

# Liturgical Epistemology:

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*Knowing the Truth through Participation*

*2015 Academic Address*

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The theologian whom I most consistently engage since I first encountered him in 1987 is Vasileios Gondikakis who writes under his monastic title of Archimandrite Vasileios of Stavronikita or of Iveron, the two monasteries of the Holy Mountain of Athos where he was abbot.<sup>1</sup> His master work is the book *Hymn of Entry: Liturgy and Life in the Orthodox Church*.<sup>2</sup> The book is a sustained apologetic for the “deep reserve” toward ecumenism displayed by the Fathers of the Holy Mountain. Fr. Vasileios’ answer emerges from his views on the very nature of theology which forms the basis for his criticism of Orthodox/Roman Catholic dialogue.<sup>3</sup> Given my own commitment to ecumenism and

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<sup>1</sup> Mount Athos, or “The Autonomous Monastic State of the Holy Mountain” to use its legal name in international parlance. Physically a peninsula in northeastern Greece, the Monastic Republic (another name for the same reality) is a federation of twenty monasteries with about 2,000 monks in residence. Athos has had a Christian presence for the past 1800 years.

<sup>2</sup> Vasileios of Stavronikita, *Hymn of Entry: Liturgy and Life in the Orthodox Church* (New York: Saint Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1984).

<sup>3</sup> After reading and re-reading Fr. Vasileios, I am coming to the conclusion that the root issue in his critique of Western theology lies in its use of philosophy, independent of the Old and New Testaments. In this, he might be continuing a theme from St. Denys (Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite) who used philosophical terms in his theology, but contended that their use could be [and indeed had to be] verified in the Bible. Intelligibility is dependent on the scriptures, not philosophy, because what is “really real” is beyond the grasp of the Intellect. Essentially, then, Vasileios is rejecting cataphatic theology in favor of an apophatic method. Indeed, he seems to argue that the apophatic method is the only one which has validity, because it can handle the underlying structure of knowledge, which is mystery. Obviously, this could be an entire treatise by itself. For some background on Denys (Dionysius) see Kevin Corrigan and L. Michael Harrington, “Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite”, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2015 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL =

my sympathy with the Neo-Patristic School of Orthodoxy,<sup>4</sup> which shares a similar methodology with Catholic *Ressourcement* theology,<sup>5</sup> I have continued to engage Archimandrite Vasileios' thought, both to respond to his concerns but also to engage what, in many ways, is a fresh approach to theology.<sup>6</sup>

In each of my academic addresses, I have called your attention to the principal challenge that faces you as ministers in the twenty-first century and which intellectual formation must equip you to engage. I am referring to the way truth is in dispute and how it is the task of theology to offer a new basis for truth in the post-modern age. In this year's address, I'm going to pick up something I introduced last year – that truth can be known through participation – and develop that idea into an epistemology.

Fr. Vasileios describes theology liturgically and dogmatically through the lens of monastic liturgy on the Holy Mountain. In this he speaks of the Holy Trinity and

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<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2015/entries/pseudo-dionysius-areopagite/> Accessed April 5, 2015.

<sup>4</sup> The Neo-Patristic School of Orthodoxy is derived from the work of Georges V. Florovsky (1893-1979). Derek Michaud and Phil LaFountain write: "Florovsky became interested in developing a meta-historical judgment of humanity. Underlying this was a view of creation that was at the same time seen as historically contingent, and allowed for the liberation of humanity from all kinds of determinism (whether predestinarian or dialectical). History is not a linear development, but rather a succession of unpredictable creativity. History is chaotic, but open. Between this creative contingency and forward looking judicial eschaton is the Christ as Person, Truth and Head of the Body. This is what Florovsky calls the 'neo-patristic synthesis.'" See "Georges Vasilyevich Florovsky" in *Boston Collaborative Encyclopedia of Western Theology* at <http://people.bu.edu/wwildman/bce/florovsky.htm> (Accessed September 2, 2014).

