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THE ROLE OF BAPTISMAL WATER AT THE VIGIL OF EASTER
IN THE LITURGICAL GENERATION OF ECO-THEOLOGY

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Abstract

THE ROLE OF BAPTISMAL WATER AT THE VIGIL OF EASTER IN THE LITURGICAL GENERATION OF ECO-THEOLOGY

By Benjamin M. Stewart

This dissertation explores the role of baptismal water at the Easter Vigil in cultivating responsible eco-theological orientation. Three sets of sources are examined, including twentieth century liturgical theology concerned with the eco-theological and cosmic dimensions of baptismal water at the Easter Vigil, accounts in cognitive science of the meaning-generative character of water, and an ethnographic account of Easter Vigil baptisms at one local congregation. The examination of liturgical theologians especially focuses on the work of Kevin W. Irwin, Aidan Kavanagh, Gordon W. Lathrop, and Alexander Schmemmann, and discerns in their work some common proposals for the reform of baptismal rites at the Easter Vigil. In an analysis of cognitive scientific studies of water as a source domain, the image schematic structures of water are outlined largely by way of the CONTAINER and SOURCE-PATH-GOAL image schemas, with a focus on the significance of entailments peculiar to the source domain of water. The ethnographic account details the place of baptismal water in the significance ascribed to Easter Vigil baptisms in one congregation. Building on a synthetic analysis of the liturgical-theological, cognitive scientific, and ethnographic accounts, three practices are explored in detail for their capacity to foster responsible eco-theological orientation at the baptismal water of the Easter Vigil: praying in thanksgiving over the baptismal water, the act of baptismal washing, and extra-liturgical engagement with local watersheds.

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INTRODUCTION

David W. Orr, in a short essay in *Earth in Mind: On Education, Environment, and the Human Prospect*, suggests that the contemporary era might be understood as a struggle between the cultural patterns and logic that arise respectively from two liquids: water and petroleum. Water, on the one hand, has a basic relationship to human life: human bodies are composed mostly of water and our “brain literally floats on a cushion of water.”¹ Human bodies need water and enjoy it: “We play in water, fish in it, bathe in it, and drink it. Some of us were baptized in it. We like the feel of salt spray in our faces and the smell of rain that ends a dry summer heat wave. The sound of mountain water heals.”² Water, Orr notices, shapes our language and conceptual metaphors:

Our language is full of allusions to springs, depths, currents, rivers, seas, rain, mist, dew, and snowfall. . . . Oil, on the contrary, has had no such effect on our language. To my knowledge, it has given rise to no poetry, hymns, or great literature, and probably to no flights of imagination other than those of pecuniary accumulation.³

And yet, in this age, according to Orr, the logic of petroleum is pervasive: it is a logic of speed, extraction, accumulation and competition. Oil has fueled the rise of a pervasive industry—one associated with environmental disaster, political power, violent struggle, and a strange combination of hoarding and burning. Orr writes:

The wise use of water is quite possibly the truest indicator of human intelligence, measurable by what we are smart enough to keep out of it, including oil, soil, toxics, and old tires. The most intelligent thing we could have done with oil was to have left it in the ground or to have used it very slowly over many centuries.⁴

¹ David W. Orr, *Earth in Mind: On Education, Environment, and the Human Prospect* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 1994), 54.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid., 54-55.

⁴ Ibid.

Orr's essay goes on to describe ways in which the profligate use of oil has “undermined our intelligence” and how attention to water as a theme in education might “make us smarter.”⁵ Orr imagines attention to water as a prominent theme in education at all levels; he advocates making water a beautiful and prominent part of the natural and built landscape of schools, so that water is able to teach, rather than being hidden behind a tap; and Orr says that all levels of education could easily be involved in watershed restoration—as water connects all living things, and living creatures will only flourish when water is clean. To study water, in some senses, is to study life: the search for life in the universe is largely the search for water. As another author noted, instead of “earth,” this planet might have been called “water.”

The intellectual spark struck by Orr’s little essay is this. Orr, a secular philosopher of education and ecology, is arguing that at the center of the education humans need for ecological flourishing should be intellectual and bodily engagement with *water*. He is calling for teaching that stands next to and is in dialog with bodily engagement with water. Orr, of course, is directing this ambitious proposal to the educational system as a whole. And yet there is already at least one tradition of education and formation that practices some of its most vital *teaching* in direct juxtaposition to *bodily engagement with water*—and has done so for many centuries. At the center of the Christian initiation process is teaching culminating in bodily engagement with water in baptism. And of all the liturgical scenarios in which baptism might take place, the water imagery of baptism overflows perhaps most dramatically at the culmination of the season of Lent, in the Northern Hemisphere’s season of spring, at the Vigil of Easter.

⁵ Ibid., 57.

The Vigil of Easter takes place on the night that precedes Easter Sunday: the first Sunday after the first full moon, following the Northern Hemisphere's Spring Equinox. This is the Sunday that follows the traditional designation of Passover, the festival with which the New Testament associates Christ's death and resurrection. The Easter Vigil liturgy, practiced in a growing number of congregations throughout the world, has been recovered in many Christian denominations largely beginning in the twentieth century. It is considered by many to be the most fitting liturgy for baptism. The contemporary recovered Easter Vigil rites are modeled on accounts of the Easter Vigil from the fourth and fifth centuries. The service typically begins with a gathering around a fire outdoors, proceeds inside for a series of scripture readings and sung responses from the Old Testament followed by readings from the New Testament and a sermon, includes baptisms or an affirmation of baptism, and concludes with a sharing in communion.

This dissertation proposes that baptismal water at the Easter Vigil can play a powerful role in nurturing a sense of eco-theological orientation among participants in the baptismal rites at the Easter Vigil. In constructing such a proposal, this project draws on a number of disciplines, including liturgical theology, ethnography, and cognitive science. This present dissertation both relies on past work in these fields and addresses some gaps in the scholarship.

Over the past fifty years, liturgical theologians have made some intriguing (if relatively isolated and inchoate) suggestions about the role of baptismal water at the Easter Vigil in evoking eco-theological sensibility and cosmic orientation among

participants in the rites.⁶ These suggestions about the specific role of water exist within a slightly larger body of scholarship that has made the more general case for the Easter Vigil as an ecologically orienting event.⁷ This ecological reading of the Easter Vigil tends to be located within an even larger thesis—perhaps now something of an assumption among many liturgical theologians—that baptism at the Easter Vigil has unique power for generating strong theological and existential orientation in participants in the rite. This present project inevitably engages those larger claims about the formative power of an initiatory Easter Vigil, but this project’s chief analytical focus is concerned with the specific question of the eco-theological relevance of baptismal water in the vigil.

The theme of baptismal water at the Easter Vigil as an eco-theologically or cosmically orienting element is indeed shared by a number of different liturgical theological accounts. However, no study has yet examined this theme as it is variously articulated among liturgical theologians. Thus, a number of questions may be raised: what relationship between liturgical practice (especially concerning baptismal water) and liturgical theology (especially ecological or cosmic dimensions) is suggested by these accounts? In what sense can such accounts be understood to form a common proposal about the eco-theological role of baptismal water in the Easter Vigil? How do these accounts differ? How are their claims to be evaluated?

⁶ The first chapter of this project chiefly examines four of the most notable of these theologians (Kevin Irwin, Aidan Kavanagh, Gordon Lathrop, and Alexander Schmemmann).

⁷ See, for example, Anscar J. Chupungco, *Shaping the Easter Feast* (Washington, DC: Pastoral Press, 1992).

Cognitive scientists have advanced a number of persuasive theories about the way in which water activates cognitive schemas and thus frames concepts.⁸ The patterns by which water is perceived become, according to these theories, the skeletal structure by which the skin of concepts is given shape. The physical patterns of water are used, cognitive scientists have shown, to structure many concepts that are not physically fluidic (e.g. “Her anger over the insult came out in a torrent when she spoke to him,” or “The tax cuts will trickle down.”). While the realities described are not physically fluidic, the basic conceptual structure of the description entails and depends on a comprehension of fluidic patterns. Cognitive scientists are increasingly discovering ways in which bodily experience functions as a schematic frame for conceptualization, including significant evidence for the role of water in some of the most basic and important cognitive structures. However, the specific question of how bodily engagement with water in religious ritual remains only sparingly addressed in the fields of cognitive science, and the more specific question of baptismal water at the Easter Vigil has not until now been analyzed with cognitive scientific tools.

The advances in cognitive science hold important implications for liturgical theology—an intersection of embodied (ritual) action and conceptual (theological) construction. While this dissertation will necessarily acknowledge some of the wider developments in cognitive science, the analytical engagement with cognitive science is largely focused on the ways in which bodily engagement with water structures cognition.

⁸ Cognitive science can typically refer to inquiries in a relatively wide range of disciplines, including some branches of psychology, philosophy, linguistics, metaphor studies, sociology, and neuroscience. The use of the term here largely follows a broad usage, in which cognitive science refers to the study of “any mental operation or structure that can be studied in precise terms,” including both conscious and unconscious mental acts, and both mental and embodied dimensions of experience. See George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and Its Challenge to Western Thought* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), 11-12.

Scholars of liturgy, ritual, and cognition have used a variety of methods and sources to inform their scholarship and judge its validity. While this dissertation engages specific bodies of textual scholarship in liturgical theology and cognitive science, a third body of wisdom informs this project: the performance of baptisms in an Easter Vigil liturgy at a specific local site and the interpretation of that experience by actual participants, especially regarding the interaction with water in the rites. Such local interpretations and local enactment of the rite generate insights that are by definition innovative; each iteration of the Easter Vigil is a unique event, with different candidates for baptism, in a different year, in an assembly never before convoked for this “specific ethnographic event.”⁹ Ethnographic study of such events draws on local categories of interpretation, and contributes new perspectives and voices to the scholarly record.

In sum, the literature up to this point leaves a wide opening—perhaps a compelling invitation—for a project such as this. Liturgical theologians have only vaguely addressed the eco-theologically orienting role of baptismal water in the Easter Vigil, and no study has yet collated the various accounts of this theme among liturgical theologians. Cognitive scientists have only recently turned specifically to the study of religious ritual, and within the field of cognitive science the specific question of how baptismal water at the Easter Vigil may give rise to eco-theological thought is apparently unasked. These lacunae in two different fields, together with the opportunity for new ethnographic study of Easter Vigil baptisms, reveal an opening for this interdisciplinary inquiry. Further, though this present project has a rather modest focus on the single element of water, the larger context of the Easter Vigil is, in the accounts of the liturgical

⁹ Catherine Bell, "Ethnography," in *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, ed. Mark C. Taylor (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 215.

theologians examined for this paper, of great significance, i.e. within the field of liturgical theology, contributions to the understanding of the Easter Vigil are of relatively large importance. And the global context of what some are describing as a “planetary emergency” makes the question of eco-theological orientation in liturgy a pressing one.¹⁰ Thus, this project offers: 1) an overview and analysis of the present liturgical-theological case for water as an eco-theologically orienting element at the Easter Vigil; 2) an account of the cognitive implications of bodily engagement with water; 3) one community’s wisdom and experience arising at the Easter baptismal water; 4) a synthetic analysis of these three streams of thought; and, 5) a constructive proposal for how such insights might issue in liturgical practices that foster responsible eco-theological orientation at the baptismal water of the Easter Vigil. As such, this project explores, on a number of levels, the relationships and porous boundary between embodied experience/practice and conceptual/theological thought.

The focus of this dissertation is baptismal water at the ritual event of the Vigil of Easter. That water is explored here as a central ritual element, giving rise to thought. This project assumes that the ritual use of water in baptisms at the Easter Vigil may be a) fruitfully *studied* for the way in which it shapes eco-theological thought in actual participants and b) responsibly *reformed*—both in theoretical accounts of its significance and in actual practice in the baptismal rite itself—in light of advances in the study of ritual as well as ongoing conversations connecting ecology and theology. Thus, this

¹⁰ Felicity Barringer and Andrew Revkin, "Gore Warns Congress of 'Planetary Emergency'," *New York Times*, 21 March 2007. See also the plea of leading scientists for religious engagement with the ecological crises in "Preserving and Cherishing the Earth: An Appeal for Joint Commitment in Science and Religion." National Religious Partnership for the Environment, <http://environment.harvard.edu/religion/publications/statements/preserve.html>.

project approaches baptism at the Easter Vigil at times in an analytical, descriptive mode, and at others in a suggestive, constructive, mode.

The thesis of this dissertation is that baptism at the Vigil of Easter can foster enduring, responsible, eco-theological sensibility in liturgical participants by way of bodily engagement with water at baptism, given 1) water's role as the central baptismal element, 2) water's vital ecological role in connecting and nurturing all living creatures, 3) the centrality of water imagery in the Easter Vigil, and 4) water's ready capacity to activate and extend conceptual blends. Most specifically and centrally, water's activation of the SOURCE-PATH-GOAL image schema allows for the conceptual blending—and mutual enrichment—of theological and ecological accounts of reality. Informed attention to water at the Easter Vigil can help nurture a sense of eco-theological orientation that overflows the boundaries of the vigil and informs a wider sense of baptismal identity.

While this project addresses the specific question of the role of water in eco-theological orientation at the Easter Vigil, such a question, in the wider literature, is often connected to the springtime nature of the Easter Vigil. Such imagery draws on the renewing spring rains that fall in many places at Easter. This, of course, raises questions about the relevance of such work for Easter Vigil liturgies in the Southern Hemisphere (which occur during autumn).¹¹ While the context for this project is the Northern Hemisphere, a number of scholars from the Southern Hemisphere have in fact singled out (albeit very briefly) the baptismal water of the Easter Vigil precisely as an eco-theologically orienting element.¹² Thus, the analysis offered in this project may be useful

¹¹ See Anscar Chupungco's critique of the predominance of springtime imagery at Easter in Chupungco, *Shaping the Easter Feast*, 39.

¹² Clare Johnson of Australia writes, "The waters into which a candidate is plunged in the celebration of baptism at Easter bring them "new life" in Christ. The new life wrought by the baptismal waters is mirrored

even to those assemblies experiencing ecological seasons quite different than the spring rains of the Northern Hemisphere.¹³ But, again, the primary context engaged by this inquiry is Northern Hemisphere (especially North American) mainline Christianity. The season of spring is taken as a given in the consideration of the Easter Vigil in this project. Work toward eco-theological orientation in Southern Hemisphere contexts (and contexts where other alternate weather patterns predominate) would, according to the proposals in this project, benefit from engaging local patterns of ecology and season.

A further clarification connected to the question of ecology is in order. The use of the term *eco-theological* in this project is certainly informed by the body of theology that largely emerged in the latter half of the twentieth century known as “eco-theology.” Yet the use of the term in this dissertation is not limited to a specific body of literature. Rather the use of the term here signals a theological approach that incorporates responsible ecological knowledge, practice, and care into systems of theological belief and practice,

in nature in southeast Australia, as the soaking rains of autumn and winter, absent over the long hot summer bring new life to the parched earth, greening and refreshing the land. These waters are a tangible natural theological symbol, powerful and accessible to all local people regardless of ethnic background.” Clare V. Johnson, "Inculturating the Easter Feast in Southeast Australia," *Worship* 78, no. 2 (2004): 115-16. Johnson also identifies the motif of human thirst as an important baptismal image in Southern Hemisphere vigils. Johnson, "Inculturating the Easter Feast in Southeast Australia," 111. Carmel Pilcher, also of Australia writes, “Easter marks the season of new life for Australians, not with characteristics of European spring, but with the coming of a cooler climate and the hope of refreshing rains. Easter water takes on special significance in a desert land where water is the most precious natural commodity and the inhabitants carefully conserve its use. Water offers solace from the heat, is needed for survival by all living species, and it also quenches bushfires. The waters of baptism become the strongest reminder of the fragility of life and creation's utter dependence on God. New Christians are welcomed into the community and become the sign of this new life and growth.” Carmel Pilcher, "Poinsettia: Christmas or Pentecost -- Celebrating Liturgy in the Great South Land That Is Australia," *Worship* 81, no. 6 (2007): 516.

¹³ Clare Johnson, in fact, explicitly argues that relatively little adjustment needs to be made in the ecological motifs of the vigil for the Southern Hemisphere. She writes that “A great difference could be made to the celebration of the Easter feast in southeast Australia by the simple addition of some carefully worded and poetic phrases to the blessing prayers and collects of this feast which situate it in *our* time and in *our* place, i.e., southeast Australia. The addition of such phrases would not have to come at the expense of expressions in the prayers that are genuinely universal, such as those which are scripturally based and seasonally neutral. Such minor attempts at inculturation would not separate the southeast Australian church from the Easter celebration of the universal church, but instead would enable us to embrace the universal ritual as our own, rather than perpetuating an incongruent ritual pattern for the sake of universal uniformity.” Johnson, "Inculturating the Easter Feast in Southeast Australia," 116.

such that it tends toward healing of the earth's anthropogenically disrupted ecological systems.¹⁴ Much of the incorporation of eco-theological elements analyzed in this project is accomplished by way of conceptual blending, in which, in cognitive scientific terms, ecological inputs are conceptually blended with other theological inputs via the element of water in the blending space of the ritual.

The flow of the dissertation is rather simple. Chapter One identifies and maps the (relatively isolated) eco-theological claims about baptismal water at the Easter Vigil across the discipline of liturgical theology. The chapter especially focuses on clarifying the ways in which four liturgical theologians (Kevin Irwin, Aidan Kavanagh, Gordon Lathrop, and Alexander Schmemmann) suggest that baptismal water at the Easter Vigil participates in the construction of eco-theological meanings. The chapter concludes with an account of what may be seen as a sort of consensus proposal among the theologians analyzed.

Chapter Two demonstrates how the emerging scholarship that falls roughly under the heading of cognitive science offers a helpful and promising set of theoretical tools for analyzing the role of ritual in the generation of accounts of meaning. The chapter demonstrates how cognitive analysis of ritual is concerned with the processes by which ritual participants become meaningfully oriented to the physical world, construct knowledge by way of embodied patterns in ritual, and conceptually blend layers of theological and mundane knowledge—a wide set of concerns directly related to liturgical theology and practice.

¹⁴ For such a definition rooted in the general conception of healing, see Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Gaia & God: An Ecofeminist Theology of Earth Healing*, 1st ed. (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1992).

Chapter Three collates a sizeable body of research on the role of water in structuring concepts, and offers an account of how bodily engagement with water activates and structures cognitive processes, with a focus on the CONTAINER and SOURCE-PATH-GOAL image schemas.

Chapter Four is a detailed set of observations arising from participation with one specific community in their baptismal Easter Vigil rite. The chapter first establishes the context for the rite, then offers an observational account of the rite itself, and, making up the bulk of the chapter, offers an analysis of the role of water in the rite, relying in part on the voices and analytical categories of the local participants.

Chapter Five mediates between the claims, theories, and observations of the previous chapters. The chapter is structured by consideration of four foci arising from the common emphases of the liturgical theology explored in Chapter One: the prayer of thanksgiving over the water, the unique character of the Easter Vigil for baptism, the scope of concern at baptism and at the Easter Vigil, and the baptismal water itself.

Chapter Six, in light of the analysis of the previous four chapters, explores ways of enacting three focal practices as exemplars of eco-theological orientation at the waters of the Easter Vigil. The practices include an (extra-liturgical) engagement with the local watershed, the prayer over the water, and the act of baptismal washing. This chapter largely draws on the analysis of the previous chapters to offer a constructive vision of a set of practices that issue in eco-theological orientation at the baptismal waters of the Easter Vigil.

CHAPTER ONE

LITURGICAL THEOLOGIANS AND THE WATER: THE ECO-THEOLOGICAL ROLE OF BAPTISMAL WATER AT THE EASTER VIGIL

I. Introduction

Liturgical theologians in the past century have made far-reaching claims about the formative power of a recovered Easter Vigil. Influenced to a significant degree by homilies from and accounts of patristic era vigils, liturgical theologians have drawn specific attention to the way in which the vigil can function as a symbolically dense baptismal center to a catechumenal process—one that may healthfully reorient participants theologically, cosmologically, and even ecologically. Within this body of literature, a number of relatively isolated though suggestive claims about the eco-theological significance of baptismal water arise. A review of this literature establishes the ways in which liturgical theologians are making the case for water as an eco-theologically orienting element at the Easter Vigil. Four theologians are examined in detail here: Kevin Irwin, Aidan Kavanagh, Gordon Lathrop, and Alexander Schmemmann. These four theologians are some of the most influential theologians in the field of liturgical theology, and, more than others, directly address the ecological and cosmic dimensions of baptismal water at the Easter Vigil.

II. Kevin Irwin

Kevin Irwin, a Roman Catholic liturgical theologian teaching at the Catholic University of America, has written specifically on the ecological dimensions of baptismal water at the Easter Vigil. In “The Sacramentality of Creation and the Role of Creation in

Liturgy and Sacraments,” Irwin devotes a sub-section to creation symbolism in the use of water in the Rite of the Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA), a rite that normally culminates in baptism at Easter Vigil. While Irwin’s attention to water is relatively brief, he addresses a number of ecological themes related to baptismal water at the Easter Vigil.¹

Water

Irwin points to rubrical directions regarding the physical element of water that, he argues, foreground the ecological character of water. The water, according to the rubrics, is to be “true water” that is “pure and clean,” held in a font that is “spotlessly clean and of pleasing design.”² During the blessing of the water (a blessing which, Irwin points out, narrates the role of water in the history of salvation) the presider is rubrically instructed to touch the water, setting the water in motion. This instruction for setting the water in motion, according to Irwin, “suggests that the freshness and life-giving properties of water are to be emphasized by hearing and seeing the water move, thus becoming ‘living’ water.”³ In the rubrical instruction that the water and the act of baptism be visible to the assembly, Irwin finds evidence that the liturgy invites communal engagement with the physical element of water.⁴

Irwin finds ecologically significant symbolism in a procedural change that, in some senses, actually de-centers the Easter Vigil. Irwin notes that the previous official

¹ The subsection devoted to creation symbolism in the use of water in the RCIA is a relatively small part of the chapter. Kevin W. Irwin, "The Sacramentality of Creation and the Role of Creation in Liturgy and Sacraments," in *Preserving the Creation: Environmental Theology and Ethics*, ed. Kevin W. Irwin and Edmund D. Pellegrino (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1994), 82-85.

² *Ibid.*, 82. Irwin is quoting from notes 8 and 9 in Catholic Church., International Committee on English in the Liturgy., and Catholic Church. National Conference of Catholic Bishops. Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy., *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, Study ed. (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1988).

³ Irwin, "The Sacramentality of Creation and the Role of Creation in Liturgy and Sacraments," 83.

⁴ *Ibid.*

instruction called for water to be blessed at the Easter Vigil and to be used throughout the year for baptism. However, the newer instruction calls for the water blessed at the Easter Vigil to be used only during the Easter season. In the resulting practice of fresh water being used throughout the year, Irwin argues, the “freshness and life-giving properties are underscored.”⁵

The symbol of water rightly reaches out to an expansive symbolic field, according to Irwin. Irwin highlights water’s symbolic connections to the rite’s frequent textual images of natural processes such as “cleansing,” “birth,” “rebirth,” “new birth,” “life,” and “new life.”⁶ Irwin suggests that robust bodily engagement with water most fully brings to mind the symbolism suggested by such liturgical texts, and he notes approvingly that the instructions prefer immersion as the method for baptism.⁷

Irwin, while addressing the issue only briefly, finds great promise in the theology that may arise out engagement with water at the baptismal rite in the vigil: “It is clear from this methodological example about one aspect [i.e. water] of the *lex orandi* for adult initiation that the revised rites offer a wealth of material from which to develop a liturgical theology of baptism. The value placed on creation is implicit throughout the rite...”⁸ For Irwin, then, engagement with the element of baptismal water at the Easter Vigil is a strong example of the potential for ecological orientation in liturgy.

Other Symbols at the Easter Vigil

But the eco-symbolic power of water in the Easter Vigil is partly drawn from wider set of symbols at play in the Vigil. Not only does Irwin describe the Easter Vigil as

⁵ Ibid., 82.

⁶ Ibid., 83-85.

⁷ Ibid., 82, 85.

⁸ Ibid., 85.

“the most striking example we have at present of a symbolically rich liturgy,”⁹ but he also suggests that the vigil’s complex of cosmic imagery occupies a paradigmatic place in wider Christian theology and practice:

a creation focus for the theology of liturgy and sacraments will ground the global relatedness of every act of worship, the paradigm for which is the annual Spring feast of Easter when the location of the moon and the rebirth of the earth provide the requisite cosmic context for the sacred rites of being reincorporated annually in the deepest sense possible in Christ’s paschal mystery.¹⁰

In addition to the cosmic occurrences that set the date for Easter, the Easter texts themselves echo cosmic themes, Irwin notes. He specifically identifies a number of examples of such texts, including the creation narrative in Genesis, the images of new life associated with baptism in the reading from Romans, and the Gospel accounts of the resurrection that take note of a new day and a new week dawning. Alongside these texts and their springtime seasonal setting, the ritual acts themselves include “primal celebration of earth, air, fire, and water.”¹¹ All of these seasonal, ritual, and textual elements together “are important indications of the cosmic centeredness of this celebration and the appropriateness of drawing more fully on cosmic images for salvation.”¹²

Made up of such rich cosmic and ecological symbolism, the Easter Vigil liturgy itself, Irwin suggests, may be a primary experience of how “the human race overcomes paradise lost and experiences paradise regained,” even as the liturgy still looks forward to a “new heavens and new earth.”¹³ The cosmic imagery of the vigil may thus expand an understanding of salvation beyond one that is centered only in “an (individual or

⁹ Ibid., 92.

¹⁰ Ibid., 88.

¹¹ Ibid., 89.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

collective) experience of forgiveness” to a much broader vision of “cosmic regeneration and renewal.”¹⁴

Initiation and Ecology

Irwin, after highlighting the ecological dimensions of the baptismal element of water in the Easter Vigil, nevertheless frames the ecological and initiatory motifs of the Easter Vigil as at least potentially mutually opposed:

if the overriding focus that night is on the incorporation of catechumens into the church by means of the Easter sacraments... then what happens to the environmental context of this celebration in terms of the Spring renewal of the earth, the light of the moon and the reading of the Genesis creation account (among others) on which adult initiation is predicated? There is a clear danger here of ignoring the polyvalent meanings of this celebration and making them too catechumenal.¹⁵

Irwin, in fact, suggests a monastic community’s (non-initiatory) Easter Vigil as an ideal example of an ecologically oriented vigil. Monasteries, Irwin points out, typically do not have baptisms, but they are able to renew their baptismal identity and monastic vows in the context of the great cosmic and ecological themes of the vigil. Such renewal may be deepened, Irwin writes, in monastic settings in which the community is engaged in farming, and, thus, working daily with the cycles of the seasons, especially during springtime, when the “renewal of the cosmos taking place in nature at that time” is especially obvious:

The very real yet symbolically imaged combat between God and Satan, redemption and condemnation, life and death, grace and sin, and virtue and temptation have a fuller meaning and take on a richer connotation when set within the cosmic struggle at this time of year when Spring strains to renew the earth and Winter hangs on to breathe its last. The comic battle between warmth and cold and between light and darkness provides the requisite and theologically rich

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid., 92.

context within which to consider the christologically and pneumatically rich theology of the Easter victory.¹⁶

In sum, Kevin Irwin, offers a brief but specific account of the ecologically orienting symbolic power of the element of water at baptisms at the Easter Vigil. He finds the rubrically prescribed physical engagement with water to be key to the vigil's ecological significance: pure and attractive water set in visible and audible motion and robustly engaged with bodies speaks of the "life-giving" properties of all the waters of the earth. While water is the chief element explored by Irwin, he notes that the other cosmic symbolic elements of the vigil further intensify the eco-theological significance of the vigil, making the vigil a uniquely rich resource for the generation of eco-theology. In particular, the vigil helps participants know salvation as the cosmic renewal of creation, rather than only the forgiveness of humans. While Irwin focuses on the baptismal element of water, he cautions that themes of baptismal initiation could overwhelm the wider eco-theological motifs of the vigil.

III. Aidan Kavanagh

Aidan Kavanagh, a twentieth century Roman Catholic liturgical theologian, does not use the language of *ecology* in writing about theological orientation arising from baptism, but rather that of *cosmos*. He champions baptismal rites that extend the church's vision beyond only individual and ecclesial renewal to cosmic renewal. And he finds the Easter Vigil, when centered in the water-immersion of baptism, to be unequaled in its ability to offer a sense of orientation to a cosmos being made new.

¹⁶ Ibid., 92-93.

Bodily Experience and the Cosmos

Kavanagh insists that bodily experience in the rites cannot simply be distinguished from doctrinal knowledge. Rather, according to Kavanagh, bodily experience is itself an important form of knowledge. And it is bodily engagement with water that is one of the most crucial for Kavanagh. He asserts that Christian initiation rites at their best—he names as noteworthy the *Didache*, the Gelasian sacramentary, and the twentieth century RCIA—all “wisely emphasize words far less than rich and ambiguous gestures, images, and sensations... Their classroom is a river, pool, bathhouse, or tomb.”¹⁷ Kavanagh speaks of this knowledge as intimate—as close as water on the skin. He uses the image of the bathhouse to convey the bodily immediacy of the knowledge imparted in baptism:

Baptism’s knowledge of Christ is not that of the dining room but of the bath house. It is not a mannered knowledge, for manners, etiquette, and artifice fall away with one’s clothes. It is a knowledge of appalling candor, hearty and intimate, less intellectual than physical—as when lovers are said to ‘know’ one another. It is more the inspired wisdom of Solomon’s Song than of Paul’s letter to the Romans. God speaks not only in logic but in the aroma and feel of oil and warm water on the skin, and these too possess their own sort of rigorous logic.¹⁸

It is partly this intimate bodily experience in liturgy that, according to Kavanagh, opens the participants in initiation rites to the wider cosmos. Kavanagh therefore advocates heightened bodily engagement in the rites (naming the engagement with water first of all), believing that such engagement does not constrain knowledge to the level of the individual body, but rather expands the sense of orientation to the cosmos, radiating out from the body:

¹⁷ Aidan Kavanagh, *The Shape of Baptism: The Rite of Christian Initiation* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1991), 158.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 161.

the symbolic elements involved in the sacraments of initiation will have to regain much of the robustness that has always been intrinsically theirs. Water and oil on the skin, the aroma of chrism, the taste of bread and wine (and perhaps even Hippolytus' milk mixed with honey), the sounds of songs and ovations, the sight of the assembly rejoicing, the touch of another's hands, a kiss of peace and welcome—all these elements should work in harmony. . . . it is even more crucial than it ever has been to give Christians more than concepts alone, important as these are. Christians individually and corporately also need access to a radical experience and sense of rightness; of standing at an axial spot from which everything radiates out and to which everything falls home; of dwelling splendidly at the center of things. This experience and sense form the basic orientation that must undergird the whole of ecclesial life. . . . Basic orientation mobilizes that whole sense of where one stands toward one's own need to survive in the present and future. It raises the organism to a peak of physical and psychic coordination where it 'knows' to a degree never otherwise attainable.¹⁹

The symbols lavished on bodies at the vigil in its initiation rites cultivate a powerful sense of location and center, according to Kavanagh, from which one is prepared to open outward toward a vision of the whole. Christian liturgy in general, Kavanagh insists, always rightly extends outward to the cosmos. But the physical elements that make up the symbolic field of the Easter Vigil in particular, Kavanagh asserts, uniquely become “a veritable evangelization of the cosmos. Fire, wind, wax, bees, light and darkness, water, oil, nakedness, bread, wine, aromas. . . .”²⁰

The baptismal process, anchored in the Easter Vigil, is, for Kavanagh, unequaled in its power to offer a sense of “basic orientation” to the cosmos: “no liturgical complex in the Church's repertoires is so capable of attaining this sort of power” to orient participants to the wider cosmos.²¹ A diminution of a sense of orientation and identity among the baptized “may be traceable in large part to the attenuation of the experience and sense of basic orientation in the Church's initiatory practice.”²² When Christianity

¹⁹ Ibid., 178-79.

²⁰ Ibid., 135.

²¹ Ibid., 179.

²² Ibid.

suffers from a weak sense of cosmic orientation, Kavanagh advocates a renewal of participation in the baptismal process culminating in the Easter Vigil. The recovery of such experience and orientation begins with attention to the baptismal water at Easter: baptism demands “more than drops of water,” and instead “enough water to die in.”²³

Thus far, we have seen Kavanagh’s concern that the symbolic elements of baptismal initiation at the Easter Vigil—with water chief among them—be prominent, powerful, and bodily brought to bear on the initiates. This expansion of symbol is a central motif of Kavanagh’s thought: in every consideration of the reform of the baptismal rites, Kavanagh writes, “the purpose must be to allow the power and vigor of those events which make a Christian to emerge from the constrictions that have hemmed them in for centuries.”²⁴ But, for Kavanagh, there are other important symbolic elements at work at the Easter Vigil that are not able physically to be heightened or manipulated in the way that water, oil, or bread and wine may be. Kavanagh suggests that the great seasonal and cosmic signs—springtime, equinox, full moon—associated with the Easter feast may be drawn into the symbolism of the Easter Vigil rites. For Kavanagh, even these cosmic signs, however, may be conceptualized in terms drawn from the water-immersion of the vigil baptisms:

...the entire round of the year’s sequence of seasons is called upon to help, and the life-thrust of the cosmos itself is invoked in risky images of sexual fertility and through the inscrutable terrors of the grave. *The Christian stands deep in all this, naked, covered with nothing but water* and oil as night turns into day and as the fast becomes the Mother of Feasts.²⁵

²³ Kavanagh’s advocacy of an increase in the scale of the baptismal water is accompanied by similar advocacy for heightened, sensorily stimulating use of fragrant oil for anointing, substantial bread and wine, and embraces and kisses for the kiss of peace. Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid., 180.

²⁵ My emphasis. Ibid., 158.

Kavanagh blends here the image of bodily immersion in water at the Easter Vigil with an image of immersion in the total symbolic field marshaled in the vigil liturgy. The schema of bodily immersion—simultaneously in the water and in the symbols—stands at the center of this image of the vigil. When participants are immersed in the water at the Vigil of Easter, Kavanagh suggests, they are immersed not only in water but also in seasons, cosmos, and life and death.

Easter and the Cosmos

In Kavanagh's account of the vigil, the cosmic images at Easter Vigil baptisms are not present simply for heightened emotional impact. They are integral to the significance of the event. The renewal of the cosmos is central to the meaning of Easter: Christ's "passage from death and 'this world' to life unbounded remains an ongoing reality that is the *pivot on which the renewed cosmos turns*."²⁶ This vision of renewal can be seen with special clarity at the waters of baptism at the Easter Vigil, according to Kavanagh. Baptisms at the Easter Vigil put the font "at the center of a world made new."²⁷

Aidan Kavanagh does not write, as do some others examined for this project, as a self-identified participant in any ecological movement. However, his project is clearly concerned with cultivating a practice of baptism at the Easter Vigil that engages liturgical participants with a vision of a renewed cosmos—a vision that to some extent depends on the way in which water is used in the rite. Water immersion may function for Kavanagh as the ideal bodily engagement with symbol: basic, natural symbolic elements are lavished on the participants who are "covered" in them. This bodily, symbolic

²⁶ My emphasis. *Ibid.*, 135.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 162.

engagement creates an “axial point” at which the participants may be re-oriented to the cosmos and find their own sense of identity deepened. Such a re-orientation to the cosmos—and specifically to a cosmos being made new—is central to the significance of Easter, and “there is simply no other time of the year, and certainly no other liturgical context, that serves as so rich a setting for sacramental initiation and its meaning.”²⁸

IV. Gordon Lathrop

Gordon Lathrop, a Lutheran liturgical theologian who long taught at Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia and now teaches at Yale Divinity School, deals most directly with explicitly ecological concerns. Lathrop’s engagement of the language of environmentalism is much more clear than the other primary writers examined for this chapter, and the place of water, baptism, ecology, and Easter Vigil is prominent in Lathrop’s writings. The connections between these themes are strong, though explicit connections between water as an element and the Easter Vigil in particular are not as immediately evident as in some other accounts discussed here. The review of Lathrop below begins with the element of water, continues with the signs and actions around the water, and concludes with a consideration of how Lathrop envisions these themes coming to eco-theological expression at the Easter Vigil.

Water

Water, for Lathrop, carries symbolic depth prior to any liturgical meaning-making. The element in its most pure state carries no marks of human manufacturing or

²⁸ Ibid., 134-35.

cultural adornment.²⁹ Water captures human imagination and its presence can suggest a place for human flourishing and life:

Our attention is drawn by clear water rushing over rocks or by a still and peaceful pool. Even in this time of poisoned water sources and water additives to protect us from farm and sewage runoffs, we imagine such a source could cool us or wash us or slake our thirst. Water is a source of life for us, and it figures large in our imagination of full life. Since ancient times, a spring or well has been regarded as a sacred place, a mysterious source of life beyond our supplying.... No wonder bodies of water would determine primary locations for centers of human dwelling, outlines of focused cities, as well as boundaries between peoples.³⁰

But water does not only symbolize life and beneficence. Water's life-giving properties may remind us that lack of water means death: "our very need for water means that in its symbolic meanings, death is never far away."³¹ And while water itself is a basic need for all life, it is not always benign: "[n]ever far from our imagination is the sense that, rising, [water] could drown us, wash away our place, destroy the signs of our centered cities. ..."³² Thus, even before any liturgical engagement, water may carry multi-layered ecological symbolism for those entering the liturgical space and discovering a pool of water:

Before its use in the *ordo*, before the teaching and the name and the words are set next to it, before a candidate comes to be examined, stripped, anointed, illuminated, and clothed beside it, the water is a symbol. We may behold it and find, namelessly, both our dreams and our communal experience of hope for life and fear of death drawn toward it. We may see in it a birthing place, a watery sipapu, a magic pool, or our connection to mountains and streams away from here, our hopes for a more cared-for and cleaner earth.³³

Lathrop even sees a sort of theological structure to the pre-liturgical natural symbolism of water. In Lathrop's description, water flows to the human assembly from an ecological

²⁹ "It is not, first of all, a domestic symbol. There is no admixture of human culture in it." Gordon Lathrop, *Holy Things: A Liturgical Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 94.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid., 95.

place beyond human control. It is precisely this unmarked, uncontrolled character that in fact becomes a symbolic dimension of the water as it enters the liturgical space. The mysterious (and ecological) origins of water, Lathrop suggests, contribute to its pre-liturgical associations with divine otherness:

for all of its ordinary abundance on this blue planet, [water] comes from beyond our circle, from oceans, sky, winds, and mountains in common action. It comes ‘from God,’ as even our secular culture can sometimes say in naming the uncontrollable... All water is sacred, flowing from beyond here.³⁴

Thus, for Lathrop, both the life-giving, domestic character of water as well as its mysterious otherness draws humans to water. Water’s ecological characteristics established prior to the liturgy, lend “cosmic and oneiric resonance” to the liturgical actions and words that will occur next to the water.³⁵

Holding the Water: Font

Lathrop acknowledges that the liturgy’s use of the “things of the earth seems hesitant, continually shrinking the symbols and turning them into signs of history rather than of nature.”³⁶ He identifies a trend in church history in which “the pool or font has been made smaller and smaller; it has been pushed aside, finally not even filled.”³⁷ Against this trajectory, Lathrop advocates a recovery of the symbolic strength of water in the liturgical space.

Lathrop is aware that the intentional presence of a pool of water in the liturgical space is already an act that suggests meaning-making, and, as noted above, he believes that such meaning-making may well include ecological meanings. For the purpose of strengthening the pre-liturgical and liturgical symbolic dimensions available in water,

³⁴ Ibid., 94.

³⁵ Ibid., 102.

³⁶ Ibid., 214.

³⁷ Ibid., 95.

Lathrop advocates a more intentional and apparent pool of water: “perhaps to enlarge it to a flowing pool, perhaps to place it near the entrance of the assembly room in its own strong space.”³⁸

The amount of water available for baptisms may directly relate to a sense of ecological purpose, as water that is present “in abundance... may awaken in us inchoate but powerful longings for both a cleaner earth and a widespread slaking of thirsts.”³⁹ If baptisms are not conducted in a “river or lake or sea, then such a great water place will need to be replicated near the assembly.”⁴⁰ In any case, at the least, “a bath requires a tub,”⁴¹ a “pool, a washing-pit.”⁴² Lathrop describes baptismal candidates removing some of their clothes along with their shoes, as they “enter the water,” suggesting that he believes that, ideally, the water should be commodious enough to be entered bodily.⁴³ Lathrop asks participants in the liturgy if they can affirmatively answer that the act of baptism carried out in their assembly is “seen as a great event.”⁴⁴

The size of the water-sign is also relates to Lathrop’s larger concern for bringing a few “central things” into liturgical focus: “we focus upon them, make them larger than mere utilitarian necessity requires, abstract them in kiva-like clarity,” and thus “we deal with them as sacred symbols, giving ourselves and our world a center.”⁴⁵ The enlarged size of the water-sign helps to bring a liturgical focus to the water, and provides a center to the liturgical gathering. Such a focus, in itself, as noted above, “brings connections to

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ ———, *Holy Ground: A Liturgical Cosmology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 106.

⁴⁰ Lathrop, *Holy Things*, 96.

⁴¹ Ibid., 95.

⁴² Ibid., 166.

⁴³ ———, *Holy Ground*, 114.

⁴⁴ ———, *Holy Things*, 168.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 96.

the natural world.”⁴⁶ In order to serve as such a center, the font should be “significant,”⁴⁷ “striking,”⁴⁸ and “strong,”⁴⁹ with waters that “flow.”⁵⁰ Beyond the suggestions for a central font in the local assembly-place, or baptizing at a local body of water, Lathrop also suggests the possibility of establishing a central font for all of the Christian congregations of an area.⁵¹

The font-as-center serves as one of the anchors for the liturgical space. And this center may take on a number of metaphors drawn from the liturgy. The metaphors Lathrop cites strengthen the sense of the font as not only a center for the liturgical gathering but also as a cosmic center. The font, according to Lathrop, may become

a center to the world. Here is a womb for the birthing of new life, as ancient Christians would say. Here is a sea on the shores of which the church may be as a new city open to all the peoples. Here is a spring from which the whole earth may drink and be washed, a tiny point in the scheme of things that nonetheless gives a center, a little pool of water that washes all the people. If the Christian liturgy has a locative character, that is, if it tends to propose that the world is organized around a center, an omphalos, then that center is first of all the local Christian font, not distant Jerusalem or Rome. . . . Today, with the font newly set out or built in the assembly place of the church, the very symbol of the waters greets us as we enter and begins to remind us that what goes on here is not only about human culture but also about cosmos.⁵²

In Lathrop’s vision, the strong, local center of the font, in its strength, can speak inclusively of washing all, quenching all, and of a shore that welcomes all. The strength of the local water-place can imply a welcome to the entire cosmos. Lathrop, after reviewing a number of options for practicing baptisms and constructing baptismal spaces,

⁴⁶ Ibid., 97. Simple abundance of water may help “give us a cosmic center.” Lathrop, *Holy Ground*, 106.

