himself the divine spark. For example, in the *Symposium*, Plato talks about the reciprocal communion between the gods and men, *ἡ περὶ θεοῦ καὶ ἀνθρώπου κοινωνία*.<sup>29</sup> That

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<sup>27</sup> Athanasius, Athanasius. *On the Incarnation*. (N.p.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1998), 54:3

<sup>28</sup> John Paul II. *Encyclical Letter Orientale Lumen of the Holy Father, John Paul II*. (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1995) par. 14.

<sup>29</sup> Plato. *Lysis. Symposium. Gorgias*. Translated by W. R. M. Lamb. Loeb Classical Library Online 166. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press), 188 b-c

*κοινωνία* is used here, the same word used in 2 Peter for participation in the divine nature, shows that the writer of the Scriptural epistle chose a word that might have had a similar profane context, and hence the danger of not being withdrawn from it, as the word *theosis*. Theosis as it is expressed in its most Christian sense is rooted in the Creator/creature distinction, by which man comes to be united with God through his grace and not by his own nature. Also very important, is that a proper concept of theosis is rooted in the union of man with the *Trinitarian* God. The danger of assimilation of man into God, also called fusion by some Reformed theologians,<sup>30</sup> is an accusation that is also leveled at the Western concept of deification, though I do not believe it is as warranted as it has the potential to be in the East.

In the West, deification is inextricably linked to the definition of grace, which is a word with theological content that can be markedly different between Reformed and Roman Catholic theology, though both agree that it is by grace that any union between God and man is achieved. Thomas Aquinas, the scholastic doctor who translated so much of Augustine's thought into scholastic theology, said this about grace and deification:

Now the gift of grace surpasses every capability of created nature, since it is nothing short of a partaking of the Divine Nature, which exceeds every other nature. And thus it is impossible that any creature should cause grace. For it is as necessary that God alone should deify, bestowing a partaking of the Divine Nature by a participated likeness, as it is impossible that anything save fire should enkindle.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Horton, Michael S. *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way*. (N.p.: Zondervan, 2011), ch. 18

<sup>31</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, First Part of the Second Part, Question 112, Article 1, Response.

While St. Thomas makes it clear that deification is present in the theology of the Medieval West, much of the scholarship of deification in the Patristic era focuses on Eastern theosis. I limit my thesis to the theology of deification in Augustine and on how it pertains to the liturgy. Augustine's work on deification is an important part of his exposition on human relationship to the Triune God. He writes about this relationship in his work *De Trinitate*, but it is in his homilies contemporary to the writing of the aforementioned work that Augustine explicitly mentions the term of deification.<sup>32</sup> These homilies are important in seeing the movement of Augustine's thought in *De Trinitate* as well. Because Augustine was reacting to the Manichaean belief in the soul's emanation from the substance of God, he refrains from using words of total union with God, like Plotinus, but instead uses metaphors of mediated union, such as touch, sight, and light. He is, however, capable of expressing a very intimate unity, like when he speaks of the human "being changed into God in the way that food is changed into the body."<sup>33</sup> In Augustine's work on deification, the strongest element of partaking in the divine nature involves the face-to-face vision of God, which of course is a Biblical metaphor for the most intimate of unions, presaged by the creation of man, when God "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life." The opposite of this vision, or deification, is when souls that fail to contemplate God end up becoming like beasts through a contemplation of lower things. This corresponds in an interesting way with what Barfield says original participation is, as the soul's inability to distinguish itself from nature, and an identification with phenomena that sees itself by the law of participation as the same

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<sup>32</sup> Marrocco, i

<sup>33</sup> Augustine, *Confessions*, (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998), VII. 10



thing as another animate or inanimate object. According to Augustine, man is made for the contemplation of eternal things, and not in the contemplation of changeable, passing phenomena. In this lies his capacity for deification and for final participation.