<sup>5</sup> On *Ressourcement* see *Ressourcement: A Movement for Renewal in Twentieth Century Catholic Theology*, eds. Gabriel Flynn and Paul Murray (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

<sup>6</sup> Here I want to acknowledge a new insight about Archimandrite Vasileios' own engagement with the *Ressourcement* school through Henri de Lubac in France given me by Fr. Matthew Baker, one of the brightest theological lights of a new generation of Orthodox priest-scholars. I had the occasion to visit with Father Matthew at the American Academy of Religion in San Diego in 2014. Father Matthew died tragically on March 1, 2015. May his memory be eternal.

uncreated grace as the criterion for theological knowledge. In effect, he has described a liturgical epistemology.<sup>7</sup>

Liturgical epistemology is the theme of my academic address tonight. Vasileios notes:

In [the new life] everything exists in a different way, everything interpenetrates: all experiences are contained there. Man is contained; he is stretched to the point of being lost, and comes to himself in the one thing which is all. He finds the Lord who is Alpha and Omega.”<sup>8</sup>

We have just prayed to the Alpha and Omega in the Easter Vigil last Saturday. As the priest-celebrant blessed the Easter Candle, he declared “Jesus Christ, yesterday and today, the beginning and the end, the Alpha and the Omega, all time belongs to him and all the ages, to him be glory and power through every age forever, Amen.”<sup>9</sup> And as he lights the candle from the new fire, the priest-celebrant proclaims: “May the light of Christ, rising in glory, dispel the darkness of our hearts and minds.”<sup>10</sup>

The image of darkness of heart and minds overcome by the illumination of life in Christ is the guiding and governing metaphor of the Easter Vigil. Yet, Catholic theology has not exploited this metaphor as well as Eastern Orthodox theology has.

What I want to do tonight is to look at Orthodox thought on this metaphor of

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<sup>7</sup> Vasileios, op. cit., 57. I should note for those readers not familiar with Orthodox monasticism that in the East, the monastic life is more hermetical than coenobitic. An Athonite monk would spend a couple hours each day in private prayer, directed by a personal “rule of prayer” given him by his abbot. About five hours of the day would be devoted to the Divine Liturgy and the Liturgy of the Hours. There is about three hours of manual work, tending to the needs of the monastery. And there are a few hours devoted to study.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 59-60.

<sup>9</sup> *Roman Missal*, Third Typical Edition (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 2011), 345.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 346.

illumination and attempt to apply it to one of the perplexing issues which confronts Western theologians and especially those engaged in the new evangelization. I am referring to the theological status of experience. Let me begin by framing the question of the role of experience in theology and spirituality. I will then offer you two perspectives on how we can access legitimate experience doctrinally and morally. Finally, I will return to the metaphor of illumination as a way of approaching the spiritual life.

## **Sanctified Experience as a way of knowing**

While not at once apparent, the way I read Fr. Vasileios shows that certain experience has epistemic status for theology. My use of the term “certain” is, however, and important qualifier. I am using the term in a very precise sense as an adjective, which conveys the meaning of “true, unquestionable, definitive” and also in its meaning as a pronoun, “certain of [blank]” which is a statement which distinguishes “some from all.” Applied to Fr. Vasileios’ theology, experience can have epistemic capacity if and only if it is “true” experience as distinguished from “all experience.”

Sin has no epistemic value. Truth is not in it. But sanctified experience is a *locus theologicus*.<sup>11</sup> And we discover sanctified experience by applying the criterion of the liturgy.

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<sup>11</sup> James T. Bretzke writes: “The *loci theologici* [sing. *Locus theologicus*] generally refer to the clusters of organizing principles that help determine the focus of theology. Thus various biblical themes such as sin, redemption, justification, grace, etc. furnish some of the *loci theologici* for systematic theology. *Loci theologici* can also refer to the sources from which theologians draw the material for their reflection. In this sense Scripture, liturgy, the experience of the faithful, local churches, etc. become important *loci*

## The Liturgy as Criterion

The Liturgy is the criterion of sanctified experience. By this I mean the same thing which Saint Irenaeus meant when he wrote: “Our opinion is in agreement with the Eucharist, and the Eucharist confirms our opinion.”<sup>12</sup> What could such a statement mean? The late Dominican philosopher, Herbert McCabe noted that “Liturgy is the first instance of Tradition.”<sup>13</sup> I would rephrase his statement to say that liturgy is the principal instantiation of tradition. Tradition is the indispensable criteria for interpretation of the Scriptures, for the average Christian, Tradition is experienced not as a document, but as Sunday Mass.<sup>14</sup> The Mass is the key to interpretation of all of the Christian life. This is what Pope Paul VI meant when he referred to the Eucharist as the source and summit of the Christian life.<sup>15</sup> This is what Father Martis means when he tells you that the Roman Missal is first of all an interpretation of the Holy Scriptures.<sup>16</sup>