⁴⁷ Lathrop, *Holy Things*, 166.

⁴⁸ ———, *Holy Ground*, 107.

⁴⁹ ———, *Holy Things*, 95.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 166.

⁵¹ ———, *Holy Ground*, 112.

⁵² Ibid., 106.

concludes that, in any case, in all baptisms and fonts, “the obvious cosmic resonance, the sense of a cosmic omphalos, should probably be heightened.”⁵³

Over the Water: Prayer

Lathrop considers the recovery of substantial pools of water for baptism as a development “more important” than the recovery of prayers of thanksgiving over the water.⁵⁴ Yet when Lathrop addresses baptism and cosmology most directly, in a subsection of his *Holy Ground*, he turns first to the prayer of thanksgiving over the water.⁵⁵ Lathrop can identify “the doctrinal soul” of the “liturgical body” as “thanksgiving for creation,”⁵⁶ and insists that in this age of ecological crises, a “profound recovery of thanksgiving” over the water is needed.⁵⁷

In the thanksgiving over the water at the heart of the [baptismal] rite... many Christian communities praise God for the goodness of the water. From the midst of our watery earth, aware of our need for water simply to live, we give thanks, believing that God has made the water and used the water again and again to save or to recreate...⁵⁸

Thanksgiving provides a perspective, via water, by which liturgical participants may consider the entire watery earth, the need of all creatures for water, the goodness of the gift of water, and God, who is the source of this gift that still flows through creation.

Lathrop explores the language of one example of the prayer over the water, considering especially the image of the “waters of creation’s birth.” Lathrop notes that the use of imagery from the biblical myths of creation need not contradict scientific

⁵³ Ibid., 107.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 105.

⁵⁵ See “Baptismal *Ordo* and Cosmology” in Ibid., 104-15. While it is outside of the scope of this project, Lathrop devotes much of his work to the relationship between word and sign. He follows Luther in insisting that the word and sign must not be opposed to one another, yet, finally the word is privileged, as it reveals and enables participation in the vital theological and “historical intent” (i.e. salvation history) of the signs employed in liturgy. See Lathrop, *Holy Things*, 100-02.

⁵⁶ Lathrop, *Holy Things*, 215.

⁵⁷ ———, *Holy Ground*, 107.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 104.

narratives concerning the origin of the universe and life. In fact, Lathrop suggests, the biblical images that place water in such a prominent place may helpfully allow us “to see more acutely how precious the water is.”⁵⁹ The image of the “waters of creation’s birth” suggests that the creation itself “has intended such fecundity from the beginning.”⁶⁰

Lathrop suggests that the prayer may offer a distorted sense of the cosmos by so privileging the context of earth, and by perceiving the cosmos only from the perspective of human consciousness. Yet Lathrop understands the address of the prayer to *God*, known as the one who creates the entire universe (a universe still clothed largely in mystery), as a critique of terracentrism and anthropocentrism. While he notes that the prayer does not explicitly offer such critiques, it is nevertheless “the very act of thanksgiving” to God that de-centers the strictly human perspective.⁶¹ Lathrop can suggest an opposition between hydrological and theological cosmologies here, and insists that the theological vision is at the heart of the prayer: “it is God—not the water or the pictured order—who gives a center to the cosmos implied here.”⁶² Yet the act of thanksgiving to God over the water may nurture an ecologically appropriate human humility in the wider use of water and other resources of the earth. Prayers of thanksgiving in the liturgy, including those over the water,

by repeatedly inserting us into praise, also insert... us into humility, into the sense that all things are created with us and are to be honored, cared for, not dominated and trampled. The assembly, gathered by the Spirit into Jesus Christ and so into thanksgiving before the Ancient One, learns again and again that our profane use of other created things for our survival, our withdrawal of them from God’s sacred world surrounding us, must always be marked by attention and gratitude. The pattern of thanksgiving at table and at the pool in the church becomes the

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 105.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

pattern of thanksgiving at the table in our homes, and that pattern becomes a pattern for life.⁶³

Lathrop suggests that further editing or compositions of the prayer over the water should reflect ecological concern. Liturgical planners should “consider shaping the prayer so that the vastness of the universe and both the marginality and the preciousness of our watery planet are recalled.”⁶⁴

Around the Water

In constructing baptismal spaces and events that suggest ecological and cosmological dimensions, Lathrop suggests a number of actions and considerations that surround the water. Many of these considerations stretch the boundaries of this project, and so some will be treated only briefly here.

First, the motifs of fecundity and local place reviewed above must be balanced by baptismal images of the global, the cosmic, and the welcome to all. Local fonts, even those functioning as the strong omphalos that Lathrop recommends, must critique any impression that “the world is an island or a bubble within the dangerous but now ordered waters, the waters within this bubble being tamed to fruitfulness.”⁶⁵ The local goodness of any one place must be held together with the goodness of the whole creation—and the conviction that the whole creation is held in God.⁶⁶ This vision is both constructed cosmology, laden with ethics, and description of ecological reality:

This place where we stand is, indeed a little place, dwarfed and marginalized and threatened in the vast chaos of things; yet this place is beloved, dear, central even. This place where we stand matters immensely, yet it is connected to all places...

⁶³ ———, *Holy Things*, 215.

⁶⁴ ———, *Holy Ground*, 113.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 105.

⁶⁶ ———, *Holy Things*, 105.

Allowed always to say both things, the public symbol of baptism can constantly challenge whatever public organization of space may mark our current culture.⁶⁷

Lathrop does not suggest that one pole of this tense pairing should moderate the other.

Rather, both truths—the local and cosmic, the danger and the goodness—are to be spoken and enacted with strength, as both are true.

Lathrop uses images with ecological and hydrological dimensions to describe the way in which God should be invoked at the actual baptizing of the participants. The image of God suggested in the baptismal formula corresponds, Lathrop suggests, to the organization of the cosmos:

As these candidates are actually baptized, use words that help us all to understand that God is a flowing, communal reality, holding all things in mercy ...not a patriarchal monarchy, with the authority inherited along a masculine line of succession. While the words from Matthew 28:19 will be used in most of the churches, they may be introduced and surrounded by other words that expand and deepen the understanding of the Trinity and connect this linguistic usage to Jesus' baptism in the Jordan and to the revelation there of the sphere-breaking mercy that is saving all things. 'I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, Eternal Majesty, Incarnate Word, Abiding Comforter, one God.' This difference in being-before-God makes the greatest difference in the ritual map drawn by the rite: the universe is not a hierarchy organized underneath a single authority; it is a vast, diverse richness held in embracing love.⁶⁸

Words that expand and critique the possible hierarchical interpretation of the baptismal formula do so through images of water in motion (“God is a flowing...reality”) and of a cared-for, wide, ecological expanse (“vast, diverse richness held in embracing love”).

Moving somewhat beyond the water and its prayer in consideration, Lathrop suggests that the place for the water is best surrounded with other symbolic elements,

⁶⁷ ———, *Holy Ground*, 111.

⁶⁸ My emphasis. *Ibid.*, 114.

which themselves, in juxtaposition to the water and the font, evoke cosmic and ecological significance.

A burning candle, a reminder of the paschal night, may bring fire near the water. Nearby, may also lie a vessel of oil and folded white garments, both intended for those washed in this pool... The paschal fire will associate the old springtime new fire and its use in the *ordo* of *pascha* with what happens at this pool, whenever that washing occurs. Anointing will bring the rich outpourings of olive trees, still redolent of ancient monarch-making and priest-making rites, associating the holy people with the fruitfulness of the land... [These signs] help unfold the meaning of the washing.⁶⁹

Lathrop suggests that a powerful string of associations are active in the symbols that surround the water. A candle beside the water—at any time of the year—activates associations between the water, springtime, and the great fire of the Easter Vigil. The use of olive oil for anointing beside the water evokes the fecundity of the earth. By way of their juxtaposition to the water and to the washing, these symbolic elements lend ecological dimensions to the water and the actions at the water.

Finally, in order for baptism to orient participants most powerfully to the ecological and cosmic dimensions of Christian faith, Lathrop hopes to see baptism embedded in a process of teaching and formation. It is this entire *process*—not the act of washing itself—that sets out what Lathrop identifies as the “most powerful of the Christian cosmological maps,” what he calls an “enacted *mappamundi*.”⁷⁰ In addition to the actual water washing of baptism, the process of formation and teaching in the baptismal process should involve, in Lathrop’s view, the teaching of “creation faith” and participation in learning and enacting the ethical life of the community, possibly

⁶⁹ ———, *Holy Things*, 96.

⁷⁰ ———, *Holy Ground*, 104.

including “acts of ecological responsibility.”⁷¹ The teaching of Christian faith itself in relation to baptism should have primary and prominent cosmic and ecological themes:

Teaching the faith involves, as its first and basic move, teaching that there is a world and not just chaos, that this world is created, and that human beings have a compassionate and caring role within that creation. Christian faith is, first of all, trusting, therefore, that the world is not some trick. Formation in prayer, then, involves learning to stand within this world in thanksgiving.⁷²

Near the beginning of the chapter devoted to “Eucharist and Earth-Care,” Lathrop, as an initial help in considering the topic, reviews and summarizes his thinking on *baptism* and ecology, a topic he had addressed in the previous chapter:

The water for this central bath comes from the resources of this blue planet, the pool of water here amid the assembly being for us something like the burning bush. Also from the earth itself are the attendant fire and oil and, most especially, the food of that meal toward which baptism leads. The faith confessed at baptism begins with creation, with trust in the creator, thus, with the goodness of the world. Christians who are baptized into this faith must assume that the stewardship of the good earth is part of their concern and that a genuine ecological crisis calls for their response. Furthermore, the prayer learned at baptism begins with thanksgiving, concrete thanksgiving over concrete things. Thanksgiving, thus, is a kind of steady exercise of creation faith, and it marks a way to walk on the earth itself. So the catechumens—and all of us, as lifelong catechumens—might be learning ecological responsibility along with response to the poor as part of baptismal ethics. These are at least possibilities in baptismal practice that might break out into important meaning for a Christian response to ecological need.⁷³

This summary account addresses many of the central themes already identified above: water evoking the wider earth’s ecology; font as center to the gathering and the cosmos; symbols juxtaposed to the water; faith in the goodness of the world anchored in thanksgiving; the baptismal process offering a map for a life of creation care; the entire cosmos held in God. It is clear thus far that Lathrop sees strong lines of connection among the themes of baptism, water, and cosmology/ecology. The interrelationships of

⁷¹ Ibid., 112-14.

⁷² Ibid., 107.

⁷³ Ibid., 126.

these themes to the Easter Vigil, however, are less prominent and less defined in Lathrop's account. As we will see below, Lathrop establishes clear links between baptism and Easter Vigil, as well as Easter Vigil and cosmology/ecology. But there are mostly only hints about a unique role for water specifically at the Easter Vigil.

Easter Vigil and Baptism

Lathrop links baptism to the Easter Vigil largely by way of endorsing the theological and ritual appropriateness of the relationship that developed historically between baptism and Easter Vigil. Lathrop writes that because of the "importance" of the ritual and scriptural "content" that accumulated through history in the Easter Vigil liturgy, the Easter Vigil became "the most likely time" for baptisms,⁷⁴ and thus the vigil "rightly drew to itself the practice of Christian baptism."⁷⁵

The confluence of scriptural texts read and evoked at the vigil afforded an occasion rich in theology, such that those baptized at the vigil were understood to be "bathed in all these stories."⁷⁶ What became the unequaled gravity of the occasion of the Easter Vigil made the event of baptism at the vigil a rite in which "[e]very Christian" was afforded "personal access to the center" of the church's communal and ritual life.⁷⁷

Easter Vigil and Cosmology/Ecology

Lathrop understands the cosmic character of the Easter Vigil to be the *example par excellence* of the cosmic (and even ecological) dimension of Christian liturgical time-keeping in general. By keeping a liturgical calendar that relates intentionally to the local

⁷⁴ ———, *Holy Things*, 76.

⁷⁵ ———, *Holy Ground*, 169.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ ———, *Holy Things*, 77.

seasons and the local cycles of day and night, the ecological and cosmic dimensions of sacraments and scripture naturally emerge:

If we can recover the practice of time-keeping as knowing what time it is here, we may find ourselves invited to see the sky from our place on the earth. Then, if the celebration itself accords with the ecumenical liturgical renewal, it will juxtapose the grace of the triune God, known in word and sacrament, to our place and time on the earth. As a result, the assembly will simply and faithfully be proclaiming that God holds our earth-sky, that we are gathered here on holy ground, and that fidelity to this God includes care for this planet.⁷⁸

The date of the Easter Vigil “has rightly been determined with reference both to the sun and to the moon” and its liturgy is “filled with overlaid cosmic symbolism.”⁷⁹ While the ecological roots of the Easter Vigil are emphatically in the Northern Hemisphere—and this causes a number of complications⁸⁰—nevertheless, for Lathrop, “Easter or Pascha is the occasion for the proclamation of the gospel to our springtime world.”⁸¹

The pre-Christian antecedents to the Easter Vigil—Passover and its own antecedents—were themselves rich in ecological and cosmic significance.⁸² The themes

⁷⁸ ———, *Holy Ground*, 171.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 168.

⁸⁰ “Obviously, as the Christian faith has moved into the tropics and into the Southern Hemisphere, the question must be raised of the appropriateness of feasts determined by the experience of time in the temperate zone of the Northern Hemisphere. If the Sunday meeting can be regarded as the most important organization of time for Christians, it may help free us in the future to apply to other important earth festivals in other places something like the same juxtapositions applied to *pesach* and winter solstice. Perhaps *pascha* should be universally observed by Christians, since its juxtapositions involve the canonical accounts of the Exodus and all the stories of the Hebrew scriptures together with the Passover-timed gospel accounts of the passion and resurrection of Jesus. But the paschal analogy that made possible solstice observance and the old cosmic significance of *pascha/pesach* itself ought to urge us to find new patterns of juxtaposition in new places. In any case, the goal will be to speak the truth about God and the mercy of God to this community with all the richness that is locally available.” Lathrop, *Holy Things*, 78-79.

⁸¹ ———, *Holy Ground*, 168.

⁸² “This juxtaposition of spring fertility festival with the story of the slain lamb and of the saved people drew other stories to itself, stories that also came to be recounted at the [pre-Christian, Jewish] festival. Inevitably, the narrative of the creation of the people called in the account of the creation of the world. The slaying of the lamb led to recounting the goat slain instead of Isaac. The salvation of the people led to the hope for messianic deliverance. The juxtaposition of the remembrance of the liberation to the springtime fertility festival already suggested the cosmic significance of the Exodus story. That significance was further unfolded by seeing this night of liberation-remembrance as the night of creation, of the deliverance of Isaac, and of the final deliverance of the people. Thus the Exodus story could be experienced as the center of storied, and the whole complex of stories could be celebrated, eaten and drunk, and made the

established in these earlier festivals, in Lathrop's estimation, continue to offer rich ecological and cosmic layers of meaning to contemporary enactments of the Easter Vigil. Christian celebrations of the Easter Vigil rightly continued celebrating the cosmic and natural significance of God's mighty acts known especially at the springtime renewal of the landscape.⁸³ At the Easter Vigil, the seasons, in all their complex ecology, are "witnesses of God's saving love," and, "with all the stuff of the earth... may hope... for God's great day of mercy."⁸⁴ Lathrop stresses continuity in the cosmic scope of the festival: the Easter Vigil, when it continues to celebrate the older cosmic themes of Passover, "has a theological intention: the God known in the resurrection of Jesus is the God who saved the ancient people and the God who saves the cosmos itself."⁸⁵ Time itself "could be made to echo the gospel, implying that this salvation was also for sun and moon, earth and stars."⁸⁶ Indeed, for Lathrop, neglect of the pre-Christian themes of the Easter Vigil in favor of more strictly historical commemoration of the death and resurrection of Christ unhelpfully constricts, in fact, the significance of the death and

grounds for continued hope... From the perspective of the resultant festival, then, the annual cycle was not to be seen as simply the endless repetition of the same old thing. The cycles of sun and moon, of seasons and vegetation and flocks, are *this* world in motion. These cycles are appropriately and powerfully present in the festival life of the people, but they come from God; God made them. They are witnesses of God's saving love, and they are going somewhere. *Pesach* proposes that the people may hope, with all the stuff of the earth and all its suffering peoples, for God's great day of mercy." Lathrop, *Holy Things*, 69-70.

⁸³ "If the ancient *pesach* set biblical faith next to the annual round in order to declare the cosmic significance of this people's identity, the Quartodeciman observance added one further juxtaposition: faith in the coming of Jesus (in all the sense of that word) as the deliverance of the people and the salvation of the world. At *pesach* Jesus was killed. The hope engendered by the word of his resurrection and the remembrance of the date of his death enabled the community to keep Passover as a symbol of Christian faith. The slaying of the lamb drew to itself one other story of a killing, this time of the one called Lamb of God. The remembrance of creation drew to itself the hope for the one who was to judge and save the world..." Ibid., 73.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 70.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 77.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 75-76.

resurrection of Christ, which is properly, Lathrop insists, an event of cosmic and ecological significance.⁸⁷

Baptism, Ecology, Easter Vigil

Easter, for Lathrop, is rightly “the primary time for baptizing.”⁸⁸ The entire Easter cycle, centered in the Easter Vigil, may be suffused with baptismal themes, including motifs that signal the ecological and cosmic dimensions of both Easter and baptismal identity. Lent, especially, affords a time for baptismal preparation and remembrance, anticipating the cosmic themes to be encountered in the baptismal festival of the Easter Vigil.⁸⁹ Lathrop suggests that at the beginning of what he calls “the great baptismal remembrance of Lent,” in the Ash Wednesday liturgy, “probably the best form of the words to use” in the address to those receiving ashes on their foreheads is “You are earth, to earth you shall return.”⁹⁰

We noted above that the confluence of cosmic symbols—as well as the historical events commemorated—at Easter makes the Easter Vigil into something Lathrop can describe as the “center of the year,” which also means, for Lathrop, something like a center in the cosmos.⁹¹ Therefore, when *baptism* occurs at the Easter Vigil, it places individuals in the center of an already-central event, implying that the baptized stand at

⁸⁷ “Both ancient and modern dramatic interest has sometimes run the danger of seeing the genius of this feast. When it came about that the last days of the fast were organized as devotional days for telling and enacting the story of the passion, ritual was created in which the juxtapositions to the old Jewish feast and to the cosmic events could be forgotten in favor of cultic reenactment of Jesus’ story. . . . The communal identifications of the feast and its cosmic significance could easily be lost, as the community strained to say what the old reenacted story might have to do with them. At its origin and in its intention, however, the *ordo of pascha* is the juxtaposition. . . . This *pascha* after *pesach*, after the full moon, after the vernal equinox, means to say in a borrowed language, in as rich terms as possible drawn from all the force of springtime *pesach* and all the stories of the Bible, how great is that new grace into which we are grafted who are washed into Christ. His death and resurrection are the world’s springtime and the world’s deliverance.” *Ibid.*, 78.

⁸⁸ ———, *Holy Ground*, 123.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 123, 169, 170.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 113.

⁹¹ ———, *Holy Things*, 77.

the center of the cosmos. While Lathrop wants to place this cosmic centering of the liturgy and of baptism in a strong, critical dialectic, he nevertheless values this experience of “every Christian” standing—in baptismal remembrance if not always in actual baptism—at the center of the “year” (which is also to say cosmos) at the Easter Vigil.⁹² The great themes evoked in the liturgy do not exist only the abstract, but come to address individuals in baptism at the vigil: “the mercy known in the exodus and in the creation is for us and for this world; we are washed into it in the name of Jesus.”⁹³ After the great cosmic narratives of the vigil, the candidates are “bathed in all these stories.”⁹⁴

Easter Vigil, Water, Ecology and Baptism

Is there, for Lathrop, a particular role for water in the evocation of ecological or cosmic dimensions at baptism specifically during the Easter Vigil? This is a very particular question apparently not explicitly raised in his work. However, there may be some hints into Lathrop’s vision. His description of Easter Vigil baptisms often invokes the great cosmic and ecological images and narratives of the vigil, and then describes the candidates for baptism being “washed”⁹⁵ or “bathed”⁹⁶ or “immersed”⁹⁷ in the symbols themselves. It seems clear that Lathrop also simultaneously envisions an ideal in which the candidates are physically immersed in the water—and that these two immersions (into the symbols and into the water) are related. Thus, while it is only a linguistic clue here, it seems plausible that Lathrop hints at a special role for water particularly at the Easter Vigil toward the goal of ecological orientation: that the candidates for baptism are

⁹² In baptisms at the vigil, “[e]very Christian could find personal access to the center of the community and the center of the year in the paschal mystery.” Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid., 78.

⁹⁴ ———, *Holy Ground*, 169.

⁹⁵ ———, *Holy Things*, 78, 97. ———, *Holy Ground*, 105, 106, 108.

⁹⁶ Lathrop, *Holy Ground*, 169.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 107.

engaged by the great cosmic and ecological symbols of the vigil perhaps most profoundly as they are engaged by the water of baptism, as the water itself is a vehicle for such symbolism.

Lathrop's account of ecological orientation at the baptismal water is the most explicitly ecological account reviewed for this project. The concern is not only for cosmic scope, or for a sense of participation with creation, or even of the goodness of creation. Lathrop's account seeks to ensure that ecological concern and action (in sympathetic conversation with current extra-Christian ecological movements) are integral to a Christian faith centered and renewed at the waters of baptism. Such an integrated place for ecology in Christian liturgy means that the ecological themes in liturgy are not simply additional layers or occasional events that supplement a non-ecological liturgical structure. The ecological themes run deep in the structures of Christian liturgy:

Here is another paradox: A quite concrete agenda for liturgical reform will not mandate but may stimulate many diverse agendas for environmental reform. The reformed liturgy will simply say 'Earth matters, earth is dear.' The liturgy itself—not some occasional votive mass for the earth, certainly not some protest liturgy, but the *ordo* itself done clearly and well—may help provide the currently much needed 'positive vocabulary of human limit in a sanctified and sustainable creation.' Out of the restored liturgical *ordo*, then, also arise fighting, working, praying—or, at least, heartfelt lament—for the earth.⁹⁸

Lathrop's explicitly identified concern for contemporary ecological renewal is paired with a confidence in the larger agenda of liturgical renewal to integrate ecological themes into Christian ways of life arising from participation in liturgy.

Nevertheless, the connections that Lathrop identifies among the foci of water, baptism, ecology, and Easter Vigil form a distinct and multi-faceted proposal: water itself

⁹⁸ ———, *Holy Things*, 216-17. Lathrop quotes a phrase from Timothy C. Weiskel, "'While Angels Weep...! Doing Theology on a Small Planet,'" *The Harvard Divinity Bulletin* XIX, no. 3 (1989).

as a symbol of the earth's ecology; a font that centers the gathering and locates in the cosmos; a prayer of thanksgiving over the water that recalls the goodness of the earth, the preciousness of water, the vastness of the universe, and locates the origin and ongoing care of all things in God; symbols around the water that speak of Easter's meaning and earth's fecundity; baptismal language that images God as a flowing reality, giving life to a diverse creation; a baptismal process centered in the Easter Vigil; the marking of liturgical time as marking of God's care for this local place; the vigil bath placing individuals in the very center of the earth's year as the baptized are washed and renewed in symbols that speak Trinitarian faith, ecological care, and a cosmos embraced by God. Lathrop identifies the most critical themes for the renewal of baptismal practice: "In our time, there should at least be these things: a more striking pool of water, a stronger formation in creation faith, a profound recovery of thanksgiving, a strengthening of local community."⁹⁹

V. Alexander Schmemmann

Alexander Schmemmann, a twentieth century Orthodox liturgical theologian who long taught at St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary, holds the Easter Vigil and baptism closely together. Every baptism possesses a spiritual connection to the Vigil: "whenever and wherever Baptism is celebrated, we find ourselves—spiritually at least!—on the eve of Pascha... at the very beginning of that unique night which every year truly makes us enter into the Kingdom of God."¹⁰⁰

Baptism and Easter

⁹⁹ Lathrop, *Holy Ground*, 107.

¹⁰⁰ Alexander Schmemmann, *Of Water and the Spirit: A Liturgical Study of Baptism* ([Crestwood, N.Y.]: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1974), 38.

Schmemmann is influenced by accounts of the celebration of baptism at the Easter Vigil in antiquity. Employing a chiasm to emphasize a symbiotic relationship, he describes the “paschal celebration of Baptism and the baptismal celebration of Pascha” as “the greatest of all solemnities of the early church.”¹⁰¹ He asserts that “the liturgy of Easter is primarily a baptismal liturgy.”¹⁰² Even though Schmemmann sees that baptism and *pascha* have been profoundly disassociated in practice, he insists that the relationship between baptism and *pascha* nevertheless remains critical to the significance of baptism—and even to Christianity itself. He argues that in contemporary times “even though it is probably impossible simply to reintegrate Baptism into Pascha, the paschal character of Baptism—the connection between Baptism and Pascha—remains the key not only to Baptism but to the totality of the Christian faith itself.”¹⁰³ The basic connection between *pascha* and baptism is that both are centrally concerned with the death and resurrection of Christ.¹⁰⁴ And Schmemmann sees this reality as extending outward in meaning to cosmic and eschatological dimensions. Baptism, for Schmemmann, is an “entrance into and participation in the life of the Risen Christ,”¹⁰⁵ an “experience illuminating [one’s] whole life.”¹⁰⁶ Schmemmann is captivated by the way in which he understands patristic-era Easter Vigils to join an awe-inspiring experience of baptism to powerful symbols of the death and resurrection of Christ. Such a baptism gathers the force of salvation history and joins it to a discrete event (baptism) in the life of a Christian. This event marks a new era in the life of the baptized even as it is “understood

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 37.

¹⁰² Ibid., 7.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 37.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 54.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 8.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 9.

as having a direct meaning for the ‘new time,’ of which Easter is the celebration and the manifestation”¹⁰⁷ For Schmemmann, the layers of meaning at work in the celebration of the Easter Vigil—creation, death and resurrection of Christ, new creation—make baptism at the vigil a paradigmatic entrance into the Christian life.

As much as baptism and *pascha*—together—constitute an enduring theological key for understanding Christianity, Schmemmann sees in baptism an act that is central to the ongoing renewal of the contemporary church. Baptism, Schmemmann argues, is “the source and the starting point of all liturgical renewal and revival” in which “the Church reveals her own nature to herself” and “constantly renews herself as a community of the baptized.”¹⁰⁸ Those attempting to accomplish serious liturgical renewal are turned by Schmemmann to the rites of baptism.

Water

Having already established the Easter Vigil as the ideal setting for baptisms, Schmemmann locates the meaning-generative power of baptism in the element of water: “it is precisely *water* which reveals to us the meaning of Baptism.”¹⁰⁹ Indeed, the chapter in Schmemmann’s *Of Water and the Spirit* devoted to baptism proper begins with an exploration of the element of water *qua* water. Schmemmann blames what he sees as the diminution of baptismal identity and significance on an obsession with mechanical questions of sacramental “validity” that eclipse the natural mysteries of water:

if today... Baptism is presented as an almost magical act, if it has ceased to be the source, the constant ‘term of reference’ in both liturgy and piety, it is precisely because it in fact has been disconnected from the ‘mystery of water,’ which gives

¹⁰⁷ ———, *For the Life of the World: Sacraments and Orthodoxy*, 2nd rev. and expanded ed. ([Crestwood, N.Y.]: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1988), 68.

¹⁰⁸ Schmemmann, *Of Water and the Spirit*, 38.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 39.

it its real context and significance. It is with this mystery of water, then, that we must begin our explanation.¹¹⁰

Schmemmann sees three symbolic dimensions in water that he understands as essential to a proper appreciation for baptism. He understands these symbolic levels to be part of a “fundamental religious symbolism of water—symbolism rooted in the self-evident and natural attributes of water.”¹¹¹ Water comes to the liturgy already with symbolic weight, gathered from its everyday and ecological roles. Schmemmann begins with the cosmic symbolic dimensions of water. This view of water, Schmemmann writes, arises from the basic observation of the dependence on water of all living things. He describes the “primitive” projection of this connection backwards to the origins of the cosmos: water is the “*prima essentia*” of the living creation.¹¹² Across cultures and religions, Schmemmann claims, water quite naturally “reflects and symbolizes the world as cosmos and life.”¹¹³ “In a way, then,” he writes, “creation is a transformation of water into life.”¹¹⁴ The second dimension of the symbolism of water is the inverse of the first: “destruction and death,” in which water “is the mysterious depth which kills and annihilates... the very image of the irrational, uncontrollable, elemental in the world.”¹¹⁵ The final symbolic dimension Schmemmann names is “the principle of purification, of cleanliness, and therefore of regeneration and renewal.”¹¹⁶ This symbolic level is rooted in the basic-level experience of cleaning with water and the larger ecological-level observation of water’s

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 72.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 39.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

work of restoring the “purity of the earth.”¹¹⁷ Given these three important levels of symbolism, water for Schmemmann is a symbol *par excellence* in its ability to hold together many layers of meaning.¹¹⁸

It is the first level of the symbolism of water—the cosmic, the principle of life and creation—that Schmemmann finds most interesting and most urgently in need of recovery in liturgical practice and emphasis. While Schmemmann is aware of—and is in fact a major figure in—the liturgical renewal movement’s work to restore baptism to a more robust place in the ritual life of the church, he pointedly critiques that same movement’s neglect of the *cosmic* dimensions of baptism in its recovery of baptism:

Lately, it is true, there has occurred throughout the Christian world a certain widening of the theology of baptism. There has been a rediscovery of the meaning of baptism as entrance and integration into the Church, of its ‘ecclesiological’ significance. But ecclesiology, unless it is given its true cosmic perspective (‘for the life of the world’), unless it is understood as the Christian form of ‘cosmology,’ is always ecclesiolatry, the church considered as a ‘being in itself’ and not the new relation of God, [humanity], and the world...¹¹⁹

Baptism, in neglecting its cosmic dimension, “has suffered an almost disastrous loss of meaning.”¹²⁰

The chief symbolic vehicle for the cosmic dimension in baptism is, for Schmemmann, water. Water “refers us inescapably to ‘matter,’ to the world.”¹²¹ Water “represents and stands for the entire cosmos.”¹²² The diminution of cosmic reference in baptism, Schmemmann asserts, is parallel to the reduction in the amount of water used for baptism. He characterizes baptisms in early church history as “involving the whole

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 40.

¹¹⁹ ———, *For the Life of the World*, 68.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid., 67.

¹²² ———, *Of Water and the Spirit*, 42.

cosmos” and contrasts them to what over time “became a private ceremony, performed in a corner of the church,” in which the cosmos “was reduced...to three symbolic drops of water.”¹²³

Prayer Over the Water

Schmemmann critiques a miserly approach to the use of water in baptismal rites, and finds such practice to be symptomatic of an obsession with ritual validity at the expense of cosmic and existential meaning. The water, for Schmemmann, matters. Yet it is the prayer over the water—the blessing, or consecration, of water—that, in its work of interpreting the physical element of water, he finds singularly powerful for evoking the cosmic dimensions of baptism:

We must understand, therefore, that it is precisely *water* which reveals to us the meaning of Baptism and that this revelation takes place in the consecration of water before Baptism. Not only does Baptism *begin* with the blessing of water, but it is this blessing alone that reveals all the dimensions of the baptismal mystery, its truly cosmical content and depth. It is, in other terms, the blessing of water that manifests the *relevance* of Baptism, by revealing its relation to the world and matter, to life and all its aspects....¹²⁴

It is, for Schmemmann, ultimately the prayer over the water that sets out and interprets the meaning of baptism, and, in particular, the cosmic dimensions of baptism’s significance. The great prayer, through its use of “this one symbol” of water, recounts “Creation, Fall and Redemption, Life and Death, Resurrection and Life Eternal: all the essential dimensions, the entire content of the Christian faith.”¹²⁵ Thus, by way of the symbol of

¹²³ Schmemmann critiques another parallel diminution of symbol in the baptismal rites: the reduction in communal participation. The withdrawal from the cosmic dimensions in baptism is accompanied not only by a lessening of the quantity of water, but also a retreat into the motif of the private and individual: “From an act of the whole Church, involving the whole cosmos, it became a private ceremony, performed in a corner of the church by ‘private appointment,’ and in which the Church was reduced to the ‘minister of sacraments’ and the cosmos to three symbolic drops of water...” Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, 67.

¹²⁴ _____, *Of Water and the Spirit*, 38-39.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 40.

water, participants encounter in the great prayer “the *epiphany*, the revelation of the true meaning of Baptism as a cosmical... act.”¹²⁶

The epiphanic character of the prayer is, for Schmemmann, not a secondary concern, but rather a central one. The liturgical action that is called *consecration*, is, in fact, “always the manifestation, the epiphany” of God’s purposes for the whole of creation.¹²⁷ Thus, for Schmemmann, the primary effect of the prayer is epiphanic, and the scope and content of the prayer is cosmic. The prayer is not about changing a single pool of water into some other supernatural or supersacred substance, but is about revealing and understanding the nature of all water’s sacrality. Schmemmann clearly and forcefully makes a distinction between “two entirely different meanings” of the consecration of water:

It may mean, on the one hand, the transformation of something *profane*, and thus religiously void or neutral, into something *sacred*, in which case the main religious meaning of ‘holy water’ is precisely that it is no longer ‘mere’ water, and is in fact opposed to it—as the sacred is to the profane. Here the act of blessing reveals nothing about water, and thus about matter or world, but on the contrary makes them irrelevant to the new function of water as ‘holy water.’ The sacred posits the profane as precisely profane, i.e. religiously meaningless. On the other hand, the same act of blessing may mean the revelation of the true ‘nature’ and ‘destiny’ of water, and thus of the world—it may be the epiphany and the fulfillment of their ‘sacramentality.’ By being restored through the blessing to its proper function, the ‘holy water’ is revealed as the true, full, adequate water, and matter becomes again means of communion with and knowledge of God.¹²⁸

Thus, Schmemmann makes a negative case against some understandings of “consecration.” He argues that by opposing “holy water” to all other water in the consecratory prayer, water itself (which Schmemmann understands as a symbol for all matter and the entire cosmos) is imaged as profane and outside of religious concern. The

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 50.

¹²⁸ ———, *For the Life of the World*, 131-32.

attention of the participants is directed away from the water of the creation/cosmos toward an artifact created by the prayer: ‘holy water.’ Thus, any “epiphany” is concerned with dimensions far smaller than the cosmic. Schmemmann goes on to affirm another understanding of consecration. The prayer over the water may, in this case, unfold an understanding and use of water that places water in its proper cosmic context. From the particular pool of water at the baptismal font, the participants are invited to know all water (and through the symbol of water, all matter and the entire cosmos) as a “means of communion” with God. Schmemmann argues that the text of the classic versions of the prayer of blessing over the water are clearly composed with the latter purpose in mind, but the prayer’s function and meaning is, nevertheless, generally received by participants in the former sense.¹²⁹ Schmemmann notes that the language of the prayer includes language of revelation and epiphany:

‘...show this water...’ Consecration... is never a visible and ‘physical’ miracle, a change that can be tested and proved by our senses. One can even say that in ‘this world,’ i.e. by its standards and ‘objective’ laws, nothing ‘happens’ to water... Christ came to not *replace* ‘natural’ matter with some ‘supernatural’ and sacred matter, but to *restore* it and to fulfill it as the means of communion with God. The holy water in Baptism, the bread and wine in the Eucharist, stand for, i.e. *represent* the whole of creation, but creation as it will be at the *end*, when it will be consummated in God, when He will fill all things with Himself.¹³⁰

Schmemmann finds the distinction between physical and epiphanic approaches to the prayer to have serious consequences for the entire Christian project in the contemporary age. An approach to the consecration of water that sets out to distinguish ‘holy water’ from all other water

not only is in no way a challenge to secularism, but is in fact one of its very sources. For it leaves the world profane, i.e. precisely *secular*, in the deepest

¹²⁹ Ibid., 132.

¹³⁰ ———, *Of Water and the Spirit*, 49.

sense of this term: as totally incapable of any real communication with the Divine, of any real transformation and transfiguration. Having nothing to reveal about world and matter, about time and nature, this idea and this experience of worship ‘disturb’ nothing, question nothing, challenge nothing, and are indeed ‘applicable’ to nothing.¹³¹

Schmemmann’s concern about the prayer thus far is two-fold: that the prayer be practiced as *revelatory* rather than mechanical,¹³² and that the prayer be concerned with the living *cosmos* rather than only a delimited pool of water.

But the revelatory character of the prayer is not wholly distinct from the disposition in which the prayer is prayed. The eucharistic mode in which the prayer is prayed is related to the cosmic scope of the prayer. The prayer extends its participants in “an all-embracing eucharistic movement” outward to the cosmos:

To bless, as we already know, is to give thanks. In and through thanksgiving, man acknowledges the true nature of things he receives from God, and thus makes them to be what they are. We bless and sanctify things when we offer them to God in a eucharistic movement of our whole being. And as we stand before the *water*—before the cosmos, the matter given to us by God—it is an all-embracing eucharistic movement which gives the baptismal liturgy its true beginning.¹³³

For Schmemmann, the mode in which the entire cosmos may be appropriately imaged in prayer is thanksgiving. The mode of thanksgiving is expansive and “embracing” enough in scope so as to extend to the entire cosmos. And Schmemmann suggests that the mode of thanksgiving also reveals something about the “true nature” of the stuff of the cosmos—its status as gift from God and its fundamental and original goodness. The mode of thanksgiving, then, contributes both to the *scope* of the concern of the prayer and to the *character* of that to which the prayer’s concern extends.

¹³¹ ———, *For the Life of the World*, 132-33.

¹³² This concern will relate to work in the cognitive sciences on perception of “essence,” especially concerning the ascription of essence to liquids.

¹³³ Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, 73.

Schmemmann's review of the text of the prayer over the water repeatedly stresses the cosmic dimensions of the prayer. In his review, the motif Schmemmann employs to describe the overall posture of the prayer is that of a priest who stands next to the water (which is symbolic *prima essentia*) and is able to see and give thanks for all of God's work in history, beginning, as of first importance, with the fundamental good gift of creation, mythologically birthed out of water:

the priest... [stands] before the water as if facing the whole cosmos on the day of creation—as the first man opening his eyes to God's glory and contemplating all that God has done in Christ for our redemption and salvation... [The prayer over the water] is a solemn act of praise and thanksgiving, an act of adoration by which man, on behalf of the whole world, responds back to God. And it is this eucharist and adoration that take us back to the *beginning*, make us indeed witnesses of creation. For Thanksgiving is truly the first and the essential act of man, the act by which he fulfills himself as man. The one who gives thanks is no longer a slave; there is no fear, no anxiety, no envy in adoration. Rendering thanks to God, one becomes free again, free in relation to God, free in relation to the world... [T]his thanksgiving „takes us back to Paradise, for it restores in us the very principle and essence of our being, life and knowledge.¹³⁴

Schmemmann here sketches something of a liturgical anthropology. At the waters of the font, humans may discover, through thanksgiving for the cosmos and for God's work in restoring the cosmos, an original freedom (imaged as arising first of all in a verdant garden) that is central to the essence of human being. In the praying of the baptismal prayer, by the power of God, is, according to Schmemmann, the re-creation of humanity, which is accomplished by “recreating... the world.”¹³⁵ Humanity's relationship with the cosmos is not framed as one concern among others at Christian baptism. Rather, in Schmemmann's account, God's renewal of the cosmos is both perceived and joined by

¹³⁴ _____, *Of Water and the Spirit*, 46.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 48.

humanity at the waters of Christian baptism. Humans, at the font, become “witnesses of creation.”

The angle of vision afforded beside the water, with the words of the prayer for guidance, is one that extends through all of salvation history and over all the cosmos. Yet images from the biblical creation narratives—and specifically images of the primordial waters of creation—hold a privileged place in the prayer and are a sort of frame by which other biblical images are related. The prayer, as noted above, begins with the primordial waters. Christ’s baptism, recalled further along in the prayer, is imaged in terms drawn from the first account of the waters of creation:

It was then, as Christ was coming out of the water, that the Epiphany—the new and redemptive manifestation of God—took place, and the Spirit of God, who at the beginning of creation ‘moved upon the face of the waters,’ made water—that is, the world—again into what He made it at the beginning.¹³⁶

Even as the “waters of creation” have been “darkened and polluted by the fall” and “become the very symbol of death and demonic oppression,” the prayer over the water is an epiphanic act that reveals those same waters

as the waters of Jordan, as the beginning of recreation and salvation. The Holy Spirit, the Giver of Life, who ‘moved on the face of the waters’ in the beginning, descends again on them; and they—and through them the world—are revealed to be that which they were meant and created to be: the life of man as communion with God. The time of salvation begins again, and we are witnesses and partakers of that beginning and we thank God for it.¹³⁷

Thus, in the act of the prayer itself there is a restoration of the cosmos to being the means of communion with God in which participants in the prayer are “witnesses and partakers.” The present-tense renewal of the world that Schmemmann describes is imaged in terms drawn from the biblical narrative of creation, with the primordial waters as a

¹³⁶ ———, *For the Life of the World*, 73.

¹³⁷ ———, *Of Water and the Spirit*, 47.

privileged image. The consummation of history is also glimpsed at the waters. It is a return to an original goodness as well as something new: when God becomes all in all.

The water of baptism “*represent[s]* the whole of creation, but creation as it will be at the *end*, when it will be consummated in God, when He will fill all things with Himself.”¹³⁸

In the end, the cosmic imagery that Schmemmann consistently relates to the first biblical account of creation—the “beginning” when the Spirit brooded over the water—is deepened as Schmemmann locates the cosmic Christ in this water and in all things:

It is in this water that we now baptize—i.e. immerse—man, and this baptism is for him baptism ‘*into Christ*’ (Rom. 6:3) For the faith in Christ that led this man to baptism is precisely the certitude that Christ is the only true ‘content’—meaning being and end—of all that exists, the fullness of Him who fills all things. In faith the whole world becomes the sacrament of his presence, the means of life in Him. And water, the image and presence of the world, is truly the image and presence of Christ.¹³⁹

Alexander Schmemmann’s account of the cosmic dimensions of the water of baptism at Easter Vigil is not constructed of inconsequential claims. Schmemmann identifies baptism and *pascha* as mutually interpretive, fundamentally connected, and, as such, forming the “key” to Christian faith. Liturgical renewal therefore begins with the renewal of baptismal practice. The significance of baptism begins with knowledge of the element of water in its earthly ecological roles, and most importantly in its cosmic-scale life-giving properties. Water, thus known, is a symbol of all life and even of all matter, the entire cosmos. While the scale of water pool at baptism appropriately refers to the cosmic scope of baptism, it is finally the prayer over the water that reveals the full dimensions of baptism’s and water’s significance. The prayer is centered in the image of water and the primordial waters of creation hold a privileged place among the water-

¹³⁸ Ibid., 49.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 73-74.

images. The major themes of the Christian faith are all known in the prayer through water-imagery. The mode of the cosmic-scale prayer is thanksgiving, thereby embracing the entire cosmos and all of history as gift. The effect of such a prayer is epiphany, revealing the waters and the cosmos itself as an ongoing gift of God, thus making the praying of this prayer a participation in the renewal of all things, an anticipation of the consummation of history in which God's renewing presence fills all things. Schmemmann situates his account of baptismal significance over-and-against baptismal practices that locate baptismal significance at the level of the individual or even the ecclesial rather than the cosmic, or that are concerned only with the water of the font rather than the waters of the entire creation.