Final participation as a stage of human consciousness is comparable to the Christian stage of consciousness in which man participates in the divine nature. For Augustine, this divine participation, or deification, involves an unmediated vision of God. He does not include in his theory what place the rest of phenomenal reality has in this vision, but he does say that man would be united in this public space of inner vision. Since man acts in this public space through his body, this necessarily entails the resurrection of the body as well. The concepts of Augustine and Barfield are not perfectly comparable, because for Augustine signs are qualities of the mortal world, like faith and hope, because they will eventually be done away with when we see God face-to-face. For Barfield, the hope of man's language is that he will be able to have a reunion with phenomena while retaining his self-consciousness. I consider this sufficiently comparable, however, to call Barfield's an eschatological vision, for the reason that it is a fulfillment of man, as the image of God, to stand in a "directionally-creator relationship," to the phenomena, which is a relationship that Christians believe will come only when God has finally purified the eyes of all, and set his Name in the hearts and mouths of all men.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Liturgy and Participation

I established in my previous chapter that final participation must be linked to the Christian concept of participation in the eschatological sense, because it is the unity of man in the public space of inner vision for Augustine and a directionally-creator relationship to phenomena for Barfield. In this chapter, I extend this argument by showing that the link is further corroborated by the participation that is brought about by the sacramental liturgy, by an act of conscious involvement of the imagination. Barfield hints at the link between Christian worship and final participation, though he does not develop it, whereas doctors and theologians of the Church have consistently linked the liturgy to eschatology. This link is confirmed by the presence of the Christian liturgy's skeletal structure in the Book of Revelation.<sup>102</sup> My contention is simply that, if final participation is correlative to participation in the divine nature, and if participation in the divine nature is made possible through the sacramental, liturgical worship of the Church, then the liturgy is the vehicle in which man's consciousness is taught to participate finally.

Given the way that Barfield describes the reciprocal relationship between man and phenomena, I would go so far as to say that participation in the Barfieldian—as well as the theological sense—is itself a liturgical act. Man's relationship with the world is a

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<sup>102</sup> Hahn, Scott. *Letter and Spirit: From Written Text to Living Word in the Liturgy*. (N.p.: Doubleday, 2005), 135

call and response. He receives the meaning that is already present in an image and responds by naming it, thereby participating in its creation. This is man's act of worship.

The one who truly speaks, though, according to Judeo-Christian revelation, is the God who does not dwell in the phenomena. God says, "Let there be," and man responds, "let it be." This, too, is man's act of worship. God creates and man participates. In Barfield's theory of the evolution of human consciousness, he does not concretely address the drama of human sin and redemption (though he does say that original participation is paganism). According to the Christian claim, however, man's failure to read the signs of God and, hence, his failure to participate in the phenomena rightly is a patent result of man's sin. The Judeo-Christian revelation claims to remedy this failure to participate rightly, and so to bring man into right relation with God by means of his saving Word. In the *Symposium*, Socrates makes a prescient statement that foreshadows the Church's belief about what she does in the sacramental liturgy: worship is concerned with the wholeness and healing of love.<sup>1</sup> One of Augustine's concerns in *The Confessions* was the *ordo amoris* (order of love) and how loving rightly orients the knower towards a full understanding of the truth. In *On Christian Doctrine* he made the rule of charity the single greatest rule by which one ought to read and interpret the signs. Worship, then, teaches man to 'read the signs' with love, within the act of conscious figuration, which is an approach toward final participation. Worship teaches human consciousness to participate finally in the Spirit, who is the communion of God's love. It does this as on the supernatural level, but also as a semiotic reality it invites man into a

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<sup>1</sup> Plato 188 b-c

conscious figuration of the symbols in the liturgy, with imagination being a fundamental aspect of the participant in the liturgy.

As an extension and corroboration of the argument in the previous chapter, I will begin by giving some etymological and textual context for participation in its theological sense in the Old Testament, and so I return once again to Israel's withdrawal out of original participation, and its particular focus on the Divine Name in this withdrawal. When speaking about the place of the Divine Name in the participating consciousness of Israel, Barfield takes his cue especially from the 12<sup>th</sup> century Rabbi Maimonides, whom he quotes to articulate his point:

All the names of the Creator which are found in books are taken from his works, except one name, the Tetragrammaton, which is proper to him, and is therefore called 'the name apart' (*nomen separatum*); because it signifies the substance of the Creator by pure signification, in which there is no participation. His other glorious names do indeed signify by participation, because they are taken from his works.<sup>2</sup>