But I am still speaking in a very Western way, in the cataphatic way that Fr. Vasileios wants to warn us away from. For, from the way I have been describing it, the Liturgy can still be thought of as a text. What Fr. Vasileios wants us to understand is

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*theologici.*” See James T. Bretzke, S.J., *Consecrated Phrases: A Latin Theological Dictionary* (Collegeville, MN: Michael Glazier Books/Liturgical Press, 1998), 67.

<sup>12</sup> Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 4:18:3; PG 7:1028A, in Archimandrite Vasileios of Stavronikita, *Hymn of Entry: Liturgy and Life in the Orthodox Church* (Crestwood, NY: Saint Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1984), 57. This small quotation taps into a deep well of sacramental theology which has been an important point of contact between Catholic *Ressourcement* and the Neo-Patristic Synthesis. See Paul McPartlan, *The Eucharist Makes the Church: Henri de Lubac and John Zizioulas in Dialogue* (London: T & T Clark, 1996).

<sup>13</sup> Herbert McCabe, *The Teaching of the Catholic Church: A New Catechism of Christian Doctrine* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, Ltd., 2000).

<sup>14</sup> See Yves Congar, *The Meaning of Tradition* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004).

<sup>15</sup> *Lumen Gentium*, no. 11 in *Vatican II: The Essential Texts*, ed. Norman Tanner, S.J., (New York: Image Books, 2012), 119.

<sup>16</sup> See Christopher Carstens and Douglas A. Martis, *Mystical Body, Mystical Voice: Encountering Christ in the Words of the Mass* (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 2010).

that when he says liturgy he means participation in a nexus of relationships brought into existence by our baptism and the conferral of the Holy Spirit through the sacrament. These relationships are perfected in our entrance into thanksgiving for such undeserved grace. This is the doxological life. As I noted in my earlier academic address:

Archimandrite Vasilios' most basic claim is that theology is really the *song* of dogma. It is the *vocalization* of the lived experience of the Trinitarian life discovered in the theanthropic mystery of the Church.<sup>17</sup>

Let me try to explain it this way. If we read Saint Paul, especially the sections of Romans that Fr. John Lodge has analyzed so carefully in his scholarship, we discover that we are spiritual Semites.<sup>18</sup> Though Gentile in ethnic origin, spiritually we are Jews for we are heirs to the heritage of the creation, revelation and redemption which God has worked out through the Jewish people since the time of the first covenant. But again, if we read the Bible with this insight, we discover that we are not just any kind of spiritual Jew, but are spiritual Levites.<sup>19</sup> Baptism makes us priests, of that we are

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<sup>17</sup> Thomas A. Baima, "Unveiling Truth to a Culture," unpublished lecture, University of Saint Mary of the Lake, April 10, 2012. <http://www.usml.edu/academic-affairs/deans-page> There is another aspect to this statement by Fr. Vasileios which would not be apparent to a Western Christian. In the Byzantine rite, much of the dogmatic thought of the Orthodox Church is recorded in the dogmatic hymns. The propers of the day will frequently function as a micro-treatise on the doctrine associated with a particular liturgical day. These dogmatic hymns are quoted by Orthodox theologians in much the same way a Catholic theologian might quote Denzinger. A "song of dogma" therefore, is not just a turn of phrase, but a literal reality in the Byzantine tradition. Such dogmatic hymns have similar weight as canons of councils (from which their content is most often drawn). See *Festal Menaion*, Kalistos Ware, ed., Mother Mary, trans., (London, Faber, 1977).

<sup>18</sup> See John G. Lodge, *Romans 9-11: A Reader-Response Analysis* (Scholars Press, University of South Florida, 1996).