VI. Others

A number of others have addressed the chief themes of this project less directly and/or less fully. Before summarizing the work of the four principal theologians examined for this chapter, a short review of other voices may offer a sense of the wider conversation.

Two brief accounts of the eco-theological dimensions of the prayer over the water come to differing conclusions. Mary Grey, seeking to construct a "sacramental poetics of water," describes the prayer over the water at the Easter vigil as "the sacred story of renewal of creation" that rehearses "the drama *par excellence* of sacramental poetics," by way of a "dramatic history of water in salvation... from the dawn of creation to Resurrection."¹⁴⁰ The prayer over the water is an example for Grey of an ecologically and spiritually fecund approach to the water, in contrast to what she understands to be the

¹⁴⁰ Mary C. Grey, *Sacred Longings: The Ecological Spirit and Global Culture*, 1st Fortress Press ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2004), 86, 97.

sterile approach to water and bodies of some Christian baptisms. Grey notes that the context of the Easter Vigil (especially including the nighttime setting and the Easter fire) contributes to the symbolic power of the prayer.¹⁴¹ While she critiques the obvious phallic interpretations, Grey identifies the plunging of the candle into the water of the font as “the most significant moment” of the prayer, offering a sign of “the joyous union of the Rising Jesus, the cosmic Jesus, with the fertile promise of the watery depths of chaos.”¹⁴² Ann Patrick Ware, however, in her essay, “The Easter Vigil: A Theological and Liturgical Critique,” critiques the prayer over the water for its “utter disregard” of environmental realities, as it

fails to note the scarcity of water in many countries and the facts that women across the world walk miles to carry water to their families, that drought and famine are interconnected, and that acid rain and toxic pollution of the world’s water supply make fresh and life-giving water one of our most precious commodities. If the liturgy can be criticized for anything, it is for this utter disregard of contemporary realities. One cannot expect the modern situation to be reflected in ancient texts, but surely such reference is not too much to expect in prayers addressed to God, prayers that the congregation is expected to affirm with an “Amen.”¹⁴³

Ware’s critique focuses on the lack of engagement with contemporary ecological concerns about water, while Grey finds promise in the depth and breadth of the prayer’s engagement with water and water-symbols. While Ware and Grey come to opposing conclusions about the ecological sensibility of the prayer over the water, they both identify a strong eco-theological significance for this central water-prayer at the Easter Vigil.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 97.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Ann Patrick Ware, “The Easter Vigil: A Theological and Liturgical Critique,” in *Women at Worship: Interpretations of North American Diversity*, ed. Marjorie Procter-Smith and Janet Roland Walton (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster/J. Knox Press, 1993), 95-96.

Paul Santmire, in *Nature Reborn: the Ecological and Cosmic Promise of Christian Theology* and more recently in *Ritualizing Nature: Renewing Christian Liturgy in a Time of Crisis*, commends the cosmic and ecological themes related to baptism as helpful for the nurturance of Christian eco-theological imagination and identity.¹⁴⁴ His most recent book specifically encourages the ample use of water in baptism, the construction of fonts with cosmic motifs, the relation of the baptismal theme of resurrection to the renewal of all creation, heightened bodily engagement with water, a prayer over the water with cosmic scope, and consideration of the Easter Vigil as a liturgy that can carry these baptismal and cosmic/ecological themes with particular richness.¹⁴⁵

Anscar Chupungco's *Shaping the Easter Feast* (originally published as *The Cosmic Elements of Christian Passover*) offers a detailed account of the cosmic imagery at play in the Easter Vigil as the images come to expression in the natural signs that determine the date of Easter: springtime, equinox, full moon, evening and night. Chupungco laments a "purely materialistic" approach to creation, and finds in the Easter Vigil "cosmic underpinnings" unequaled in any other Christian feast, and the potential for a rediscovery of "the sacramental character of nature."¹⁴⁶ His approach collates patristic-era reflections—mostly Easter homilies—on the natural and cosmic signs that mark the date of the Easter Vigil. While *Shaping the Easter Feast* is a significant

¹⁴⁴ H. Paul Santmire, *Nature Reborn: The Ecological and Cosmic Promise of Christian Theology*, Theology and the Sciences (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), and *Ritualizing Nature: Renewing Christian Liturgy in a Time of Crisis*, Theology and the Sciences (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008).

¹⁴⁵ Santmire, *Ritualizing Nature*, 133-36. On ecological approaches to baptism and the Easter Vigil, Santmire cites Grey, *Sacred Longings*., Benjamin M. Stewart, "Flooding the Landscape: Luther's Flood Prayer and Baptismal Theology," *CrossAccent* 13, no. 1 (2005)., and Benjamin M. Stewart, "A Tree Planted by Water: Ecological Orientation at the Vigil of Easter" (Thesis (S T M), Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia, 2004.).

¹⁴⁶ Anscar J. Chupungco, *Shaping the Easter Feast* (Washington, DC: Pastoral Press, 1992), vii.

investigation of the cosmic and even ecological motifs classically employed in reflection on the Easter Vigil, it does not, however, address the element of water in any sustained manner. The work, rather, is focused on the time-keeping elements. Chupungco's contribution at this point in this project is simply to underscore the cosmic and ecological relevance of the Easter Vigil and its symbolic field.

Gail Ramshaw addresses ecological orientation at the baptismal water of the Easter Vigil briefly in two of her works. In her chapter on the liturgical use of the image of water in her *Treasures Old and New: Images in the Lectionary*, Ramshaw identifies connections between water and ecology, baptism, and Easter Vigil,¹⁴⁷ and she highlights a few ecological and cosmic motifs of the vigil in her short book designed for congregational use, *The Three Day Feast: Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter*.¹⁴⁸ The ritual elements and actions of the Easter Vigil, according to Ramshaw, embody "the ancient notion that the universe was constructed with the four elements of earth, air, fire, and water."¹⁴⁹ Ramshaw suggests that the image of water is unfolded with unusual fullness at the Easter Vigil: all of water's Christian symbolic structures are evoked in the vigil, including birth, death, renewal and washing.¹⁵⁰ She identifies the Easter Vigil as "the preeminent liturgy for the celebration of parish baptisms and for the renewal of everyone's baptismal vows,"¹⁵¹ and she notes with apparent approval the recovery of larger fonts and more prominent, flowing water in recent baptismal practice.¹⁵² Ramshaw

¹⁴⁷ See "Water" in Gail Ramshaw, *Treasures Old and New: Images in the Lectionary* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002), 401-10.

¹⁴⁸ ———, *The Three-Day Feast: Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter*, Worship Matters (Minneapolis, Minn.: Augsburg Fortress, 2004).

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 54.

¹⁵⁰ Ramshaw, *Treasures Old and New*, 404.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 405.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 407.

traces the themes of water in many of the vigil's scripture readings, and notes the way in which the theme of creation-through-water reappears even in narratives apparently primarily about humans.¹⁵³ The nighttime nature of the vigil is "extraordinary," and, in the particular context of the Easter Vigil, serves as a relevant ritual location for "recent Christian awareness of ecological issues."¹⁵⁴ She suggests that liturgy throughout the year might include water-concerns in its intercessions: thanking God for the gift of water, praying for environmental healing of the waters and for those who are threatened or victimized by the deadly power of water or drought.¹⁵⁵ Christians may even come to know God and themselves through images of water that intermingle: "Christ the water, incarnating God's water of creation, flows continuously in the Spirit, who waters the believers, who themselves become the spring of living water in the world."¹⁵⁶ At the same time "the very earthiness of the vigil helps us to see ourselves as creatures of the earth that God created and loves."¹⁵⁷

Together, these short accounts of eco-theological meaning at the baptismal waters of the Easter Vigil largely stand in continuity with the writings of the principal theologians engaged for this chapter: the vigil as prominent ritual location for baptism and baptismal renewal; the prayer over the water as significant for eco-theological reorientation to the waters of the earth; the scale of the water, the font, and the bodily engagement with water as related to the orienting power of baptismal liturgies; the Easter

¹⁵³ Ibid., 406.

¹⁵⁴ ———, *The Three-Day Feast*, 54. Ramshaw does not elaborate on this point but cites Chupungco, *Shaping the Easter Feast*. and Stewart, "A Tree Planted by Water: Ecological Orientation at the Vigil of Easter".

¹⁵⁵ Ramshaw, *Treasures Old and New*, 408.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 409.

¹⁵⁷ ———, *The Three-Day Feast*, 54.

Vigil as uniquely powerful in its cosmic, ecological, and water motifs; and the setting of the Easter Vigil as deepening the symbol-bearing potential of the baptismal water.

VII. Concluding Observations

While the penultimate chapter of this project makes a number of summary observations, some initial observations may be made concerning the patterns emerging in the writings engaged thus far. The four primary accounts above can be analyzed by attending to how they characterize four foci: the baptismal water, the prayer over the water, the Easter Vigil itself, and the scope of concern addressed by the Easter Vigil liturgy.

Baptismal Water

All four theologians characterize water as a vehicle for the symbols at work in the liturgy. Water in liturgical use carries “pluriform meanings”¹⁵⁸ and offers a “wealth of material from which to develop a liturgical theology of baptism.”¹⁵⁹ Much of the “power of this symbol” of water resides in its ability to “hold together” many layers of meaning.¹⁶⁰ Liturgical participants, as they encounter the water, are “bathed,”¹⁶¹ “washed”¹⁶² and “immersed” in the images of the Easter Vigil.¹⁶³ Worshippers “stand deep” in the symbols and are “covered” with them.¹⁶⁴ Water in use in the Easter Vigil liturgy is a vehicle for meaning.

Lathrop and Schmemmann emphasize that water carries symbolic significance with it into the liturgical space, before any liturgical meaning making occurs. Some of the

¹⁵⁸ Irwin, "The Sacramentality of Creation and the Role of Creation in Liturgy and Sacraments," 83.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 85.

¹⁶⁰ Schmemmann, *Of Water and the Spirit*, 40.

¹⁶¹ Lathrop, *Holy Things*, 78.

¹⁶² ———, *Holy Ground*, 107.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 169.

¹⁶⁴ Kavanagh, *The Shape of Baptism*, 158.

ecological roles of water—flowing freely, connecting physically separated places, sustaining life, cleansing, and even destroying—are evoked simply by the intentional presence of water in the liturgical space. Schmemmann understands water to be such a foundational symbol that it can function “naturally” as a symbol of all matter, of the cosmos itself. Lathrop sees symbolic correlations between the flow of water into human community from some other uncontrolled place and the otherness of divine freedom. Lathrop and Schmemmann assume that water enters the liturgical space carrying symbolic weight from the wider ecological realm, and that this symbolic field rightly contributes to the meanings evoked in baptism.

All four theologians critique what they understand to be minimal use of water in baptismal rites. They advocate the use of more water in baptisms, larger fonts, and heightened bodily engagement with the water. Additionally, Irwin and Lathrop emphasize that the water might be set in motion, perhaps in a font in which the water flows or by the gestures of the presider. Lathrop and Kavanagh suggest that the font serve as a strong ritual center in the assembly and, more dramatically, might serve as a cosmic center, an omphalos,¹⁶⁵ an “axial spot”¹⁶⁶ in the cosmos. Lathrop emphasizes the need for free access to the water-center—that the assembly can gather at the water and that those being baptized are seen as being welcomed to a central place. Irwin rehearses the aesthetics of the water and the font: the water is to be pure and clean, and the font is to be of a pleasing design. In short, all four theologians seek, in order to increase the symbol-strength of the water, to enlarge, clarify, and strengthen the water-sign and increase the level of embodied engagement with the water.

¹⁶⁵ Lathrop, *Holy Ground*, 106.

¹⁶⁶ Kavanagh, *The Shape of Baptism*, 178.

Prayer Over the Water

That the prayer over the water is prayed in the mode of thanksgiving is significant to both Lathrop and Schmemmann. The practice of thanksgiving to God functions as a critique of any strictly anthropocentric worldview, Lathrop writes. The perspective of the prayer is, rather, theocentric. Lathrop contends that the prayer of thanksgiving implies a posture of “humility” on the part of humans concerning the created order, and carries “the sense that all things are created with us and are to be honored, cared for, not dominated and trampled.”¹⁶⁷ Schmemmann writes that the mode of thanksgiving at the font is “all embracing” and a “movement of our whole being” toward the cosmos.¹⁶⁸ This posture of thanksgiving is part of humanity’s “essential” nature.¹⁶⁹ The practice of thanksgiving allows humanity to experience the (now polluted) creation as good and as gift, according to Schmemmann. Together, Schmemmann and Lathrop suggest that the mode of thanksgiving turns liturgical participants toward the wider creation in a disposition of appreciation, humility, and care.

Irwin, Schmemmann, and Lathrop all note the primary place of water in the prayer.¹⁷⁰ The history of salvation is related in the prayer as one saving water-event after another. Irwin notes that the prayer asks God to do things for the baptized that water does naturally: bury, give life, cleanse, wash, bring to birth. Though the prayer is steeped in images drawn from biblical sources that picture the earth as surrounded by water, Lathrop suggests that scientific knowledge about the profound scarcity of water in the cosmos may nevertheless serve helpful eco-theological ends in the shaping of the prayer.

¹⁶⁷ Lathrop, *Holy Things*, 215.

¹⁶⁸ Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, 73.

¹⁶⁹ ———, *Of Water and the Spirit*, 46.

¹⁷⁰ Kavanagh scarcely mentions the prayer.

He suggests that the prayer highlight “the vastness of the universe and both the marginality and the preciousness of our watery planet.”¹⁷¹

Schmemmann characterizes the primary effect of the prayer as “epiphany,” a revelation of the character of water (and the entire created order) as created by God, as “good” (in spite of its now-polluted character), and as filled with the presence and promise of God.¹⁷² The prayer offers an angle of vision by which to consider all of the cosmos with both beginning and consummation of history in view. In this sense, humans become “witnesses of creation” during the prayer and are also able to envision the future as a renewal of the original goodness of creation.¹⁷³ Such an epiphany in the present time alters the liturgical participants’ sense of the present-day cosmos, an epiphany that Schmemmann understands to be itself part of the renewal of creation. Schmemmann advances this account of the prayer in clear critique of an understanding of the prayer that is concerned with the “validity” of the sacrament and the making of “holy water.” For Schmemmann, the prayer is an epiphany about *all* water, not a manipulation of a small basin of water. The former mode of prayer invites an “embrace” of the cosmos while the latter mode renders the cosmos “profane.”¹⁷⁴

Easter Vigil

All four theologians characterize the Easter Vigil as occupying a uniquely powerful place in the Christian year due to the convergence of strong symbols at the vigil. The vigil is the most “symbolically rich” liturgy in the Christian repertoire,

¹⁷¹ Lathrop, *Holy Ground*, 113.

¹⁷² Schmemmann, *Of Water and the Spirit*, 46-49.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 46.

¹⁷⁴ ———, *For the Life of the World*, 131-32.

according to Irwin.¹⁷⁵ Lathrop describes the vigil as the “center of the year,” and Kavanagh calls it the “Mother of Feasts.”¹⁷⁶ The layers of symbol at play in the vigil make the liturgy uniquely powerful for baptismal initiation and renewal, as individual Christian identity is joined to the paschal, natural, and cosmic images of the vigil. Irwin, Kavanagh, and Lathrop take note of the extended baptismal process (Lent through Pentecost) that may support and find its center in the vigil. Kavanagh, Lathrop, and Schmemmann suggest that the vigil has a unique and privileged relationship to baptism, and they argue that the cosmic and natural strata of symbols in the vigil provide powerful orienting signs for baptismal identity in relationship to the earth and the wider cosmos. However, Irwin, while noting the central place of the vigil for baptism, worries that baptismal initiation might eclipse the natural/cosmic images of the vigil. Irwin suggests that creation-themes of the vigil might arise more powerfully when baptisms are not conducted. These theologians find the vigil to be unique in the Christian year for the depth and centrality of its symbolic field, with cosmic and ecological images powerfully animating the liturgy. Such a setting provides a particularly fertile ritual location for baptismal initiation and ecological/cosmic orientation, though Irwin suggests that the baptisms might in fact overwhelm the natural themes of the liturgy.

Scope of Concern

A prominent theme in the work of all four theologians is the need for a wider scope of concern at the Easter Vigil and at baptism: from a limited focus on individual sin and forgiveness to a wider engagement with ecological and cosmic renewal. The baptismal rite at the Easter Vigil rightly includes the consideration of all the waters of the

¹⁷⁵ Irwin, "The Sacramentality of Creation and the Role of Creation in Liturgy and Sacraments," 92.

¹⁷⁶ Kavanagh, *The Shape of Baptism*, 158.

earth, the springtime earth, all of history, the sun and moon, all matter, and “the vastness of the universe.”¹⁷⁷ The baptismal process, normally centered in the Easter Vigil, is an “enacted *mappamundi*” and the “most powerful of the Christian cosmological maps.”¹⁷⁸ Schmemmann suggests that such a liturgy itself participates in the renewal of creation, and can be an experience, as Irwin writes, of “paradise regained.”¹⁷⁹

All four theologians also note the importance of the scale of the water-sign in baptism, advocating more water, larger fonts, and greater bodily engagement with the water. The strong, central characteristic of the font, however, especially in the accounts of Kavanagh and Lathrop, also stands in generative relationship to the widest horizons of concern. Kavanagh suggests that the strong, close-to-the-skin, bodily experience of baptismal immersion cultivates a heightened sense of orientation to the wider cosmos. He describes the vigil’s font as standing “at the center of a world made new.”¹⁸⁰ Lathrop seeks to keep the strong local font in dialog with the other local fonts throughout the world, each font functioning as something of cosmic *omphalos* located in a beloved local place—the congregational and global, the local and cosmic, kept in fruitful dialog. Further, Lathrop describes the rite of baptism as a welcome to the very center of the church’s life from which the baptized also are invited into a view of wide earth’s ecology and of God’s care for the cosmos.

Though the inquiry above makes clear that the accounts of these liturgical theologians regarding the cosmic and ecological dimensions of water at the Easter Vigil are far from uniform. Nevertheless, together, their claims take the shape of a generally

¹⁷⁷ Lathrop, *Holy Ground*, 113.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 104.

¹⁷⁹ Irwin, “The Sacramentality of Creation and the Role of Creation in Liturgy and Sacraments,” 89.

¹⁸⁰ Kavanagh, *The Shape of Baptism*, 162.

consistent proposal for reform. These four theologians together offer strong claims for the orienting power of baptismal water at the Easter Vigil: multi-layered symbols carried by the vehicle of water; significant changes in meaning-making on the part of ritual participants through changes in font design and ritual water-use; ritual engagement with the whole earth's ecology—and even with the solar system and wider universe. Having gathered such claims and proposals from four liturgical theologians regarding meaning-making beside a pool of water in the enactment of an annual ritual, we now turn to another conversation among cognitive scientists and metaphor theorists. These thinkers are addressing questions of how humans make meaning of ritual, how water-patterns serve as a structure for concepts, and how bodily experience interacts with perception and conceptual thought.

CHAPTER TWO

BODIES, IMAGE SCHEMAS, AND MEANING IN RITUAL

I. Introduction

According to the scholarship analyzed in the first chapter, the element of water plays a central role in cosmic and eco-theological orientation at the Easter Vigil. Water, according to these accounts, functions both as a prominent physical element in the baptismal liturgy and also as a principal metaphor running through the wider vigil liturgy, especially including the scripture readings. The relationship between physical elements in liturgy (e.g. water) and the conceptual significance of the liturgy (e.g. the meaning of baptism, etc.) has long been an interest in theology. This relationship between the physical, embodied dimensions of human experience and the cognitive, conceptual dimensions of experience is also at the heart of wider, recent research into cognition.

In recent years a significant body of scholarship analyzing metaphor has emerged in the cognitive sciences. While only a number of scholars have thus far turned that analysis specifically toward ritual, the relevance of these studies for liturgical theology is significant. Much of the task of cognitive science has been to understand the way in which bodily experience interacts with conceptual thought. This line of inquiry largely correlates with the embodied nature of liturgy and the conceptual nature of theology. This chapter explores the central cognitive scientific concept of the image schema, which may be understood as the cognitive mechanism by which embodied experience and conceptual structure are linked. This introductory section on the image schema seeks to lay a foundation for the use of cognitive scientific analysis in this project.

After introducing the concept of the image schema in this chapter, the following chapter is concerned with a specific set of image schemas: those that arise from the source domain of water. Within the wider fields of cognitive science, there is some work addressed specifically to the question of how cognition is activated and structured by bodily interaction with water. There is, however, relatively little scholarship in this area. Chapter three offers a review of the major accounts that address water as a source domain, and suggests some basic patterns by which image schemas arising from water are structured. This chapter constructs a detailed schematic account by which the bodily and conceptual patterns that animate Christian baptism may be analyzed.

II. Image Schemas and Ritual

This chapter will demonstrate that Mark Johnson's account of *image schema*, detailed in his work *The Body in the Mind*, is a valuable tool for analyzing meaning-construction in ritual, given the image schema's capacity for *structuring* meaning through embodied forms without *determining* meaning.¹ Johnson's concept of the image schema may be augmented with the categories of mirroring (bodily internalization of external observations), blending (ritual itself as a constructed space that accomplishes conceptual blending), agency (scalar attribution of power to entities), and metonymy (its focusing and radiating functions). Together, these categories address a significant set of connections between bodily experience in ritual and the construction of meaning by participants in ritual. While the meaning-constructions of participants are not strictly

¹ Mark Johnson, *The Body in the Mind: The Bodily Basis of Meaning, Imagination, and Reason* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987). Most work involving cognitive science and image schemas gives prominent place to Johnson's work. Jesper Sørensen, a scholar of religious ritual and cognitive science, for example, recently identified Johnson's monograph, now more than two decades old, as the most thorough scholarly analysis of image schemas. Jesper Sørensen, *A Cognitive Theory of Magic*, Cognitive Science of Religion Series (Lanham: AltaMira, 2007), 40.

determined by embodied experience in ritual, the participants' meaning-constructions are nevertheless both *constrained* and *evoked* by the specific patterns of embodied experience in ritual.

In ritual, bodies often move in ordered—even schematic—patterns. Candles or lamps are lighted in a particular order at a given ritual moment. Processions proceed along a path toward a goal. Food is offered to gods or people and distributed according to a regular pattern. When baptismal candidates approach the water for baptism, some kind of patterned bodily interaction with water is normally expected. Even in ritual events that are described by participants as spontaneous or free of “ritual,” there are clearly some expectations for correct and exemplary behavior: ways of marking beginnings and endings, and, usually, identified centers to the rites.²

The *patterns* expected of a *ritual* seem to be structured similarly to Mark Johnson's *image schema*:

A schema is a recurrent pattern, shape, and regularity in, or of, these ongoing ordering activities. These patterns emerge as meaningful structures for us chiefly at the level of our bodily movements through space, our manipulation of objects, and our perceptual imagination.³

The image schema, arising from bodily experience, is of fundamental importance for Johnson: the “basic epistemological finding of this... approach is that knowledge must be understood in terms of structures of embodied human understanding, as an interaction of

² “Performing the [ritual] action implies creating an exemplar of the category, and of no other category.” Pascal Boyer, *The Naturalness of Religious Ideas: A Cognitive Theory of Religion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 199.

³ Johnson, *The Body in the Mind*, 29.

a human organism with its environment.”⁴ According to Johnson, image schemas structure a significant proportion of human thought by way of metaphorical projection.⁵

Therefore, following Johnson, two important claims may be made: first, bodily experience can function like a skeleton that gives a general shape to the more plastic “skin” of meaning. Image schemas, arising from bodily experience, give to vague ideas—in some cases, literally—“backbone” or “spine.”⁶ Second, rituals themselves, with their embodied patterns functioning much like image schemas, may be potential source domains for further metaphorical projection. Patterned actions of rituals may become image schemas themselves.⁷ Thus ritual both draws upon earlier, more basic image-schematic embodied experience by way of its deployment of metaphor, and at the same time also perform actions that may themselves generate or modify image schemas.

Image schemas are diverse but not unlimited in number or possibility. Some primary examples cited by Johnson include CONTAINMENT, SOURCE-PATH-GOAL, BLOCKAGE, CENTER-PERIPHERY, COMPULSION, COUNTERFORCE, DIVERSION, REMOVAL OF

⁴Ibid., 209.

⁵ Paul Ricoeur, in an essay published four years before Lakoff’s and Johnson’s *Metaphors We Live By*, seems to anticipate the cognitive turn in the study of metaphor as he makes a break with those who would see only the emotive character of metaphor apart from its “logos” character. The logos character Ricoeur sought might be understood to be the schematic element of metaphor that Johnson charts. Paul Ricoeur, “Metaphor and Symbol,” in *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1976). Ricoeur, “Metaphor and Symbol.”

⁶ This “backbone” character may be a way to preserve communal memory and conceptualizations by way of the embodied schema; the ritual ordo and schema may be a way of “off-loading” what would otherwise be *individual* conceptual work, and instead keeping it preserved in the wider *culture*. Raymond W. Gibbs, “Taking Metaphor out of Our Heads and Putting It into the Cultural World,” in *Metaphor in Cognitive Linguistics: Selected Papers from the Fifth International Cognitive Linguistics Conference, Amsterdam, July 1997*, ed. Raymond W. Gibbs and Gerard Steen (Amsterdam ; Philadelphia: J. Benjamins, 1999), 156-59.

⁷ In research relevant to ritual gestures, Alan Cienki has begun a promising study of the metaphorical nature of embodied gestures that accompany everyday speech, charting how such gestures accompany and cue metaphorical thought—perhaps in the thought of the *speaker* more than the *listener*. Alan Cienki, “Image Schemas and Gesture,” in *From Perception to Meaning: Image Schemas in Cognitive Linguistics*, ed. Beate Hampe, 421-441. (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2005).

RESTRAINT, ENABLEMENT, ATTRACTION, LINK, EQUILIBRIUM, CONTACT, FULL-EMPTY, MERGING, MATCHING, NEAR-FAR, SPLITTING, PART-WHOLE, COLLECTION. These schemas are able to provide the underlying structure for a large number of diverse concepts. Given the way in which schemas possess a relatively fixed skeletal structure *and* a capacity for being draped with various and diverse conceptual skins, it is not surprising to notice that scholars of ritual tend to point out (and at times quarrel over) the apparently contradictory natures of ritual—i.e. that of conserving structure and meaning (arising from ritual’s skeletal, schematic character) and that of enabling emergent meaning (arising from, among other elements, the schemas’ openness to receive new meaning).

The image schema, as an analytical tool, however, may leave some important bodily perceptions too far out of consideration. The simplicity of Johnson’s diagrams of image schemas suggests that some layers of accumulated bodily experience that form the image schema might be hidden by such elementary-looking renderings. For example, the bodily experience of a journey not only entails progress from one point to another, but often also holds a mixture of the senses of danger, possibility, and physical exertion. The feat of balance may be experienced not simply as centering in “a point or axis around which forces and weights must be distributed,”⁸ but also as a socially admirable achievement (e.g. a waiter balancing a tray, or a gymnast on a balance beam). Faces not only have a front, but also often have a deep and mysterious emotive effect on humans. Johnson’s diagrams, powerful in their clear sketch of spatial orientation and movement, seem to leave this emotive level out of consideration—even though metaphors do often seem to entail this emotive level in their meanings. Thus, the basic bodily experience

⁸ Johnson, *The Body in the Mind*, 80.

(the “source domain” of metaphor) remains more complex than Johnson’s image schemas suggest.⁹

A patterned comprehension of the source domain (along the lines of Johnson’s image schema) seems essential for the construction or comprehension of metaphorical meaning. The challenge may be to produce a schematic account of bodily experience without too violently reducing the complexity of accumulated embodied knowledge. The following sections seek to account for some of the elements of embodied experience that are left in the background in Johnson’s analysis.

Mimetic Schemas

Jordan Zlatev helpfully complements the concept of image schema with his concept of *mimetic schema*, which highlights the ways in which embodied knowledge is constructed through the observation of others performing physical acts.¹⁰ The discovery of neurophysiological mechanisms (including the mirror neuron system) that fire during actual physical actions and also during the observation of that same action points to a strong cognitive connection between enacting an action and observing it.¹¹ A person’s brain responds to observed actions in much the same way as it functions when actually performing the same action. In fact, it appears that, in the case of action-observation,

⁹ Johnson himself has noted this important consideration in a later writing, but has not specified the way in which it is to be integrated into his theories regarding image schemas: “...our current accounts of the workings of image-schematic structure do not adequately capture the felt, qualitative aspects of embodied human understanding. To the extent that these accounts remain exclusively structural, they are bound to leave out significant dimensions of human meaning.” Mark Johnson, “The Philosophical Significance of Image Schemas,” in *Cognitive Linguistics Research*; 29, ed. Beate Hampe and Joseph E. Grady (Berlin ; New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 2005), 15. Johnson nevertheless continues to assert, “the structural aspects of concepts and inference would appear to be primarily a matter of image schema logic.” Johnson, “The Philosophical Significance of Image Schemas,” 24.

¹⁰ Jordan Zlatev, “What’s in a Schema? Bodily Mimesis and the Grounding of Language,” in *From Perception to Meaning: Image Schemas in Cognitive Linguistics*, ed. Beate Hampe (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2005).

¹¹ Giacomo Rizzolatti and Laila Craighero, “The Mirror-Neuron System,” *Annual Review of Neuroscience* 27 (2004).

mechanisms in the spinal cord block impulses that would otherwise cause observers' muscles actually to carry out the observed actions.¹² Clinical experiments show that very small but observable muscular actions do fire and correlate with observed actions.¹³ The same phenomenon has been observed in fMRI scans of people observing the behavior of non-human animals; when humans observed some animal activities (such as biting), the humans' motor cortex activated as if the human observer were carrying out the biting. Thus, the line between one's own physical enactment of a rite and the observation of another's ritual action is fuzzy. Whereas the conception of an image schema is often linked to immediate personal bodily experience, the concept of mimetic schema opens naturally to *shared, public* (i.e. mimetic) source domains for the construction of conceptual metaphor. The domain is "shared among the members of a community who engage in face-to-face (or rather body-to-body) interaction."¹⁴

Further, Zlatev's mimetic schema helpfully complicates the literally black-and-white schematic renderings of Johnson's image schemas. Certainly bodily experience is more complex than such sketches, given the feelings, emotions, and various senses involved in basic bodily experience. Bodily *mimesis*, on the other hand, while not as easily sketched, accounts more readily for such experience: "mimetic schemas exist at the level of specific real or imagined bodily actions. Since they are by their nature *experiential* structures, each mimetic schema has a different emotional-proprioceptive 'feel', or affective tone."¹⁵

¹² Ibid.: 175.

¹³ Ibid.: 186.

¹⁴ Zlatev, "What's in a Schema? Bodily Mimesis and the Grounding of Language," 20.

¹⁵ Ibid., 10.

In the study of ritual, especially rituals that are normally performed only once on an individual (though observed many times) as in many rites of passage, the concept of mimetic schema may help account for the strong embodied knowledge of a rite that one normally only observes. For example, a rite of passage that is only experienced once in a lifetime as a “passenger” may nevertheless function as an embodied, often-experienced schema if it is observed with some regularity. This could be true even for those who *only* observe the rite and are *never* the ritual “passenger.”

Spatial Cognition and Schemas

Johnson implies a rather strict boundary around the sensing body as a source domain. Zlatev helpfully blurs the distinction between one’s own bodily experience and others’ by pointing to the human mimetic tendency to receive another’s bodily experience similarly to one’s own by way of the mirror neuron network. Chris Sinha and Kristine Jensen de Lopez also widen the scope of schematic analysis. They direct attention beyond immediate, brute, bodily experience to the landscape as a source domain.¹⁶ They notice that metaphorical projections originate in the body and also frequently in the landscape. Often, they find, the metaphorical blends seem mutually to inform each source domain.¹⁷ Thus, there is an interplay between body and landscape, or body and ecology, that is important to consider in the mapping of source domains, as the boundary between body and landscape is a fuzzy one:

we would conclude that the human body schema is a privileged, but not unique, source domain for the linguistic conceptualization of spatial relations, and that its widespread recruitment for this purpose reflects its universal experiential salience. To this extent, the embodiment thesis is empirically well founded. However, other

¹⁶ Chris Sinha and Kristine Jensen de Lopez, "Language, Culture and the Embodiment of Spatial Cognition," *Cognitive Linguistics* 11, no. 1 (2000).

¹⁷ *Ibid.*: 23.

source domains (e.g., geophysical features, geographically or cosmologically based directional systems) also occur with high frequency, and this by the same token also reflects their high experiential saliency. The embodiment thesis thus predicts a part of the relevant linguistic data, but is on its own unable to account for all of it, unless extended to encompass at least aspects and features of the experientially or ecologically significant, noncorporeal world.¹⁸

Thus, schematic accounts of embodied ritual action may arise not only from enacted and observed embodied activity but also from patterns observed in the wider landscape and cosmos.

As will be explored below, water seems to be especially susceptible to a conceptual interplay between body and landscape: water in the landscape is often called a “body”; descriptions of bodily experience are often structured by water-in-the-landscape metaphors.¹⁹ Attending to the bodies of the landscape keeps the analyst of ritual open to perceiving conceptual blends that might be otherwise “off the map” for the researcher who confines the angle of analysis only to human bodies.²⁰

The ways in which humans observe motion in general suggests further connections between observed activity and embodied experience. Gibbs and Berg demonstrate that even when humans view static objects, they tend to seek out and think in terms of “motion” and “cause.”²¹ Mental imagery often includes imaginary object manipulation and/or bodily movement:

¹⁸ Ibid.: 24.

¹⁹ See, for example, how ascriptions of supernatural bodily strength and power to the Ganges have suppressed ritual participants’ willingness to see the river as polluted or physically fragile in Kelly D. Alley, “Idioms of Degeneracy: Assessing Ganga’s Purity and Pollution,” in *Purifying the Earthly Body of God: Religion and Ecology in Hindu India*, ed. Lance E Nelson, *Suny Series in Religious Studies* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1998).

²⁰ One exemplary ethnographic study of the interaction between narrative practices, metaphor, and landscape is Keith H. Basso, “Wisdom Sits in Places: Notes on a Western Apache Landscape,” in *Senses of Place*, ed. Steven Feld and Keith H. Basso (Santa Fe: School of American Research Press, 1996).

²¹ Raymond W. Gibbs and Eric A. Berg, “Mental Imagery and Embodied Activity,” *Journal of Mental Imagery* 26, no. 1&2 (2002): 3.

...we understand the term *image* to refer to any imaginary instance where one considers what it may be like to move one's body in a certain way, to think what it may be like to manipulate an object in different ways, or what it must feel like to act upon an object in a certain manner, all without actually physically doing what we are presently thinking.²²

Further, they observe that mental processes often seem to include simulations of physical experience: people tend to take more time imagining the concept of running through a room filled with waist-deep water than they do imagining the concept of running through a (generically large) room.²³

Given the importance of movement for mental schema, it follows that Gibbs and Berg would identify the SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schema as “one of the most basic image schemas that arises from our bodily experience and perceptual interactions with the world (i.e. consider all of the actions in which any part of a body moves to reach some physical object or location).”²⁴ Thus, any movement—even, as suggested above, a static object—may invite mental mappings outward to include a source, a path, and a goal. This seems to be a mapping that occurs previous to the metaphorical projection; it is an elaboration that occurs within a schema itself.

Further, movement is related to schematically imagined momentum. Human perception seems to anticipate unconsciously the effects of momentum and gravity on any moving object, even those not subject to such forces.²⁵ For example, human subjects tended to report mechanical objects that moved horizontally as moving lower than they did in reality, compared to vertically moving objects—apparently unconsciously

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.: 4.

²⁴ Ibid.: 16.

²⁵ Ibid.: 14-15.

accounting for the downward force of gravity.²⁶ Not only do mental schemas seem to be set in motion in the mind, but they also seem to be structured by way of some bodily experienced realities such as momentum and gravity.

Blending and Ritual

The concept of conceptual blending is integral to much metaphor theory and specifically to this project's use of Johnson's account of the image schema.²⁷ In brief, blending theory holds that a significant amount of human cognition arises from blended domains, in which discrete image schematic accounts and other conceptual elements are held together in the mind and correlated to produce an additional blended meaning. Gilles Fauconnier points to an everyday example of this phenomenon when a passenger who was a guest of a driver said: "you're driving us around so much you're going to meet yourself coming down the street."²⁸ Fauconnier's point is that such a joke depends upon the mental gathering of schematic renderings of *different* passes along a road taken by the car into the *same* blended space, thus allowing the car to "meet" itself on the street. Fauconnier introduces this joke as a fairly simple example of the same kind of thinking required in the more sophisticated example of a Buddhist riddle regarding a monk "meeting himself" while climbing a mountain on subsequent days, thus suggesting that blending can occur at more and less profound levels of thought.²⁹ According to Fauconnier, when a blend is accomplished at any level of thought correlations between

²⁶ Ibid.: 15.

²⁷ Blending theory is generally less concerned with strictly rendered schemas than conceptual metaphor theory. Joseph E. Grady, Todd Oakley, and Seana Coulson, "Blending and Metaphor," in *Metaphor in Cognitive Linguistics*, ed. Raymond W. Gibbs and Gerard Steen (Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Co., 1999), 102.

²⁸ Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner, *The Way We Think: Conceptual Blending and the Mind's Hidden Complexities* (New York: Basic Books, 2002), 53.

²⁹ Ibid., 39ff.

the blended spaces can “pop out automatically, yielding a flash of comprehension, Koestler’s magical ‘act of creation.’”³⁰

Fauconnier sees conceptual blending as the “basic instrument of imaginative invention” in rituals.³¹ He uses the example of the rite of the “Baby’s Ascent” in which a new child is carried up the steps into its home for the first time. Fauconnier notes that the upward trajectory of the stairs is blended with the hopes for a future of growth and success (metaphorically represented by upward motion) for the new child. That the ritual space is a “live” space, open for “emergent structure,” is indicated by the way in which even ordinarily small events (for example, a small stumble over a stair or a hurried rush up the stairs) may evoke ominous thoughts in the participants, suggesting a future for the child that involves danger or peril, or a short life span.³² The meaning-stakes can be high in such a ritual, as the simple ascent of a flight of stairs is blended with an image of the entire future life of a newly born child. Fauconnier notes that the conservative nature of ritual scripts (that they are in fact scripted) arises partly in order to prevent undesirable blends from being created, i.e. the conservative nature of ritual scripts is at least partly a response to the prolific character of meaning-generation in the ritual blending space.³³

The meaning arising in ritual is real meaning, according to Fauconnier. Quite apart from attributions of superhuman participation, the *meaning-structures* that are *emergent* in the rite are often recognized as real and efficacious even by otherwise agnostic participants:

Although many participants may lack belief in the efficacy of a ritual, they have a shared interest in achieving optimal correspondence between the performance of

³⁰ Ibid., 44.

³¹ Ibid., 81.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid., 85.

the ritual and the reality it is meant to capture. The performance can label the participants, and the labels can have social effects over time, making the performance ultimately self-fulfilling. The blend, for social reasons, can create its own efficacy.³⁴

Fauconnier, in sum, offers an account of blending that naturally incorporates Johnson's image schema and allows for wider schematic accounts arising from mimesis and landscape. Fauconnier's analysis of ritual attends strongly to embodied patterns enacted in the ritual space, and relativizes questions of supernatural participation in rites in favor of an analysis of the social consequences of ritual blending.

Jesper Sørensen has fruitfully explored—in detail greater than Fauconnier—some theoretical dynamics of the relationship between ritual and blending. Generally, Sørensen argues that

ritual structures are constructed through the process of conceptually blending separate cognitive domains; they are marked off from ordinary discourse as a specific cultural genre; and links based on identity, analogy, metaphor and metonymy facilitate the projection of both ritual efficacy and inferential structure into the ritual space.³⁵

In Sørensen's consideration of magic ritual,³⁶ he points to the schematic/metaphorical connections between the magic rite on the one hand and the intended effect of the rite on the other. Thus,

...exorcism will contain iconic or image-schematic structures involving a movement *away* from the afflicted, and possibly indexical structures of power transferred from persons or objects by contact etc. These features... constrain possible symbolic interpretations.... Ritual actions will often provoke symbolic interpretations aimed to make sense of the actions involved, and these interpretations will not only be related to already existing symbolic structures of religion and mythology, but also be constrained by the iconic and indexical meaning inherent in the ritual actions. Thus it is difficult if not impossible to

³⁴ Ibid., 86.

³⁵ Jesper Sørensen, "Magic among the Trobrianders: Conceptual Mapping in Magical Rituals," *Cognitive Semiotics* (2008): 36.

³⁶ By "magic ritual" he means a ritual performance involving an agent possessing a non-native physical power that is especially sensed, renewed, or employed by way of ritual.

interpret the ingestion of an object as an act of expulsion of that same object, or to interpret kneeling before a statue of a god as an act of subjugation.”³⁷

Thus, the conceptual blend “enables the magician to physically manipulate things [natural entities, enemies, diseases] that are otherwise difficult or impossible to manipulate” in their non-metaphorical state.³⁸ Sørensen sees the thought-practices invited by ritual as conceptually creative, opening the ritual participants’ minds to ways of thinking that might not arise outside of the conceptual possibilities that ritual offers:

When the Trobrianders claim that “the belly of my garden shall rise”...or the Catholic priest that “bread and wine is the flesh and blood of Christ,” neither of them are subject to category-mistakes, prelogical mentality, or a proclivity to poetry. Rather the ritual actions and utterances effect a transfer or manipulation of essential and schematic properties between conceptual or even ontological domains that enable novel inferences and interaction with domains otherwise beyond reach.³⁹

Ritual, for Sørensen, is structured to encourage what might be called a *hyper-metaphorical* disposition: “the construction of a ritual space facilitates a change in the participants’ emotional, aesthetic and epistemic attitude by creating a blended space in which different domains are allowed to interact.”⁴⁰

Sørensen takes the strangeness or non-utilitarian nature of ritual to be a cue for the participants to enter a more heightened state of metaphorical projection. Participants in ritual, Sørensen argues, are prepared by ritual cues to regard much of the ritual activity as meaningful in a domain other than its everyday, instrumental domain. The de-coupling of embodied action from typical expectation is cued by the “apparent meaninglessness of

³⁷ Jesper Sørensen, "The Problem of Magic: Or How Gibberish Becomes Efficacious Action," *Semiotic Inquiry* 25, no. 1-2 (2005): 23-24.