Israel set its face against the original participation of the world, which sensed that on the other side of the phenomena is a represented nature that is of the same nature as man; in other words, something voluntary and psychic.<sup>3</sup> This withdrawal from original participation is in complete contrast to the alpha-thinking of the West under the influence of Aristotle. According to Barfield, the incommunicable nature of the divine Name is one of the main reasons that Israel was able to retreat so effectively from the universally practiced original participation of primitive man. It is because of the incommunicable nature of the divine Name also that there does not exist between God and man, as their

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<sup>2</sup> Rabbi Maimonides as quoted in Barfield, 114-115

<sup>3</sup> Barfield 111

relationship stands in the Old Testament, that *κοινωνία*, or participation, that is spoken of in 2 Peter 1:4, as well as in the Greco-Roman world in its profane context. The equivalent concept in Hebrew, *חברה*, or *chaburah*, does not apply to the relationship between God and man, but to the relationship between men only.<sup>4</sup> Instead, there is between God and man only the concept of *ברית*, or *berit*, which is a covenantal relationship. This guarantees that God remains exalted, and that he alone can establish the relation of the creature to himself.<sup>5</sup> This makes any totemic relationship with the God of Israel an impossibility, of which Israel was acutely aware. A cognate of *chaburah* is *chaber*, meaning friend, and this friendship with God is exactly what Jesus preaches (cf. John 15:15). It is only in the context of the God of Israel, the God who says “my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways,”<sup>6</sup> that the gravity of a friendship with Him can be fully realized, because it is preached by the God for whom there is no *chaburah* or *κοινωνία* with man (unlike the gods of original participation). This is a confounding and paradoxical transition for Israel, a stumbling block that could not be overcome by most, because the God of their fathers had, until the Incarnation, refused to let his people speak of *κοινωνία* like the pagans, but then comes to preach it to the Jewish and Gentile world as the good news.

It will be helpful here to look further at the place of the liturgy in Israel’s own reflection in the Old Testament, before going on to show that it is within the liturgy that man’s consciousness is taught to withdraw from original participation, and by

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<sup>4</sup> Strong 2274

<sup>5</sup> Ratzinger, Joseph Cardinal. *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith: The Church as Communion*. Trans. Henry Taylor. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005), 74

<sup>6</sup> Isaiah 55:8

participating within the context of the semiotic reality of the liturgical worship is guided towards final participation. There can be seen in the Old Testament direct connections between the liturgy and Israel's figuration of the whole phenomenal world. In much of the theology of the Old Testament—in the narratives, the laws, the psalms, and the prophetic writings—Israel proclaims itself to be a kingdom of priests, a holy nation (cf. Ex. 19:6). The basis of Israel's faith in her role as a priestly nation comes from God's action towards Israel. He makes them a holy people by setting them apart from all other nations. For example, the psalmist expresses this explicitly in the 147<sup>th</sup> Psalm: "He declares his word to Jacob, his statutes and rules to Israel. He has not dealt thus with any other nation: they do not know his rules. Praise the LORD." The theophanic event on Sinai, and the events surrounding it, set the stage definitively for the construction of Israel's liturgy as it is focused on the presence of God with Israel through the Divine Name and through his actions towards them.

Israel recognizes that it is drawn out from other nations in the same way that Moses, the prophet who led Israel's withdrawal from original participation, was drawn out of the River Nile in Egypt. His own story acts as a signification for God's action towards Israel (a consistent trope in all of Israel's prophets, through whom God communicates in the medium of image, sign, and symbol), as well as his name, which consists of the same trilateral root as the Hebrew word מִשָּׁה (mšh), meaning 'to draw out.'<sup>7</sup> When God commands Moses to liberate Israel from Egypt, He tells him: "When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain."<sup>8</sup> The

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<sup>7</sup> Strong 4871

<sup>8</sup> Ex. 3:12

Hebrew word translated as ‘worship,’ is עבדה (‘bdh). This word, which is used 145 times in the Old Testament (not counting its cognates *avad* and *eved*), can also be translated as ‘labor’ or ‘service.’<sup>9</sup> This is the word used to denote the work done by Israel on all six days of the week, before the day of rest, on which the service of worship is rendered. Even further, the word used to describe the service of Adam in the Garden of Eden, translated as ‘till’ in most English translations, is its cognate, עבד (‘bd), showing Adam’s service in the garden to be the priestly work of worship. Notably, this is also the word used to describe Israel’s service to Egypt.<sup>10</sup>