<sup>19</sup> The fundamental concept at work here is sacrificial. The first born that opens the womb belongs to the Lord as a sacrifice. In Numbers 3:3-11, the sacred author relates how the setting-apart of the tribe of Levi is a substitute for the sacrifice of the first born. The Lord consecrates the Levites to his service. Service in the things of God is thus equated with sacrifice. For a more complete discussion of the priesthood in the

certain. All of the baptized are true priests, a new tribe of Levites.<sup>20</sup> Certain of us are ordered in different ranks of the priesthood, but all Christians share the common characteristics of a Levitical priest, we are set apart for the worship of God. “Set apart” in this sense is another term for “holiness.” Of all the tribes, one only was set apart for the service of God. Because of that, the tribe of Levi had no inheritance among the tribes of Israel. Inheritance in the Old Testament meant land, possession. A Levite has none. He has no place to return to, no ancestral home, no inheritance. Instead, he has a portion—a grace given him by God to sustain him. It is not payment for services, rather it is a sustenance tied to his holiness—his set-apartness. The mystery of this holiness is described in the holiness code of the Torah, interpreted through Christ in the Book of Hebrews and applied to us by Fr. Vasileios as he describes the consequences of a doxological view of reality. He writes:

You lose everything, and deep in your heart it becomes clear that man potentially has everything when he enters this state, because in the Liturgy of salvation Christ, who can no longer die, is ‘He who offers and is offered and receives and is distributed.’<sup>21</sup>

After baptism and participation in the Eucharist, Fr. Vasileios says,

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Old Testament, see John J. Castelot, S.S., “Religious Institutions of Israel” in *The Jerome Biblical Commentary*, eds. Raymond E. Brown, S.S., Joseph A. Fitzmeyer, S.J., Roland E. Murphy, O.Carm. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1968), 706.

<sup>20</sup> See Revelation 1:6. “This messianic promise has been developed, beginning with Exodus 9:16. The persecuted Christians participate now in the abasement of Christ, but they are assured that they will reign with him soon . . . By reason of their union with Christ the priest, through baptism, they can fulfill the priestly service.” Jean-Louis D’Aragon, S.J., “The Apocalypse” in *The Jerome Biblical Commentary*, eds. Raymond E. Brown, S.S., Joseph A. Fitzmeyer, S.J., Roland E. Murphy, O.Carm. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1968), 468.

<sup>21</sup> Vasileios, *Op. cit.*, 60.

. . . everything exists in a different way, everything interpenetrates: all experiences are contained there. Man is stretched to the point of being lost, and comes to himself in the one thing which is all. He finds the Lord who is Alpha and Omega."<sup>22</sup>

Fr. Vasileios contends that the doxological life, which is prepared for by penance, rents a man apart and then returns him to existence through grace.<sup>23</sup> Only the experience of total dependence on God, in effect the recognition of our powerlessness to accomplish our own salvation, allows us to receive a power greater than ourselves which can restore us.<sup>24</sup> The awareness of our dependence actually creates true freedom. We offer ourselves, after the example of Christ. Fr. Vasileios notes, "This offering strips us of everything: we are lost. We cease to exist. We die. At the same time, this is the moment when we are born into life; we partake in divine life through offering everything, through becoming an offering of thanksgiving."<sup>25</sup>

Becoming a doxology makes us "extremely sensitive" because it makes us "free from ourselves." This is the necessary condition for a human experience to become sanctified. Under this condition, and only this condition, can experience be a way of

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. The notion of penance here is not one of expiation (to use the term in the Roman Ritual's description of penance in the Sacrament of Reconciliation) but rather the wider notion found in the same Roman Ritual's introduction nos. 3-4. "The people of God accomplish and perfect this continual repentance in many different ways. They share in the sufferings of Christ by enduring their own difficulties, carry out works of mercy and charity, and adopt ever more fully the outlook of the Gospel message. Thus the people of God become in the world a sign of conversion to God." Penance, for the Athonite monks is similar, a constitutive dimension of Christian living which strengthens the monk spiritually to better equip him to live the virtues. The acquisition of virtue creates the "sensitivity" Fr. Vasileios next speaks about.

<sup>24</sup> This is the same notion expressed in Alcoholics Anonymous teaching on the higher power.