³⁸ Sørensen, "Conceptual Mapping in Magical Rituals," 58.

³⁹ Jesper Sørensen, "Piercing Dolls and Burning Hair: Conceptual Blending in Magical Rituals," in *The Way We Think: a research symposium on conceptual integration and the nature and origin of cognitively modern human beings*, ed. Anders Hougaard and Steffen Norhahl Lund (Odense University (Denmark), Institute of Language and Communication 2002), 6.

⁴⁰ Sørensen, "Conceptual Mapping in Magical Rituals," 62.

the ritual action” which in turn seems to catalyze a curiosity that may inspire a “continuous generation of meaning”:⁴¹

The absence of strong domain-specific expectations and clear symbolic reference as to the purpose and meaning of the actions performed provokes a cognitive search for other relations between ritual actions and their purported effect. In this search, fundamental strategies of categorization such as essential identity, part-whole relations, and perceptual similarity are employed—exactly the processes fundamental to the construction and understanding of metonymies and metaphors, or indexical and iconic representations. At the same time the focus moves away from the relation between an intentional logical agent and the result of the action, to properties of the ritual actions.⁴²

Thus, de-coupling, accomplished by the strangeness, or non-literality, of the rite, is integral to the meaningfulness of ritual, and, therefore, to any definition of ritual: “ritual can be characterized as a mode of action in which both the domain-specific expectations to behaviour and cause and effect of entities in the world and conventional symbolic references are de-coupled from the actions performed.”⁴³

Sørensen and Fauconnier together offer an analysis of ritual that highlights the embodied patterns enacted in the rite, relativizes the question of literal ascription of supernatural agency, and, at least in Sørensen, suggests the cognitive motivation of conceptual “de-coupling” behind some of ritual’s strange performative behaviors. Ritual, in their account, takes place in—and even functions as—a blending space, generating socially meaningful and significant conceptualizations, i.e. meaning.

⁴¹ ———, “The Problem of Magic,” 22.

⁴² ———, “Conceptual Blending in Magical Rituals,” 10.

⁴³ ———, “Conceptual Blending in Magical Rituals,” 9. This de-coupling process is part of non-ritualized metaphor as well. William Croft notices the same search for significance and the “adjustment” brought about in the face of metaphor and metonymy in William Croft, “The Role of Domains in the Interpretation of Metaphors and Metonymies,” *Cognitive Linguistics*, no. 4 (1993): 366. And Paul Ricoeur writes about a crisis brought about by the “logical absurdity” of metaphor, resulting in a search for an appropriate interpretation of the metaphor. Paul Ricoeur, “Metaphor and the Main Problem of Hermeneutics,” in *The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur: An Anthology of His Work*, ed. Charles E. Reagan and David Stewart (Boston: Beacon Press, 1978), 140-41.

Up to this point, this account of metaphor, meaning, and ritual has largely been applicable to ritual and metaphor in general. The following section, however, enters the contested territory of the construction of agency, which is at times particularly associated with the domain of religion and the supernatural.

Agency and Ritual

The attribution of agency is of paramount importance in McCauley's and Lawson's analysis of rites: "...our command of the category of agency (and the inferences that accompany it) is the single most important piece of ordinary cognitive equipment deployed in the representation of religious rituals."⁴⁴ McCauley and Lawson are interested in the attribution of "superhuman" agency in ritual—first to culturally constructed divine powers and then, from them, to ritual actors, actions, and objects.

Lakoff and Johnson address the ascription of agency in much more quotidian contexts. They describe how intention and action are routinely ascribed via metaphor to non-living entities—especially complex and relatively inchoate entities.⁴⁵ Concepts like "the economy" are given "ontological" status.⁴⁶ "The economy" is conceived not simply as a concept but as an object or a being, and even given agency and intention: it creates jobs, responds to events, has an invisible hand, grows or shrinks, suffers, can take things into account and know things, can be freed or controlled by other entities, can take care of some things on its own. Such ascription of agency radically reduces the complexity of the total field of practices and relationships deemed "economic," and thus offers a way to speak and think efficiently about events and realities of diffuse and immense complexity.

⁴⁴ Robert N. McCauley and E. Thomas Lawson, *Bringing Ritual to Mind: Psychological Foundations of Cultural Forms* (Cambridge, UK ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 23.

⁴⁵ See chapters 6-7 in George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 25-32.

Lakoff and Johnson describe the agency and intention ascribed to such non-human entities as a projection of human qualities onto non-human (in this case, abstract) entities.⁴⁷

Thus, while McCauley and Lawson focus on the religious nature of the construction of super-human agency, Lakoff and Johnson point to the everyday nature of both the construction of agency and the conventionalization of ontological status of non-physical entities. Further, as noted above, Gibbs has demonstrated that human knowers account for physical forces (i.e. natural, agential forces) like movement, gravity, and inertia in their everyday cognitive accounts of actions and objects. Movement and action (and the suggestion of such actions), when received within the SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schema, invite extrapolation “backward” to a source and “forward” to a goal. In all these accounts, human ascription of agency may indeed be described, as Justin Barrett has it, as “hyperactive.”⁴⁸ But such attribution of agency is not necessarily fictitious or extraordinary, and often does function helpfully in everyday, conceptual, and non-religious ways.

Sørensen examines questions of agency in ritual in some detail. He argues that magic ritual creates a mapping in which an agent in the rite appears, by way of conceptual blending, to possess an agency that originates somewhere other than itself. The site of the non-native agency may be posited in a *human person* (as in a priest or demoniac or divinely ordained leader), an *action* (as in the actions of a fertility rite, the speech of a powerful verbal formula, or the sacred patterned manipulation of an

⁴⁷ Ibid., 33-34.

⁴⁸ See his description of the Hyperactive Agency Detection Device (HADD) in Justin Barrett, "Exploring the Natural Foundations of Religion," *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 4 (2000).

otherwise non-specially-agential object), or in an *object* (as in a magical weapon, a sacred tree, or blessed eucharistic bread).⁴⁹

Given the identification of the non-native agency, rites also may indicate the character of the force that the agent possesses:

for instance, spells aimed to protect someone against an external malevolent agent must expose at least the same amount of force as is ascribed the malevolent external agent, and iteration, prosody, rhythm and intonation are some of the means to produce this representation.⁵⁰

Sørensen notes that representations of agency and force in “magical” rites, in order to be efficacious for participants, need to be signified as a force adequately powerful to oppose those other forces. Sørensen analyzes the Azande practice of a traveler placing a round stone in the crook of a tree trunk on a journey home in the hope that the sun will not set before he or she returns home.⁵¹ Sørensen notes that the supporting force of the tree branch successfully opposes the downward force drawing the stone toward the earth. This tree-rock schema is blended with the schema structuring the setting sun: the downward force of the setting sun, via the blend, is now opposed by a supportive force that has sufficient agency to oppose the downward-forcing round object. While Sørensen does not suggest this interpretation, it is reasonable to imagine the blend described here as creating a space in which the traveler may experience an efficacious sense of freedom and ability. Such an understanding would correlate with Mark Johnson’s account of modal verbs—specifically of the verbs that express ability and openness: they are structured, Johnson argues, around a schematic account of an open space, without

⁴⁹ Sørensen, "Conceptual Blending in Magical Rituals," 3-5.

⁵⁰ ———, "The Problem of Magic," 18.

⁵¹ Sørensen relies on reports of the rite from Evans-Pritchard. ———, "Conceptual Blending in Magical Rituals," 11.

obstacles, in which an actor may freely move.⁵² In this case, when the sun/rock is held up by the tree, the obstacles that accompany the setting of the sun (the darkness and perhaps stones to trip over) are kept elevated, out of the path of the traveler.

Sørensen, following Mark Johnson, finds force-dynamics to be related to all image-schematic structures:

In bodily experience, image-schemata and force-dynamics are interwoven. All schemata involve notions of relations of forces (thus a CONTAINER will have a border that one must exert some force to overcome), and all exertion of force will have a schematic quality organizing the spatial relation among the parts. Further, force-dynamics are an essential part of all causal scenarios used to distinguish important from unimportant parts of a given scenario. Elements exerting or resisting force will be judged as more important than elements that do not, and primary among these are the exertion of psychological force, i.e. intention.⁵³

The dynamics of force are thus not additional layers projected onto image schemas, but rather an integral dimension of the schema itself.

Sørensen's account helpfully illustrates that supplemental agency may be constructed into a ritual blend via image schematic properties without ontological assertions of "culturally postulated superhuman agents."⁵⁴ The image schemas themselves entail power, momentum, and force. Entities are schematically rendered and blended in such a way that ritual actors may participate in and harness the power/agency that animates the image schema.

Also, contra McCauley and Lawson, the counter-intuitive agency constructed in the ritual need not necessarily be a projection of human agency into another domain and then received back as "super-human" agency, but rather may be a case of intuitive, quotidian force (e.g. "support") that is blended with other quotidian processes (e.g.

⁵² Johnson, *The Body in the Mind*, 41-57.

⁵³ Sørensen, *A Cognitive Theory of Magic*, 42.

⁵⁴ McCauley and Lawson, *Bringing Ritual to Mind*, 23.

sunset, downward force). Thus, it is certainly possible that the ritual act could serve cognitively to counteract irrational thoughts about the sun sinking faster than normal, or simply as a reassuring reminder that the powerful “downward” force of the sun is checked by other forces. In both of the latter senses, the ritual act may (but not at all necessarily) serve cognitively to reacquaint the ritual actor with a more trustworthy and accurate account of the cosmos. All this is to note that the ritual construction of agency need not be delusional or “patently false”⁵⁵ but even *may* be a helpful recalibration of the ritual actor’s working model of the cosmos.⁵⁶

Rituals may grant supplemental agency to persons, actions, and objects as well as to special times and places. In all cases the supplementation of agency is generated via

⁵⁵ Nancy Frankenberry asserts that metaphors do not carry meaningful “contents” but rather are “patently false expression[s]” that simply cause people to notice “novel relationships.” In short, metaphor “does not carry meaning.” Nancy Frankenberry, “Religion as a Mobile Army of Metaphors: A Davidsonian Critique,” in *Radical Interpretation in Religion*, ed. Nancy Frankenberry (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 179.

⁵⁶ Tom Driver places efficacy and agency (“power”) at the heart of his definition of ritual: “A ritual is an efficacious performance that invokes the presence and action of powers which, without the ritual, would not be present or active at that time and place, or would be so in a different way.” Tom Faw Driver, *Liberating Rites: Understanding the Transformative Power of Ritual* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1998), 97. For Driver, the “bracketing of the ontological status of deity” is acceptable in theoretical analysis and is a plausible stance for ritual participants. Ritual participants themselves can and do believe in the supplemental efficacy/power of ritual without ascribing ontological status to non-physical agents who would ostensibly grant such agency. Driver, *Liberating Rites: Understanding the Transformative Power of Ritual*, 98. Indeed it is not uncommon for people to experience real supplementation to their own agency by way of metaphorical projection—quite apart from supernatural ascription. Gibbs and Berg describe the example of a man who was a poor public speaker and was seeking to improve his speaking skills for his job. Knowing that he had formerly been an outstanding baseball player, an advisor suggested that he imagine his audience as an opposing baseball team’s pitcher, and the podium as home plate. By blending a situation in which he had previously experienced strong agency (baseball) with a situation in which he felt little agency (public speaking) this businessman experienced an enhanced sense of agency and efficacy that resulted in observably improved public speaking. It is not difficult to call to mind other situations in which similar strategies of blending can increase or decrease actual ability and agency. Gibbs and Berg, “Mental Imagery and Embodied Activity,” 23. Reframing situations through blending or ritual is not limited to purely psychological benefits. Donald Schön makes a persuasive case for the role of metaphorical reframing as a powerful tool in conceptual, scientific, and technological advances in Donald Schön, “Generative Metaphor: A Perspective on Problem Setting in Social Policy,” in *Metaphor and Thought*, ed. A. Ortony (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978). While such advances are clearly generating agency of a sort distinct from that which is under discussion here, Schön’s account nevertheless demonstrates how metaphorical reframing results in greater experienced autonomy and agency—arguably not only in novel cases but also in repeated ritual situations that “re-mind” participants of helpful and efficacious ways of conceptualizing and operating in the world.

metaphorical/metonymical blending, though, as McCauley and Lawson point out, the agency may enter the ritual system by way of a previous ritual (e.g. a previous ordination or spirit possession that grants a ritual leader on-going supplemental agency; this category can include even “hypothetical” rituals like institution narratives that grant agency in the distant past).⁵⁷ Sørensen also notes that some ritual entities receive an ascription of agency by way of contagion or contiguity—a concept discussed below, under the category of metonymy. For example, a chalice that simply holds “consecrated” wine may have no explicit rite that grants it sacred agency, yet ritual participants may over time come to regard the object as demanding reverence from them and fear treating the chalice as if it were an ordinary drinking cup.

Ritual also may grant agency in a more immediate sense. Recalling Catherine Bell’s insistence that “political rituals do not refer to politics... they *are* politics,”⁵⁸ one may see in the ritual arrangement of bodies both strong *restrictions on* and *generations of* agency. For example, ritual participants bowing to an enthroned political or religious leader can be both generative of power for the enthroned and restrictive on power for those bowing. Contrariwise, certain rites of passage that are open to *all* members of a community may generate reverence for the ritual “passenger” by way of lavish ritual dignity physically given to the “passenger,” and thereby, even if only temporarily, generate agency and power in an egalitarian mode. Such rites clearly also have image schematic properties that are activated and run in the ritual blend: *prohibitions* against treating the passenger as a manipulable object (the negation of an image of manipulation)

⁵⁷ McCauley and Lawson, *Bringing Ritual to Mind*, 23. Bell claims that “It appears that ritual is used in those situations in which certain values and ideas are more powerfully binding on people if they are deemed to derive from sources of power outside the immediate community.” Catherine M. Bell, *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 136.

⁵⁸ Catherine M. Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 195.

and *enacted* prescriptions of gift giving and servanthood (perhaps enacted by actual gift-giving and arranging the passenger physically above the other ritual participants).⁵⁹

Another example illustrates a complex field of forces that can be ritually generated and experienced as a force or power in which ritual participants participate. At the invitation to receive communion in some orthodox liturgies, the presider calls out while holding up the communion elements, “Holy things for holy people,” which might function as a warning and/or an invitation.⁶⁰ There is ambiguity about whether a schema of ENABLEMENT or of BLOCKAGE is being constructed here (are the people “holy” and therefore welcome to the table, or not holy, and therefore not welcome? Johnson’s account of modal verbs would ask the question: is the path open or obstructed, etc?). The scripted response of the assembly reframes the invitation so that the schema constructed sounds exclusive: “*One* is holy, Jesus Christ to the glory of God.” The schema here appears to be one of singular, particular access to holiness. And yet it draws into the blend the image of Christ who himself, as he is represented especially at table in scripture, is a sign of welcome, especially to those known as the unholy. Thus the simple binary dynamics of ENABLEMENT and BLOSCKAGE are disrupted. Finally, the cantor may sing out to the assembly “O, taste and see that the Lord is good”—a final word of invitation and access. Thus, a complex blend of schemas is constructed, all of them entailing questions of force and access, with the final authoritative word/schema being

⁵⁹ Given primary metaphors such as CONTROL IS UP and UNDERSTANDING IS GRASPING, one might fruitfully notice which symbolic elements are highest in a ritual space, and which ones are able to be physically grasped. These embodied primary metaphors are analyzed in George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and Its Challenge to Western Thought* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), 50ff.

⁶⁰ This analysis largely follows Gordon Lathrop’s description of the theological and anthropological dimensions (without the image schematic analysis) of this dialog in Gordon Lathrop, *Holy Things: A Liturgical Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 117-18.

one of ENABLEMENT or REMOVAL OF RESTRAINT: the invitation to “taste and see” comes on the authority of the “one” who is holy, who may therefore approach the “holy things.” The layering of these schemas produces a complex map of agency, access, and restriction. Such rites—and the meaning arising from them—might be helpfully analyzed by way of image schemas, with special attention to agency and field of force.

Thus the augmentation to agency comes by way of a number of ritual constructions: the ritual construction of actual power relationships in the ritual itself (e.g. subservient bodies, etc.); image schematic properties of the ritual act that suggest force beyond what is actually seen (e.g. representational momentum, implied behavioral prohibitions and prescriptions relative to ritual passengers); ritual blending in which the agency or force of one domain is blended with and transferred to another domain (e.g. a stone in a tree; the piercing of a doll); ascriptions of agency arising from previous (actual or hypothetical) rituals (e.g. ordinations, institution narratives); and ascription of agency to ritual entities by way of contiguity with/contagion from other powerful ritual entities (e.g. the unconsecrated chalice treated as sacred).

The ritual supplementation of agency may be helpfully analyzed by the categories laid out here. However, one point needs to be emphasized: agency is not always a category well analyzed by binary schemas, such as human vs. superhuman agency, or sacred vs. mundane agency. First, there is nothing “sacred” about the mental imagery that blends a speaking podium with home plate and the audience with the opposing pitcher. Yet the constructed blend can enable a speaker to believe in and experience increased agency—even if the memories of the speaker’s baseball prowess are embellished or entirely fictional. If one speaker approaches the podium imagining that he will speak

well, just as if he is hitting a home run (when in fact he never has played baseball), and another speaker approaches the podium reciting a religious mantra about the gods promising her words of wisdom to speak, then the distinction between sacred and mundane sources of agency begins to appear fuzzy at best. Second, Sørensen's account of schematically generated "force" demonstrates that the agency constructed by ritual can be less binary than scalar—and likely more complex than the linear scale as well. Some rituals, Sørensen shows, calibrate representations of agency to make the force of such agency adequate for the task at hand (i.e. the force is scalar, and not binary).

Further, human agency itself is hardly attributed and experienced in general as a binary, on/off phenomenon. Feminist ethicists and epistemologists have shown that in everyday situations agency ebbs and flows, and is experienced and evoked by way of complex social processes.⁶¹ Accounts of agency that depict "superhuman agency" as an either/or proposition are not sufficiently complex.⁶² It does not account for the human experience of varying sense of efficacy, but rather charts agency as either human or superhuman—binary. Mark Johnson's account of modal verbs has a very schematic but much more complex account of agency and ability and as such is useful for mapping agency and field of force constructions in ritual.

Metonymy and Ritual

The concepts of metonymy and ritual blur, or perhaps more appropriately, *blend* in myriad ways. Laurie Patton provocatively states that the "use of metonymy in fiction is

⁶¹ See, for example, Lorraine Code, *Rhetorical Spaces: Essays on Gendered Locations* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

⁶² See, for example, McCauley, Robert N., and E. Thomas Lawson. *Bringing Ritual to Mind: Psychological Foundations of Cultural Forms*. Cambridge, UK ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

also the same in ritual—in fact, one might say the very definition of ritual.”⁶³ There may be numerous ways to structure an analysis of metonymy and ritual. In the interest of simplicity of structure, this essay will orient the discussion of metonymy and ritual by way of two functions of metonymy in ritual—an epistemic centripetal force that focuses meaning, and an epistemic centrifugal force, which radiates or disperses meaning.

Linguistic and visual metonymies may exert a sort of epistemic gravitational force. Anne Pankhurst charts the layers of meaning that accrete to Pilate’s earring in Toni Morrison’s *Song of Solomon* by way of an OBJECT-FOR-OWNER metonymy.⁶⁴ The earring, through the art of narrative construction, draws to itself strata of meaning, including the identity of Pilate, her family history, and images of matriarchal power. Thus the focused sign of Pilate’s earring comes to stand for a complex of narrative events and concepts all of which can be called to mind by the appearance of the earring. Metonymy, therefore, Pankhurst demonstrates, is able to operate as a powerful tool for memory by way of its focused epistemic character.

The same process may be observed in ritual. For example, bread in the eucharist may stand in a PART-FOR-WHOLE metonymy for food/nourishment in general. Additionally, it may, by way of narrative juxtaposition, draw to itself associations with Passover bread, manna in the wilderness, the bread-meals of Jesus (including the so-called last supper of Jesus in which the bread is associated with Jesus’ body), and the images of eschatological feasts scattered throughout the Hebrew and Christian scriptures and called to mind in ritual. The metonymically focused element (in this case, the bread)

⁶³ Laurie L. Patton, *Bringing the Gods to Mind: Mantra and Ritual in Early Indian Sacrifice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 51.

⁶⁴ Anne Pankhurst, "Recontextualization of Metonymy in Narrative and the Case of Morrison's *Song of Solomon*," in *Metonymy in Language and Thought*, ed. Klaus-Uwe Panther and Günter Radden (Amsterdam ; Philadelphia: J. Benjamins, 1999).

not only calls to mind numerous strata of narratives and concepts but also highlights or foregrounds the role of bread in those now-related accounts. Ritual allows the diverse metonymically associated meaning-accounts (e.g. the bread narratives or the various narratives regarding Pilate) that have been focused in the element (e.g. the bread or the earring), able to be not only *memorable* by way of the appearance of the element, but also physically *manipulable*.⁶⁵

Thus the focusing function of metonymy may culminate in ritual in a compact epistemic entity: a loaf of bread, a doll, a scrap of text, a stone, a mantra. Having been focused, or loaded, with cognitive associations, the entity holds much meaning-association, and is thus useful for memorability, but perhaps its most powerful function is that in which, by way of its manipulability, the focused metonymic element is placed into interaction with ritual participants, other metonymically focused elements, and the wider world. One can, for analytical purposes, identify a theoretical point—if not a discrete ritual moment—at which a ritual element is maximally charged with metonymic associations. This charged, or focused, element enables ritual participants to maneuver efficiently large amounts of complex meanings and narratives.⁶⁶

The centripetal/focusing function of metonymy may be contrasted to its centrifugal/radiating function. In the radiating mode, metonymically focused elements radiate their signification metonymically (i.e. by way of contiguity or association) to still

⁶⁵ Turner and Fauconnier point out that metonymic representations in the blend may themselves be “tightened” at least partly so as to provide greater manipulability of the metonymic entity on the part of ritual participants. Mark Turner and Gilles Fauconnier, “Metaphor, Metonymy, and Binding,” <http://markturner.org/metmet.html>.

⁶⁶ The manipulability of metonymic elements makes them especially suited for abuse. The metonymically focused element by nature suppresses certain aspects of the reality it represents, and then may be manipulated (literally and figuratively) to produce further conceptualizations that can be violently repressive. See especially the claim of M. Bal who provocatively states that “sublimation is the most adequate theory of metaphor.” M. Bal, “Metaphors He Lives By,” in *Women, War, and Metaphor* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993), 205.

other elements. This process becomes apparent and even expected when one understands the entire ritual theater as a sort of domain, or, to speak imprecisely, as a physical embodiment of a blending space. As soon as the metonymically focused element is maneuvered by an actor relative to another object or actor, the associative properties of metonymy continue to function and thus the meaning-structures that are focused at the metonymic element *radiate* or *blur* toward those contiguous elements. This may take place with intention (e.g. the participants ingest the focused bread and wine, or place their hands over the focused flames and then place their hands over their foreheads) or simply by “contagion” (e.g. the rail at which the communicants kneel is treated with reverence even after the ritual; a boutonniere from a wedding is preserved for years in a special case). Sørensen notes that this contagious character of metonymic significance is so pervasive that one may fruitfully analyze the ritual strategies by which such contagion is *prevented*—ritual practices that try to ensure that associative thought does not arc out in undesired ways.⁶⁷ This correlates with Fauconnier’s and Turner’s observation that all objects within a blending space will tend to have significance assigned to them.⁶⁸

The migration, or radiation, of meaning described here in ritual is not dissimilar to the development of metonymous meaning in other more mundane settings. René Dirven describes the radiation of meaning from the tea bush, to its fermented leaves, to a drink,

⁶⁷ Jesper Sørensen, "the Morphology and Function of Magic' Revisited," in *Current Approaches in the Cognitive Science of Religion*, ed. Ilkka Pyysiäinen and Veikko Anttonen (New York: Continuum, 2002), 188.

⁶⁸ “... [I]f an element appears in the blend, there will be pressure to find significance for this element.” Turner and Fauconnier, "Metaphor, Metonymy, and Binding."

to a ritual occasion (tea-time), to even the biscuits served at “tea.”⁶⁹ This secular example demonstrates how the introduction of even a basic ritualized pattern—teatime—may widen the scope of associative possibilities, or, in other words, radiate significance more widely. Until the introduction of the ritual, “tea” referred to entities tightly bound to the original bush. Yet with the ritualisation of the tea drinking, suddenly *bread* products also may be included in “tea,” just as wine, singing, and scriptures may be included in the *ritual* called by some “the bread” (i.e. the eucharist).

In sum, metonymies are *created* by the focusing of significance. Metonymies *create* significance by the radiation of their focused significance. Both functions operate by the principle of associative thought. Ritual functions as a blending space, in which, by way of juxtaposition, diverse entities may be known and experienced associatively (i.e. the ritual event can function as a domain in itself and thus its elements can—*de facto*—be *associated* metonymically). The ritual blending space allows a number of different image-schematic elements to be associated with a metonymically focused element—with the metonymically focused element itself (e.g. bread, water, idol, and even the ritual itself) rather than a single image schema able to bind the otherwise incompatible image schemas. As will be seen in later chapters, attention to the creation and diffusion of metonymic meaning in the ritual theater offers a promising angle of analysis for the study of the construction of significance and meaning in ritual.

Image Schemas in Ritual and Cognition

This chapter has sought to demonstrate how the category of image schema may be useful in analyzing meaning-construction arising from embodied patterns in ritual.

⁶⁹ Rene Dirven, "Metonymy and Metaphor: Different Mental Strategies of Conceptualisation," in *Metaphor and Metonymy in Comparison and Contrast*, ed. Rene Dirven and Ralf Porings (New York: Mouton d Gruyter, 2002), 81-82.

Johnson's original concept from *The Body in the Mind* was shown to be a useful entry point for understanding how meaning arises from bodily realities *prior* to the embodied ritual itself, and, further, how meaning may be simultaneously *structured* and yet not strictly *determined* by schematic patterns arising from bodily participation in ritual. The concept of image schema was augmented by accounts of the embodied knowledge that arises from the observation of other bodies and of the wider landscape. Blending theory offered a way of understanding the ritual theater itself as a blending space in which image schematic and other meaningful entities interact in an embodied context to produce powerful and epiphanic conceptualizations. Both blending theory and image schemas offered analytical tools for accounting for the construction of agency in ritual, leading to the conclusion that ritually constructed agency and force are best analyzed as scalar rather than binary phenomena. Metonymy in ritual was shown to operate by the principal of associative thought, allowing otherwise incompatible image schematic and narrative elements to be bound together metonymically. Metonymy may be helpfully studied by attention to its focusing and diffusing properties. Throughout, the categories developed over the past few decades in the study of metaphor, metonymy, and blending theory proved helpful in analyzing the meaning-construction arising from ritual. This cross-disciplinary connection suggests that the emerging social-, cognitive-, and neuro-scientific advances in the study of conceptual metaphor (and its associated fields) may offer new possibilities for the study of ritual in the coming years. Theology—and liturgical theology in particular—with its long interest in the study of signs, may especially benefit from the insights arising from these emerging disciplines: how is “primary theology” actually constructed in the minds of real ritual participants,

especially, as has been shown here, in light of *bodies* at least as much as *texts*?⁷⁰ And the ethically oriented branches of theology may find the analysis of the construction of agency in ritual to be significant and helpful: how is agency (divine or otherwise) actually received or constructed in rites, again, especially as it becomes manifest in ritual *embodiment* and beyond?

⁷⁰ One attempt at a theory of comparative religions is oriented around the study of conceptual metaphor: Edward Slingerland, "Conceptual Metaphor Theory as Methodology for Comparative Religion," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 72, no. 1 (2004). A less cognitive approach—analyzing metaphorical religious discourse similarly to aesthetic analysis of music—is proposed in Przemyslaw Jablonski, Jan van der Lans, and Chris Herman, "Metaphor Theories and Religious Language Understanding," *Metaphor and Symbol* 13, no. 4 (1998). And an analysis of a single theological metaphorical extension, LIFE IS A MORAL JOURNEY, is mapped with striking coherence in Olaf Jakel, "Hypothesis Revisited: The Cognitive Theory of Metaphor Applied to Religious Texts," *Metaphorik*, no. 02 (2002). Similar interpretive strategies may be proposed for rituals—even among variant rituals within similar traditions (e.g. an analysis of Baptist and Methodist conceptual metaphors and embodied schemas in baptism).

CHAPTER THREE

WATER AND COGNITION IN COGNITIVE SCIENCE

Having sketched a basic introduction to the role of image schemas in ritual and cognition in the previous chapter, this chapter is concerned with a particular source domain and its schematic characteristics: water. How does water function as a source domain in conceptual blending? Do different water-forms tend to correlate to different patterns of thought or conceptualizations? The method below is to organize the analysis of water as a source domain by way of discrete image-schematic patterns. The detailed considerations of the image schemas are grouped into two broader sections: schemas arising from pooled water and schemas arising from flowing water.

The literature on water and cognition in the fields of cognitive science has not yet become a self-identified body of work. The studies engaged below are generally informed by and in conversation with the standard cognitive science literature, but perhaps without exception they are not in conversation with other studies of water as a source domain. In short, these studies are placed in conversation with each other here for the first time. Those readers not interested in the specificities of previous research on water as a source domain may find the introductory and concluding sections of this chapter sufficient for navigating the cognitive scientific analysis deployed in this project.

I. Pooled water and image schemas

One of the most basic characteristics of pooled water is that it holds depth. Terms such as “the depths” and “the deeps” may refer metonymically to deeply pooled water, even as domain “water” is not directly invoked. Many of the studies of the conceptual

structure of water metaphors find the motif of depth to be significant for the work that metaphors do.

Depths: Tremendous Amounts

A basic schematic function of the depth dimension of pooled water is to signal quantity. Riika Virtanen's study of the poetry of Don grub rgyal, a 20th century Tibetan scholar and poet, identifies *depth* as the primary entailment of Don grub rgyal's use of the image of lake.⁷¹ According to Virtanen, in this poetry depth of water serves as a conceptual metaphor for a large mass of things more abstract than water. Love, the poet writes, may be "deeper than Blue Lake."⁷² When Don grub rgyal contrasts "a rivulet of suffering" with an "ocean of happiness," Virtanen notes how the usage invokes "different-sized bodies of water" in order "to express the amplitude of certain kinds of experiences."⁷³

William Brown notes that the Psalmist, in a multi-scope blend, conjures an image of ocean depths in order to accentuate the miraculous and abundantly generous character of God's gift of water in the desert.⁷⁴ God "split rocks open in the wilderness, and gave them drink abundantly as from the deeps."⁷⁵ Here one small body of water in the desert is conceptualized in terms of a much larger body of water: the ocean.

Perspective into the Depths: Exploration

A different mapping emerges when the conceptual perspective shifts to peer *inside* the body of deeply pooled water. Jane Espenson, in her analysis of the conceptual

⁷¹ Riika J. Virtanen, "Water Imagery in the Writings of Don Grub Rgyal," in *The Sixth Nordic Tibet Research Conference* (Stockholm University 2007), 8.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ William P. Brown, *Seeing the Psalms: A Theology of Metaphor*, 1st ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 111.

⁷⁵ Psalm 78.15

metaphor A PROBLEM IS A BODY OF WATER, provides an example of such shifts.⁷⁶ The task of solving an intellectual puzzle in this conceptual metaphor involves taking up a perspective that seeks to perceive the interior space of the water. The investigation of the intellectual puzzle is begun by—metaphorically—entering the water: Espenson’s examples include a problem-solver who “dived right into the problem” and “really immersed himself in the problem.”⁷⁷ Espenson notes that seeking a solution to the puzzle may be mapped as “looking for [an] object in water” (e.g. “fishing for the answer”), and that difficulties in solving the problem may be a lack of clarity of perception into the waters: a problem may be “murky.”⁷⁸ Virtanen cites an example of poetic metaphor in which one character compares another character’s mind to a “muddy pond polluted by rubbish” when the former is unable to discern the latter’s thoughts and intentions.⁷⁹ Similarly, in a study of conceptual metaphor use in knowledge management, Daniel Andriessen cites the use of pooled water metaphors to describe a field of relatively unexamined knowledge: study participants suggested that organizations “plumb the reservoirs” of institutional knowledge.⁸⁰ These elements of the conceptual metaphor are

⁷⁶ The conceptual metaphor might be more accurately titled “AN INTELLECTUAL PUZZLE IS A BODY OF WATER,” as “problem” can refer to a larger range of situations than those mapped here. Jane Espenson, “A Problem Is a Body of Water,”

http://cogsci.berkeley.edu/lakoff/metaphors/A_Problem_Is_A_Body_Of_Water.html.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Virtanen observes that, in general, MIND IS AN OCEAN “seems to be very typical of Tibetan culture,” yet the typical mapping may more often foreground the surface of the sea (calm or turbulent) rather than the depth-dimension of the sea. Regarding the specific poet under analysis, Virtanen notes “the images of ocean are often employed to express mental states or vastness.” Virtanen, “Water Imagery in the Writings of Don Grub Rgyal,” 7-8.

⁸⁰ Daniel Andriessen, “Knowledge as Love: How Metaphors Direct the Way We Manage Knowledge in Organizations” in *The 5th critical management society conference* (Manchester, UK2007), 10.

dependent upon a point of view that attempts to perceive an object that exists inside the depths of the body of water.⁸¹

It is clear that the conceptual metaphor A PROBLEM IS A BODY OF WATER entails a perspective that is directed into the body of water, yet the conceptual perspective is not necessarily one that extends outward from a position of immersion *in* the body of water. The linguistic examples of solution-finding that Espenson provides all depend on a solution being *removed from* the depths of the water and brought into clear view. This is evident in the “fishing” metaphor above: the solution, hidden in the water, is to be drawn out into the clear air. Espenson notes how an answer may be described as having “surfaced” or may be “just floating around out there.”

While the entrance into the problem is mapped as bodily immersion into a pooled body of water, the remainder of the images in A PROBLEM IS A BODY OF WATER are visual images related to the conceptual metaphor UNDERSTANDING IS SEEING.⁸² Thus, while the *entrance* into an intellectual puzzle is mapped with the metaphor of bodily immersion in water, the *solution* to such a puzzle is here mapped by the extraction and viewing of the object outside of the water. The conceptual metaphor A PROBLEM IS A BODY OF WATER thus exemplifies a characteristic of CONTAINER metaphors identified by Mark Johnson: “the contained object becomes either accessible or inaccessible to the view of some observer. It is either held so that it can be observed, or else the container itself blocks or hides the object from view.”⁸³ Water hides objects—but not completely. Water may be “murky” and thus hide an object, but it also may be “clear” and afford a relatively lucid view of the object. Further, objects may be “fished” out of the water or even “emerge” or

⁸¹ Espenson, "A Problem Is a Body of Water."

⁸² See UNDERSTANDING IS SEEING in {Lakoff, 2003 #12@103-104}

⁸³ Johnson, *The Body in the Mind*, 22.

“surface” of their own accord. According to Espenson’s mapping, the conceptual metaphor A PROBLEM IS A BODY OF WATER includes perspectives from both inside and outside of the pooled water.

Perspectives from within the Depths: Danger

Brown’s analysis of conceptual metaphors arising from the source domain of water in the Psalms highlights a number of metaphorical constructions involving a perspective taken up from *under* the water: immersion. The pooled water of the sea is a container *inside of which* originates the perspective of the schema of CONTAINMENT. The Psalmist writes of being overwhelmed by enemies in terms of immersion in the sea:

Let me be delivered from those who hate me,
from the deep waters,
Do not let the flood sweep over me,
or the deep swallow me up...⁸⁴

The control over the psalmist exerted by enemies—what Brown labels as “defenselessness”⁸⁵—is entailed by the CONTAINER schema. As Mark Johnson writes, “containment... limits and restricts forces within the container. When I am *in* a room, or *in* a jacket, I am restrained in my forceful movements.”⁸⁶ The mapping of limits and restrictions over those contained within the conceptual metaphor of immersion may be total: the watery depths can be used to structure conceptually the complete limit and restriction of the grave and death.⁸⁷ The water “covers over” Israel’s enemies in Psalm 78.53 and 106.11, as God is portrayed as the divine warrior who commands the sea water.⁸⁸

⁸⁴ Psalm 69.14-15b, quoted in Brown, *Seeing the Psalms*, 114.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Johnson, *The Body in the Mind*, 22.

⁸⁷ Brown, *Seeing the Psalms*, 117.

⁸⁸ Cited in Ibid., 111.

The threatening dangers of being immersed or contained in deep water are projected into a number of domains. Eric Johnson notes the use of the conceptual structure of water-immersion in the political debate over bi-lingual education in California. In his analysis of the conceptual metaphor EDUCATION AS A BODY OF WATER, Johnson cites an example from a newspaper article of the popular characterization of bi-lingual education as a force that threatens and constrains children. The article expressed concern for “most immigrants whose *children were sinking year after year* in interminable bilingual programs.”⁸⁹

The conceptual structure of immersion also functions to encode danger and loss of control in the conceptual metaphor CONTROL IN A FINANCIAL SITUATION IS CONTROL IN LIQUID.⁹⁰ The language arising from this conceptual structure makes clear that the question of whether perspective originates *above* or *below* water makes a significant difference in how the blend is perceived. Examples of language structured by this conceptual metaphor include “keep[ing] your head above water, financially,” the danger of “get[ting] in over your head,” describing a business that “went under/sunk” or a person who is “drowning in debts.”⁹¹

Perspective from within the Depths: Unifying Relationship

Immersion in water can also be employed to structure the conception of an overwhelmingly positive experience. Brown argues that Psalm 43 blends the schema of bodily immersion in water with the experience of emotional immersion in worship. While much biblical literature associates bodily immersion in water with metaphors of death or

⁸⁹ News text is taken from *East Valley Tribune*, 2000, August 24, p. A14, cited in Eric Johnson, "Proposition 203: A Critical Metaphor Analysis" *Bilingual Research Journal* 29, no. 1 (2005): 78.

⁹⁰ The metaphor is a subcategory of MONEY IS A LIQUID. George Lakoff, "MONEY IS A LIQUID," http://cogsci.berkeley.edu/lakoff/metaphors/Money_Is_A_Liquid.html.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

trouble, in this psalm “the psalmist discerns something profoundly liturgical about ‘deep call[ing] to deep,’ something irresistible in the peals of praise and thanksgiving issuing from the temple... [the psalmist] identifies God’s billows with *hesed*.”⁹² The conceptual map is one of overwhelming immersion in the “sea” of song, mercy, and worship.

Virtanen notes that Don grub rgyal can portray the ocean as a vast container into which various water-forms are tamed and homogenized. This process of “water, bubbles and waves” being absorbed back into a unifying ocean is used as a conceptual map of a meditative mind that calms the various contents that have entered into it.⁹³

In all accounts of immersion into the depths reviewed for this project, both the negative and positive accounts of immersion project across domains a diminution of individual freedom and a giving-over of control to some other force. This is consistent with Mark Johnson’s description of the basic characteristics of the CONTAINMENT schema as entailing limits, restrictions, and restraints on the entity contained.⁹⁴

Thus far, we have explored the motif of *depth* as it is entailed by the cognitive structure of the perception of pooled water. Another image schematic feature of the conceptual map of pooled water is the *boundary* around the water. This image schematic element exists as a necessary part of what Lakoff labels the “gestalt structure” of the CONTAINMENT image schema.⁹⁵ If something is to exist either inside or outside of a container, then the container must be marked (at least cognitively) with a boundary that establishes inside versus outside. In the case of pooled water as a source domain, the boundary around the water performs more image schematic work than simply

⁹² Brown, *Seeing the Psalms*, 133-34.

⁹³ Virtanen, "Water Imagery in the Writings of Don Grub Rgyal," 8.

⁹⁴ Johnson, *The Body in the Mind*, 22.

⁹⁵ George Lakoff, *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things: What Categories Reveal About the Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 284.

determining whether or not something is inside or outside of the water. As the analysis below indicates, the peculiar physical properties of pooled water on this planet offer a unique set of image schematic characteristics that serve as a powerful and widely shared conceptual framework.

Boundaries: Essential for Pooling/Containment

All CONTAINMENT image schemas necessarily entail boundaries that distinguish the interior from the exterior of the container. Additionally, boundaries around pooled water are *physically* necessary for the water to be, in fact, pooled. The studies reviewed for this project indicate that a number of metaphorical projections are based on the peculiar nature of water-pool boundaries.

Lower boundary: filling from the bottom

Slingerland's study of ancient accounts of *wu-wei* demonstrates the metaphorical significance of the lower boundary of pooled water: water fills a pool by collecting at the lowest boundaried level. Mencius, a fourth century B.C.E. Confucian philosopher, blends this property of pooled water with the image of rootedness in his description of the workings of *qi* in the cosmos: water flows toward a pool, "filling all of the hollows in its path, and then eventually drawing into the Four Seas. All things that have a root are so, and what Confucius saw in water is simply this and nothing more."⁹⁶ This property of *qi* is portrayed as offering strength and stability to all things that are thus formed—having a deep reservoir that can be filled—including human bodies. According to Slingerland, in

⁹⁶ Mencius, 4:B:18, cited in Edward G. Slingerland, *Effortless Action: Wu-Wei as Conceptual Metaphor and Spiritual Ideal in Early China* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 157. The schema here appears to be SOURCE-PATH-GOAL, with the GOAL strongly foregrounded: water flows into a pool, which is the GOAL of the water-flow.

Mencius' account, sage-hood itself is understood within the "QI AS WATER" metaphor as "involving the accumulation of the 'quintessential qi.'"⁹⁷

In the analysis of the LIGHT IS A FLUID conceptual metaphor in George Lakoff's conceptual metaphor database, the examples of the metaphor listed on the site suggest that even in a non-fluid target domain pooling occurs at a low boundary of a given place: "The stage was flooded with light... Pools of light were scattered across the clearing."⁹⁸ In both examples light is depicted as pooling in a fluidic fashion at a low boundary in the imagined scene.