Shown in the etymology, then, there is a link in the Hebrew consciousness between the service it once rendered to Egypt and the service it had once rendered to the true God. This provides the context for how Israel viewed her worship, which was an act of ‘tilling’ the ground, a liturgy that had been liberated from its bondage to idolaters. A ‘tilling’ of phenomena in the perceiving consciousness would also be an apt description of what the liturgy accomplishes, which is that liturgical process of cultivating the images as they are given to man. Egypt is the typical example of idolatry, and of original participation, both in Scripture and in Barfield. Egypt’s original participation, and to be more explicit, her idolatry, was impotent to understand the signs that Moses and Aaron performed. The semiotic communication of God is signs and wonders that contain a coherent message, to which the man with eyes to see and ears to hear is called to understand.

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<sup>9</sup> Strong 5647

<sup>10</sup> Ex. 1:13. Incidentally, the King James Version translates Exodus 3:12 with the word ‘service’ and not ‘worship.’

Moreover, in Israel's reflection on God's saving action towards her, she recognizes the centrality of the language from which God saved her, and the language for which He saved her: "When Israel went out from Egypt, the house of Jacob from a people of strange language; Judah was his sanctuary, and Israel his dominion."<sup>11</sup> The Hebrew word that is translated as 'strange language' is לֵעָל, a hapax legomenon that means 'speaking indistinctly or unintelligibly.'<sup>12</sup> Together with the aforementioned 147<sup>th</sup> Psalm, in which God "declares his word to Jacob," it becomes clear that the basis of Israel's worship of God and gratitude for his actions toward them is that he has liberated them from one kind of language and brought them to another kind of language, specifically the language of praise and worship. Since Israel came from a place where the prevailing consciousness was very aware of her own participation, it is no surprise on an anthropological level that Israel was also very aware of the role that her language was to play in their liberation. Given the evidence from the Psalms regarding Israel's withdrawal from "strange language" and God's special declaration of His word, as was mentioned above, Israel were confident that her language played a special role in "saving the appearances," as Barfield would say it. She knew this because of her consciousness of language's extra-sensory connection to phenomena, and in the divine revelation that His word was now among her people. This provides the etymological context for Barfield's assertion that Israel was withdrawn from the world of original participation.

Much of Israel's beta-thinking about their own worship involved the awareness that the language of praise is what holds up the cosmic order. Israel's withdrawal from

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<sup>11</sup> Psalm 114:1

<sup>12</sup> Strong 3937



original participation can be seen as complete in this saying by Symeon the Just in the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC: “By three things the world is sustained: by the Law, by the [Temple]-service, and by deeds of loving-kindness.”<sup>13</sup> Similar words were made twenty-three hundred years later by the Capuchin priest popularly known as Padre Pio: “It would be easier for the world to survive without the sun than to do so without the Holy Mass.”<sup>14</sup> These two priests articulate a figuration in which the liturgical ‘tilling’ of the sacred ministers is part of the sustaining power of the world. It may rightly be asked which world these two priests mean that cannot go on without this sacred tilling, whether it is the world of the represented or the unrepresented. Though I presume they would answer that the world of the unrepresented is also sustained efficaciously by this power, their statements are most applicable to the phenomenal world. It is that world of appearances that Barfield says needs saving. If a withdrawal from predicating phenomena with divine is what is brought about by the liturgy, then it is true that the sacramental liturgy actually produces a different phenomenal world, with different connections in the representations that man perceives.

In the previous chapter, I looked at the word *αποκάλυψις*, or ‘unveiling,’ and cited Luke chapter 2 as evidence of cultic imagery being evoked in portraying the eschatological hope of the Church in the presence of the Divine Name, the awareness of which Barfield calls final participation. I return to this briefly to provide more evidence of the relevance of the cultic liturgy to understanding this presence. The Temple acted as

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<sup>13</sup> As quoted in Pitre, Brant. “Jesus, the New Temple, and the New Priesthood.” *Letter & Spirit* 4 (2008): 47-83. Print.