<sup>25</sup> Vasileios, *Op. cit.*, 59.

knowledge. The problem with experience-based theology today is that the wrong experiences are held up as sources for theological reflection. The Jewish pattern of God's dealings with us has to be respected. Creation, revelation and redemption. We were created in the image and likeness of God. Through sin, however, humankind falls from the likeness. Now this is a difference in Orthodox theology from Protestant thought, while we lost the likeness, the image of God is still imprinted upon us.<sup>26</sup> I know that Father Hebden tries to introduce you to this Eastern perspective in his Christology course. We remain image-bearers even if we have lost the likeness. The likeness can be restored by baptism and participation in the Eucharist, for by them we again represent likeness to Christ, the perfect man. Creation is restored by revelation and redemption. Note they are acts of God, not humanity. Note that they are given and received. Thus the liturgy "reveals to man . . . the truth about his nature and shows him the way to freedom, the possibility of his ascension and deification." Fr. Vasileios continues saying "When one leaves everything to God and attains ultimate contrition and humility, one received the grace of God by the natural working of the spiritual laws."<sup>27</sup> "The liturgy" Fr. Vasileios continues, "consists not of sacred words, but of sacred action. We do not speak, but act. . . . What is depicted or heard externally is a

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<sup>26</sup> I am referring, of course, here to the more extreme forms of the Augustinian school such as strict Calvinism, which overstress divine sovereignty and propose a double predestination. In this view, the Fall is so complete that it has both noetic consequences which leave nothing but a "sin nature" in humankind. This position was rejected by the Council of Orange in favor of a moderate Augustinian position of single predestination. See Heinrich Denzinger, *Compendium of Creeds, Definitions and Declarations on Matters of Faith and Morals*, 43<sup>rd</sup> edition, ed. Peter Hunerman, Robert Fastiggi and Anne Englund Nash (San Francisco, Ignatius Press, 2012), 139-140.

<sup>27</sup> Vasileios, *Op. cit.*, 61.

manifestation of an inner, personal and conscious sacrifice.”<sup>28</sup> Fr. Vasileios then makes the epistemological move:

The Divine Liturgy becomes the theological ground on which all things meet. Outside its warmth things are all unrecognizable, frozen and isolated. When they are within it they interpenetrate and serve a liturgical function. The unity of the faith is apparent in the way everything is brought alive, transfigured and made incorruptible by the uncreated grace of the Trinity. This indicates clearly the basic unity there is between the initial origin, the present-day organization and the eschatological reality of all things, which is God who is the cause and end of all.<sup>29</sup>

So, the first perspective on how we can access experience as a source of knowledge is through the liturgical criterion. Next, I want to look at a second perspective, a moral criterion, where doing is a path to understanding.<sup>30</sup>

## **Doing as the path to understanding**

Those of you who were with me in the Holy Land may remember that I preached once about doing as a path to understanding. I reminded you that Christianity teaches that rationality is the very nature of divine being. Christianity offers another response

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 62.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 66-67.

<sup>30</sup> There is an analogy which well expresses the point I am making here which comes from the theater. If you were to try to understand a character in a play, you could learn something about him by reading books about the play. You could learn something else by reading the script. But this would be intellectual knowledge. A different kind of knowledge is gained by action in the play and becoming that character. The knowledge of the actor is only available in this way. Applied to the moral life, and following the work of Karol Wojtyla, action theory is an important area of study in contemporary ethics.

which in an odd way unites aspects of the secular responses. Kenneth Smith has called this “the hermeneutics of obedience.”<sup>31</sup> He points to John 7:17 as an example. He asserts that relational knowledge comes after the experience of obedience.

Since most of you were not with us in Bethlehem, I will run through the logic of Pastor Smith’s argument quickly here. Jesus says: “. . . My doctrine is not mine, but [belongs to the one who] sent me, *if any one may will to do His will, he shall know concerning the [doctrine].*”<sup>32</sup> In that sermons, I said:

There is a subtle shift here, but one which takes us back to Fr. Vasileios and the spiritual enlightenment which comes from participation. Listen closely, “. . .if any one may will to do [God’s] will, he shall know concerning the [doctrine] . . .”<sup>33</sup> This is not fideism, believing a proposition after the abandonment of reason. Rather, it is knowledge through participation. It recognizes Jesus’ inherent authority which comes from being the incarnate Logos. We trust God before understanding, and use that trust to move our will to conform ourselves to the will of the person we are trusting, and from that experience coming to certainty

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<sup>31</sup> Kenneth Smith, “The Hermeneutics of Obedience” unpublished sermon delivered at the Syracuse Reformed Presbyterian Church (1999).