Upper boundary: liminality

In a generic CONTAINER schema, little is specifically entailed involving the character of the open boundary between the interior and exterior of the container. However, just as the lower boundary of the water pool carries characteristics peculiar to its physical properties into metaphorical blends, so too does the upper boundary of a water pool. In conceptual blends that include the source domain of pooled water, the upper boundary (the "surface") of the water is normally the boundary by which objects are known to be IN or OUT of the container. Because it possible (and relatively familiar) to experience bodily immersion in water as both partly under and partly above the water-line, the normally binary IN-OUT schema of CONTAINMENT is complicated by the source domain of water-pool immersion. In other words, human bodily experience of immersion in water pools takes place largely neither wholly beneath the water-surface nor wholly above the water-surface but rather at the margin of the upper boundary, with bodies occupying positions both in and out of the water as container. While this bodily position

⁹⁷ Ibid., 124.

⁹⁸ George Lakoff, "Light Is a Fluid," http://cogsci.berkeley.edu/lakoff/metaphors/Light_Is_A_Fluid.html.

of occupying both sides of the upper boundary of the water is often cognitively mapped as being IN the water, the schematic pattern certainly allows for more complete entry to the inside of the container, as in complete immersion. This liminality is a characteristic carried over into a number of different blends involving water immersion and the upper boundary of the water pool.

Upper boundary: rising and falling

In a CONTAINMENT image schema arising from the source domain of pooled water, the upper boundary between IN and OUT in the schema may itself be in motion, especially when the source domain is a larger body of water such as the ocean, where such movement is typical. Therefore a human body occupying the upper boundary of the pooled water is located not only at a structurally liminal place, but also in a zone in which the limen itself is in motion.

The upper boundary of pooled water rises and falls, and this characteristic is mapped across domains in some blends involving pooled water. Omori's corpora research on source domains for conceptual metaphors of emotion finds that water is the most prevalent source domain for framing emotion, and that the sea serves as the most common body of water employed.⁹⁹ Omori notes that the particular features of seawater that map emotion include "surge," "tide," "tidal wave," and "ebb and flow."¹⁰⁰ These structures keep the boundary between interior (immersion) and exterior (outside of the water) in motion, suggesting that "a specific emotion dominates a person intermittently

⁹⁹ Ayako Omori, "Emotion as a Huge Mass of Moving Water," *Metaphor & Symbol* 23, no. 2 (2008): 135, 43. While water serves as the predominant source domain for metaphors of emotion in general, Omori further notes that some particular emotions are more associated with water metaphors than others. For example, anxiety, relief, desire, and pleasure, are most frequently mapped with water metaphors, while hope, despair, and anger are least likely to be mapped with water metaphors. Omori, "Emotion as a Huge Mass of Moving Water," 145. Omori does not speculate on why such patterns emerge.

¹⁰⁰ Omori, "Emotion as a Huge Mass of Moving Water," 144, 38.

and repeatedly.”¹⁰¹ The particular nature of waves and tides makes the upper boundary of a sea-based CONTAINMENT metaphor a zone of power being exerted in which “the intensity” of the mapped force increases and decreases.¹⁰² On the weak end of the continuum of force at the upper boundary are “ripples” within a pooled body of water.¹⁰³ This force is exerted in addition to the entailed forceful restriction that occurs on the inside of any CONTAINMENT schema.

Chung *et al.* compare Spanish, English, and Mandarin Chinese corpora and find that the conceptual metaphor of “STOCK MARKET IS OCEAN WATER” based on varying water levels is employed frequently in all three languages.¹⁰⁴ The authors conclude that the rising and falling of tides maps onto the rising and falling of stock market prices and indices.¹⁰⁵

The rising and falling of the upper boundary of pooled water is at times regular and predictable as in the examples above of tides and regular waves. Both the interval between the variations in the surface level (the regularity of the tides and waves) and the force exerted by the movement of the water (the force with which waves and tides move) can be relatively predictable. But the surface movement of water is also often unpredictable, in variations of both forcefulness and direction.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.: 138.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Siaw-Fong Chung, Kathleen Ahrens, and Ya-hui Sung, "Stock Markets as Ocean Water: A Corpus-Based, Comparative Study of Mandarin Chinese, English and Spanish," in *Language, Information and Computation: Proceedings of the 17th Pacific Asia Conference* (Sentosa, Singapore: Colips publication, 2003), 129. Omori, "Emotion as a Huge Mass of Moving Water," 144.

¹⁰⁴ Chung, Ahrens, and Sung, "Stock Markets as Ocean Water," 133.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 129. While the authors convincingly show a number of other water-metaphors at work in mapping stock market activity (detailed further below), the authors do not sufficiently demonstrate that the metaphor of rising and falling in the stock market is any more complex than the common UP-DOWN schema (e.g. MORE IS UP, LESS IS DOWN). Indeed, one would expect to find other water entailments in a tide-based, rising and falling schema (i.e. significance for the coast/boundary or water-as-container, etc), but none is demonstrated.

Upper boundary: turbulence

The upper boundary of pooled water is often turbulent in conceptual blends, i.e. unpredictable and forceful, and often destabilizing in a manner that tends to bring objects on the margin of the container more fully inside the container, a location where the forces of the CONTAINMENT schema act more powerfully on the object.

Turbulence: force/lack of control

Omori describes the observed and bodily knowledge of the “tremendous power” of the churning surface of seawater:

The power of seawater is far beyond human biological capacities. Swimming in high waves may make people drown. Television images of storm surges and tidal waves sweeping everything, such as the tsunami that devastated the coastal areas around the Indian Ocean in 2004, reinforce anew our bodily based knowledge about water. Thus, the conceptualization of water in the natural world arises out of embodiment and is manifested in metaphor.¹⁰⁶

He concludes that “massive forms of water” are “preferable” as a source domain for metaphors of emotion because “uncontrollability is highlighted” and “the motion of seawater” is “an energy far beyond human control.”¹⁰⁷ The experience of being caught in intense and unpredictable ocean waves serves as a conceptual map for the experience of finding one’s emotions “intensified in a confusing way,” which results in an inability to control the emotions, and a feeling of being “caught” and controlled by the emotions.¹⁰⁸ Virtanen, also, notes the prominent place of waves in poetic metaphors for loss of emotional and mental control; the calm surface of pooled water maps to orderly

¹⁰⁶ Omori, "Emotion as a Huge Mass of Moving Water," 138.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.: 135.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.: 138.

meditation and emotional states, while waves and turbulence on the surface of the water map to “being worried, confused or experiencing another kind of emotional agitation.”¹⁰⁹

Brown’s account of conceptual metaphors in the Psalms arising from the source domain of water identifies numerous examples of the metaphoric use of the powerful churning of the sea. The forces of the sea’s churning are blended with Israel’s enemies, both political and cosmic. God and God’s appointed rulers do battle with “the raging of the sea.”¹¹⁰ God is identified repeatedly as the one who stills the chaotic movements of the sea. Similarly, God is portrayed as enthroned “above” or “upon” the waves, or voicing “over” the roaring waters.¹¹¹ These latter usages rely on the HAVING CONTROL IS UP / BEING SUBJECT TO CONTROL IS DOWN¹¹² conceptual metaphor and take advantage of a cosmological scheme that locates God in the heavens, “above” the waters.

The churning, chaotic waters are not always portrayed as a force in binary opposition to God. The same roaring, turbulent waters are sometimes conceptually blended with the shouts and songs of Israel’s worship.

Within the cosmic arena of praise, the sea’s ‘roar’—usually taken as a threat—is heard as the sea’s song. In the psalmist’s cry for a ‘new song’ (96:1; 98:1), the roaring of the waves is heard anew, namely, as praise rather than battle cry. The old ‘song’ of conflict and violence is gone, displaced by the new song of all-encompassing praise. Just as divine kingship is celebrated by *all* creation in Psalm 96 (see v. 10), the deafening noise of pounding waves is perceived as hand-clapping in celebration of God’s victory on Israel’s behalf (98.1-3). Given its associations with chaos elsewhere, the image of the roiling sea is the perfect choice as the metonym of universal praise.¹¹³

¹⁰⁹ Virtanen, "Water Imagery in the Writings of Don Grub Rgyal," 7-8.

¹¹⁰ Brown finds these motifs operating “most prominently” in Psalms 74 and 89. Brown, *Seeing the Psalms*, 108-09.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 110.

¹¹² Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 15.

¹¹³ Brown, *Seeing the Psalms*, 128-29.

The same phenomenon from the source domain of water that is mapped as a powerful, chaotic, and dangerous force in other texts, here is conceptually blended in such a way that the power and force is ordered by its trajectory toward God in worship. In the blend, the concept of worship recruits power and cosmic voice; the concept of the sea recruits order and subservience to God.

Similarly, a violent and turbulent storm at sea can serve as the source domain for a metaphorical conception of God that portrays the “writhing” of the waters and the “trembl[ing]” of the deeps as the sea’s awed response to God’s passing presence above the sea. In another instance of the HAVING CONTROL IS UP / BEING SUBJECT TO CONTROL IS DOWN¹¹⁴ metaphor, the higher-altitude meteorological phenomena of the storm are portrayed as God’s attributes: the thunder is part of God’s domain, and lightening bolts are God’s flashing arrows. The sea serves as a path for God-as-storm.¹¹⁵ Again, here, the power of the sea is portrayed as an awed response to the (apparently greater) power of God, and the chaotic nature of the sea is conceptualized as ordered (as it is a predictable, appropriately awe-struck bodily response to the presence of God).

The churning sea itself can even be blended in such a way that it is more or less made equivalent to God. As in the example of Psalm 88, both the power and the chaotic turbulence of the sea surface can be carried over into a conceptual blend in which God becomes closely associated with the very force against which God does battle in other psalms referenced above.

God’s heavy ‘wrath’ (v. 7a; cf. 32:4) is matched by the pounding waves of God’s fury (88:7b, 17). Like a flood, God’s anger inundates the psalmist (v. 16). The pit is likened to the watery depths, whose breakers assault and overcome the psalmist

¹¹⁴ Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 15.

¹¹⁵ The storm here is the psalmist’s poetic memory of the Exodus in Psalm 77. Brown, *Seeing the Psalms*, 111.

(vv. 6-7). Indelibly associated with cosmic conflict or turmoil, the image of raging waters is recast as an image of *divine* rage. In this Job-like complaint, God is the embodiment of chaos, and the psalmist finds himself plunged into the very heart of darkness. In order to heighten the terrifying impact of God's wrath, the metaphor's source domain maps the very contours of divine fury. The enemy, the psalmist has discovered, is God.¹¹⁶

The power of the upper boundary of water-as-container is fully displayed in Psalm 88, as the psalmist loses control in the violent, turbulent waves. The psalm also hints at yet another entailment specific to conceptual metaphors in which deep water is the source domain: the tendency of many objects (including, in general, human bodies) to sink into the depths and be dangerously covered in water.

Turbulence: toward immersion

In a generic CONTAINMENT schema, the boundary between IN and OUT of the container is not complex. However, in a schema based on the source domain of pooled water, the boundary between IN and OUT of the container is not only normally located at the upper boundary of the container and sometimes in powerful and unpredictable motion (as demonstrated above) but also may actively draw objects downward into the container. This structure is based on the bodily experience of the difficulty of staying afloat in water—especially in deep, turbulent water—and on the observation of objects sinking in water. This naïve-physics account of downward force into pooled water is recruited into a number of blends to communicate a centripetal force that can exist at the margin of a CONTAINER.

Brown notes that overwhelming waves are used to map the experience of being drawn into ecstatic worship, into song, and into the mercy or love of God.¹¹⁷ Omori notes

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 113.

¹¹⁷ Two examples are Psalms 96 and 98. Ibid., 133-34.

the use of “whirlpool” as a source domain for conceptual metaphors of pleasure and desire—highlighting the force with which these emotions seem to draw people deeper “into” the CONTAINER of the emotion.¹¹⁸ Omori identifies other surface actions of the sea that serve as source domains for emotions: swirling waters and tidal waves both represent CONTAINMENT boundaries that seem actively to draw objects into the CONTAINER. In the case of a tidal wave, those apparently standing far outside the CONTAINER may nevertheless be swept inside, as in a “tidal wave of emotion.”¹¹⁹

In addition to structuring blends that map emotional or spiritual trajectories, the downward force of the upper boundary of water-pools may also map the possibility of and tendency toward physical containment. Brown cites examples from the psalms of enemies being mapped as the covering and churning sea surface.¹²⁰ Many of these instances also include in the blend the metaphor of SEA SURFACE IS MOUTH, further accentuating the inward trajectory of the boundary toward the interior of the CONTAINER:

Do not let the flood sweep over me,
or the deep swallow me up,
or the pit close its mouth over me.¹²¹

Brown observes that the interior of deeply pooled water also serves as a structure for mapping death and the grave.¹²² It seems that the inevitability of death, the inward/downward trajectory of objects in pooled water, and the typical below-ground nature of graves serve as particularly fitting elements of a blend that ends in complete and lasting physical containment.

¹¹⁸ Omori, "Emotion as a Huge Mass of Moving Water," 144.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.: 138.

¹²⁰ Brown, *Seeing the Psalms*, 113-15.

¹²¹ Psalm 69.15, cited in Ibid., 114.

¹²² Ibid., 117.

Turbulence: theme of danger

The themes of loss of control and the threat of death make a sense of *danger* animate a number of conceptual blends structured by deeply pooled water. Emotion may sweep people away from stability and rationality;¹²³ economic realities may cause people to sink or drown in debts;¹²⁴ immigrants may flood over boundaries;¹²⁵ some students may “sink” in the educational “mainstream”;¹²⁶ powerful dangers such as enemies, God and the grave are mapped by deep-water schemas.¹²⁷ God’s saving character can be portrayed in the psalms as the ability to calm the dangerous sea.¹²⁸ Similarly, the churning of the sea can be portrayed in a metaphor of antitype: God is that which is greater than the dangerous power of the sea.¹²⁹ Thus, the dangerous force of the sea can also be recruited into a blend that, in fact, reframes and negates the sea’s danger. God, blended in a HAVING CONTROL IS UP / BEING SUBJECT TO CONTROL IS DOWN¹³⁰ metaphor, can be portrayed as being enthroned on the churning sea, reigning “over” the danger.¹³¹ Danger, nevertheless, maintains a place in the blend.

Upper boundary: floating, support

While the upper boundary of deep, pooled water can map a downward force into the CONTAINER of water, blends constructed with deep, pooled water may also highlight an apparently opposing force: that of support or flotation. Many objects behave not as if the upper boundary of pooled water draws them into the depths of the water but as if the

¹²³ Omori, "Emotion as a Huge Mass of Moving Water," 138.

¹²⁴ Lakoff, "Money Is a Liquid." Chung, Ahrens, and Sung, "Stock Markets as Ocean Water."

¹²⁵ Johnson, "Proposition 203: A Critical Metaphor Analysis ": 71.

¹²⁶ Ibid.: 78.

¹²⁷ Brown, *Seeing the Psalms*, 108-09, 13-15, 23-24.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 108-09, 15, 26.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 117-18.

¹³⁰ Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 15.

¹³¹ Brown, *Seeing the Psalms*, 110.

depths of the water in fact push them out of the water CONTAINER or at least upward to the upper boundary.

A number of examples have been examined above. The psalms portray God as walking and enthroned on the sea, as the churning sea seems to support God.¹³² An answer to a puzzle may be “floating around out there,” suggesting that the answer may not be deeply hidden. Or an answer to a puzzle may “surface,” suggesting that forces other than human manipulation allowed the answer to “emerge” from its hidden state.¹³³ Participation in economic or market forces may be conceptualized by way of nautical blends in which participants depend on being kept “afloat” and “navigating” the market, even as they are to some extent at the mercy of “plunges” in the market that might cause a business to “go under,” etc.¹³⁴ Success in education can be described in terms of controlled and purposeful floating, as when children in “immersion classes [are] *doing swimmingly*.”¹³⁵ Even when the image of floating is highlighted in a conceptual blend, the implied danger of the downward force of water may also be included. Eric Johnson cites such an example from the political realm in which the metaphor for a promoted form of language-immersion in English recruited the buoyant characteristics of water. Proponents of “sheltered immersion,” a name for a particular style of English immersion classes invoke, Eric Johnson claims, a conceptual metaphor that “conveys an image of a safe environment where students (SWIMMERS) build up their English competence and skills before easily transitioning into mainstream (BODY OF WATER) classes.”¹³⁶

¹³² Ibid., 110-11.

¹³³ Espenson, "A Problem Is a Body of Water."

¹³⁴ Chung, Ahrens, and Sung, "Stock Markets as Ocean Water," 130, Lakoff, "Money Is a Liquid."

¹³⁵ Johnson, "Proposition 203: A Critical Metaphor Analysis ": 75.

¹³⁶ Ibid.: 79.

Lateral boundary

As noted above, Lakoff's account of the CONTAINER image schema observes that only three structures make up the generic CONTAINER schema: INTERIOR, EXTERIOR and BOUNDARY.¹³⁷ The above section noted the peculiar characteristics of the upper BOUNDARY of bodies of water-CONTAINERS. While not nearly as dynamic, the lateral boundaries of water-bodies contribute some particular structures as elements of the source domain. The lateral boundary of a body of water may serve metonymically for the activities related to the water, for example, recreation at a beach,¹³⁸ collection of drinking water,¹³⁹ or the larger region serving as boundary to the water-body.¹⁴⁰ Thus, the boundary around the water-body may serve as a metonymic connector between the water-body and the land.

Lateral boundary: separation

In use, however, the structure of the boundary of a body of pooled water tends to contribute to blends signaling *separation* more than *connection*. Andriessen records examples of metaphors for knowledge that imply undesirable restriction of information and knowledge: study participants described isolated pools of knowledge, underground "reservoirs" of knowledge in which knowledge was trapped, and individuals in the organization as "barrels" or "pools" of water who were not adequately "tapped."¹⁴¹ Water-as-knowledge was often framed as something that had problematic boundaries and

¹³⁷ Lakoff, *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things* 284.

¹³⁸ Marisol Velasco-Sacristána and Pedro A. Fuertes-Olivera, "Towards a Critical Cognitive-Pragmatic Approach to Gender Metaphors in Advertising English," *Journal of Pragmatics* 38, no. 11 (2006): 1984-85.

¹³⁹ Wolf-Andreas Liebert, "The Emergence of the Metaphor Model 'Money Is Water' in the Nineteenth Century," in *The Ecolinguistics Reader: Language, Ecology, and Environment*, ed. Alwin Fill and Peter Mühlhäusler (London ; New York: Continuum, 2001), 103.

¹⁴⁰ Juval Portugali, "The Mediterranean as a Cognitive Map," *Mediterranean Historical Review* 19, no. 2 (2004): 23-24.

¹⁴¹ Andriessen, "Knowledge as Love," 7, 10.

was “not always in the right place at the right time.”¹⁴² Eric Johnson notes the importance of the motif of separation in the images of water-bodies in the political debate surrounding Proposition 203: the separation of “sheltered immersion” from the “mainstream” suggested protection from forces that existed outside of the water-CONTAINER.

In a study of the role of water-based schemas in academic and public accounts of underground aquifers, Leonard Vacher, William Hutchings and David Budd found that the image of BOUNDARY around injected aquifers was frequently misrepresented as impermeable—as a “bubble”—when in fact the boundary was permeable.¹⁴³ Thus, one commonly observed water-schema (bubble) implied *separation* in a more hidden water-domain (aquifer), where the boundaries are in fact more permeable than the bubble metaphor suggests.

Lateral boundary: stagnation

A further entailment from the source domain of water makes its way into blends based on boundaried water: that of stagnation. Omori describes the source domain as occurring when a “geographic cause prevents water from moving and makes it stagnate,” yielding a conceptual blend in which—in the case of the target domain of emotions—emotions become “inactive” and stagnant.¹⁴⁴ Andreessen’s study of KNOWLEDGE IS WATER metaphors found numerous critiques of knowledge management based on the schema of stagnation: some study participants described “flowing” information as “good” and “fresh,” while “standing” information was problematic; information that doesn’t

¹⁴² Ibid., 12.

¹⁴³ H. L. Vacher, William C. Hutchings, and David A. Budd, "Metaphors and Models: The Asr Bubble in the Floridan Aquifer," *Ground Water* 44, no. 2 (2006): 152-53.

¹⁴⁴ Omori, "Emotion as a Huge Mass of Moving Water," 138.

“circulate” with the wider world or gets “trapped” risks stagnation; stagnated knowledge should be “flushed” or “freshened” or have “oxygen” added to it; solutions to unhealthily contained knowledge might include building or opening the “floodgates” of knowledge.¹⁴⁵ Supervised employees tended to highlight the risks of boundaried water and tended to favor metaphors of free-flowing information, while managers in supervisory positions tended to favor metaphors of controlled water, including both channeled and pooled water.¹⁴⁶

Lateral boundary: evaporation

Another entailment of pooled water framed in negative terms is evaporation. In the MONEY IS A LIQUID conceptual metaphor money may “dry up.”¹⁴⁷ Mencius, describing the workings of *qi*, portrays a lack of steady inflow of *qi* as “like rain water that accumulates after a late summer storm” in which even though “all the gutters and ditches may be filled” one may nevertheless “just stand for a moment and watch it all dry up.”¹⁴⁸

Lateral boundary: leaking

Metaphors based on the source domain of pooled water at times entail yet another potential boundary-related problem: the tendency of water to “leak” out of its boundaries. Andriessen recorded concern about knowledge “leaking away” when knowledgeable employees leave an institution, with the solution being to “store” the knowledge in databases.¹⁴⁹ Other solutions for “leaking” knowledge included “tapping” the knowledge before it leaks away, and “blocking” or “damming” the leaks.¹⁵⁰ Lakoff, exploring the

¹⁴⁵ Andriessen, "Knowledge as Love," 10.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 9-12.

¹⁴⁷ Lakoff, "Money Is a Liquid."

¹⁴⁸ Slingerland, *Effortless Action*, 157.

¹⁴⁹ Andriessen, "Knowledge as Love," 2.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 10.

metaphor LIGHT IS A FLUID, cites the example of light “seeping in around the door of the darkroom.”¹⁵¹ Brown cites a number of instances from the psalms in which “life is defined metaphorically as *contained* water” and the dissolution of health and life is portrayed in terms of water “poured out” or become “formless.”¹⁵² In these instances the strong BOUNDARY around the water pool signifies a desired or necessary element in the health of the target domain.

II. Flowing Water and Image Schemas

Having examined pooled water largely by way of the CONTAINMENT schema, we now turn to an examination of flowing water, which is normally perceived within the SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schema.

Water-Flow and the SOURCE-PATH-GOAL Schema

Charles Fillmore defines the pattern of “fluidic motion” as a frame in which “a FLUID moves from a SOURCE to a GOAL along a PATH or within an AREA.”¹⁵³ This schema, known as the SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schema, or simply the PATH schema, is one of the most basic and commonly activated image-schematic patterns identified by cognitive scientists.¹⁵⁴ It is not limited to fluid as a source domain, but rather may be evoked by widely differing types of motion. This full schema is often activated when humans observe, even briefly, an object in motion.¹⁵⁵ The logic of this schema entails “a SOURCE (starting point), a DESTINATION (end point), a PATH (a sequence of contiguous locations

¹⁵¹ Lakoff, "Light Is a Fluid."

¹⁵² Brown, *Seeing the Psalms*, 121.

¹⁵³ FrameNet, "Fluidic_Motion,"

http://framenet.icsi.berkeley.edu/fnReports/displayReport.php?frame=Fluidic_motion.

¹⁵⁴ “To give a comprehensive analysis of the PATH schema and its role in our understanding would require a book-length study.” Johnson, *The Body in the Mind*, 117. “Our most fundamental knowledge of motion is characterized by the source-path-goal schema, and this logic is implicit in its structure.” Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, 34.

¹⁵⁵ See an overview of representational momentum (RM) in {Gibbs, 2006 #118@139-142} and, regarding the projection of this momentum into conceptual metaphors, pp. 180-181.

connecting the source and the destination), and a DIRECTION (toward the destination).”¹⁵⁶

Additionally, a trajector that may move along the PATH from the SOURCE to the GOAL is at least implied in the schema.¹⁵⁷

While the SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schema structures the logic of many concepts, Lakoff and Johnson identify a few usages of the schema that are especially significant. They note that many “spatial-relations concepts” draw on the “inherent spatial logic” of the SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schema for their logical structure, as entities are located, for example, “*toward, away, through, and along*” other entities.¹⁵⁸

Johnson notes that a sense of *purpose* is often attributed to a PATH: the familiar experience of moving from one place to another for a purpose may be projected into blends structured by the SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schema.¹⁵⁹ Lakoff, too, finds the concept of *purpose* to be strongly related to this schema:

Purposes are understood in terms of destinations, and achieving a purpose is understood as passing along a path from a starting point to an endpoint. Thus, one may *go a long way toward* achieving one’s purposes, or one may get *sidetracked*, or find something getting *in ones’ way*.¹⁶⁰

Similarly, the SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schema has a basic and important function in narrative. Lakoff argues that one of the common ways of bringing conceptual order to a complex event is to structure the mental account of the event by way of the SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schema. Such events are assigned “initial states (source), a sequence of

¹⁵⁶ Lakoff, *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things* 275.

¹⁵⁷ Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, 32.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 34.

¹⁵⁹ “There may well be no intention satisfied more often than physical motion to a particular desired location.” Johnson, *The Body in the Mind*, 115. See also Johnson’s discussion of modal verbs, in which Johnson argues that such verbs are mapped by the experience of movement toward a goal—movement that may be inhibited, blocked, or enacted freely, etc. Johnson here describes this dimension of image schematic sense as the FORCE schema, yet it clearly corresponds to the PATH schema while highlighting the dimension of force. ———, *The Body in the Mind*, 41-64.

¹⁶⁰ Lakoff, *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things* 275.

intermediate stages (path), and a final state (destination).”¹⁶¹ Johnson sees such conceptual ordering as the basic process by which extended narratives are composed. Johnson identifies three levels at which the SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schema operates in narrative:

First, stories often involve actual physical journeys of characters from a starting point, along a path, toward some destination. Second we *follow* the story itself metaphorically along its path, as it proceeds from start to finish. Third, via the PURPOSES ARE DESTINATIONS metaphor, we can understand all purposive activity metaphorically as movement (physical or mental) directed toward a goal (physical or abstract).¹⁶²

Johnson finds that the protagonist of a story is frequently mapped as a trajector in a SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schema, and that difficulties and opportunities encountered by the protagonist are often mapped respectively as obstacles and enabling conditions that are encountered along the PATH. Finally, the resolution of the narrative is given enhanced narrative logic by way of the resolution’s relationship to a GOAL.¹⁶³

Fatemeh Keshavarz, however, compares two narrative structures, both of which are identified with the SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schema, and finds that the use of water as a source domain entails significant differences from a typical PATH schema in which the source domain is human travel over land. She compares the narrative structure of a) LIFE IS A JOURNEY and b) LIFE IS A RIVER and finds the following divergences:

1. In (a) the route is fixed, and the traveler is moving;
In (b) water is moving and the observer is fixed;
2. In (a) traveler knows about the destination;
In (b) observer does not necessarily know about the destination of the river;
3. In (a) the route is measurable, and it is subject to calculation and planning;
In (b) water moving in the river bed, is a flow and moving;

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Mark Johnson, *Moral Imagination: Implications of Cognitive Science for Ethics*, Paperback ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 166-67.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 168.

4. In (a) there is a reversibility;
In (b) there is no reversibility.¹⁶⁴

Thus, Keshavarz identifies a number of characteristics of water-flow as a source domain that contribute unique affordances to SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schemas: a trajector that is other than the human subject, a possibly mysterious GOAL and a flowing, irreversible, and relatively uncontrollable PATH.

Examining individually the SOURCE, PATH, and GOAL of flowing-water schemas reveals some further important characteristics of flowing water as a conceptual map.

SOURCE: Water-Source in the SOURCE-PATH-GOAL Schema

Charles Fillmore defines SOURCE in the fluidic motion frame simply as “the location the Fluid occupies initially.”¹⁶⁵ The specific hydrological forms in the source domain, however, contribute complexity and specificity to the schematic shape of the SOURCE.¹⁶⁶ In particular, three SOURCE forms emerge with special prominence in the literature: rain, poured water, and springs.

Rain as SOURCE

Rain, interestingly, is only vaguely a SOURCE, as it flows from yet another relatively inaccessible and mysterious SOURCE. Conceptually, the SOURCE of rain is,

¹⁶⁴ Fatemeh Keshavarz and Habibollah Ghassemzadeh, "Life as a Stream and the Psychology of "Moment" in Hafiz' Verse: Application of the Blending Theory " *Journal of Pragmatics* 40, no. 10 (2008): 6.

¹⁶⁵ FrameNet, "Fluidic_Motion."

¹⁶⁶ In the conceptual metaphor and cognitive science literature, there is little account of metaphorical work being done by the most common SOURCE in a typical watershed: the “headwaters” of a dendritic drainage system. In fact, one of the few examples in the literature of a conceptual blend involving this physical element employs another non-hydrological source domain to frame the structure of the water: the human body is the source domain as the “water-eye refers to a point where surface run-off first assembles to form a trickle, or where spring water emerges from the ground; ... ‘water-nose’ is a point where such trickles join to form a larger rivulet; ... ‘water-ear’ refers to a peripheral source in the water’s head.” Niclas. Burenhult, "Streams of Words: Hydrological Lexicon in Jahai," *Language Sciences* 30, no. 2-3 (2008): 187. This example is obviously similar to the familiar “headwaters” of English usage. Notably, the technical terminology for the watershed (dendritic) also relies on another source domain, that of the tree, complete with branches that flow into the ‘trunk.’

actually, cloudy, hazy. Nevertheless, rain can schematically represent power flowing from a SOURCE. A few examples may be helpful for illustration. Virtanen records instances of knowledge being construed in terms of a downpour. Participants spoke of their organization's need to capture the downpour of knowledge rather than simply shunting the flow off and losing it.¹⁶⁷ Heavy rain serves as the source domain for the power of virtue in the writings of Mencius.¹⁶⁸ Rainfall's downward force and, most prominently here, its accumulated potential force when it flows into deep pools, serve as the source domains for expressing the powerful influence of virtue.

Brown identifies three instances of biblical rain metaphors, each of which entails significant force and power, while each map to somewhat different concepts. Brown notes how Psalm 68 maps abundant, nourishing rain as being caused by the presence of God:

O God, when you went out before your people,
 when you marched through the wilderness,
 the earth quaked, the heavens poured down rain
 at the presence of God, the God of Sinai,
 at the presence of God, the God of Israel.
 Rain in abundance, O God, you showered abroad;
 you restored your heritage when it languished;
 your flock found a dwelling in it;
 in your goodness, O God, you provided for the needy.¹⁶⁹

Similarly, a benevolent leader's rule is mapped as "rain that falls on the mown grass, like showers that irrigate the earth," with the force of the rain arising from its ability to make the earth productive.¹⁷⁰ Brown contrasts this conception of a leader with another biblical

¹⁶⁷ Virtanen, "Water Imagery in the Writings of Don Grub Rgyal," 7.

¹⁶⁸ Slingerland, *Effortless Action*, 312.

¹⁶⁹ Psalm 68.7-10, cited in Brown, *Seeing the Psalms*, 124.

¹⁷⁰ Psalm 72.6, cited in *Ibid.*, 127.

description of an unjust leader who, in oppressing the poor, “is a beating rain that leaves no food.”¹⁷¹

Thus, rain as a SOURCE, in the studies reviewed for this project, contributes to conceptual blends a sense of power from its downward motion, life-giving properties, and inundating capacity.

Spring as SOURCE

Slingerland defines the SPRING schema as structured by “a hidden, underground source... [that] naturally gives rise to a visible spring.”¹⁷² The hidden/visible contrast is central to this schema. Both Slingerland and Omori demonstrate that the SPRING schema is employed to map inner (hidden) human emotional, intellectual or spiritual states that are then revealed in outward (visible) actions.¹⁷³ The SPRING schema may suggest a “vast, hydraulic power source” that, though hidden, provides the “force” that moves visible actions.¹⁷⁴

The SPRING schema entails a sense of the schema being “natural,” “right,” “inevitable,” and “inexorable.”¹⁷⁵ The “natural” character of the spring carries over in the blend to the target domain. Additionally, conceptual blends that rely on flowing water as a source domain generally contain a strong directional orientation—the “flow” moves in

¹⁷¹ Proverbs 28.3, cited in Ibid.

¹⁷² Edward G. Slingerland, "Conceptual Blending, Somatic Marking, and Normativity: A Case Example from Ancient Chinese," *Cognitive Linguistics* 16, no. 3 (2005): 572. Slingerland relates the SPRING schema to the NATURAL CAUSATION IS MOTION OUT schema outlined by Lakoff and Johnson. Slingerland, "Conceptual Blending, Somatic Marking, and Normativity," 573-74. citing Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, 214.

¹⁷³ Omori describes a “spring of emotion” in which emotions become manifest, based on the source domain in which “water comes naturally to the surface from under the ground.” Omori, "Emotion as a Huge Mass of Moving Water," 138. Slingerland describes a blend in which *sweating* is indicative of an inner ethical/emotional state that “springs” from within the individual. The fluidic nature of the sweat and of the SPRING make the conceptual blend especially persuasive, Slingerland argues. Slingerland, *Effortless Action*, 153. ———, "Conceptual Blending, Somatic Marking, and Normativity," 572.

¹⁷⁴ Slingerland, *Effortless Action*, 155.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 153. ———, "Conceptual Blending, Somatic Marking, and Normativity," 574. Omori, "Emotion as a Huge Mass of Moving Water," 138.

a “natural” direction in both the source and target domain.¹⁷⁶ The two motions of natural flow in springs—upwelling and outflowing—may thus be projected into the blend, lending naturalness to the bidirectional workings of the “spring” in the target domain.

Poured water as SOURCE

Poured water may be considered a peculiar schematic instantiation of the SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schema. In general, compared to other water-PATH schemas, poured water holds some distinctive characteristics. Poured water is characterized by a SOURCE that is relatively separate from the GOAL of the flow. While flowing water may *flow* along a relatively undifferentiated path, water typically *pours* from one entity into another—from a relatively distinct SOURCE to a relatively distinct GOAL. In many instances the PATH of pouring water may be traced, perhaps prototypically, through the open air rather than being guided through a low channel on the ground.

Pouring water exists in both wild and domestic settings. It may be that the domestic setting has generally been the more familiar one for many cultures for a considerable span of human history. The image of water poured from a pitcher appears to be widely employed in the ancient near east as a source domain for mapping the SOURCE of rivers.¹⁷⁷ Brown cites a number of ancient artistic works that portray the origins of rivers as water poured from vessels by gods. In two of these examples multiple rivers are represented as flowing from a single vessel.¹⁷⁸

In the wild, water may take on structures similar to domestic poured water. Virtanen notes that waterfalls seem to embody their own schematic SOURCE as the water begins to stream down into the air. Further, they by definition possess a characteristic not

¹⁷⁶ Slingerland, "Conceptual Blending, Somatic Marking, and Normativity," 574.

¹⁷⁷ Brown, *Seeing the Psalms*, 203.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 66, 203-05.

shared by other natural water streams: a free-falling stream of water.¹⁷⁹ Virtanen calls attention to the evocation of the concept of “freedom” by way of the free-falling PATH of waterfalls.¹⁸⁰

A variety of characteristics of poured water may be used to structure concepts. Concepts structured by pouring water may highlight an abundant SOURCE: sunlight may pour into a room.¹⁸¹ Or the pattern of pouring may be used to highlight abundantly receiving poured entities at the GOAL: inspiration may pour down onto a musician.¹⁸² Poured water schemas may highlight the disjunction between SOURCE and GOAL: money may be (irretrievably) poured down the drain,¹⁸³ or one’s life may be poured out in dissolution.¹⁸⁴ In both of these latter cases, the pouring container may be emptied, as the SOURCE is exhausted into a sharply distinct and undesirable GOAL.

Thus, poured water embodies a number of rather unique schematic patterns. First, and perhaps most noteworthy for the purposes of this study, poured water may most commonly draw on domestic settings for its source domain. In such settings, water is poured from a hand-held vessel or from a channeled conduit. Second, perhaps surprisingly given a domestic and manipulated source domain, the schematic pattern of pouring water shows some tendency to map a relatively uncontrollable, abundant, and unmanipulable free flow of entities. Third, poured water highlights *the separate nature* of SOURCE and GOAL. In order for the water to pour from one thing to another, SOURCE and

¹⁷⁹ Virtanen, "Water Imagery in the Writings of Don Grub Rgyal," 5.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Lakoff, "Light Is a Fluid."

¹⁸² Steven Feld, "Waterfalls of Song: An Acostemology of Place Resounding in Bosavi, Papua New Guinea," in *Senses of Place*, ed. Steven Feld and Keith H. Basso (Santa Fe, N.M.: School of American Research Press, 1996), 132.

¹⁸³ Lakoff, "Money Is a Liquid."

¹⁸⁴ "Life dissolves into nothingness, like ... water poured out of a pitcher. Life is defined metaphorically as *contained water*." Brown, *Seeing the Psalms*, 121.

GOAL must be relatively separated. This remains true even as the flow (PATH) of water physically joins SOURCE and GOAL. Fourth, the PATH in this schema is prototypically not channeled by land. By definition, the flow, when it is being poured, is neither impeded nor diverted from its “natural” downward flow. It appears to represent a purity of free flow. Fifth, flowing fluids in general may be blocked and completely halted along the PATH. The blocked flow may cause the fluid “upstream” to halt, as well, with the still water extending “backwards” toward the source, potentially stopping the flow entirely. However, one can only halt the flow of *poured* fluid “downstream,” and thus the entire flow of poured water may be halted only by reaching and altering the SOURCE.

PATH: Water-Path in the SOURCE-PATH-GOAL Schema

Mark Johnson defines PATH as “a sequence of contiguous locations connecting the source with the goal,” with paths functioning as “routes for moving from one point to another.”¹⁸⁵ This definition of PATH, therefore, includes both SOURCE and GOAL. Lakoff, while sharing a basic definition of PATH with Johnson, notes that while mental schemas of PATHS often include conceptions of both SOURCE and, even more frequently, GOAL, they do sometimes exist without account of SOURCE or GOAL.¹⁸⁶ Fillmore’s description of the PATH in the fluidic motion semantic frame, while explicitly located within the SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schema, does not, however, make reference to SOURCE or GOAL in its account of the water-PATH. The PATH is described as “the trajectory along which the Fluid moves.”¹⁸⁷ Thus, while one may analyze the characteristics of the conceptual patterns of water-PATH, the larger schema including both SOURCE and GOAL is rarely far removed from the conception of PATH.

¹⁸⁵ Johnson, *The Body in the Mind*, 113.

¹⁸⁶ Lakoff, *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things* 275, 441.

¹⁸⁷ FrameNet, “Fluidic_Motion.”

The maxim attributed to Heraclitus, “You cannot step into the same river twice,” does not apply to all PATHS, but rather depends for its logic on two immediately perceptible characteristics peculiar to naturally flowing water as a PATH: a) the relatively *fixed* nature of the PATH and boundaries of the hydrological flow, making the river an apparently stable entity, and, b) the continuously *fresh* nature of the water moving in the hydrological flow, making a river constantly “new.” If Heraclitus’ river were a still body of water, then the maxim would be false (the PATH would in fact be “the same” twice). If the boundaries and PATH of the river were in such flux so as to be nearly unidentifiable, then the maxim would be truistic (no one would perceive the river as “the same” twice). These two characteristics of flowing water—continuous new water and enduring boundary and PATH—contribute unique affordances to flowing water as a source domain.

Lakoff and Johnson write that PATHS are partly defined by “trajectors” that move from one place to another. These trajectors trace trajectories that, Lakoff and Johnson write, “are imaginative insofar as they are not entities in the world; they are conceptualized as a linelike ‘trail’ left by an object as it moves and projected forward in the direction of motion.”¹⁸⁸ However, in the case of water-PATHS, the trajectory—the “linelike ‘trail’ left by an object as it moves”—is in fact made up of a “continuity of particles and entities [that is] ...passing and flowing”¹⁸⁹ and is indeed an “entity in the world.” Thus, in the case of water-PATHS, the trajectory is real and enduring, and is more or less identical to the trajector. In other words, if the trajector (flowing water) is not continuously observable, then the PATH is likely to be considered non-ideal.

The apparent contradiction of a trajector that is both *continuously flowing past an*

¹⁸⁸ Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, 33.

¹⁸⁹ Keshavarz and Ghassemzadeh, "Life as a Stream," 10.

observer and at the same time *enduringly present as a flow and a PATH* offers affordances for a conceptual mapping of *time*. Lakoff and Johnson identify a conceptual-metaphorical account of *time* in which time flows in a bounded channel past a stationary observer: “we speak of *the flow of time* and often conceptualize the linear flow of time in terms of a common linear moving substance—a river.”¹⁹⁰ Keshavarz includes in a list of entailments of the flowing water schema a) the “continuity of particles and entities” in the flow, b) the stationary nature of the observer and the moving nature of the observed, and c) the momentary and passing nature of any observed flow of water within the river. Virtanen notes with interest that concepts of time may draw on these two apparently opposed qualities in flowing water: “its continuity and its momentary nature.”¹⁹¹ Virtanen cites an example in which the continuous nature of a water-flow is highlighted in order to map a conception of a “continuous meditative state” over time,¹⁹² as well as examples in which the river-flow, which is “never still” and always “passing the viewer,” frames a concept of the “very momentary and ephemeral” nature of time.¹⁹³ In these cases, the steady quality of the flow is contrasted with the fresh and passing quality of the water composing that very same flow.

PATH and force

Both the enduring and flowing characteristics of the water-PATH contribute to another dimension present in all causal interactions: *force*. Johnson identifies a number of

¹⁹⁰ Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, 144. Both Virtanen and Keshavarz cite Lakoff and Johnson on this point. Virtanen, “Water Imagery in the Writings of Don Grub Rgyal,” 2. Keshavarz and Ghassemzadeh, “Life as a Stream,” 4.

¹⁹¹ Virtanen, “Water Imagery in the Writings of Don Grub Rgyal,” 3. “Rivers,” Virtanen writes, “are generally viewed as a flowing continuum.” ———, “Water Imagery in the Writings of Don Grub Rgyal,” 2. Virtanen also notes that river-systems may function as a conceptual map of unity-within-diversity, an example being the various tributaries of a river standing for, respectively, various authors, who nevertheless are all part of the same “flow” of tradition. ———, “Water Imagery in the Writings of Don Grub Rgyal,” 3.