<sup>14</sup> Manelli, Stefano M., *Jesus Our Eucharistic Love: Eucharistic Life According to the Examples of the Saints*. (N.p.: Our Blessed Lady of Victory Mission Publisher. N.d.), 15

microcosm of the heavenly and earthly order. It was an icon to those worshipping the God of Israel that showed in sign and symbol, in the Augustinian sense, how Heaven is connected to the Earth. In the second century AD, Rabbi Phinehas ben Ya'ir said this about the temple: "The house of the Holy of Holies is made to correspond to the highest heaven. The outer holy house was made to correspond to the earth. And the courtyard was made to correspond to the sea."<sup>15</sup> The author of the Book of Revelation seems to have this idea in mind (though the quote by Ya'ir is from the second century, I believe it is sufficiently contemporary to be within the same context as the writing of the last book of the New Testament canon) when he says in the twenty-first chapter: "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea."<sup>16</sup> This apocalyptic event is a fulfillment of what transpired in sign when Simeon held the Christ child in the outer court of the temple (it does not say which court, though it is clear that it is not the Holy of Holies). The *parousia* of God has filled the earth so there is no longer any courtyard for the profane, which is symbolized by the sea (recall St. Paul saying that in the Church there is no Jew or Gentile, no male or female, because the presence has come out to "dwell among us").

Another prophetic text that speaks about the eschatological hope of Israel and of the Church is Isaiah 11:9, which says, "they shall not hurt nor destroy on all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea." A Barfieldian reading of the text would equate this knowledge with that stage of human consciousness of final participation. The Hebrew word for 'knowledge' in this

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<sup>15</sup> As quoted in Pitre, Brant. "Jesus, the New Temple, and the New Priesthood." *Letter & Spirit* 4 (2008): 47-83. Print.

<sup>16</sup> Rev. 21:1

verse is יָדָע, or *da'ah*, whose cognate verb is יָדָה, or *yadah*, has the dual meaning of ‘to know’ and ‘to love.’ This is seen, for example, whenever the word ‘know’ is used in the context of the marital act (cf. Genesis 4:1). This knowledge, then, is a knowledge that participates, that is informed by the love of the object being known, it does not reject the necessity of a union with that which is being known. It is the knowledge that is informed by the right *ordo amoris*, of which Augustine speaks in his *Confessions*. It is the knowledge that is formed by the vision of wisdom rather than simply the mind’s grasp of a proposition. *Yadah* knowledge exists over and against what Barfield means by alpha-thinking. Though Barfield does not vilify alpha-thinking, he does say that the evolution of consciousness is the gradual destruction of participation by alpha-thinking. While he compares the loss of participation to St. Augustine’s *felix peccatum Adae* (happy sin of Adam)—because it is the necessary sin of man that paves the way for final participation—it is still a sin of human consciousness to attempt to rely solely on alpha-thinking, though Barfield makes it clear that there is no such thing as a language that does not have participation. Alpha-thinking *left to itself* is similar to the ‘knowledge of good and evil’ against which Adam and Eve are warned in Genesis. This is why Barfield can compare the scientific revolution to the *felix peccatum Adae* as a similar sort of Fall, though it is a fall into a different sort of idolatry from the fall into original participation that Christians confess to have happened in the beginning of man’s history. This filling of the earth with the knowledge of the Lord is also another way of signifying that future time when “there is no longer any sea.”

I return again to looking at Augustine’s *De Vera Religione*, in which his thought shared similarities to Barfield’s thought on the unfolding of the history of the

consciousness of man, and especially that this eschatological reality comes in the present to the believing Church through the sacramental liturgy. For Augustine, the eschaton is our identification with the risen and glorified Christ. It is a reality that is both future and present and that is unfolding in history through the Church and which points us beyond history. The eschaton is also a *sacramentum* in that it is an avenue of spiritual integration by which man is transformed outside of the expectations of history.<sup>17</sup> The eschaton is not just a historical event, but also a Person. Christ makes the eschaton present in sacrament through the liturgy. Thus, the process of the deification of man is for Augustine—like it is in the mystical theology of the East—a process that involves the liturgy. If this is the case, then one can expect to see evidence of final participation in the worship of the Church. A modern articulation of this can be seen in the words of the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, during the Divine Liturgy on the Feast of Saint Andrew in 2006: “We are convinced that during this Divine Liturgy, we have once again been transferred spiritually in three directions: toward the kingdom of heaven where the angels celebrate; toward the celebration of the liturgy throughout the centuries; and toward the heavenly kingdom to come.”<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, in the liturgical experience “Christ the Lord is the light which illumines the way and reveals the transparency of the cosmos, precisely as in Scripture. The events of the past find in Christ their meaning and fullness, and creation is revealed for what it is: a complex whole which finds its perfection, its purpose, in liturgy alone.”<sup>19</sup> Thus, the Church’s worship achieves a new level of unity between form and