<sup>32</sup> John 7:16-17 (translation mine). The RSV-Catholic Edition translates the text this way: “if any man’s will is to do his will, he shall know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority.” In his sermon, Pastor Smith used a translation closer to the Authorized Version. I have tried to render it above so that the rhetorical point about how conforming one’s will to the will of God actually purifies us. The underlying point is that because of the effects of the rationalist tradition on Western thought, we tend to believe that we deserve an explanation prior to making an act of the will to do something. What I am suggesting here is closer to the ancient notion of how a disciple learns from a master. Dr. Stuart Brisco described the disciple as one who would “listen to the master, sit at his feet, learn from him, [and] live his life.” Out of the experience of discipleship he would come to know concerning the doctrine of the master. In this sense, Jesus was more of a didaskalos, “one who showed [people] the way of salvation.” (See Thayer, *Greek Lexicon Electronic Database*, 2011).

<sup>33</sup> Smith, Op. cit.

about his teaching. It is not forcing belief, as fideism does, but giving a secure experience from which we can “know concerning the doctrine.”<sup>34</sup>

Said another way, this is having the mind of Christ from the Garden of Gethsemane. Fr. Vasileios would put it this way:

The world in which man lives according to his nature as the theantropic entity is the liturgical world. It is not time as represented by history, nor space as represented by creation, nor the logic of fallen man, nor the skill of the unstable individual. . . . the whole world of the Church, the new creation, is theantropic. Without change, alteration or confusion, the created world is united with uncreated grace, and is not annihilated or consumed, but transfigured and made incorruptible. “For the whole of the spiritual world appears mystically represented in symbolic forms in every part of the sensible world for those who are able to see: and in every part of the spiritual world the whole of the sensible world exists, set out intelligibly in principles accessible to the intellect.”<sup>35</sup>

This is sanctified experience, known through “doing the world as the world was meant to be” to borrow a phrase from Dr. David Fagerberg’s Paluch Lecture series.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Thomas A. Baima, “Faith as a path to understanding” unpublished sermon, Caritas Retreat Center, Bethlehem, Palestine, January 13, 2015.

<sup>35</sup> Vasileios, *Op. cit.*, 67.

<sup>36</sup> David Fagerberg, “Doing the World as the World was Meant to Be,” unpublished lecture, University of Saint Mary of the Lake, October 28, 2015.

## Conclusion

I said at the outset that I wanted to look at Orthodox thought and its emphasis on the metaphor of illumination. I proposed this in an attempt to apply it to engage one of the perplexing issues which confronts Western theologians and especially those engaged in the new evangelization. Archimandrite Vasileios and others in the Neo-Patriatic school offer us a robust way of using experience as a source for theology. I am referring to the way they use the liturgy as a criterion for qualifying specific experiences as having theological status. Sin has no epistemic value, nor do arguments from nature which is not first illuminated through revelation and the redeeming power of the sacraments of baptism and Eucharistic participation. None of the behaviors described in your practice conversations with parishioners so carefully constructed by Dr. Barrett can alone be a source for theology unless they become sanctified experiences set apart by the transforming power of grace. This is the reason why penance in the Athonite tradition is an ordinary and ongoing part of Christian living and not exceptional. Penitential practice sensitizes us by reminding us of our set-apart quality as spiritual Levites, baptismal priests of the New and eternal covenant consecrated to offer spiritual sacrifices to God. Unless all of our theology roots itself in the doxological dimension of baptism we will not develop the capacity to discern how certain of our human experience qualify as sanctified experience, thereby gaining epistemic significance for theology. Baptism and our participation in the Eucharist illuminate our minds through grace. Doing before understanding illuminates our wills through sanctified experience. With such holiness, set apartness for the service of God, we are prepared to fully

integrate the spiritual life with our theology, and we can pray, with Archimandrite Vasileios and all our brothers and sisters who use the Byzantine rite:

We have seen the true Light! We have received the heavenly Spirit! We have found the true faith! Worshiping the undivided Trinity, who has saved us.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> *Service Books of the Orthodox Church, Vol. I: Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom* (South Canaan, PA: Saint Tikhon's Seminary Press, 1984), 93.