¹⁹² Virtanen, “Water Imagery in the Writings of Don Grub Rgyal,” 3.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

characteristics of force that strongly correlate to SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schemas. Force, in Johnson's description, 1) is "always exerted through interaction," 2) "usually involves the movement of some object though space in some direction," 3) moves "typically in a single path of motion," 4) has an "origin" or "source" and can be directed by "agents" to "targets," 5) possesses a level of "power or intensity," and 6) is "always" involved in a "structure or sequence of causality" with "either an animate and purposive being" or "a mere inanimate object or event."¹⁹⁴ Johnson identifies seven of what he describes as the "most common force structures that operate constantly in our experience," all of which may characterize force dynamics along the PATH of the SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schema: compulsion (pushing), blockage, counterforce, diversion, removal of restraint (unencumbered movement through a potential barrier), enablement (potential for movement), and attraction (pulling).¹⁹⁵

Water-PATH and force

A number of studies make note of schemas that highlight the destabilizing nature of the force embodied in a water-PATH schema. Flow can be characterized as "relentless" and "massive" in order to imply danger to those near or on the PATH.¹⁹⁶ The flow of a waterfall can map a "powerful" and "uncontrollable deluge."¹⁹⁷ Forceful rainfall can suggest the pattern of a flowing, damaging force.¹⁹⁸ Waters that flow in a "rush" or "torrent" may be used to map the concept of "uncontrollability."¹⁹⁹ Joining the

¹⁹⁴ Johnson, *The Body in the Mind*, 43-44.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 45.

¹⁹⁶ Anti-immigration subtleties can be found in phrases such as "the *relentless flow of immigrants*" and "the *massive flow of illegal immigrants*." ———, "Proposition 203: A Critical Metaphor Analysis": 71. Johnson cites Otto Santa Ana, *Brown Tide Rising: Metaphors of Latinos in Contemporary American Public Discourse*, 1st ed. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002).

¹⁹⁷ Virtanen, "Water Imagery in the Writings of Don Grub Rgyal," 5.

¹⁹⁸ Brown, *Seeing the Psalms*, 127.

¹⁹⁹ Omori, "Emotion as a Huge Mass of Moving Water," 135.

“mainstream” can be experienced as exposure to destabilizing forces.²⁰⁰ An increased flow can be, as a swollen water-flow, “unmanageable.”²⁰¹

Free flow and control

In what is perhaps best understood as a schematic extension of water’s powerful and destabilizing force, a number of conceptual metaphors are based on the distinction between *controlled flow of water* and *free-flowing water*. The introduction of piped, centralized, drinking water systems in Germany (replacing rivers, streams, springs, and wells as primary sources of water) seems to have provided a conceptual schema for the linguistic logic governing the central money supply in Germany, in which money, understood as vital to economic health, could “flow” from a “supply” that could be turned on or off at the “tap.”²⁰² Wolf-Andreas Liebert argues that during and through the introduction of central water supply in Germany the circulation of both money and water became increasingly abstract, anonymous, scientific, costly, and anti-ecological.²⁰³

In an attempt to foster responsible, informed use of local free-flowing watersheds in Tanzania and Nigeria, Bruce Lankford and Drennan Watson developed the schema-based “river basin game” for local leaders and water users. In the game, marbles rolling down natural-looking channels schematically represented free-flowing water. Players were given the opportunity to capture marbles by placing sticks across some amount of the marble flow. They quickly discovered how players in the lower reaches of the catchment could lose all or some of their water supply. The metaphorical structure of the game allowed the participants to draw conclusions about the importance of free-flowing

²⁰⁰ Johnson, "Proposition 203: A Critical Metaphor Analysis ": 79.

²⁰¹ Andriessen, "Knowledge as Love," 7.

²⁰² Liebert, "Money Is Water," 101-04.

²⁰³ Ibid., 103.

water and the dangers and ethical dilemmas of human control over watersheds. Lankford and Watson found that participation in the metaphorical world of the game produced more informed, empowered, and communally oriented behavior in the real world of the watershed, concluding that “the game’s success is related to its quality of metaphor,” and that “the richer the metaphor of the game, the better the game.”²⁰⁴

Andriessen’s experiments found that when members of organizations spoke of knowledge in terms of KNOWLEDGE IS WATER, *managers* tended to speak of the need to control and direct the flow of water/information within the organization, conceptualizing water/information as something “not always in the right place at the right time.”²⁰⁵ Knowledge-flow, according to the managers, needed “irrigation systems,” “knowledge taps,” “dams,” and “floodgates.”²⁰⁶ *Other* employees, however, who were supervised by these managers, tended to speak of KNOWLEDGE IS WATER in terms of freely flowing streams, unencumbered by barriers and free from artificial channelization. The employees strongly critiqued the controlled-flow metaphors employed by the managers.²⁰⁷

Slingerland charts how an ancient inter-Confucian argument is framed by competing conceptions of free-flowing versus channelized water. Mencius’ arguments for working with an innately good human nature are framed by conceptual metaphors of naturally flowing water. The opposing arguments of Gaozi, who is more suspicious of human nature and favored more stringent control over human behaviors, are framed by

²⁰⁴ Bruce Lankford and Drennan Watson, "Metaphor in Natural Resource Gaming: Insights from the River Basin Game," *Simulation & Gaming* 38, no. 3 (2007): 1-2. The authors conclude that a number of characteristics of the metaphors in the game enhance the strength of the conceptual work of the metaphors: levity, specificity, spatiality, empathy (exchanging roles), solidarity (working together), and ingenuity. Lankford and Watson, "Metaphor in Natural Resource Gaming," 11-13.

²⁰⁵ Andriessen, "Knowledge as Love," 12.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 10-12.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 12.

conceptual metaphors of controlled flow of water, including channelization of water-flow.²⁰⁸

In sum, in the studies reviewed for this project, metaphorical schemas based on channelization and human control over water-flow are associated with centralized control over other domains, including money, power, knowledge, communication, human nature and human behavior. Conceptual metaphors based on free-flowing water are associated with just sharing of resources, critique of hierarchy, sharing of knowledge, freedom from strict governance, and an understanding of human nature as relatively benign.

Lack of flow

The patterns arising from a water-PATH with diminished water-flow also serve as the basis for conceptual metaphors. The flow along the PATH may be diminished or completely absent (an absent or reduced trajector), or the movement of the trajector along the PATH may come to a halt (a stationary trajector). The former patterns (an absent or reduced trajector) tend to highlight a lack of the flowing entity at the GOAL, while the latter pattern (a stationary trajector) tends to highlight the cessation of movement along the PATH and, often, the “stagnation” of the trajector.

Stagnation as a conceptual metaphor in a SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schema may include the force-schematic element of “blockage.”²⁰⁹ The flow becomes trapped and does not circulate or move, causing it to stagnate. Andriessen and Omori cite numerous examples of the use of “stagnation” as a conceptual metaphor for communicational and

²⁰⁸ Slingerland, "Conceptual Blending, Somatic Marking, and Normativity," 577.

²⁰⁹ See above and Johnson, *The Body in the Mind*, 45. See also Lakoff and Johnson's FREEDOM OF ACTION IS THE ABSENCE OF IMPEDIMENTS TO MOVEMENT in Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, 190. cited in Virtanen, "Water Imagery in the Writings of Don Grub Rgyal," 10.

emotional flow.²¹⁰ In a SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schema based on fluidity, a flow that is moving may be understood to be “good” and “fresh,” while one that stands still may be understood to be a “problem” and “bad.”²¹¹ Schematic representations of solutions to the problem of metaphorical stagnation include removing blockages (allowing flow/circulation), and flushing and refreshing the system.²¹²

Similarly, the flow may be stopped by being frozen. As might be expected, the schematic representation of frozen flow does not include the entailment of spoilage of the trajectory, as in stagnation. Various entities may be schematically frozen in a system in which they are understood normally to be flowing: emotions, financial assets, prices, thought, freedom, and communication.²¹³

The force-schematic pattern of blockage may also give rise to a schema not simply of halted fluidic flow, but also complete absence of flow. The cause of the blockage may be represented schematically by entities along the PATH such as dams and closed taps.²¹⁴

A broader representation of absence of flow may portray a problem not only with the PATH but also with the SOURCE: dry weather and drought cause the flow of water to disappear all along the PATH.²¹⁵ Entities, lacking a flowing input, may simply “dry up” and disappear: money, emotions, energy, life.²¹⁶ This pattern may draw into the conceptual blend a number of other ecological elements: *thirst* may stand for distress,

²¹⁰ Andriessen, "Knowledge as Love," 7. Omori, "Emotion as a Huge Mass of Moving Water," 138.

²¹¹ Andriessen, "Knowledge as Love," 7.

²¹² *Ibid.*, 10.

²¹³ Virtanen, "Water Imagery in the Writings of Don Grub Rgyal," 10. Lakoff, "Money Is a Liquid." Andriessen, "Knowledge as Love," 7.

²¹⁴ Andriessen, "Knowledge as Love," 7. Liebert, "Money Is Water," 101. Lankford and Watson, "Metaphor in Natural Resource Gaming," 1.

²¹⁵ Brown, *Seeing the Psalms*, 121-22, Omori, "Emotion as a Huge Mass of Moving Water," 138.

²¹⁶ Lakoff, "Money Is a Liquid.", Liebert, "Money Is Water," 101, Slingerland, *Effortless Action*, 157.

need, or desire, and may be experienced by the entire landscape, including humans, other animals, and the land itself. This watershed-wide thirst magnifies that intensity of the sense of lack in the conceptual blend. Thirst and need are to be found everywhere.

Brown notes that the psalms contain a number of examples of this pattern:

As a deer longs for flowing streams, so my soul longs for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.... O God, you are my God, I seek you, my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water.... my soul thirsts for you like a parched land... Restore our fortunes, O Living One, like the watercourses in the Negeb.²¹⁷

The threat behind such lack may be the threat of death—a danger not only to humans but to the wider landscape, everything living in the conceptual blend.²¹⁸

Flow and directionality

The patterns of drought and refreshment from flowing water can activate a system of metaphorical representations that is more complex than a strictly linear SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schema. Humans, other animals, plants, and land all along the water-PATH may be represented in the conceptual blend as dependent on the water-flow of the PATH. These entities, while they are located along the PATH and are clearly “passed” by the water-FLOW as they are located short of the GOAL of the schema, nevertheless receive water from the PATH in ways significant to the metaphorical schema. A wide “area”—in Fillmore’s terminology—may be schematically represented: “the setting in which the Fluid’s movement takes place on an unspecified Path.”²¹⁹ A water flow that nourishes the

²¹⁷ Psalm 42.1-2a, Psalm 63.1-2, Psalm 143.6b, Psalm 126.4, cited in Brown, *Seeing the Psalms*, 121-23. “The metaphor of thirst maps the psalmist’s felt lack of divine aid and presence. God is out of sight; water is only a mirage. The taunting questions ‘Where is your God?’ reveals the target of the psalmist’s figurative thirst.” ———, *Seeing the Psalms*, 134.

²¹⁸ Brown, *Seeing the Psalms*, 121.

²¹⁹ FrameNet, “Fluidic_Motion.”

land as blood nourishes the body,²²⁰ a tree “planted by streams of water” as one of the faithful draws sustenance from the Torah,²²¹ a lateral flow of water that gives nourishment to plants that grow vertically upward.²²² these metaphorical connections make use of the life-giving properties of water granted to entities near the PATH of flowing water.²²³ The benefits carried by water are not only delivered to the GOAL but are also available along the PATH, and, at least in some instances, this characteristic of water is carried over into conceptual blends.

The schematic account of water-flow may be further complicated. Rather than the simple schema of a linear flow for the water-PATH, the flow of water may be itself framed by metaphors. Many cultures identify a fixed right/left orientation to a river that is determined by the direction of the river’s flow, thus, in a sense, giving the river its own right and left hands. Some cultures extend the bodily metaphors for the water-flow, such that the flow is mapped as having, for example, a “water-back” (the upper surface of the flow), a “water-chest” (the bottom layer of water, along the bed of the flow), “water-shoulders” (upper tributaries), and “water-thighs” and “water-feet” (lower tributaries). In this case, the entire watershed is mapped as the figure of a prostrate body, with its head at

²²⁰ Slingerland, *Effortless Action*, 124.

²²¹ Brown, *Seeing the Psalms*, 131.

²²² Slingerland, *Effortless Action*, 157.

²²³ The conceptual blend of water cycling through the landscape with blood cycling through the body makes prominent use of the CYCLE schema, in which a PATH exhibits a “definite recurring internal structure.” Johnson, *The Body in the Mind*, 121. The flow of water through the landscape is elsewhere blended with the flow of blood, energy, voice, song, inspiration, etc. Feld, for example, finds significant blending of water-flow with the flows of the body: “Flow concerns the interrelated sense and sensuality of water flowing through and connecting landforms, as well as the voice flowing through and connecting the thinking, moving, feeling body. It also concerns the hold, the lingering grip, of sound and poetic song, the resoundingness of voice in silent memory. These notions of flow all merge in the performance of the path maps that are a central feature of poetic song texts.” Feld, “Waterfalls of Song,” 100.

the uphill end of the watershed.²²⁴ Thus, the sense of direction in a water-flow may be encoded on levels much more complex than simple direction-of-flow. Any given place along the PATH may be mapped in relationship to the entire watershed. Such a schema may also be “fractal” in use: the conceptual pattern of the entire watershed may be “applied at any level of scale,” making use of the characteristic shape of a watershed that “can be subdivided into parts, each of which is a smaller version of the whole.”²²⁵

It is, however, perhaps the *unidirectional* nature of water’s flow along its PATH that is the most strongly and significantly entailed in conceptual blends structured around water-flow. According to Keshavarz, this unidirectional characteristic is “the most important feature” of a water-flow serving as a conceptual metaphor.²²⁶ Slingerland and Virtanen also identify the unidirectional nature of water-flow as basic and nearly essential to the structure of water-flow schemas.²²⁷

The unidirectional flow is “inexorable,”²²⁸ allows for “no possibility of a reverse flow for the water,”²²⁹ as the flow is a “powerful natural force... and will continue its flow.”²³⁰ Slingerland explains how water-flow conceptual metaphors may draw on the

²²⁴ Burenhult, "Streams of Words," 187. The metaphor of WATERSHED IS A BODY, along with, less frequently, WATERSHED IS A FAMILY (e.g. “water-mother” and “water-child” express the relationships of streams), SO structure the Jahai conceptions of watershed that it is difficult for watersheds to function as source domains themselves. Burenhult writes that “metaphor is in a sense an abstract system applied ‘top-down’ onto landscape, operating with minimal dependency on individual natural features and their use... it is difficult in the case of Jahai to see ‘drainage’ or even ‘landscape’ as a basic domain or backdrop against which other human experience takes place. Indeed, it is the metaphorical templates themselves, or rather their source domains of body and kinship, which form the most fundamental dimensions along which the Jahai categorize the physical world.”———, "Streams of Words," 197-98.

²²⁵ Burenhult, "Streams of Words," 187-88.

²²⁶ Keshavarz and Ghassemzadeh, "Life as a Stream," 6.

²²⁷ Slingerland, "Conceptual Blending, Somatic Marking, and Normativity," 574, Virtanen, "Water Imagery in the Writings of Don Grub Rgyal," 2.

²²⁸ Slingerland, *Effortless Action*, 153.

²²⁹ Keshavarz and Ghassemzadeh, "Life as a Stream," 10.

²³⁰ Virtanen, "Water Imagery in the Writings of Don Grub Rgyal," 6.

power of the entailed unidirectional nature of water-flow. Water-flow in a blend, he writes, may be used

to introduce teleological and normatively charged features: the natural, “internal” tendency of water is to flow downhill, and to go against this tendency requires the application of external force. Although it is possible under certain circumstances to make water flow uphill, this requires a huge expenditure of force and is ultimately unsustainable—going “against the flow” of Nature-Heaven is bound to lead to failure.²³¹

Once one is committed to metaphor that has been structured around the schema of the watershed in its natural flowing state, it is difficult to argue against the direction of the “flow” of the schema.²³² The unidirectional nature of the flowing entity is portrayed “as natural and inevitable.”²³³ Slingerland notes the persuasive power of this metaphorical structure across cultures and centuries, as it operates on his own undergraduate students reading ancient texts governed by unidirectional water-flow metaphors:

Of course modern American college students react predictably to the image of someone foolishly trying to oppose the inexorable downward flow of water. This sense of cognitive transparency makes it easy for us to overlook how astounding it is that a text assembled in archaic Chinese in the 4th c. B.C.E. by some wizened Confucian scholars could survive the millennia, be translated into modern English, and trigger the construction of spaces in the minds of 21st c. A.D., baggy-pants-clad, MTV-watching California college students in a manner entirely predictable to its original author.²³⁴

A number of elements of water-flow schemas may be given to flexibility and adaptation depending on the specific conceptual blend of which it is a part. However, the downward, unidirectional flow of water represents a relatively fixed element of the water-flow

²³¹ Slingerland, "Conceptual Blending, Somatic Marking, and Normativity," 578-79.

²³² Ibid.: 577-78.

²³³ Ibid.: 574.

²³⁴ Ibid.: 580. It may be worth noting that the (unconvincing) *opponent* of this “wizened Confucian scholar” sought to frame his arguments by way of schemas drawn from channelized, controlled, and manipulated flow of water, over-and-against schemas of naturally flowing water.

schema, and contributes a naturally persuasive power to the flowing nature of the elements to which it corresponds in the blend.

GOAL: Water-Goal in the SOURCE-PATH-GOAL Schema

Fillmore's definition is deceptively simple: the GOAL of fluidic motion is "the location the Fluid ends up."²³⁵ Lakoff and Johnson are nearly as straightforward in their definitions. The GOAL of a SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schema is an "end point"²³⁶ that is the "intended destination of the trajectory."²³⁷ Lakoff and Johnson specify that the "actual final location of the trajectory... may or may not be the intended destination."²³⁸

While many movements and trajectories indeed commonly fail to reach their goal, a peculiarity of water-flow and its SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schema is that water-flows in the wild typically reach their GOAL. Rivers and streams do not typically "dry up" short of their goal. If such a pattern were typical, however, the schematic pattern of water-flow would be quite different: the water's inexorable movement toward the GOAL would be much less strongly entailed in the basic schema of water flow. As it is, however, the schematic representation of natural water flow does indeed strongly entail inexorable movement toward the GOAL.

One rather obvious immediate complication of the description of schema as having an "end point" is that naturally flowing water in the wild does not normally have a single trajectory moving along the PATH toward the GOAL, but rather is a flowing continuum that, in its ideal state, is continuously flowing along the entire length of the PATH. Even as it is flowing into the GOAL, it is being simultaneously newly generated at

²³⁵ FrameNet, "Fluidic_Motion."

²³⁶ Lakoff, *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things* 275.

²³⁷ Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, 33.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*

the SOURCE. In its ideal state, the physical trajector enduringly inhabits SOURCE, PATH, AND GOAL simultaneously.

Water-GOAL as CONTAINER and SOURCE

A number of schematic patterns for the GOAL of water-flow are characterized by a GOAL that is structured as a container that holds the flow captured at the end of the PATH, i.e. it is “where the Fluid ends up.”²³⁹ Sunlight may pour into a room;²⁴⁰ a river of feeling may feed a sea of emotions;²⁴¹ immigrants may stream into a new locale;²⁴² information may flow into the receptive minds of employees.²⁴³ In these cases, the GOAL is relatively static. There is little schematically represented activity based on water-source domains that occurs after the entities flow into the GOAL.

In other schematic renderings, however, the CONTAINER that serves as the GOAL of the SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schemas contributes to the conceptual blend the possibility of its becoming a SOURCE once again, based on the characteristic potential energy of pooled water that allows it to flow elsewhere. A number of examples in the conceptual-metaphor literature share this feature: for example, musical inspiration may flow into the “pool” of the musician’s mind and then flow out of the musician as a flowing song;²⁴⁴ money that is pooled from an influx of funds may also become an outflow of funds;²⁴⁵ energy flowing into the body may become an outward directed flow of power;²⁴⁶ the “water-bum” at the end of an anthropomorphized drainage system not only discharges water into a GOAL

²³⁹ FrameNet, "Fluidic_Motion."

²⁴⁰ Lakoff, "Light Is a Fluid."

²⁴¹ Omori, "Emotion as a Huge Mass of Moving Water," 138.

²⁴² Johnson, "Proposition 203: A Critical Metaphor Analysis": 71.

²⁴³ Andriessen, "Knowledge as Love," 10.

²⁴⁴ Feld, "Waterfalls of Song," 132.

²⁴⁵ Lakoff, "Money Is a Liquid."

²⁴⁶ Slingerland, *Effortless Action*, 155.

but also contributes to the flow of a larger catchment network.²⁴⁷ Thus, the natural characteristics of pooled water at the GOAL of a flowing PATH may structure a schema that allows the GOAL of the SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schema to become, newly, a SOURCE, and to do so “naturally.”

Water-GOAL as self

While the schematic elements of a water-SOURCE or water-PATH at times schematically represent the *self* or the *self's habitation or land*, the element of water-GOAL appears much more often than SOURCE or PATH to be identified with *self*. In the conceptual metaphors examined for this project, when a point of view arises from within a water-flow's SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schema, the point of view arises from, more often than not, the position of the GOAL. The self receives the flow of the system. Further, in the studies examined for this project, the PATH normally flows toward the self/GOAL with entities that, more often than not, are strongly desired. In the metaphorical schemas examined for this project, the self/GOAL stands ready to receive the flow of, for example, money, information, inspiration, emotion, energy, healing, salvation, and even God.

Eric Johnson notes an exception to the entailed desirability of the flow: the conceptual framing by anti-immigration groups of the flow of immigrants into the GOAL of the state of Arizona. Opponents of immigration in Arizona employed the metaphor of fluidic flow of immigrants. The “intended destination” of the flow maps as Arizona, and the aims of the immigration opponents include solutions schematized by channelization, control, blockage and diversion.²⁴⁸ Given the powerful and inexorable nature of the flow-schema, as well as the combination of the SELF AS GOAL and SELF AS CONTAINER, one

²⁴⁷ Burenhult, "Streams of Words," 186.

²⁴⁸ Johnson, "Proposition 203: A Critical Metaphor Analysis ". See also Santa Ana, *Brown Tide Rising*.

may hypothesize that schemas that place the self at the GOAL (thus receiving the flow of the system into the SELF AS CONTAINER) will evaluate the flow as either strongly desired or strongly unwelcome.

Water-GOAL and the watershed

A number of conceptual blends that focus on the GOAL of a water-flow also preserve entailments from the larger fluidic system of the SOURCE-PATH-GOAL. The vision mapped by the GOAL element need not shrink to entail only the deposit of the flow into the CONTAINER/GOAL, as these examples demonstrate: psalmic metaphors of God's goodness flowing toward the supplicant often include not only representations of individual reception of such a flow, but also include images of the entire landscape and watershed being renewed;²⁴⁹ the fluidic patterns of the watershed that inspire a musician also give schematic structure to the musical creations of the musician;²⁵⁰ the accumulation of *qi* gathers the strength and pattern of the entire watershed into the body;²⁵¹ a game may use simple metaphorical tools of marbles and sticks—representing individually constructed dams, i.e. mini-water-GOALS—to foster knowledge of ethically and ecologically significant elements of the entire local watershed.²⁵² Liebert charts a metaphorical and actual shift in one society from communal concern for the healthy flow of a local water-GOAL to a narrow concern for the water-GOAL of individual taps.²⁵³ In

²⁴⁹ Brown, *Seeing the Psalms*.

²⁵⁰ Feld, "Waterfalls of Song."

²⁵¹ Slingerland, *Effortless Action*.

²⁵² Lankford and Watson, "Metaphor in Natural Resource Gaming."

²⁵³ Liebert, "Money Is Water." A natural water-GOAL may well more "naturally" entail a view of an entire watershed when compared to a channelized, centrally controlled water system. The schema of a natural watershed is relatively predictable and "fractal"—one small part may serve as a micro-representation of the entire watershed. Even if it is not schematically represented in the minds of some water users, any GOAL of a natural water-flow naturally feeds the SOURCE, also. Thus, in natural systems, the GOAL *may* always be understood as part of a CYCLE, not simply a dead-end CONTAINER. In any case, even if the GOAL of a natural water system is understood as a container (such as a very large lake or an ocean), these very GOAL-

short, a focus on the GOAL of a water-flow need not eclipse a view of the entire water-flow system. Image schematic patterns of the entire water-flow may be evoked in representations of the GOAL of the system.

III. Summary: Water and Cognition

The studies reviewed for this project find water to be mapped in cognition largely by way of two schemas: CONTAINMENT (in the case of pooled water) and SOURCE-PATH-GOAL (in the case of flowing water). The source domain of water contributes some particular elaborations to these common schemas.

Pooled water's *depths* function schematically in a number of ways. The depths themselves—the volume of the CONTAINER—can function as a measuring device for the concept of quantity, especially in the case of vast quantities. The schematic image of entering the depths—either physically or visually—often suggests exploration of a relatively hidden domain, while, correlatively, an object's removal from the depths tends to suggest clarity, revelation, and accessibility. Being located enduringly *within* the depths maps to a giving-over of some autonomy to something larger: sometimes in a blend highlighting danger and constraint in the CONTAINER, and at other times in a blend highlighting a sense of unity and shared identity, often including emotional and even ecstatic dimensions within the CONTAINER.

entities are themselves often the source domain for metaphorical expressions of un-containability: an ocean of desire, for example, cannot be contained, and therefore subverts the schematic pattern of CONTAINER. In a domestic, centrally controlled water-system, the metaphorical structure may suggest the “end-user” or “consumer” of water is much more of a CONTAINER, at the end of one SOURCE-PATH-GOAL system (drinking water), and at the beginning of another (sewage). As an illustration of the conceptual separation of these two systems, consider the uproar over what are described as “toilet-to-tap” water systems. Sadie F. Dingfelder, "From Toilet to Tap: Psychologists Lend Their Expertise to Overcoming the Public's Aversion to Reclaimed Water," *Monitor on psychology* 35, no. 8 (2004).

The *boundaries* of pooled water contribute a number of schematic properties, including some that are quite particular to water-CONTAINERS. The *lower* boundary of a water-CONTAINER is the first to receive and hold entities flowing into the boundaried CONTAINER. Whereas the lower boundary is associated with entities settling into place, the upper boundary is a zone of liminality, turbulence, and is often characterized by a force pulling entities into the CONTAINER. Entities positioned at the upper boundary of the water-CONTAINER may be subject to a loss of control, both through the powerful rising and falling or turbulence of the upper boundary, as well as through the loss of control entailed by immersion/CONTAINMENT, which is the constant threat at the upper boundary of the water-CONTAINER. Being positioned at this boundary often maps to themes of danger and peril. Even the schema of flotation and support upon the upper boundary of the water-CONTAINER (sometimes employed to suggest a place of safety) often entails danger existing below the upper boundary.

The lateral boundaries of the water-CONTAINER tend to be highlighted in order to suggest separation between entities (with the exception of metonymic connections to the land adjoining the water-body). One pooled entity is separate from another, in a state of stasis. Sometimes, however, the tendency of pooled water to *leak* through or around boundaries is mapped in conceptual blends: some entities are not easily contained or kept separate. The separation motif entailed by the lateral boundaries also extends to the phenomena of stagnation and evaporation: entities in separated stasis may degrade in quality or quantity. These latter examples of blending patterns arising from highlighted lateral boundaries in the schema of pooled water may suggest a certain schematic

normativity to *flowing* water. Pooled water may “leak” or degrade if obstacles impede its “natural” flowing state.

The most common naturally occurring form of water-source in the landscape—the headwaters of a catchment basin—is apparently too schematically diffuse to function regularly as a source domain for metaphorical projection. In fact, the opposite seems to be true. The headwaters-SOURCE for watersheds is typically represented via metaphors from some other source domain, with kinship, the human body, and domestic water use being notable examples (e.g. mother stream, headwaters, and waters poured out from a vase or pitcher). Some water-SOURCES do indeed function as source domains. Rain as a SOURCE typically entails power and force—either fructifying or destructive. Springs tend to map a process by which hidden entities or forces become visible or evident, often with natural and inexorable characteristics. The schematic pattern of a spring-SOURCE is at times an ‘overflowing’—the flow first moves *up* from within a CONTAINER and then *outward* and/or *downward*. Poured water, perhaps prototypically a domestic source domain drawn from the act of pouring water from a vessel, often entails some sort of separation between SOURCE and GOAL, a sense of power and freedom from control, and an unstoppability once begun.

The entity of water-PATH generally includes, at least implicitly, a SOURCE and, even more frequently, a GOAL. The water-PATH SCHEMA is characterized by a number of qualities distinct from most other PATHS, stemming chiefly from the reality that the trajector in a water-PATH is typically coextensive with the PATH. Thus, as the PATH remains stably in place, it is also in continuous motion, occupied at every point by a flowing trajector. Hence, the trajector is always flowing *past* and simultaneously *toward*

any observer of the PATH or point along the PATH. And even as the PATH remains the “same,” it is continuously “new.” These characteristics map at times to philosophical musings about the paradoxical natures of time, music, God, and live itself.

The PATH itself entails *force*—a sometimes-destabilizing force. This destabilizing characteristic is sometimes schematically counteracted by schemas of BLOCKAGE or DIVERSION, i.e. damming and channelization, etc. This schematic interplay tends to map wider questions of freedom versus control.

A lack of flow along a PATH structured by a flowing water source domain generally indicates a non-ideal state. For example, blocked flow may lead to stagnation along the PATH. A complete absence of the trajectory may indicate a problem with the SOURCE, and pose problems for the entire PATH, AREA, AND GOAL. The metaphors of thirst or drought are sometimes used to characterize such a non-ideal state. A frozen PATH simply slows or stops the flow, often without indications of spoilage or degradation.

The PATH is often characterized by spatial and directional specificity. Points along the PATH sometimes serve as something of minor GOALS, as the flow—even as it flows past them—contributes something to the entities along the PATH. Thus the SOURCE is connected to points along the PATH that receive the flow as at a GOAL, while the schema nevertheless maintains the entire SOURCE-PATH-GOAL system, with its larger GOAL, intact. As rehearsed above, metaphors of kinship, body, and domestic water-use may give spatial and directional orientation to the PATH, or the entire SOURCE-PATH-GOAL system. And the PATH-schema system tends to be fractal, i.e. one small part may appear to be structural microcosm of the larger entity. One of the most powerful entailments of water-flow along the PATH is its unidirectionality. The direction of the flow of the PATH is

natural, forceful, and is generally impossible to reverse. These characteristics map across domains in conceptual blends and can lend the blended conception a strongly entailed unidirectional characteristic and persuasive power.

Water-flow in the natural world, unlike many other source domains for SOURCE-PATH-GOAL, typically reaches its “natural” GOAL. Based on its continuous and flowing characteristics, even as flowing water arrives at its GOAL, it normally also actively occupies the entire PATH, and is in fact being simultaneously newly generated at its SOURCE. Thus the entire system is connected to the GOAL and the *event* of reaching the GOAL is an ongoing *reality*, always occurring and always being made newly possible.

While the GOAL itself can be rendered as a static CONTAINER, the characteristics of pooled water also allow the GOAL to represent schematically a potential or active SOURCE for yet another water-flow. The self may be blended with the GOAL, with the flowing entities entering the self-as-CONTAINER and at times merging with the self. Such examples reviewed for this project tended to evaluate the flow either in strongly negative or positive terms. Finally, as noted above, at times the entire system may share characteristics of the GOAL. The flow is conceived as flowing into many parts of the system, to accomplish specific goals and deliver something to specific entities along the PATH, even as the entire system continues to flow.

The field of cognitive science is still quite young. And the work of collating separate studies of a single source domain as accomplished above is somewhat unwieldy. Yet, such work even in this young field illuminates what appears to be a distinctive set of conceptual structures arising from the source domain of water. In other words, water as a source domain structures concepts in some patterned and predictable ways, via image

schematic properties. As shown in Chapter Two, ritual distills such image schemas, and then conceptually blends these schemas for the generation of ritual and theological meaning. The patterns of conceptual meaning-making arising from water detailed in this chapter will be placed in conversation both with the work of liturgical theologians (reviewed in Chapter One) and with the baptismal practices centered in one congregation's Easter Vigil (reported in Chapter Four).

CHAPTER FOUR

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF BAPTISMAL WATER AT THE EASTER VIGIL IN ONE LOCAL CONGREGATION

I. Introduction

In previous chapters, this project explored accounts offered by liturgical theologians concerning the eco-theological significance of baptismal water at the Easter Vigil (Chapter One), and analyzed cognitive scientific accounts of the conceptual patterns arising from engagement with water (Chapter Three). At the center of both chapters was the question of how water is experienced, and how it evokes and structures perceptions and thoughts, particularly with regard to the wider ecological world. At the center of this fourth chapter is, essentially, the same question, though asked in yet another mode—through participant observation and interviews in a local congregation as it prepares for, enacts, and reflects on its celebration of baptism at the Easter Vigil. Following this account, these first four chapters (liturgical theology, cognitive science, and ethnographic inquiry) are placed together in conversation in the penultimate chapter of this project (Chapter Five).

As a teacher of liturgy in a Lutheran seminary, my interactions with congregations and worship leaders often invite me to offer normative answers to liturgical questions posed by communities I have never visited. And, indeed, this present project eventually concludes with suggestions for possible reform in the practice of liturgy. However, in this chapter my hope is to bracket some of the normative trajectories of liturgical theological scholarship and to attend carefully to this “specific ethnographic

event,”¹ relying as much as possible on local participants’ categories of interpretation.² Further, while liturgical theology has at times assigned single, authoritative meanings to liturgies, this ethnographic project seeks, first, to ask “genuine questions” of this community (questions that can only be answered by the community under study),³ to honor the “multiplicity” of voices in this congregation,⁴ and only then to seek to identify patterns and advance explanatory theories. Liturgical theologians have indeed often sought to answer such questions by attending carefully to liturgical texts and their own liturgical experience, but the discipline of ethnographic inquiry invites similar careful attention to the experience and accounts of others participating in the liturgies, learning from the other participants through conversation and bodily participation with them in the life of the community. Research such as this, which participates in the experience of others on an everyday bodily level, opens new insights for the researcher. Robert Desjarlais cites the experience of learning, in the field, how to sip tea, to catch jokes, and to participate gracefully in local customs as vital to his understandings of the rituals and

¹ Catherine Bell advocates such an approach, though she cautions, in the end, against a dogmatic resistance to systematic analysis and conclusions: “subsuming the specific into a generalized model can suggest more of an underlying system or structure than there actually is... In the end, a performance approach does not usually offer a definitive interpretation of a set of ritual actions. Indeed, it is better at conveying the multiple ways in which such activities are meant and experienced, as well as how such multiplicity is integral to the efficacy of ritual performances... However, when performance becomes a dominant metaphor that is systematically developed and applied, its insights may begin to cost more in terms of systematic insights.” Bell, Catherine. “Ethnography.” In *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, edited by Mark C. Taylor, 205-24. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998, 215.

² On pursuing the meanings and interpretations of local participants, see “Representing Members’ Meanings” in Robert M. Emerson, Rachel I. Fretz, and Linda L. Shaw, *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*, Chicago Guides to Writing, Editing, and Publishing (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 112-28.

³ “With a genuine question, there is no hypothesis to prove, just a problem to investigate. With a bona fide group, the answer to the genuine question comes from those who have actually faced, and resolved, the matters for themselves.” Leeds-Hurwitz, “Ethnography,” in *Handbook of Language and Social Interaction*, ed. Kristine L. Fitch and Robert E. Sanders (Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2005), 337.

⁴ Bell, “Critical Terms for Religious Studies,” 218.

customs he hoped to study. This dimension of knowledge required both his bodily participation and an attentive and open spirit.⁵

Nevertheless, this chapter does not represent a typical full ethnographic inquiry. Among other differences, the normal assumption for such an inquiry includes full time residency in the field for a full year. And while local patterns of interpretation and meaning are crucial in this account, I bring some specific questions, already identified above, into this inquiry from the outset: *how does baptismal water at the Easter Vigil function in the experience and meaning-making of this congregation? How do the metaphors and concepts that participants use relate to embodied liturgical patterns, especially considering the use of water in the liturgy?*⁶ Some approaches to ethnography discourage focused inquiry that approaches the field with some specific questions, instead of allowing the questions themselves to emerge in the field. This method is certainly helpful in many situations. Because of ritual's local variations and experiential complexity, ethnography's "continuous back-and-forth movement between data and analysis" may be especially helpful in the study of ritual and liturgy.⁷ However, despite the specific questions already formulated in this inquiry, even the interview questions posed here tend to position the researcher and the participant before the same basic

⁵ Kathleen M. Dewalt and Billie R. Dewalt, "Participant Observation," in *Handbook of Methods in Cultural Anthropology*, ed. H. Russell Bernard (Walnut Creek, Calif.: AltaMira Press, 1998), 264. citing Robert R. Desjarlais, *Body and Emotion: The Aesthetics of Illness and Healing in the Nepal Himalayas*, Series in Contemporary Ethnography (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992).

⁶ In addition to the concern in this project for the place of metaphor in cognitive scientific inquiry, we may note that anthropologist Roy Rappaport has described ritual as bodily participation within metaphor. Roy A. Rappaport, *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity*, Cambridge Studies in Social and Cultural Anthropology (Cambridge, U.K. ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 70-74. Certain strands of ethnography, especially those following the "thick description" method of Clifford Geertz, have been particularly attentive to the strong role of metaphor in cultural life. Paul Atkinson and Martyn Hammersley, "Ethnography and Participant Observation," in *Strategies of Qualitative Inquiry*, ed. Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1998), 130-31.

⁷ Leeds-Hurwitz, "Ethnography," 330.

question that ritual participants are already asking with regard to the liturgy: “what is going on here?”⁸

Of course, no single method of inquiry completely exhausts a good question. Ethnographic inquiry should not be confused with full access to the feelings, thoughts, or experiences of the participants in this liturgy. The results of this study offer limited numbers of voices, on limited occasions, communicating in complex ways that are imperfectly perceived. Yet imperfect methods of understanding such realities are all that are available to us. The hope in this study is that this method—attending carefully to local participants, participating alongside them over time, and striving patiently to understand the way they are experiencing and making sense of baptisms celebrated at this annual festival—is one good place to begin. In addition to the specific purposes of this ethnographic account, such accounts, in general, also provide an historical record of worship practices and their interpretation in a particular place at a given time in history. I hope this account can offer a modest contribution to such historical memory.

For this inquiry, I attended weekly worship at this Lutheran congregation on most Sundays for eight months, with the Easter Vigil occurring in the sixth month of my time there.⁹ I observed four other baptismal events at the church, on Sundays throughout those eight months, in addition to the baptisms at the Easter Vigil. In the season leading up to the Easter Vigil, I attended weekly preparatory sessions, led by the senior pastor, with the

⁸ Jürgen Streeck and Siri Mehus, "Microethnography: The Study of Practices," in *Handbook of Language and Social Interaction*, ed. Kristine L. Fitch and Robert E. Sanders (Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2005), 386. In any case, focused study of certain particular aspects of the broad category of ritual may be a more realistic way to study ritual behavior. Pascal Boyer writes, “‘Ritual’ is probably not a proper scientific object, the domain of an integrated set of causally related hypotheses, but some of its aspects are, just as ‘reproduction in zebras’ can be the object of a theory, while ‘zebras’ cannot.” Pascal Boyer, *The Naturalness of Religious Ideas: A Cognitive Theory of Religion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 222.

⁹ This congregation is a member of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the largest organized body of Lutherans in North America, with approximately 10,000 congregations and 4.5 million members.

adult candidates for baptism, their sponsors, and some other members of the congregation. These sessions included introductory discussions about Christian faith and practice, with many of the topics arising out of self-identified questions and interests of the baptismal candidates. The sessions were led by the senior pastor, and often included book studies in which all of the attendees discussed a common book. The focus of these sessions was more Christian life and spirituality than the specifics of baptismal theology. I attended all of the liturgies of Holy Week, including the Easter Vigil and the reception that followed. As a “known person” at the congregation, I had many casual conversations with attendees about liturgy, baptism, water, and Easter Vigil. During the time after the Easter Vigil, I conducted more than twenty-five informal interviews with participants in the vigil, attended the gathering of the newly baptized adults with the senior pastor and their sponsors, and conducted an email survey of the congregation, phoning some of the respondents for follow-up interviews. In my conversations and interviews, I sought out participants’ general impressions of the Easter Vigil and of the baptisms conducted in the service. At some point in the conversation, I normally asked people a few common questions: what they remembered about the baptisms at the Easter Vigil; what—if anything—was particularly striking or meaningful to them in the service; and how they might describe the significance of the baptismal event itself. When reflections on this final question did not arise naturally in the conversation, in raising the question, I tried not to make people feel like they were being quizzed, or that there was some right answer behind the question. I asked the question in a number of ways with different people. Sometimes I asked, “How would you explain to a friend of yours outside of the church what that baptism was all about?” Or “What are some of the significant things about

being baptized?” Or “What would you say baptism actually does—how would you put it?” Or “Why do you think people are baptized at all?” Or “What would we lose if we didn’t have baptisms anymore?” Though this project was deemed exempt from Institutional Review Board oversight at Emory University, I nevertheless followed protocol for verbal informed consent, including informing interviewees and conversation partners that I would keep their identity and the identity of the congregation anonymous.

Context

The congregation is located in the United States in a large city in the Midwest, in a busy neighborhood on a grid of streets served by city trains and buses. The neighborhood is made up of brick and stone houses and apartments. Many of the major streets are lined with, in addition to housing, restaurants, bars, clothing stores, coffee shops, and drugstores. A stadium for professional sports is located in the neighborhood. The population of the neighborhood is somewhat transient, being made up largely of young professionals, including many relatively newly married couples, some with young children, though few with school-age children. The neighborhood is considered to be gay-friendly by many in the city, and has a sizeable gay population, with many who are partnered or married. The neighborhood’s population is largely made up of European-Americans, with smaller populations of Hispanics, African-Americans and Asian-Americans. The congregation’s demographics generally mirror those of the surrounding neighborhood: many young professionals, some with young children; singles and couples, most of whom are heterosexual, though many are gay or lesbian; Hispanics, African-Americans, and Asian-Americans, among a larger number of European Americans; members are generally highly educated, with some professional academics

and graduate students in the membership; most members of the congregation were not raised in this city, but moved to the city for college or work; many were raised Lutheran or Roman Catholic or another Christian denomination, and yet a significant minority of others were raised in a different religion or with no religion at all. In general, members of the congregation have chosen to live in a dense urban area, and are pleased with the choice. They praise their urban setting for its cultural attractions, restaurants, colleges and universities, ethnic diversity, fast pace, and public transportation. Over the past decade, the congregation has grown from a small, financially struggling congregation with an average Sunday worship attendance of less than sixty to a growing congregation with multiple staff and an average weekly worship attendance of over one hundred fifty. The congregation was organized in the late nineteenth century, and inhabits a well-maintained brick building built in the early twentieth century with tall stained glass windows, a pipe organ, a gallery used by the choir and the organist, wooden pews, a free-standing table, a single reading stand, and a hardwood floor. The congregation collaborates with a local seminary of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, offering on-site training for seminarians, and regularly hosting seminary faculty for adult forums. The worship space has recently been renovated, is clean and well maintained. The pastoral leadership includes a male senior pastor and a recently called, part-time, female youth and family pastor. Many credit the senior pastor, called to the congregation just over ten years ago, with leading the revitalization of the congregation, especially through his attention to worship practices.