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<sup>17</sup> Daley 14

<sup>18</sup> Patriarch Bartholomew’s Homily, *zenith.org*. Web.

<sup>19</sup> John Paul II, par. 29.

content, phenomena and language, sign and thing signified. It continues the event of the Incarnation in this unity and acts as a sacrament of the New Covenant, as Augustine would call it. By this I mean that while Israel's worship, as sacrament, anticipated the unity of heaven and earth achieved in the Incarnation, the worship of the Church, as sacrament, recalls it and extends it into time and space. The worship of the Church is now what it signifies, which is the worship that the angels give to God in Heaven.

The liturgy also directs the awareness of what Barfield calls 'stopping points' on the other side of the phenomena towards its proper end. To recall, original participation was when man saw, on the other side of the phenomena, another 'stopping point' of the phenomena that is of like nature to the perceiving self, namely, something that is not mechanical or accidental, but psychic and voluntary.<sup>20</sup> The Christian liturgy instead instills the awareness that these 'stopping points' must either be co-worshippers of the Other or they belong to the party that seeks to steal worship from Him.

Within Israel's liturgy, man imitates the worship of the angels, who cry out in ecstasy, "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is filled with His glory."<sup>21</sup> Similarly, he asks to be able to imitate the worship that the phenomena themselves sing out; "the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth His handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto showeth knowledge," the beauty of which inspires him to say, "let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of

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<sup>20</sup> Barfield 41-42

<sup>21</sup> Isaiah 6:3

my heart, be acceptable in Thy sight, O LORD my strength and my Redeemer.”<sup>22</sup> This unity of worship becomes even more concentrated in the Church’s liturgy, which, based off the book of Revelation, participate in the same liturgy as the angels, in which the earthly liturgy is united to the heavenly liturgy through the God-Man. This is reflected powerfully in the recitation of the *Sanctus* in the Roman Mass before the moment of consecration, but it is mentioned more explicitly in the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom at the entrance of the Gospel, when the priest says: “O Master, Lord our God, who has appointed in Heaven legions and hosts of angels and archangels for the service of thy glory, grant that with our entrance there may be an entrance of holy angels, serving us and glorifying thy goodness.” The phenomena—and any psyches who might be felt to be on the other side of the phenomena—are no longer the focus of worship, but, instead, their worship and man’s worship become one.

The liturgy necessarily requires participation in the Barfieldian sense. The worshipers must participate in a collective representation in what they see in the sacrament of the altar as well as the work of the priest. Christians have consistently emphasized, however, that faith is the necessary prerequisite to be able to look upon the sacramental realities and to have this collective representation, indeed it is the same faith required to look upon the man, Jesus of Nazareth, and confess that his “inner” reality, as Barfield would say, is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the Maker of Heaven and Earth. The liturgy also requires a conscious figuration of the events that transpire within it; in other words, it requires imagination, which is the mark of approaching final participation. The worshipping community must learn to see and hear with their eyes and

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<sup>22</sup> Psalm 19

ears, which is something that is only accessible to the mind's eye—or to the eye of faith—in the same way that this was the only possible way to access the vision of who Christ said he was while on earth.

A participating consciousness would have perceived the liturgy as a semiotic and meaningful reality in the same way that it perceived the rest of the phenomena around him, and thus would have discerned the greater transcendence of the events transpiring before him. Barfield imagines looking at art in particular through the lens of medieval man: “it was as if the observers were themselves in the picture. Compared with us, they felt themselves and the objects around them and the words that expressed those objects, immersed together in something like a clear lake of—what shall we say?—of ‘meaning’, if you choose.”<sup>23</sup> This participating consciousness did not, and would not, have the same difficulty that modern man has when he looks upon image, sign and symbol. For modern man, the question inevitably arises about whether these symbols are meaningful in themselves and are, therefore, real avenues of communication, or whether they are only ‘projections’ of meaning that originate in the collective community. The participating consciousness, on the other hand, would have been able to experience the sacred sign as a given sign, in its Augustinian sense, from God.