The congregation began practicing the Easter Vigil ten years ago, and it has grown, over the years, to become one of the most significant services of the year. The

practice of this liturgy in this congregation coincides with a movement among many Christian denominations that is recovering the practice of the Easter Vigil. The recent recovery of the Easter Vigil began among Roman Catholics in the early twentieth century, rose to prominence in the Second Vatican Council, and spread among other denominations in the wake of the council. The pattern of the liturgy is an adaptation of patterns witnessed in patristic era accounts of Easter Vigils.¹⁰ Many mainline denominational worship resources now include full liturgical guides and texts for celebrations of the Easter Vigil quite similar to the version printed in the resource used by this congregation, *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*.¹¹ An ecumenical movement generally known as “the liturgical renewal movement” continues to publish papers, host conferences, teach workshops, and publish rites that seek to reform congregational practice such that the Easter Vigil is the central liturgical event of the year. Many of the worship professors currently teaching in mainline seminaries in North America participate in such reform efforts. The senior pastor of this congregation is active in this movement, offering occasional worship leadership at conferences, writing articles, consulting on liturgical resources, and leading workshops. The planning and leadership of the Easter Vigil in this congregation is led by the senior pastor, though it involves dozens of participants in significant planning and support roles.

¹⁰ For background on the baptismal character, historical roots and contemporary recovery of the Easter Vigil, see Paul F. Bradshaw and Lawrence A. Hoffman, *Passover and Easter: Origin and History to Modern Times*, Two Liturgical Traditions (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1999)., Maxwell E. Johnson, *Between Memory and Hope: Readings on the Liturgical Year* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2000)., ———, *The Rites of Christian Initiation: Their Evolution and Interpretation*, Rev. and expanded ed. (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2007)., and Edward Yarnold, *The Awe-Inspiring Rites of Initiation: The Origins of the RCIA*, 2nd ed. (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1994).

¹¹ Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. and Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada., *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, Leader's desk ed. (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2006), 643-53. and ———, *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, pew ed. 266-70.

The ethnographic account below is centered in the baptismal rite of the Easter Vigil, and is preceded and followed by a more cursory account of the larger liturgy of the Easter Vigil.

Easter Vigil: Before the Baptismal Rite

The assembly gathered outside of the church building around a small side porch on which a fire was burning in a raised brazier. Like many urban churches, there is little extra space on the church property and no parking lot. The church building is located on a corner of two streets, immediately bordered by sidewalks and city streets on two sides, a back alley on one side, and a residence on the other. The congregation was gathered on the sidewalk, crowded, and spilling around both the side and the front of the church building. A number of members handed out hand-held candles and worship booklets from baskets they carried through the crowd. The mood was festive, with many people greeting each other, smiling, and looking expectantly toward the area around the fire.

Just after 7:30 p.m. a number of ministers, some wearing special flowing garments including some ornately decorated ones (albs, stole, chasuble, cope) emerged from the church building, and the presiding minister greeted the assembly: “the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all,” to which the assembly responded “and also with you.” The gathering quieted, faces turned upward, bodies straightened and faced the leaders. It was clear that something significant was about to begin. (At this moment and throughout the liturgy, such strong cues were received by the participants as marking the start of an event worthy of attention. Richard Bauman writes, “Performance usually suggests an aesthetically marked and heightened mode of communication, framed in a special way and put on

display for an audience.”¹² Throughout the service, the aesthetic markers that normally frame weekly worship were at their most lavish or extreme: more readings, greater preparation for the readings, more elaborate vestment, more intricate music, more flower, more water poured, etc.) After a few brief announcements about the significance and logistics of the service, a prayer over the fire was said, and a great candle was lighted from the fire, after which the music minister chanted “the light of Christ,” and the assembly sang back, “thanks be to God.” The assembly followed the great candle into the worship space, lighting their hand-held tapers once inside the space. The worship space was nearly full, mostly dark, with attendance noticeably larger than on an average Sunday morning. The music minister chanted a long prayer of thanksgiving, the *Exultet*, that gave thanks for the light of the candle, blending images of candlelight, starlight, and sunrise with images of the risen Christ and many other images from the Christian scriptural narratives of salvation. The congregation, on a number of occasions, echoed the sung phrase, “this is the night,” the most prominent and repeated phrase of the long chanted thanksgiving.

A number of readings from scripture were read at the front of the worship space, often by teams of readers, sometimes enacted or accompanied by choreographed gestures—all of them evidently carefully planned and rehearsed. The assembly was keenly attentive to the readers, watching them, at times silently, or laughing, or expressing surprise or intensity of feeling (“mmm!”). The readings were prominent and dramatic narratives from the Old Testament, including the first creation myth, in which the Earth emerges out of water (Genesis 1), the passage of Israel out of slavery through

¹² Richard Bauman, “Performance,” in *Folklore, Cultural Performances, and Popular Entertainments: A Communications-Centered Handbook*, ed. Richard Bauman (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 41.

the Red Sea (Exodus 14), the call of Jonah who is carried under the sea “in the belly of the fish for three days and three nights,”¹³ and the story of the three young men being thrown in a fiery furnace and surviving unharmed (Daniel 3). After each reading, a hymn was sung in response, then silence, and then all stood for a short prayer that echoed the images of the reading. The sung response after the reading from Daniel was a classic text known as the *Benedicite omnia opera* that calls on all creation to praise God, specifically inviting many creatures to join the hymn, including water, sun, moon, stars, rain, dew, wind, fire, thunder, lightning, mountains, springs, sea-creatures, birds, land-animals, and all people. During this hymn, the worship leaders processed to the rear of the church, led by a processional cross, which the congregation turned to face as they sang.

The worship leaders assembled in the rear of the worship space in a symmetrical arrangement—one carrying a processional cross, some carrying candles on long poles, one holding a large Bible, another carrying a pot of smoking incense, three carrying pitchers of water, a number simply standing attentively. A text from the New Testament was read by a robed lay minister from the center aisle that included blended images of baptism and the death and resurrection of Christ: “we have been buried with Christ by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life” (Romans 6). During this reading, the front of the worship space, which was out of sight to most people because the backs of the members of the assembly were turned to it, was being quickly and quietly redecorated: white and gold cloths were draped on the altar-table; potted spring flowers were placed around the baptismal font, on the different levels of the chancel, around the

¹³ Jonah 1.17

altar-table, and around the great white candle that had been lit at the beginning of the service from the fire outside. Even with my back turned, I began to smell the scent of flowers. (During the season of Lent, tall, curly, dry branches in earthenware vases had taken the place of the fresh flowers that normally stood in vases in the front of the worship space, so these were the first flowers in the worship space for many weeks.)

After the reading from Romans, the lights were turned up while the assembly sang a hymn, “This is the Feast.”¹⁴ During the hymn, the worship leaders processed throughout the worship space (up the center aisle to the front, then completely around the assembly through the side and rear aisles, and then returning to the rear of the worship space in the center aisle), while, throughout the procession, the assembly turned their bodies to face the processional cross (also allowing the front, redecorated area of the worship space to come into view). Having returned to the rear of the church, the pastor, standing in the center and flanked by candles, read in an energetic and crisply enunciated voice John 20, one Gospel’s account of the discovery of the empty tomb and the first appearance of the risen Christ.

Following the Gospel reading, in some brief remarks, the presider named a number of “pictures of the resurrection” that had already been encountered in the liturgy:

On this night of nights we are given pictures of the resurrection: a bonfire and a candle shining in the darkness, stories that proclaim God’s undying life, water, oil, bread and wine, revealing again that God is among us in things that are of the earth and in all that it means to be human.

He continued, framing the upcoming baptism as yet another image of resurrection: “Now we are given an awesome picture of the resurrection: six persons come among us to be

¹⁴ The hymn is a most familiar one at this congregation, sung many Sunday mornings as a gathering hymn that anticipates Holy Communion. Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. and Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada., *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, pew ed., 140-41.

buried with Christ in baptism, that they may come forth reborn.” Finally, the presider linked the baptisms to an affirmation of baptism by the entire assembly that concludes the baptismal rite:

With them we renew our baptismal commitment: to gather for worship in community, and then to live as the risen Christ in the world, serving others and working for justice and peace in all the earth.

The presider invited the baptismal candidates and sponsors to join the procession toward the front of the worship space.¹⁵ The choir sang a short refrain that was then repeated a number of times by the congregation while the procession made its way down the center aisle to the front of the worship space: “You belong to Christ, in whom you have been baptized. Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.”

Easter Vigil: The Baptismal Rite

The procession gathered at the front of the worship space, on the raised area of the chancel, with the baptismal candidates and their sponsors facing the assembly across the baptismal font, and the ministers standing below them on the level of the assembly, facing the baptismal party. The font is a large, clear, plastic bowl, approximately 2.5 feet in diameter and 12 inches deep, that sits on a slight wooden stand that allows the plastic and the water to be clearly seen, even around much of the bottom of the bowl. The top of the plastic bowl stands 3.25 feet above the floor. The plastic is thick, and may be mistaken for glass from a distance. The font had been already filled more than halfway to the top before the beginning of the liturgy.

The movement into position looked well-rehearsed: the baptismal party moved into place briskly and confidently, with sponsors lining up behind the candidates, and the

¹⁵ “I invite our six baptismal candidates and their sponsors to come forward as we sing the response on page 34.”

entire group aligned in place symmetrically and closely, shoulders nearly touching. (The group's placement reminded me of staged group photographs.) The group numbered about twenty, and was made up of the four adult baptismal candidates, the sponsors, and the parents and godparents of the two infant baptismal candidates. The sponsors of the adult candidates were active members of the congregation; the godparents of the infant candidates were friends and relatives of the infants' families.

When all were in place and the music came to an end, the sponsors, without prompting, hesitation or looking at any printed resource, spoke clearly and audibly, one after another: "I present *[name]* for baptism." The presider then asked a series of questions to members of the baptismal party. Addressing them by name, he asked the adult baptismal candidates if they desired to be baptized.¹⁶ He similarly asked the parents of the infants if they desired to have their children baptized. Then, in a series of three questions, the presider asked the parents, sponsors, and the assembly if they were prepared to assume responsibilities of nurture and care for the candidates for baptism.¹⁷ The response to the first four of these five questions, repeated at least seven times, was simply "I do." The candidates and parents spoke this response clearly and firmly, standing up straight, some of them smiling, and apparently keenly attentive to the event. This simple response was the most prominent utterance in which members of the

¹⁶ The full question was: "*[Names]*, called by the Holy Spirit, trusting in the grace and love of God, do you desire to be baptized into Christ?"

¹⁷ The full questions were: 1) "As you bring your children to receive the gift of baptism, you are entrusted with responsibilities: to live with them among God's faithful people, bring them to the word of God and the holy supper, teach them the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, and the Ten Commandments, place in their hands the holy scriptures, and nurture them in faith and prayer, so that your children may learn to trust God, proclaim Christ through word and deed, care for others and the world God made, and work for justice and peace. Do you promise to help your children grow in the Christian faith and life?" 2) "Sponsors, do you promise to nurture these persons in the Christian faith as you are empowered by God's Spirit, and to help them live in the covenant of baptism and in communion with the church?" 3) "People of God, do you promise to support *[names]* and pray for them in their new life in Christ?"

baptismal party actually spoke on their own through the entire liturgy. (The repeated phrase “I do” reminded me of marriage rites, an association the church setting only strengthened.) The fifth and final response to these questions was the assembly’s similar response, promising support and prayer for the newly baptized: “We do.”

In a series of three questions, the candidates, parents and sponsors were asked to renounce evil: “Do you renounce the devil and all the forces that defy God? Do you renounce the powers of this world that rebel against God? Do you renounce the ways of sin that draw you from God?” To each question, the baptismal party responded, “I renounce them.” The entire assembly joined with the baptismal party in reciting the Apostles’ Creed in three segments in response to three questions called out by the presider: “Do you believe in God the Father?” then, “Do you believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God?” and finally, “Do you believe in God the Holy Spirit?” During the third article of the creed, three robed ministers in the front of the worship space moved briskly to the font, each carrying a clear pitcher of water. The presider arranged himself behind the font, facing the congregation, with an assistant holding a binder for him to see a printed guide to the liturgy.

Immediately at the conclusion of the creed, the presider extended his arms and hands out from his sides in a gentle arc (the *orans* posture) and began to pray over the water with a dialog that was an abbreviated form of the dialog spoken every Sunday at the beginning of the Great Thanksgiving prayer over the bread and wine at communion.

After the dialog, the prayer continued:

Holy God, you are the river of life, you are the everlasting wellspring.
 Glory to you for oceans and lakes, for rivers and streams.
 Your waters are below us, around us, above us: our life is born in you.
 You are the fountain of resurrection.

Praise to you for your saving waters:
 Noah and the animals survive the flood,
 and the Israelites escape through the sea.
 Breathe your Spirit into all who are gathered here and into all creation.
 Illumine our days. Enliven our bones. Dry our tears.
 Wash away the sin within us, and drown the evil around us.
 Satisfy all our thirst with your living water, Jesus Christ, our Savior,
 who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
 one God, now and forever.
 Amen.¹⁸

During the prayer, the three robed ministers poured water from the pitchers into the font at a rate that seemed to be carefully controlled: the ministers used two hands to control each pitcher and watched the flow of water throughout the prayer. The rate of the water's flow from each pitcher looked to be about one cup every few seconds—less than I would expect from a server filling my water glass in a restaurant. The noise made by the water was relatively high-pitched, and the sound seemed to come from the top surface of the water. As the presider came to the end of the prayer, the three ministers simultaneously poured the remaining water from the pitchers quickly into the font. The water made a deeper, more resonant sound during this final pouring of the water. This noise seemed to come from deeper in the font.

At the end of the prayer, one of the adult candidates stepped to the font by herself, and while still otherwise standing up straight beside the font, immediately bowed her head—all of which appeared to be rehearsed. The presider, speaking her name as preface to the baptismal formula (“*Name*, I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son,

¹⁸ This is an abbreviated form of the prayer printed in the congregation's primary worship resource, *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*. See Thanksgiving for Water, Prayer V, in Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. and Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada., *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, Leader's desk ed., 589. The presider told me that he had edited the prayer because he finds this prayer, among other parts of the liturgy, to be “wordy,” and because he works to keep the Easter Vigil liturgy under two hours in order to be attractive to wider numbers of people, especially including those who are new to church life.

and of the Holy Spirit”), poured water from the pitcher three times on her head. The pitcher was nearly full, so it did not need to be tipped at much of an angle for some water to pour out. At each of the three pours, approximately one or two cups of water appeared to pour out, with each pour lasting about one second. With the pitcher held just inches above her head, the water trickled down from her head into the font, visibly wetting her hair. No water appeared to spill out of the font.

After the third pour, while the congregation again began singing “You belong to Christ,” a white bath towel was placed on the newly baptized’s head, so that it looked something like a hood. The towel remained there while the newly baptized woman moved away from the font. As the organist had begun playing the introduction to “You belong to Christ,” at the end of the third pouring, members of the assembly began to look down and many shuffled their papers as the singing began. While their heads had been up watching the baptism, they now looked at the refrain printed in the worship folder that was held in their hands or resting on their seat. During the singing, the sponsor began helping the newly baptized woman put on a white robe (recognizable as one of the choir robes), over her clothes. The sponsor helped her get the robe over her clothes and secure the zipper and velcro fasteners.

When the music came to an end, the presider began baptizing the next candidate who also came to the font alone, stood straight and bowed his head over the font. As he was being baptized, the first of the baptized and her sponsor were still busy with the robe at their place in the baptismal party.

The adult baptisms continued in relatively consistent form: the candidate stepped to the font alone, without prompting, bowed their head, the water was poured, (all four of

the adult baptisms were conducted with the same single pitcher-full of water), the congregation sang while the towel was placed on the newly baptized's head (one of the newly baptized adults smiled from under the towel on her head in a way that appeared to me to signal that she found the towel's placement awkward and humorous), and the sponsor helped the newly baptized into a choir robe while the next baptism began.

In confident, direct movements that appeared choreographed and well rehearsed to me, the parents holding one of the infants approached the font and stood roughly in the same place the adult candidates had stood beside the font. The parents uncovered the infant who had been swaddled in what now could be seen was a large, fluffy white towel. The presider reached out to hold the infant, with one hand under her bottom and one hand supporting her back. The assembly voiced a quiet murmur—"oooh!"—when they saw the naked baby emerge from the towel. The presider held the infant away from his body over the font, with the infant in a sitting position, facing the assembly. The presider spoke the baptismal formula, dipping the baby into the water up to her chest three times. Immediately upon coming out of the water the first time, the infant began crying loudly and intensely, her eyes squinting. After the third dip, the presider handed the infant back to her parents, while the child continued to cry, though now less forcefully.

The second set of parents approached the font, unwrapped the second infant, and handed over the child to the presider. There was no vocalized surprise from the congregation at the emergence of the infant from the towel on this occasion, presumably because they now expected the infant to be naked.

When the second infant entered the water, she drew in a large breath for what became a loud and intense cry. The presider seemed to hurry both the baptismal formula

and the immersing in response to this cry, and in fact—apparently inadvertently—only dipped the infant twice into the water before handing the child back to her parents who enfolded her in the towel.

A minister handed the parents infant-sized, lacey, white garments on a plastic clothes hanger, while the presiding minister addressed the newly baptized: “[*Names*], you have been clothed in Christ. All who are baptized into Christ have put on Christ.”

When the adults had been clothed in their robe and the parents had been given the garment for the infants, the presider began a prayer of thanksgiving with arms outstretched, facing the congregation: “We give you thanks, O God, that through water and the Holy Spirit you give your daughters and sons new birth, cleanse them from sin, and raise them to eternal life.” Within this prayer, the presider then laid both hands on the head of each of the newly baptized in turn, and prayed over each one:

Sustain name with the gift of your Holy Spirit:
 the spirit of wisdom and understanding,
 the spirit of counsel and might,
 the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord,
 the spirit of joy in your presence, both now and forever.
 Amen.

Dipping his thumb in a small glass bowl of oil before each anointing, the pastor traced the sign of the cross with his thumb on the forehead of each of the baptized, saying “[*Name*], child of God, you have been sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked with the cross of Christ forever.”

A number of ministers together reached to the top of the large paschal candle—recently lit for the first time from the outdoor fire at the beginning of the service—and lit together smaller candles that were handed to the newly baptized (to the parents in the case of the infants), while the lay assisting minister addressed them as a group: “Jesus

said, I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will have the light of life.” The candles were handed to the parents of the newly baptized infants by the youth and family pastor, and to the newly baptized adults by the senior pastor and the assisting minister.

The assisting minister turned to the congregation and invited the assembly to “welcome the newly baptized.” Reading from the service booklet, the congregation responded: “We welcome you into the body of Christ and into the mission we share: join us in giving thanks and praise to God and bearing God's creative and redeeming word to all the world.” The presiding minister then turned to the baptismal party, saying, “our joy is overflowing,” and invited the assembly to applaud. The assembly, still standing, offered sustained applause—approximately 10 seconds. Some of the newly baptized adults were smiling and had tears in their eyes. The parents of the infants smiled and looked somewhat fatigued.

The presider then turned fully to address the assembly:

People of God:

You have been baptized into the death and resurrection of Christ.

You have made profession of your faith.

Do you intend to continue in the covenant God made with you in holy baptism:

to live among God's faithful people,

to hear the word of God and share in the Lord's supper,

to proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed,

to serve all people, following the example of Jesus,

and to strive for justice and peace in all the earth?

Reading from the worship booklet, the congregation responded, “We do, and we ask God to help and guide us.”

As the baptismal party returned to their seats during the singing of a festive hymn that wove together images of Christ's death and resurrection, water, rebirth, and renewal of bodies and creation, the congregation's two pastors walked through the aisles of the

worship space, sprinkling the assembly with water.¹⁹ They each carried a glass bowl filled with water they had scooped out of the baptismal font, into which they dipped a round, natural-fiber brush (an aspergillum) that was used to fling water in an overhand gesture over the assembly. As they sprinkled the water on people, the ministers smiled often, and many people in the assembly smiled and made the sign of the cross on their body as they were sprinkled. Some simply looked surprised and even startled by the water.

Easter Vigil: After the Baptismal Rite

The service continued with intercessory prayers led by a lay minister standing in the front of the worship space, followed by the sharing of the peace, in which members of the assembly shook hands or hugged a number of people in the pews around them and said, “peace” or “the peace of Christ” to one other. Holy Communion, which is celebrated every Sunday at this congregation, was celebrated with more festive elements than usual: as the choir sang a special Easter composition, smoking incense was carried around the altar-table and offered in the direction of the assembly (as a sign of “honor” to the meal and the people, according to the worship folder); and, while the hymns during communion are normally sung while seated and are normally musically restrained, the first hymn sung after the prayer of thanksgiving over the bread and wine was sung standing and was, lyrically and musically, a triumphant hymn, eight verses long,²⁰ members of the assembly had received communion while kneeling at a rail throughout the season of Lent, but communion was received while standing at the Easter Vigil and this posture remained the normal posture for communion for most of the year. The

¹⁹ The hymn was printed in the worship booklet: “We Know that Christ is Raised and Dies No More,” hymn 449 in *Ibid.*, Pew ed.

²⁰ The hymn was printed in the worship booklet. “At the Lamb’s High Feast We Sing,” hymn 369 in *Ibid.*

remaining hymns were also triumphant in character and referred to “the day of resurrection” in present-tense terms.

After worship, around 9:30 p.m., the entire assembly was invited to the fellowship hall for a reception: the large room’s bright fluorescent lights had been switched off, and in the center of the room glowing candle lanterns were suspended from the ceiling above a large, multi-tiered buffet table draped with flowing cloths and set with many appetizers and deserts prepared and arranged by dozens of members of the congregation. The food was interspersed with spring flowers and tea lights. At the end of the buffet table, standing a few feet away and perpendicular to it, was a smaller buffet table, similarly decorated, with a punch bowl and glasses, champagne glasses, and bottles of champagne and sparkling white grape juice. Many people stopped and smiled and opened their eyes widely when they entered the fellowship hall, looking surprised and excited. A number of members circulated among the gathering, refilling glasses of champagne and sparkling grape juice. The hall was relatively crowded, lively, and the crowd lingered for over an hour, mingling and chatting.

II. Local Voices: Baptismal Water in the Context of the Easter Vigil

Having described the basic outline and contours of the baptismal rite at the Easter Vigil with a special focus on the role of water in the baptismal rite, and having offered a cursory account of the Easter Vigil liturgy preceding and following the baptismal rite, we now turn more intentionally to the voices of the actual participants. A number of questions guide this inquiry. How did participants articulate their experience of this event? What sort of significance did the event hold for them? What role did the element of water play in their experience and understanding? Did the element of water play a role

in suggesting significance and meaning beyond the baptismal event? How did the context of the Easter Vigil liturgy affect the participants' experience of baptism?

The analysis below begins by identifying a fundamental local distinction that characterized the accounts of most participants—the distinction between infant and adult baptisms. This is followed by a sort of map of how participants navigated five different sites of engagement with the baptismal water, including the thanksgiving at the font, the font itself, the adult baptisms, the infant baptisms, and the sprinkling rite. A section tracing the motif of *largeness*, beginning with the sense of the water as abundant, follows. The final section explores four patterns by which the engagement with baptismal water at the vigil gives rise to liturgical and theological meaning in this community.

A Basic Distinction: Infants and Adults

Participants in the Easter Vigil offered a diverse set of observations about their experience of the baptisms at the Easter Vigil, but nearly every account of the baptisms was marked by a strong, common distinction: a distinction between the adult and the infant baptisms. This distinction was often made early in conversations about the baptisms. When recounting the baptisms at the vigil, the participants would sometimes interrupt their initial thoughts with caveats or parenthetical remarks, such as “it depends if they’re adults or children” or “we didn’t do that with the adults” or “it was different for the babies.” This categorical distinction structured large amounts of the accounts of the vigil baptisms. This differentiation was so basic to many of the participants’ accounts of the vigil baptisms that it may be helpful at the outset to outline the dynamics of how these categories were expressed locally. The distinctions most frequently related to bodily

postures, interactions with water, amount of preparation for baptism, and differences in theological significance ascribed respectively to adult and infant baptisms.

A number of participants volunteered reflections that indicated their sense that the event could be understood as two distinct types of baptisms: infant and adult baptisms. Even as some of these remarks insisted on the unity of the adult and infant baptisms, they, of course, simultaneously at least recognized the possibility of understanding the two types of baptisms as wholly distinct from each other. When asked what stood out to her about the baptisms, one participant mentioned that she “liked that both babies and adults were baptized.” Another found that the inclusion of both adult and infant baptisms “showed all in attendance the similarities between young and old: we are all one in Christ Jesus.” A parent of one of the infants baptized described the baptisms of the adults as demonstrating that baptisms is not simply about being “baptized as a baby and that’s it.” Rather, “baptism is a constant thing” in life, and the adults modeled a “decision” that the parents now made for their children. Another participant in the vigil, when asked about the significance of the baptisms, introduced the distinction between infant and adult baptisms in order to assert that “the meaning is the same for both” infants and adults. The pastor, in response to my question about what he believed had gone well and what he would do differently in the baptisms, immediately responded that “it was the most coordinated baptism that I’d ever had to do—trying to coordinate four adult baptisms with two infant baptisms.” The pastor described the challenge he faced in holding together the two sets of baptisms—infant and adult—into what he hoped would be a unified act, even as he wondered aloud (in what he described as “behind-the-scenes thinking”) about the possibility of only encouraging *adults* to be baptized at the Easter

Vigil, for the sake of ritual cohesion. In a variety of ways, then, many participants themselves identified a significant categorical distinction between adult and infant baptisms, even as they characterized the rite as embodying an ideal of non-distinction.

The most basic and frequent specific distinctions made between infant and adult baptisms related to body and water. The distinguishing characteristics were expressed in strikingly similar terms. Infant baptisms were distinguished by the infants being naked and immersed, while the adults had water poured over their heads. One participant put it simply and typically: “the babies are dunked—naked—and the adults have a lot of water poured over their heads.” As the role of *body* and *water* will be explored more fully below, it is sufficient to note here that these four categories appeared repeatedly in conversations and descriptions of the baptisms, and seemed to function as the basic local markers for how the baptisms were distinguished: *nakedness* and *immersion* concerning the infants, and *pouring* and *head* concerning the adults.

The adults and infants were also distinguished by the amount of preparation they undertook leading up to baptism. The adults’ preparation for baptism had been frequently mentioned in sermons, bulletin announcements, and weekly newsletters for the weeks leading up to the Easter Vigil. While the adults had been meeting with the senior pastor for nearly nine months in preparation for baptism, during the season of Lent the adult baptismal candidates and the sponsors all were publicly identified as being in attendance at the Sunday morning adult forum in which the topic of study frequently turned to the question of baptism and Easter. The adults had been publicly welcomed into preparation for baptism early in the season of Lent in the main Sunday service, in a rite that included prayers for them, the signing of their body with the sign of the cross, and the gift of a

Bible. The infants and their parents and sponsors, had relatively little public preparation or recognition: the infant candidates were included in the intercessory prayers on Sunday mornings in Lent, and in announcements about the Easter Vigil, but the parents and sponsors were not included in the preparations of the adult candidates and their sponsors other than for the rehearsal for the Easter Vigil. (The preparation of the families of the infants included attendance at one session of baptismal preparation led by the youth and family pastor, along with a short introduction to the symbols of the baptismal rite before the service on the day of the baptism.)²¹

Participants in the vigil often distinguished the adults baptized at the Easter Vigil as having undergone significant preparation for the baptism—preparation that was significant to some participants' interpretation of the baptismal act itself: "though I'm a big fan of infant baptisms, you can see it on [the adults'] faces: they've had a long preparation. They are really committing to this. This is the culmination of a long process." Another participant, responding to a question about what stood out about the baptisms, answered that he was "struck with the announcement... that they had been catechumens for a year." This demonstrated to him "how seriously the pastor took the matter of instruction for baptism."

The newly baptized adults, too, identified this preparation as significant for their experience of baptism. Weeks after the Easter Vigil, the adults and sponsors gathered again with the pastor and reflected on their experience of baptism—a conversation to which I was invited. A recurring theme of their conversations was the importance of intentional preparation for baptism. All of the participants indicated that the *communal*

²¹ Both pastors seemed somewhat uncomfortable with this division of responsibilities, sometimes acknowledging to me the awkwardness of the two distinct tracks of baptismal preparation.

and *long-term* nature of their preparation was central to the meaningfulness of their experience of baptism. At this gathering, one of the newly baptized adults described the setting of the vigil itself as extremely powerful for baptism, but insisted that the long process of preparation for baptism was as much or more important to her.

One of the most prominent themes linked to a distinction between infants and adults was that of choice, decision, commitment. Baptism, many participants said, is about making a commitment of one's whole life. The commitment was variously described as a choice to live in the community of the church, to give one's life to God, to live a new life in or with Christ, to live a Christian life, or simply to be baptized. A number of these participants pointed out that infants cannot make such a choice, and so other adults make this commitment for them, or the commitment is implied or hoped-for. One participant made the contrast especially clear: "most significant to me was that almost all of those baptized were adults," he said. "We're used to children being baptized, but it's more impressive when an adult makes a conscious choice to be baptized."

Having articulated a basic distinction that ran centrally through many of the accounts offered by participants in the Easter Vigil, we may now turn toward a more focused examination of the local experience of the vigil, and especially the role of water.

Water: During the Thanksgiving at the Font

The first specific appearance that water made in the accounts of participants in the vigil was at the prayer of thanksgiving over the water just before the baptisms. In this congregation, the font had been kept dry during the season of Lent, with only smooth river stones in it, so the first sights and sounds of water in worship for many weeks

(except for the footwashing on Maundy Thursday, the Thursday of Holy Week) came, as one participant described it, “suddenly” during this prayer.²² As described above, three robed ministers poured a measured stream of water from three pitchers into the font during the prayer, and then poured the remaining water out at the end of the prayer. The presiding minister mentioned in a conversation with me that he hoped to accentuate the sound and sight of the water by having the three ministers pouring water into the font—in an amount he described as larger than many participants were accustomed to—and that this pouring of water was indeed intended to mark a contrast to the dryness of the font during Lent. Some participants made connections between the water images of the prayer and the water being poured into the font during the prayer. One participant described how “words are spoken as large pitchers of water are slowly poured into the font.” The words are a reminder to “everyone” of “God’s promises to us” and, through the pouring of the water, these promises become “mixed with water and water imagery.” This participant volunteered that “hearing these great promises and signs of God’s faithfulness in combination with seeing and hearing the water is really lovely.” Another participant described the pouring of the water and the concurrent speech as being directed at the baptismal candidates. He said that the baptismal candidates are “retold the saving acts of God” and during this retelling, “water is poured... living, moving water, because our God is a living, moving God.”²³ One participant said that she “loved” the pouring of the

²² During Lent, the font was placed in the center of the main aisle of the worship space, approximately fifteen feet inside the main doors to the worship space. Most worship participants enter through these main doors and would pass by the font in this location. During the Easter Vigil and on Easter Sunday, the font was in front of the worship space, in the chancel, on a raised platform. The font returned to the main aisle for the Sundays of the Easter season, and remained filled with water.

²³ Neither of these two participants referred to the words spoken over the water at this point as a “prayer” but rather as “words,” “stories,” “promises,” and a retelling. Another participant, however, very simply described how “water was poured into the font as a prayer referring the biblical importance of water was said.”

water and found the “whole pouring thing” during the prayer to be “kind of an anticipation of the baptism itself,” causing her to lean into the event, looking forward with excitement to the baptisms. She also mentioned, however, that “if anything disappointed” her with the baptisms at this year’s Easter Vigil, it was that the pouring of the water was not as expansive as she had remembered from previous years. She said she missed a more full sound to the water being poured and said she loves how the pitchers are—most years—held “really high.”

Thus, at the prayer of thanksgiving over the font, the pouring of water was especially prominent in the accounts of participants. They singled out the water’s contrast with the dryness of Lent (something the senior pastor hoped they would notice), an interaction between the pouring of the water and the images of the prayer, the amount of water used (more was generally better), and a connection between the action of the water and other similar movements like the actions of the water in baptism and of God throughout history.

Water: the Font

The font itself was less prominent in descriptions of the vigil than was the water. But a few patterns regarding the font emerged. A number of participants mentioned the transition from a dry font filled with rocks during Lent to a water-filled font at the Easter Vigil. Speaking during the Easter season about her appreciation for the water at the Easter Vigil, a sponsor of one of the newly baptized members mentioned the contrast with the font during Lent: “those rocks really depressed me.” Another participant described the font as a symbol of the journey-nature of Lent and Easter: the Easter Vigil comes at the “culmination” of forty days of “going without baptismal water” when the

font is filled with rocks, and then “suddenly we hear and see the water.” The presiding minister expressed hope that the transition from “empty font” to the pouring of water at the Easter Vigil would “catch peoples’ attention,” make it “clear that we don’t have baptisms during Lent,” and, in a “spirit of fasting,” make people “thirsty for the waters of Easter... longing for the water.”

Two of the newly baptized adults spoke of a different transition concerning the font. They both described how the font, before their baptism, had been a place to avoid out of a sense of the water’s sacrality. One of the women said that the water in the font seemed, in her words, “very reverent,” and not to be touched. Now, however, when she sees the water in the font, she says that she says to herself, “that’s my water,” and touches the water with her hand, and makes the sign of the cross. Another said that she interacted with the font before her baptism within a larger pattern of being “programmed to follow the rules,” including not taking communion, and not making the sign of the cross. Now, however, she says she needs to “remind” herself that she is welcome to these things, including the waters of the font.²⁴

A few of the participants described the font’s size, though not nearly as many as commented on the quantity of water, as will be described further below. A participant said “I just love the huge bowl of water,” and the pastor talked about the heuristic character of the large font, noting that children would be “watching” the use of “the big font” instead of a “bird bath theology and practice,” perhaps even teaching them on “an unconscious level.” One participant described the font as a “center” to the gathering, and

²⁴ It does not appear that anyone officially cautioned the baptismal candidates against touching the water before their baptism. I checked with the senior pastor who conducted the pre-baptismal process and, while he had indeed taught the candidates that they might refrain from receiving communion before their baptism, he did not caution them against touching the water in the font.

compared what she described as this large font favorably to even larger bodies of water. She described seeing the water peacefully ripple in the font in a way that contrasted with a “chaotic lake or ocean.” The font, functioning as a center, thus contributed its character to “the community... bringing all of us into that centeredness.”

The font was most often mentioned, however, as a place at which people gathered and into which water was poured. In describing the action of the water, many participants mentioned the font as the place into which the water was poured, e.g. during the prayer the water was “poured into the font,” and during the baptism the water was poured “over their heads into the font.” A number of participants pointed out that the baptismal candidates “held their heads over the font” before the baptism, in preparation for the water to be poured. No theological significance was explicitly ascribed to the font for its role in catching and holding the water poured during either the prayer or the baptism, yet the frequency with which the font was described in such terms raises questions about a possible unspoken significance for the role of the font as a basin for collecting poured water.

The font was also mentioned in passing as a place at which the baptismal party gathered during the vigil baptisms. Many of these accounts also included descriptions of the location of the baptismal party that mentioned, first, that they were in the front of the worship space, e.g. the party stood “in front of the congregation, next to the baptismal font,” or at “the front of the church and stood around the baptismal font.” Thus, the font was less often described for its religious meaningfulness or even its aesthetic qualities (in contrast to the water, which was often described in evocative and theological terms), and more often described for its functional or locational character, as a basin to catch the

poured water and as a place at which the baptismal party gathered, even as its identity as a place for gathering in this liturgy seemed at times less significant than the location of being “in front” of the assembly.

In sum, the font received its most complex ascriptions of significance when liturgical actions were relatively absent from the font, and the font was perceived as the place where the baptismal water was held. Thus, the character of the font was partly dependent on the character of the water held by the font: a large amount, a peaceful nature, a transition from a dry font to a water-filled one and from a font holding water perceived to be taboo to one holding water perceived as welcoming. While the font was most often simply described, apart from any ascription of theological significance, as a place into which water was poured, the frequency with which participants mentioned this role for the font suggests that such a role may be significant in the ritual act of pouring. Finally, while some identified the font as a “center” to the community, many descriptions of the font located it more generally in the “front” of the worship space, as part of the general area in which much of the leadership of the assembly was conducted.

Water: Adult Baptisms

The descriptions that participants offered of the action of water during the adult baptisms were strikingly similar. Almost all participants described the action of the water at the baptism of the adults as “pouring,” and, more specifically, they described water pouring on or over the adults’ heads. Many participants characterized the amount of water poured as large. When participants were asked simply to describe what they remembered about the baptisms, most, at some point, described the adult baptisms in basic and similar terms. Many of them at some point spoke a simple sentence that

included the concepts *adult*, *water*, *pour*, and *head*, e.g. “the adults had a lot of water poured over their heads.”

Many participants drew attention to the quantity of water, describing it as “a generous amount,” “a whole pitcher,” or “a lot.” One described his memory of the baptisms simply: “heavy use of water; lots of wet heads.” While most participants described the action with passive constructions—the water was poured—a number of people called attention to the role of the pastor, noting that the “pastor used a generous amount of water,” “the pastors don’t hold back,” or “the pastors deliberately try to make [the experience of the water] more tactile.” As will be discussed below, the adults who were baptized later joked with each other about how much water was poured over their heads. Some contrasted the amount of water used in the adult baptisms with other baptisms they had seen—often the infant baptisms they had grown up seeing. Thus, the adult baptisms at the Easter Vigil are “not just a couple of drops,” one said. Another said, “a lot was used,” in contrast to her experience as a young person: “it’s very different from the church I grew up in—the little seashell dribble, dribble.” One participant used the word *pour* to indicate that the use of water was generous: “the people are actually doused with water; it’s not just a little dip here and there, but it’s actually *pouring* water on their heads. It’s like an immersion.”²⁵

²⁵ Only a few people suggested that the amount of water at the adult baptisms was not as significant as it might have been, and none with any strong clarity. One participant described the adult baptisms as “the equivalent of infant sprinkling,” even as he noted that the water was poured “three times over their head.” One member of the congregation, who expressed joy at seeing the baptism of infants and surprise at seeing them naked, described the adult baptisms simply and flatly as “the usual thing.” Another participant, in describing the adult baptisms, thought aloud, “I don’t remember that their whole head got wet.” She went on to describe the adult baptisms as an “expansion” of an infant baptism. I later asked her how she would characterize how much water was used for the baptisms and she responded without hesitation, “they used a lot of water—more water than I’d ever seen used before.”

Almost all participants specified that water was poured on the “head” of the adults. More general constructions were rarely used, such as “poured on their *body*” or “on *them*.” Most descriptions of the baptized’s head that went beyond a simple reference to the head seemed to communicate a perception of awkwardness in the bodily posture of the adults and the act of baptism.²⁶ One participant volunteered an overt critique of the posture of the adult baptisms. He remembered the adults “bowing over and having the water poured over their heads.” He paused and added a caveat before continuing: “I don’t know all of the logistics” involved, but, he said tentatively, it seemed that the adults were “facing down rather than facing up and having their head up.” The act seemed “awkward” to him and merited some rethinking. Other descriptions of the posture for the pouring of water were not as explicitly critical, and yet a number of other accounts signaled that others might have shared the sense that the posture was indeed awkward. One of the newly baptized said that she felt “giddy, giggly” as she approached the font at the Easter Vigil, and speculated, laughingly, that perhaps it was because “leaning your head over and feeling water poured over your head” is a “novel” experience and “not familiar.” A number of other participants offered brief descriptions of body posture at the adult baptisms that suggest awkwardness: candidates came forward to “hold their head over the font,” “the heads were bowed... I don’t remember that their whole head got wet,” the candidates were “lowering their head toward the font,” they “leaned over the basin,” or, as another of the adults baptized at the service described it, water was poured “from a glass pitcher onto the back of our heads.” Even the simple description of water

²⁶ One clear exception to this pattern was an evocative description of the adults after their baptisms, in which a participant described the newly baptized as radiant and shining. “I don’t know if it’s the oil that’s placed on them that makes them shine, or if it’s the water on their head,” but they appear to her like a “jewel.” She found it “enchanting” to see them still wet from the font, with “the future” newly opened to them.

“poured over our heads into the font” might suggest a sense of awkwardness about the task of guiding the water actually into the font. The top of the font indeed stood only about three feet above the floor. Therefore, because the adults stood up straight other than bowing their heads, the water had to travel, depending on the height of the adult, a number of feet through the air before falling into the font.

One of the most animated interactions among the newly baptized adults occurred when they discussed the water poured over their heads. The senior pastor had invited the newly baptized adults to reflect on what they had experienced in the baptisms at the Easter Vigil, even naming possible themes, like “hands... robe... water—a lotta water.” After discussing the welcome the group received into the congregation, the robes in which they were dressed, and the oil with which they were anointed, they began discussing the water. The group quickly became energized and began joking with each other. One said, “I knew I was going to get wet!” Laughing, she said she was right behind another candidate (and presumably could see how much water had been used on him). The candidate who had been in front of her then deadpanned, “I got it bad,” and the group laughed loudly together, as many began teasing each other about who “got it bad.” One candidate said that one of the other candidates didn’t “get it too bad” because the presider “thought he was going to run out” of water. The candidate who had begun the water discussion then returned to her original thought, smiling and speaking energetically. The presiding minister “just drenched me,” she said. The water was “dumped on” her. Even as she continued to characterize the amount and force of the water with the now-familiar phrase of “got me bad,” she explained that “it didn’t even

matter... I was so in the moment.” She said that at the actual pouring during the baptism, because she was “so in the moment,” she “was like, whoah, did I get wet?”

While I did not hear others reflecting with such energy and humor on the act of pouring water over the heads of the adults, there were a number of other instances in which participants talked about the “hairdos” of the adults being “messed up” by the water. One participant smilingly said that she would “like to see more water go on their hairdos.” This would demonstrate that “you can get messed up in church and still be a human being.” The presiding minister said that he talked to the adults before the baptisms about things that “they were curious about.” They wanted to know “what to expect” in the baptisms like “is my head going to get wet? What will happen to my hairdo?”

The descriptions of adult baptisms were thus generally structured by descriptions of the pouring of water, a large amount of water, the baptized’s head, and the identity of the baptized as an adult. Descriptions of the body posture of the adults hinted at—and sometimes offered explicit critiques of—the awkwardness of holding a bowed head above the font. The large amount of water was often contrasted with the small amounts of water used in infant baptisms that participants had experienced earlier in life. The large amount of water used in the baptisms became a source of joking among the newly baptized adults about who had “got it bad,” while some others mentioned, with a sense of humor and some pleasure, the watery tousling of the adult’s “hairdos.”