Barfield, though a confessing Trinitarian Christian, also professed faith in the religious system of anthroposophy, which contributed significantly to his ideas on the evolution of human consciousness. Central to anthroposophy's religious system is the Christian Eucharist; in fact, it is considered the highest act of Christian worship. Because Christ has the full revelation of the supersensible world, any contact with him brings the

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<sup>23</sup> Barfield 95

worshiper into a deeper realization of his own vision of reality. For the anthroposophist, the communicant becomes truly human and moves closer to participation in the cosmic wisdom. The most notable difference between the anthroposophist cult and the Christian cult is that the former is called the Act of Consecration of Man, a liturgy that is filled with the teachings of Rudolf Steiner.<sup>24</sup> In this sacrament, the worshiper strives to return to his divine origin. This liturgical act is seen by the practitioners of anthroposophy as a “reincarnated Mass,” which is described as being the best of all worlds in that it keeps the mysterious supersensory efficaciousness of the Roman Mass, releases the Eucharist from a priesthood that became less and less interested in the laity’s participation, and added the esoteric knowledge of Rudolf Steiner.<sup>25</sup> Barfield speaks about the Eucharist only briefly in *Saving the Appearances*, in which he makes this crucial statement: “In other men—though we have pointed to certain (mainly trivial) premonitory symptoms—that conscious realization has still barely begun to show itself. Except that the tender shoot of final participation has from the first been acknowledged and protected by the Church in the institution of the Eucharist.”<sup>26</sup> Specifically for the anthroposophist, however, the Eucharist plays a role in what seems to be a return to original participation, or a return to man’s divine origin. This is reminiscent of gnostic thought, in which man’s soul is an emanation of the divine, but it also had its proponents in early Christian thinkers, such as Origen of Alexandria, for whom the Fall of man must have involved a falling from the

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<sup>24</sup> Hardon, John A., “Anthroposophy”, Father John A. Hardon S. J. Archives, [therealpresence.org](http://therealpresence.org), Web.

<sup>25</sup> Frieling, Rudolf. *The Eucharist*, (Floris Books, 1995), 6-9

<sup>26</sup> Barfield 170



world of spirit into the world of the body.<sup>27</sup> Anthroposophy advocates a return of man's consciousness to the 'insight' that the world is a living soul.<sup>28</sup> It is not my purpose, however, to engage directly with anthroposophy, or to compare the merits of its liturgy to that of the more orthodox Christian, but to make note of the fact that Barfield sees in the Eucharist the seed of final participation.

The Eucharist is a very noteworthy and even surprising development from Israel's liturgy, at least superficially. The inheritors of the Jewish tradition had been taught to refrain from any predication with the Divine Name, but were now told to say the words, "This is my Body," and again, "This is my Blood," at the moment of consecration. At first, it seems like a return to that predication by participation that was present within totemic ritual rather than the law of identity. Part of the answer to this is looking again at the stumbling block of *κοινωνία*. The same word is used in the First Letter to the Corinthians: "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a participation (*κοινωνία*) in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a participation (*κοινωνία*) in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread."<sup>29</sup> This verse is central to Augustine's theological thinking in his Easter homilies, in which he says that by eating the one bread, we ourselves become what we are eating.<sup>30</sup> The Eucharistic Host, however, is unlike the totem in that the individual worshippers do not identify themselves with it, but identify it as wholly Other,

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<sup>27</sup> Von Balthasar 2.b

<sup>28</sup> Frieling 6-9

<sup>29</sup> 1 Corinthians 10:16-17

<sup>30</sup> Ratzinger 78

like the divine Name that contained within it the presence of God, which is the necessary precondition for any real union. Again, there is a curious continuity between the worship of Israel and the worship of the Church. Israel withdrew from original participation by pinpointing its participation in the divine Name, which divested phenomenal reality of its divinity. The glory of God is withdrawn from the Earth, and like Christ “went out and departed from the temple,” only for it to be returned through the new temple of Christ’s body when the eternal is bound to the temporal reality.

Liturgically, deification in its clearest and most explicit form in the context of the Eucharist in the Western liturgy is mentioned in the Ordo of the Latin Mass, in the prayer said over the water and the wine near the beginning of the Mass of the faithful: *per hujus aquae et vini mysterium, ejus divinitatis esse consortes, qui humanitates nostrae fieri dignatus est particeps* (by the mystery signified in the mingling of this water and wine, grant us to have part in the Godhead of Him who has deigned to become a partaker of our humanity). In the Eastern liturgies, deification forms the constant background.<sup>31</sup>

There is also textual evidence in the Christian liturgy for what I mean by the ‘tilling’ of phenomena. In the story of Adam naming the animals there is an example of man’s cooperation in the diurnal creative process that is enacted in the liturgy. Within the liturgy, as within Adam’s role as participant in the creation of phenomena, there are three stages that culminate in the Eucharist, or a giving back to God, in which deification is effected. First there is the stage of raw, uncultivated gift given by God. Next, there is the stage of the cultivation of man’s work (the naming of the animal, or the making of the bread and wine). Finally, there is the stage of ‘sacramentalizing’ or sanctifying the

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<sup>31</sup> Marrocco 78

elements, which is a full cooperation of the divine work of the Holy Spirit and man's submission to that act. This is, again, part of the role of 'tilling,' or liturgical service that I mentioned above. It is a proper cultivation of the phenomena and a reorientation of the phenomena as a gift returned to the Creator. The prayer of the Novus Ordo of the Roman Rite says these words during the Preparation of the Gifts: "Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation, for through your goodness we have received the bread we offer you, fruit of the earth, and work of human hands, it will become for us the bread of life," with similar words being said over the wine. As Augustine said about the word being spoken over the water, man's word in the context of the sacrament becomes a word that, as Christ said it would, now worships "in Spirit and in truth." Because of this, the sacramental signs in Scripture and in liturgical worship have performative power, according to the faith of Israel and the Church. This can be seen in the example cited in my second chapter, when in the book of Numbers the priest is said to have pronounced the blessing of the Name over the congregation with trust in its efficacious results. This can also be seen in the words said by the priest after the reading of the Gospel in the Roman Mass: "Per evangelica dicta, deleantur nostra delicta" (by the gospel words having been spoken, may our sins be blotted out). In a theological sense, part of the process of deification, or of divine participation, is being formed into the glory of those who worship in the heavenly court. In a Barfieldian sense, the proximity between language and phenomena also now approaches the level of final participation, because man is taught to engage in an imaginative and conscious figuration. Man, who through final participation is meant to stand in a "directionally creator-relationship" to the phenomena, now does so in regard to the phenomena that he sanctifies for the worship of God.

The sacramental liturgy, which according to Augustine would affect what it signifies, brings man into participation of the divine nature as well as the final participation of phenomena. This connection is present because final participation is standing in a directionally-creator relationship to phenomena, a vision which for the Christian is an eschatological hope, a fruit of deification. Also consistent within Christianity is the belief that the worship of the Church is coming to the house of God for the sake of being made into His likeness. The liturgy, then, teaches man to participate finally in the Spirit and to participate in the phenomenal reality with eyes of love, and therefore with eyes that are being healed.

#### *Concluding Remarks*

In the subtitle of this thesis, I say that I look at the implications of a sacred semiotic theory. The main implication I hope that I have drawn is that the effect of sacred signs, or sacraments, is to bring man into that final stage of participation, which is also participation in the divine nature.

As I mentioned in the body of my thesis, Barfield himself admits that final participation does not have a definitive explanation. He is content to leave the contours of his thought, like the Impressionist painters he so emulates, beautiful and dream-like. It is a stage of human consciousness that is accessible to us only in the imagination. This, no doubt, is intentional on Barfield's part, as much as it is unavoidable. He would be happy that any sort of reflection about the stage of man's consummated imagination would itself be an act of imagination. Whatever this will look like, Barfield's hope is that man will learn a fluid transcendence. For the more Christian articulation of this hope,

man will learn, by the grace of God, to consciously engage in the activity of the Son, through whom all things were made.

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