Water: Infant Baptisms

Just as many participants described the adult baptisms with a common set of concepts (*adult, water, pour, head*), so too did many describe the infant baptisms with a shared set of concepts. These included *infant, naked, and immerse*. One member of the

congregation who had flatly described the adult baptisms as “the usual,” animatedly and approvingly recounted the infant baptisms using images shared with many others: “They had all their clothes off—they were dunked!” The youth and family pastor told me that they had “been doing naked baby baptisms” for the past six years, and that people have now come to expect it.

The descriptions of the immersion in the water often called attention to the body of the infant—that it was naked and immersed—rather than the character or action of the water itself. Some typical descriptions of the infant baptisms included “total immersion into the water,” “naked and dunked,” “naked and they’re immersed,” “dunked, naked,” “stripped of their clothing and immersed in the water,” “dipped, nearly fully bodied, into the basin of water... unclothed.” Both categories of description suggested a full engagement with the baptismal water: completely exposed to the water (naked), fully into the water (immersed).

Participants seemed more likely to offer evaluative comments about the infant baptisms than the adult baptisms. Most of the comments offered affirmation for the method of baptism. Someone approvingly mentioned that such immersions were “closer to what Jesus did.” Many of the comments highlighted the vulnerable or dependent nature of the infants. One woman related that for “babies it’s more intimate, I think, because the children are brought forward by the sponsors; they don’t have the clothes on—they’re just in a towel.” Another participant also used the word “intimate” to describe the infant immersions: the baptisms demonstrated “the very intimate and common-place nature” of water-bathing, which is especially appropriate for infants, as “everyone takes a bath, especially babies.” A newer member of the congregation who was accustomed to adult

baptisms at the Easter Vigil at previous churches he had attended described the infant immersion baptisms as “a nice way to do it.” He found the nakedness of the infants theologically meaningful because the infants were “totally unprotected.” One participant was quite specific: “it’s better without diapers, more real.” She felt that there was something “sincere about being naked,” something “true.” She went on to contrast the naked baptisms with what she critiqued as the “hyper-sexualization” of bodies in mass culture, saying “they’re just bodies.” Another highlighted the movement of the infants out of the waters: she was “moved by the sight of the unclothed babies, emerging from the water and held up for all to see—so pure and innocent.”²⁷ A number of participants, having described the naked bodies of the infant baptisms, laughingly pointed out that this was an obvious distinction from the adult baptisms: one said that “you can’t have adults being naked,” while another said “obviously the adults were not naked—that was fine with me.”

Not all of the comments about the infant baptisms were affirmations. A number of participants critiqued the “shock” the infants apparently experienced by going into the baptismal water. Many participants, in fact, used the word “shock” to describe what the infants experienced in the water, though most characterized this shock as an expected—and perhaps appropriate—part of the experience of an infant immersion baptism. Some asserted that the shocking nature of the immersion in water appropriately signified the radical, life-changing nature of baptism. Others simply said that the shock was to be expected when an infant is unwrapped from a warm towel, handed over to another person, and dipped into water. (In the five or so baptismal festivals I have observed at this

²⁷ Another participant described this movement: “the newly baptized babies are shown off.”

congregation, every infant baptized, without exception, cried loudly when they were dipped into the water. I checked the water temperature before and after the service a number of times and found the water to be significantly cooler than I would prefer for bathing. I observed two other members of the congregation also checking the temperature of the water after a baptism and complaining angrily to those around them that the water was not warm. A number of worship leaders and members volunteered, when discussing the crying of the infants, that they knew the temperature of the water was not why the infants cried, because warm water was added to the baptismal font before the service.²⁸) No one ever joked about the infants crying, which signaled to me that people may have felt some underlying anxiety and concern about it. One member said she felt “ambivalent” about the infant immersions and expressed “concern” about how the “infants are frightened” by the “shock to their system” delivered by the water. She worried about the “psychological effects” of such “shock and fear” on children at a young age, and likened the immersion baptisms to the old method of throwing a child in water to teach them to swim.

In sum, the infant baptisms were largely identified by the markers of immersion, nakedness, and infancy. Participants often offered evaluative reflections on the infant baptisms, usually affirming the practice for its theological or spiritual appropriateness. The practice was described as true, intimate, historically and theologically faithful, appropriately signaling vulnerability, and sincere. Because the infants cried loudly at the baptisms (at the Easter Vigil baptisms and at all other baptisms observed for this project),

²⁸ I had seen one pitcher of presumably warm water added to the font on at least one occasion when I checked the temperature of the water. The water, even after this pitcher was added, as noted above, was still quite cool.

many described the experience as shocking for the infants, with some participants expressing discomfort and even anger about the experience of the infants.

Water: Sprinkling

Participants offered varied observations about the sprinkling rite. One of the newly baptized members described that she now feels “startled” by the “power and intensity” of the significance of the baptismal water sprinkled on her during the sprinkling rite. One member contrasted the generosity of the sprinkling rite to the “parched season” of Lent. Another participant evocatively described the feel of the water: it is “refreshing,” “renewing,” like a “bath” or a “fountain” that is “misted” or “brushed” on her. When I asked her if she wanted to say more about how she felt “when the water drops hit” her, she said, “I wouldn’t say ‘hit.’ I would say ‘I want to feel it.’ It’s soothing.” The senior pastor, at another service later in the year, during a rite of thanksgiving for baptism at the beginning of the service, described the sprinkling as a “pouring down” of God’s mercy.

The theme of inclusion was prominent in descriptions of the sprinkling rite. One participant identified the sprinkling as a crucial part of her experience of the Easter Vigil: “I think the most wonderful moment for me is that this year I was actually sprinkled by some droplets of water during the... sprinkling; sometimes I get missed but not this time!” She later said that the sprinkling gives her a feeling of full participation in the central baptismal and liturgical actions, and that not being sprinkled leaves her with a “left-out” feeling. Further, she added that, on years in which there are no baptisms, the sprinkling rite nevertheless brings everyone again to the waters of baptism, and allows for a strong sense of the renewal of one’s own baptism. Another participant highlighted the

wide welcome into the season of Easter at the sprinkling rite, as the ministers freely process around the room “sprinkling everyone.”

Thus, the sprinkling rite was a bodily event in at least two senses: being experienced vividly in one’s own body, and also drawing the entire assembly into a sense of being one body. The sprinkling evoked descriptions of strong and varied bodily experience, from being startled by its intensity, to being soothed by its misting quality. The sprinkling was understood as strongly connected to baptism, and offered people a sense of participation in the rite of baptism. Even as the sprinkling evoked a renewed sense of the significance of individuals’ own baptisms, many of the participants also signaled that the comprehensive character of the sprinkling of the entire assembly was integral to the significance of the sprinkling.

Largeness: the Amount of Water

One of the recurring themes above is the local description of large amounts of water in use at the Easter Vigil. Because much of the analysis above and below explores this theme, little more than a summary is needed here regarding the sense of plentiful water. The words used by participants to describe the quantity of water were strong: *heavy use of water, lots of wet heads, a whole pitcher, large pitchers, huge bowl of water, big font, a lot of water, dramatic, awesome, generous, strong, abundant, going around sprinkling everyone, not just a little, dunked, immersion, pouring, dumped, drenched, bath*. Even when some critiqued the use of water as not as large as it might have been, they relied on a logic that assumed that more water was better. The theme of the generous use of water will be further explored in following chapters, using cognitive scientific categories to analyze how the images of abundant water interact with the conception of

the abundance or fullness of other entities. The perception of the large nature of the entities explored below seems to arise in a sort of gestalt involving all of the categories here examined under the heading of *largeness*.

Largeness: the Public Nature of Baptism

Many participants highlighted the public nature of the baptisms, drawing attention to the way in which these baptisms took place in full view of a community, involved a strong public welcome into a community, and drew the community into the process of baptismal renewal. As mentioned above, the baptismal party was often described as gathering “up front,” “in front,” or “in front of the congregation,” where the baptismal candidates were “presented to the congregation.” This assembly of the baptismal party before the congregation, according to one participant, made for “not just a little private moment in the corner” but rather “something we can all get into.” The pastor contrasted the public nature of this congregation’s baptismal practice with other practices in which baptism is “often something quick or private.” A number of participants mentioned the way in which the newly baptized infants “are shown off,” and “held up for all to see.” One described how “when everybody was applauding,” the baptismal party “looked especially proud of their commitment. They felt a part of the community.”

A number of participants said that they understood the entire service to be a baptismal event, thus broadening the baptismal rite into an even larger and more public event. The images of water, new life and growth led one member to say that “the entire service” can be understood as being “about baptism.” Another said that baptisms at the vigil are part of a larger “unfolding drama” about the resurrection, and so he “can’t really talk about the baptisms apart from the larger service of the vigil.” The pastor contrasted

what he described as a typical experience of Protestantism in which both marriage and baptism are seen as separate rites concerned with transitions in individual, private lives: in this case, the rites becoming their “own thing.” By having baptisms “at the most important service of the year... we make clear that it is *our* story, that it is present tense,” and that the baptisms are also about the “renewal of congregational life.”

Some of most significant descriptions of the public nature of the baptisms came from the members of the baptismal party. A parent of one of the infants said that one reason he wanted to have his daughter baptized at the Easter Vigil was that “there would be a lot more of the congregation in attendance,” explaining that the support and “Christian environment” of the “church family” was made more evident by the large attendance. A number of the adults who were baptized remembered having felt, months before the Easter Vigil, embarrassed about being an adult and not yet being baptized, and so they wondered if the baptisms of adults might take place discretely or apart from the gathered community. One said that she had wondered, “would this be done in private, because I’m not a baby?” She soon learned, however, “not only is it not done in private, but it’s done at the biggest service of the year! This is a big thing.”

Members of the baptismal party described their experience in front of the congregation in strong and emotional terms. The parents of one of the baptized infants remembered feeling powerfully welcomed at “the moment when everyone applauded,” and spoke of how “special” it was to be “looking around at people in the audience and seeing their smiles,” recognizing people who had brought them meals after their daughter was born, and seeing that members of the assembly were “truly happy for us.” One of the newly baptized adults said that he felt “embraced into the whole community,” sensing a

“feeling of welcome from everyone.” Another said that she was very aware that “so many people” were present, “watching and supporting us,” during the baptisms. The congregation’s welcome and applause for the newly baptized was one of the most significant moments for all four of the adults baptized. One of the newly baptized described it as being “cheered” by the congregation. She even remembered the lighting in the room increasing at this welcome, though, in fact, the lighting did not change: “when the lights came up and everyone was applauding, I was embarrassed because I was crying and overwhelmed... there was an outpouring of love and acceptance” that was “magical,” “meaningful,” and “special.” Members of the congregation noticed the responses of the baptismal party, recalling that they looked “incredibly happy,” or “proud,” and like they now felt like they were part of the community. A sponsor, too, described the applause and welcome as “overwhelming,” adding that the ritualized sharing of the peace felt like an extension of this welcome and was similarly overwhelming to her. Another of the newly baptized described the “unconditional love and pride being projected toward all of us.” It was, she said, “one of the best moments of my life.” One of the adults said that while she had initially felt “embarrassed” about not being baptized until later in life, now that she had been welcomed so powerfully at the Easter Vigil, she is now “really proud” of coming to baptism as an adult, and “so grateful for it.” It is an “amazing experience that most people don’t have at our age.”

A few participants said that the public nature of the baptisms offered renewal for the entire congregation. That the baptisms are “performed so prominently in mid-service” contributes to “the community’s inclusion in the event.” Another participant suggested that “for congregation members, the baptisms of others might inspire a renewal of their

own faith and baptismal promises.” The pastor said that public nature of the baptismal process culminating in Easter Vigil baptisms “often has a lot to do with the renewal of congregational life” in terms of “commitment... and the radical nature of baptism as death and rebirth.”

Thus, the public nature of the baptismal rite contributed to a sense of the fullness of the entire event in a number of ways: the prominence of the physical place given to the baptismal party and the space for the baptisms, the sense that the entire Easter Vigil service is suffused with baptismal themes, the experience of robust welcome and support offered by the assembly to the baptismal party, and the renewal of the assembly’s own appreciation for the significance of baptism.

Largeness: the Size of the Baptismal Party

Many participants remarked on the size of the baptismal party. Beginning before Lent, there were clues that at least some people considered the number of baptismal candidates to be unusually large. A number of spoken announcements, sermons, bulletin notes, and newsletter articles announced the upcoming baptisms, often citing numbers in the description, such as “six baptisms” or “four adults will be baptized, and two infants.” The Sunday morning public preparatory rites during Lent also sometimes used numbers that seemed to underscore the large size of the baptismal parties, e.g. invitations to the assembly such as “let us pray for these four candidates who will be baptized at the Easter Vigil.” Some of those who attended the Easter Vigil spoke in similar terms in reflecting on the service. Many of the participants at the very least specified the number of baptisms in their descriptions (“six people were baptized this year, four adults and two infants”). Quite a few participants specifically identified the large size of the baptismal party as

something that stood out to them: “I suppose it did strike me how large the group was. Four adults and two infants (plus the sponsors and families) made for a pretty big group up there. I thought that was neat.” One member noted that she had attended worship at this congregation for ten years, and “this is by far the largest baptismal group I’ve seen. We’ve occasionally had a Sunday morning with three infant baptisms, but four adult baptisms at once is very unusual.” A number of the participants indicated that this was certainly the largest group of adults that they had seen baptized together at this congregation. (The records of the congregation indicate that there has been no baptismal group of adults this large over the past decade.) One of the newly baptized adults, while speaking about the powerful welcome the congregation gave to the newly baptized, described the large size of the baptismal party as contributing to the power of that moment: “what were there—twenty of us up there?”

Clearly, many participants were impressed with the number of baptismal candidates, with one participant saying that “I think the fact that we have so many baptisms... indicates the vibrancy” of the congregation. One, however, described the number of baptisms as “a little over the top.” It seemed to her as if “we were trying to cram an awful lot into one service—the drama of having six people up there.” She insisted that “we don’t have to think in terms of numbers” for baptisms, nor does the congregation need to strive for so much “dramatic” effect at the Easter Vigil.

The large nature of the baptismal party was primarily described in terms of the number of people “in front” of the congregation. And yet some descriptions seemed to measure the group as “large” based also on the large amount of preparation that had led the adults to this night. One participant said that as he looked at the adults in the

baptismal party he could see “on their faces” that “they’ve had a long preparation” and are “committing to this.” The Easter Vigil baptism, he said, is the “culmination of a long process,” and baptism is both “graduation and inauguration.” Another said he was “struck” that the group had been preparing “for a year,” which was evidence to him of how serious the process was. One of the newly baptized adults, also, recalled his surprise when he realized he would “wait for a year” before he was baptized. All of the newly baptized said that they greatly valued the companionship in the process of preparing for baptism. One of the adults, weeks before the baptisms, found it meaningful that the group ensured that all of the participants could attend their preparatory gatherings: “if somebody can’t make it, then we find a time when we can all meet. It was important to have time together.” One said that “it was special going through it as the four of us” and that he could not “comprehend going through it alone.” Another one of the newly baptized praised the vigil as “magnificent” and “exquisite,” but indicated that the process of preparation was at least as important to her. She especially appreciated the inquiry-based approach in which it was “ok to have questions” through the whole process and not simply be given answers to repeat. Another participant (who herself had expressed displeasure at what she described as the “over-the-top” number of people in front) nevertheless said she appreciated seeing the sponsors standing in front with the baptismal candidates. In these sponsors she saw that the newly baptized had “support” and the companionship of someone who would “journey with them” through their life. The pastor, too, spoke of the value of the process for congregational growth in faith: “it’s not just ‘come in and here’s a book and we’ll baptize you in a couple of weeks.’ Even though some may feel like it’s just hoops to jump through, I think they’re glad for it.” Thus, for

some, the significance of the baptismal party was deepened and made weightier by knowledge of the significant process of inquiry and formation the baptismal candidates had undergone.²⁹

Thus, participants in the vigil perceived the largeness of the baptismal party by way of a few chief characteristics. The baptismal party was in fact the largest number of adults baptized together in recent memory (and certainly within the past ten years) at this congregation. The baptismal party occupied a prominent and large amount of space during the baptismal rite. And the serious and extended nature of the adults' preparation for baptism contributed to a sense of momentousness on the part of some members of the assembly.

Largeness: The Importance of the Easter Vigil

The senior pastor stated it clearly: "I consider preparing for the Easter Vigil to be one of the most important parts of my job." He hoped that the assembly would experience the vigil as the primary celebration of Easter, such that

whether or not [participants in the vigil] come back the next day, they would feel that [the Easter Vigil] is Easter... Is this really a preview for Easter, or is this really Easter? How much energy do you put into the vigil? I lean toward 'the vigil is Easter.' I'm going to pour everything I have into the vigil. Saturday night is it!

Participants in the service also seem to share a sense that this night is powerfully unique.

They describe the vigil as dramatic, moving, intense, the biggest service, the most important service of the year, the highest holy day, a huge part of my annual journey, the queen of all feasts, the night of all nights, my favorite service of the year, the center of our life, magnificent, and exquisite.

²⁹ I wondered if another factor also contributed to a sense of the "largeness" of the baptismal party: the physical largeness of the adults relative to the infants.

One participant repeatedly made clear to me that her enthusiasm for the Easter Vigil was not about “nostalgia.” She described her nostalgic feelings about Christmas Eve, in which the traditions of the service connected her with her past in a comforting and sentimental way. She said her experience of the Easter Vigil is “not at all” like that. Rather it is about “the future” and her own renewal, and functions as one of the most important moments of the year for her.

On the Sunday before the Easter Vigil, I asked one member of the congregation (who lives in a retirement home, relies on others for rides to church, and sometimes worries aloud about coming out at night) if I would see her in worship “during Holy Week,” thinking of the many services on Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. “Oh, I would be sick to miss it,” she said emphatically. She focused immediately on the Easter Vigil: “it’s the most beautiful service, Easter Vigil.” I saw her at the Easter Vigil that Saturday night, before the service began, holding a railing outside the church, gathered with others who were watching the fire, looking expectant. A young graduate student, gathered around the same fire, quoted beatified Puerto Rican lay minister Carlos Manuel Rodríguez Santiago to express his own sentiment about the Easter Vigil: “We live for this night.”

Attendance at the Easter Vigil reflects this sentiment. Average Sunday attendance at this congregation is approximately 160, but close to 200 people attended this Easter Vigil. As noted above, some of the adults baptized commented on the large number of people in attendance at the vigil, and how the “support” and “welcome” offered by the large assembly deepened their experience of baptism. At Easter Sunday morning worship, the senior pastor drew attention to the Easter Vigil’s large attendance during a

short talk with children described in the worship guide as the “children’s moment.”

Nearly 300 people—many of whom rarely attend worship—had assembled for Easter Sunday morning worship. The pastor gathered the children around the baptismal font, and standing next to the font and gesturing toward it, told them, in a tone of amazement, “believe it or not, last night there were 200 people here” and “four adults and two infants” were baptized in “this font” and in “this water.” The congregation murmured a surprised “ohh.”

A number of participants described the significance of the Easter Vigil in terms of the time it took, its complexity, and the embodied and processional nature of the service. One of the newly baptized adults said that her desire to “honor” the “theological commitment” of baptism was nurtured by the setting of a “two hour candlelit vigil and all of the significance that brings.” A participant in the service described how “every detail” in the service (he named many details, including the many readings that “prefigure” resurrection, the light and darkness, a redecorated worship space, the first singing of Alleluia since before Lent began) spoke clearly, “this is the feast.” Another participant described the movement and engagement of bodies in procession during the service, from a fire outside (“usually it’s cold and windy”), moving inside to “hear all those stories told in a way that you can’t wait for the water,” followed by the baptisms, and the sprinkling, and the meal. Other participants described the Easter Vigil as the “culmination” of the season of Lent, causing the single night to be filled with the anticipation, “longing,” and “thirst” of many weeks. (The season of Lent had, in fact, often included prayers and images that framed the season as a “journey” to Easter and to the waters of Baptism. The first Sunday of Lent, especially, included many references to Easter and baptism. The

sermon that week focused on the baptism of Christ, and contained images of the baptismal waters in which Christ was baptized, and how, today, Jesus “calls us to the font.”) A few members cited the venerable tradition of baptisms at the vigil, with one remarking that he valued “the continuity of tradition from ancient to modern times” in the celebration of baptisms at the vigil, which demonstrates “a great respect and care for cherished traditions.” Such practice, he said, welcomes the newly baptized and the entire congregation “as a part of that continuum.” Thus, the largeness of the Easter Vigil, for this participant, extended back through time to connect to ancient celebrations of the vigil.

As discussed above, many participants indicated that the significance of baptism was clearer and more apparent for having taken place at the Easter Vigil. Conversely, it also appears that part of the strong significance attributed to the Easter Vigil arises from the practice of baptism at the vigil liturgy. Thus the vigil and baptism, practiced together, seem mutually to enlarge the sense of significance of the other. Two clusters of baptismal themes, in particular, were especially prominent in descriptions of how baptism contributed to the significance of the Easter Vigil. First, some participants described baptism—and even baptismal renewal—as participation in “the passage from death to life of Jesus Christ,” as one participant said, echoing words from scripture and both the baptismal and Easter Vigil liturgies. The emphasis in these accounts usually related the rite of baptism more strongly to Christ’s resurrection than to his death: one participant, for example, said that at baptisms at the Easter Vigil, “we celebrate Christ’s resurrection, and, with it, our promise of salvation.” The Easter Vigil, understood by many in the congregation as the church’s primary annual celebration of the resurrection, was

experienced as enlarged by the practice of baptism at the heart of the service, as baptism enacted an image of death and resurrection, joining the baptized and the entire community to the death and resurrection of Christ.

The second cluster of images described as arising from baptism and enlarging the significance of the Easter Vigil were those related to the concepts of renewal, refreshment, and rebirth. Drawing largely on water images, participants spoke of the baptismal motifs of watered ground, quenched thirst, washing of sin, rebirth, and renewing showers and baths. Many participants traced these themes outward from baptism into the larger service of the vigil, back into the season of Lent, and even occasionally into the wider “cycles of the earth,” the “elements of nature,” at “springtime.” Thus, for some participants in the vigil, some of the images of death and resurrection and flourishing, abundant life that animate the vigil arise from water images associated with baptism, thereby enlarging the significance of the Easter Vigil rather than only being associated with baptism.

In sum, the Easter Vigil is perceived in this congregation as consequential and momentous. A number of factors seemed to contribute to this perception. The service is part of the annual commemoration of the central orienting moment in the Christian Gospel, the death and resurrection of Christ, and the intent of the senior pastor is to plan the service in such a way that it is experienced as the primary celebration of Easter, “really Easter.” Preparation for this service is given the highest of priorities. The large attendance at the service played a role in the sense of the vigil’s importance, especially for the baptismal party, but the theological significance, complexity of images, strong connections to baptism, and the embodied and processional nature of the service

(including the anticipatory nature of Lent) were mentioned far more often than the number of people present for the service.

III. The Role of Water in the Construal of Meaning

It is now apparent that water was perceived to be a prominent and meaningful part of the Easter Vigil liturgy, and particularly so in the baptismal rite. The following sections chart four patterns by which the use of water in the vigil gave rise to four relatively distinct ascriptions of significance. The four sections explore the patterns by which, in the local accounts of the vigil, water sets apart, connects, embraces, and nurtures.

Water Sets Apart

Baptismal water functioned to set people apart. The use of water in the baptismal rite distinguished those who were undergoing a change in status: “the candidates step forward and receive the water on their bodies, usually on the head, dedicating them to God.” One participant evocatively described the sight of the newly baptized, still glistening from the baptism: “the person being baptized becomes a jewel—I don’t know if it’s the oil that’s placed on them that makes them shine, or if it’s the water on their head.” This image functioned for her as a sign of “the gift of the Holy Spirit” received in baptism.

Water also set people apart through what participants experienced as its power or force. Infants were “shocked” by the immersion into the water. One of the newly baptized adults said she was “startled” by the “power” and “intensity” of the sprinkled water in sprinkling rites she experienced in the weeks after her baptism. The newly baptized adults all joked about and felt camaraderie in being “soaked,” “drenched,” and “getting it bad”

in their baptisms, and others spoke approvingly of “messing up” the ordered “hairdos” of the baptized.

Some accounts of the significance of baptism related baptism to the death and resurrection of Christ. A number of these accounts employed water images in the description. One participant described a “crossing over... to a more godly life... and the significance of doing it on Easter Vigil echoes the passage from death to life of Jesus Christ.” Another highlighted the night’s repeated “theme of death and resurrection,” and described the newly baptized as “risen out of the water just as Christ was risen from the dead.”

The baptism in water functioned as a dividing line that was, according to many, “crossed over,” into a new identity. One of the newly baptized adults spoke of baptism bringing about “a whole new definition to me.” The “passage” through the baptismal water was portrayed as *a dying to the old self and old life, a rebirth, a crossing over, a transition* to a new life, and *changing into a different and new kind of person in a new relationship with God and others*. Among the images of crossing over, the image of “rising” out of the water was common. As mentioned above, rising out of the water was likened to Christ’s resurrection from the dead. The “reappearance” of the newly baptized after going through the water, to some, represented the emergence of a person with a new identity. A number of participants drew attention to the way in which the infants were held up, raised up, and “shown off” as they came out of the water. Of course, part of the new identity that singled out the newly baptized was that they were now, in fact, officially *members* of the community rather than non-members. Thus the differentiation signaled by the water simultaneously served as a sign of unity.

Water Connects

While the water functioned at times as a mark or boundary that drew distinctions between the members of the assembly, the baptismal water itself at times functioned to blur or erase conceptual distinctions that might otherwise have been more rigidly maintained. On numerous occasions, weeks before and after the Easter Vigil, the water in the baptismal font was referred to as “the same” water as the baptismal waters of the Easter Vigil (even as the font’s water was regularly emptied and poured out, outside of worship, in order to clean the font). For example, in the weeks after the Easter Vigil, the pastors referred to baptism in some of the sermons, and, while gesturing to the font, recalled that members had been baptized in “this water” at the Easter Vigil. Similarly, weeks after the Easter Vigil, the newly baptized adults related to the water in the font as if it were the same water in which they had been baptized. In fact, in speaking of their changed relationship to the water in the font accomplished by baptism, they spoke of the water that had been in the font *years* before their baptism as if it were the same water as the water in the font in the present time. Baptism, according to one of the newly baptized adults, had made the water in the font “my water,” the water in which she had been baptized. Other members mentioned the sense of inclusion they felt when they were sprinkled with water. The sprinkling offered for many a sense of inclusion in the baptisms conducted in the congregation, as well as a sense of connection with the water of their own baptism.

Other connections stretched further. In a sermon on Maundy Thursday, only days before the Easter Vigil, the senior pastor described the ritual of footwashing that would be conducted during the Maundy Thursday liturgy. He discussed the difficulty some

people have of receiving a gift, such as the gift of footwashing. Then he briefly described how, “in a few days, we will gather around the baptismal font at the Easter Vigil,” where the waters will pour out as a gift, to “heal and forgive, restore and renew.” It is “this same water” that is “poured over our feet” in the Maundy Thursday liturgy, he said. The sermon at the first Sunday in Lent recalled the baptism of Christ who emerged “dripping” from his own baptism, and who now—as the pastor gestured to the font—“calls us to the font,” seeming to imply that the water of Christ’s baptism is the same water now in the font.

On a number of occasions, some participants expressed interest or pleasure in connections they made between the action of the water in baptism and some other concept or action. One described how the pouring of water during the prayer of thanksgiving for water was “kind of an anticipation of the baptism itself.” Some described the connection between the words of the prayer and the pouring of water during the prayer: “the water is poured in” and “it is living, moving water because our God is a living, moving God,” one said. Another mentioned the way the “words” of the prayer are “mixed” with water imagery, and that “the combination” of the promises and the sight and sound of the water is “really lovely.” One of the newly baptized adults talked about how “word and feeling” came together in the words of the baptismal formula and the feeling of the water. As mentioned elsewhere, many participants called attention to the connections between the sprinkling rite, the baptisms conducted in the liturgies they attended at this congregation, and their own baptisms. In general, the actions of the waters often become the object of explicit theological reflection, perhaps rivaling explicit reflection on the specific words spoken in the liturgy, i.e. the action of the water was

pondered aloud and contemplated in detailed and careful ways that specific liturgical speech rarely was.

It is worth underscoring here that most participants in the vigil were not themselves baptized at an Easter Vigil. Yet many expressed a strong sense of connection to their own baptism through participation in the vigil. In fact, no participant ever even alluded to the possibility that there could be a divide between their own baptism and the baptismally renewing character of the vigil. Rather, the fullness of the water and baptismal imagery in the vigil seemed to intensify—and not diminish—participants' sense of the significance of their own baptisms, regardless of when and how they occurred.

Participants in the Easter Vigil at times spoke of how they saw connections between the baptismal water of the Easter Vigil and the water they encountered outside of liturgical settings. One member who identified herself as a gardener spoke of the connections she saw in the watering and growth of plants. Baptism's water is "definitely spirited," she said. The water, once applied, endures to give life to the baptized. It is not like a magical or artificial "miracle-gro," but is "pure." One participant saw in the immersion of the infants a sign of the "common-place nature" of baptism: "everyone takes a bath, especially babies." The pastor mentioned that he strove for this sort of connection, hoping that through the "strong use of symbols" the members of the assembly might make connections to "everyday life" including the everyday activity of "washing." One participant shared how, because of her experience at the Easter Vigil, she feels strongly drawn to a large fountain in a city park, where the water "mists" over her, in a shower that reminds her of baptism and the sprinkling rite, refreshing her. She said

that “the fountain, with the way the water sprinkles out—it’s just so similar to the way the water flows” in the sprinkling rite and in baptism. This fountain became one of the chief images she used to describe her experience of the Easter Vigil.

Water Embraces

As discussed above, many participants in the Easter Vigil characterized the use of water in the vigil as generous and plentiful. Some described the use of water in the baptisms as intentionally ensuring that each person baptized was able to “feel and experience... enough” or “a lot” of water. When discussing the amount of water used, some also mentioned the way in which the water became widely available to the senses of the assembly. A number of participants described the pastors as deliberately using generous amounts of water “to make it more tactile” in order to engage the entire assembly, or “to show” a theological truth to the assembly about, for example, the “abundance of God’s love and... desire.” The pastor hoped that children would be “watching” the “big font,” and that, in the water poured into the font by the three ministers, all “would have a new sense of both seeing and hearing the water.” Participants described the abundant use of water as “tangible,” “audible,” and something “we hear and see.”

The nature of the water as a strong visual, aural, and tactile sign seemed connected to a sense that all were being included as full participants in the vigil. The water was described as being heard and seen by “all” of the assembly. The sprinkling was for “everyone” (and was identified as insufficient when some were “left out” and not sprinkled). Touching the water in the font was an important weekly practice for the newly baptized adults, as the font held water that was for all the baptized. Thus, not only did the

physical sign of the water set apart members of the assembly (as discussed above), but it also functioned to foster a sense of community and of shared access to the central sign of the water. The baptismal water, generously employed in the baptismal rite, for the senses of the assembly, and even sprinkled on the assembly, was understood as a sign of membership in the community—a sign that was properly abundant and generous, physically and sensorily extending to all in the gathering.

Water Nurtures Life

The baptismal water at the Easter Vigil was described in various ways as life-giving, or as restoring life to a state of healthy flourishing. While a number of participants spoke of baptism as “washing away sin” or “cleansing us from sin,” many more did not use the word “sin” but rather spoke of baptism in more general terms of washing or cleansing.³⁰ Baptism, one member said, is a “washing away of the old self and the beginning of a new life.” Another, after describing baptism as a “washing away” of the old self “to bring on the new,” described how the infants are clothed in white garments after their baptism, “washed clean,” he said, without specifying if he was speaking of the garments or the infants. One participant invoked the hygienic necessity of bathing to describe the significance of baptism: “everyone takes a bath, especially babies, and this is God’s bath of grace.” One of the newly baptized adults spoke of the painful memories, hurts and guilt that she had been carrying with her for much of her adult life. In baptism, she said, “the past junk was kinda washed away,” giving her a new sense of identity. Another participant in the Easter Vigil who works professionally with violent

³⁰ The pastor, in an interview, said that “we don’t talk so much about washing away of sin,” in the preparation of adults for baptism. Rather, the themes of “commitment, the radical nature of baptism as death and rebirth, and baptism as paschal mystery” become prominent. This set of themes is “so much more clear” in the preparation of adults for baptism.

sex offenders said that the Easter Vigil is a “huge part” of her “annual journey” because it offers her “a bath” that washes away the accumulated burdens and struggles that weigh on her from work. She says that in her work she encounters some “pretty significant and horrific, horrid things... terrible abuse.” The sprinkling rite at the vigil is one of the high points of the service for her. In the sprinkling rite, she feels that she participates in the renewal of the newly baptized, and feels “the future” opened again. She says that the vigil is “the time for my renewal,” that it is “rejuvenating” for her, and that the sprinkling is “soothing” and “refreshing” to her. The font, as she describes it, stands in the “center” of the community, and is a sign of “cleansing” for the entire community. The images of washing and bathing that members of the community employed tended to frame the washing as a cleansing return to a more healthy state, unencumbered by accumulated burdens, and prepared for new life.

Other images of baptismal water nurturing life related to the natural need for water in living organisms. Some participants spoke of the “thirst” for water during the “parched season” of Lent, when the font was dry and filled only with stones. A parent of one of the newly baptized infants highlighted the vigil’s transformation from “months of the barren church, without any flowers, just branches,” and the “empty font.” In explaining his understanding of baptism, one participant spoke of the element of water and simply said, “water brings life,” and went on to describe the waters of baptism as similarly “lifesaving.” Some participants used the images of thirsty plants, or even fires that needed to be quenched, to speak of the longing for baptismal water at the vigil. Mentioning images from some of the readings at the vigil, one participant said that especially the images of the dry bones and the fiery furnace made her thirsty for the

baptismal water: “you’re just like, ‘oh goodness, quench this thirst! I hope it’s coming soon.’ By the time we get to the water, I just want to see it!”³¹ A number of others used the images of “renewal” and “rebirth” to describe the effects of baptismal water. One participant said that when she pictured the assembly at the Easter Vigil, she saw individuals longing for new life, and that the water at the vigil was like “nourishment... a watering of those people, a shower.”

The senior pastor explained to me that he hoped the dry font during Lent would make people “thirsty and longing... for the waters of Easter.” Further, he said he was disappointed not to see the wider church making connections between the cycles of the earth and Easter baptism, but rather continuing to focus on Easter as an historical anniversary of events firmly in the past, i.e. only “what happens to Jesus.” He critiqued this approach as often being about “the sadness of Jesus’ death and the happiness of the resurrection—and now we get to go to heaven.” He cited Easter’s connections to springtime renewal and rebirth, the equinox, and the full moon to explain his hope that the Easter Vigil and the practice of baptism at the vigil might emphasize a “call to mission” in the present day, and “more about what happens to us, and the community, and the earth and its cycles.” Within the service of the Easter Vigil, the prayer of thanksgiving over the water strongly connected the waters of the earth to the waters of baptism: *river of life; everlasting wellspring; oceans and lakes; rivers and streams; flood; sea; waters... below us, around us above us.* However, in the accounts of participants in the vigil, baptismal water was normally associated with sources of water typically delivered through piped water supply: baths, showers, watering cans, city

³¹ The narrative of the dry bones (Ezekiel 37) was not read at this vigil. This participant apparently remembered the reading from previous years when the text was read.

fountains. The one clear mention of water in its natural, non-diverted state by a participant—“a lakeshore or an ocean”—was mentioned as an anti-type of the water in the font. The waters of the lakes and oceans were characterized as “chaotic,” as opposed to the gentle rippling of water in the font.

Thus, the element of baptismal water in the Easter Vigil liturgy gave rise to a range of meanings and interpretations, including the motifs of dividing, connecting, embracing, and nurturing. The motif of division included images of marking and setting apart by water, being shocked or struck by the power of water, and crossing over across and through water serving as a boundary. The experience of water’s connections included experiencing baptismal waters that were separated by time and place as “the same water,” and identifying meaningful connections between the movement of water in the baptismal rite and other phenomena including some common water sources outside the worship space. Water, in its embracing character, was experienced as plentiful, including its sensorily rich qualities that could be experienced by the entire gathering through seeing, hearing, and touching or being touched by the water. The sprinkling rite, the pouring of water, and the generous use of water in baptism was experienced by many as a rich inclusion of the entire community into the baptismal event. Water’s life-nurturing character was imaged as the washing and clearing out of debris, and as the quenching of thirst and renewal of the bodies of land, plants, animals, and humans.

IV. Concluding Observations:

The Significance of Baptismal Water at the Easter Vigil in One Congregation

This inquiry has focused on a rite that stands at the center of a liturgy described by its participants in a litany of superlatives: *the night of all nights, the highest holy day,*

a huge part of my annual journey, the center of our life. The rite at the center of the liturgy began with a prayer of thanksgiving for water while three people poured water into the font, continued with six baptisms in that water, and concluded with a rite in which that water was sprinkled over the bodies of more than one hundred people.

Having inquired into how the water functioned in the construal of meaning in this ritual situation and in this particular community, a number of patterns have emerged. The perception of the abundance of the water emerged alongside other ascriptions of largeness and abundance: the public nature of baptism at the vigil, the large size of the baptismal party (including the substantial process of preparation undergone by the adults), and the great significance of the occasion of the Easter Vigil. The baptismal rite (including the water at the center of that rite) appears to stand in a mutually strengthening relationship with the larger rite of the Easter Vigil; the significance of both rites was enlarged by their concurrence.

Further, the use of water in the vigil structured the patterns of significance arising out of the rite. Participants often spoke theologically about the water-actions of the rites, perhaps more often and in a more reflective mode than about the specific words spoken in the rites. Water physically marked individuals as set apart in baptism, and functioned as a threshold through which initiates pass and out of which they rise, together with the risen Christ. The sense of the continuity of baptismal water extended across time and space, such that “the same” baptismal water could be experienced enduringly in the varied water rites encountered in liturgy over long periods of time. Water nurtured a theological imagination that perceived connections between baptismal waters and other waters, including waters far outside the church building and not otherwise commonly

identified as religiously significant. The rich sensory experience of the baptismal water—sight, sound, and touch—was experienced as an abundance of water reaching the entire assembly, welcoming all into participation. The life-giving and renewing power of water was described as a washing away of sin and burdens, as well as a satisfaction of the thirsts and needs of living things. In all these sensory experience, the water tended to be captivating, drawing the attention and wonder of participant's into the action.

Some of these patterns of meaning-making observed here seemed to work together to make the distinction between infant and adult baptisms especially strong: the patterns of engagement with the water for the infants and adults respectively were quite distinct, the embodied shape of the baptisms was markedly different both in terms of gesture and clothing, the bodily “shock” of the infants in the water was not shared by the adults, the large amount of (often publicly recognized) preparation for the adults contrasted strongly with the minimal preparation of the infants and their parents, the commitment and decision made by the adults contrasted completely with that of the infants, and the baptismal rite itself ritually segregated the adult baptisms from the infant baptisms.

Among the diverse voices in the congregation, some critiqued parts of the Easter Vigil and the baptisms. The posture of the adults being baptized seemed, to some, awkward and perhaps disrespectful. The size of the baptismal party and the large symbols, to one participant, seemed “over the top.” Some wished that more water would be used in the pouring, the baptizing, and the sprinkling. There seemed to be some vague anxiety along with explicit critique of the “shock” experienced by the infants in the baptismal immersion.

In one sense, this inquiry has been about asking a community one question: *how do you experience the water of baptism at the Easter Vigil?* Their answer is complex, multi-vocalic, and strong. They experience the baptismal water as...

- connected to other bodies of water,
- related to human thirst and to the thirst of the land and its plants,
- washing away sin, guilt, and accumulated burdens,
- stimulating the senses through touch, sight, and sound,
- a bodily experience that is soothing, powerful, refreshing, and even shocking,
- simultaneously setting apart and integrating into community,
- a burial in Christ, and, even more, a rising with Christ,
- generously, actively, and powerfully flowing forth,
- signifying God's goodness flowing forth, and
- abundantly pouring out at the heart of their common life, at the very center of "the night of all nights."

This account of one local event, largely related in the voices of its own participants, is now carried forward into Chapter Five in a wider conversation about the significance of baptismal water at the Easter Vigil. It is there placed together with two other sets of voices: the liturgical theology examined in Chapter One and the cognitive scientific accounts analyzed in Chapters Two and Three.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE WATERS AT A CONFLUENCE: LITURGICAL THEOLOGY, ETHNOGRAPHY, AND COGNITIVE SCIENCE

I. Introduction

In the first chapter, this project collated a number of claims and proposals made by liturgical theologians regarding the cosmic and eco-theological significance of baptismal water at the Easter Vigil. That collation may be regarded as a more-or-less internally consistent agenda for the ongoing reform of the Easter Vigil. Of course, such a normative agenda cannot be cleanly distinguished from descriptive study. Much study and analysis of liturgical texts, theological sources, ritual studies scholarship, and actual ritual events informed the proposals and claims examined in the first chapter. But the principal concern of the liturgical theology examined in the first chapter is not simply observation and analysis, but rather liturgical reform. The reform agenda makes proposals both for how the Easter Vigil might be practiced in local assemblies and how it might be understood (by participants, leaders, planners, theologians, and those who draft new official versions of the rites).

Further, it must be noted again at the outset of this chapter that there is diversity among the proposals for reform that are here treated as a relatively coherent agenda. While Chapter One offered a more detailed examination of the commonalities and divergences among the proposals studied, this chapter foregrounds the significant common emphases of the various accounts, while making note of the more important divergences. As the final section of Chapter One indicated, there is, in fact, enough

affinity and common cause among the proposals examined to identify a substantial block of scholarship that comprises a sort of consensus proposal.¹

The second, third and fourth chapters were not primarily concerned with proposals for the reform of ritual practice, but rather with observations and analyses that sought to understand more clearly how people experience and make sense of water, both in general and in the very specific situation of the encounter with baptismal water at the Easter Vigil. The principal intent was descriptive and analytical.

This present chapter now places the previous four chapters in conversation, seeking to mediate between the claims, proposals, theories, and observations of the previous chapters. The first four chapters of this project have analyzed a large amount of material, much of which will now be selectively integrated. Not everything analyzed thus far in the project is equally relevant to the specific concerns below. This chapter will engage once again, in light of the cognitive scientific and ethnographic data, the proposals of the first chapter. The sixth and final chapter will draw on all five previous chapters to illuminate a limited set of practices within the Easter Vigil, given the analysis offered in this paper, that issue in responsible eco-theological orientation by way of the baptismal water.

In order to respect the specific intents represented in the previous chapters, the claims and proposals of the first chapter—an agenda for reform arising from liturgical theology—now return to the foreground to set the agenda for this chapter. Given such an

¹ Gail Ramshaw has identified such a common proposal within the liturgical renewal movement as a whole. “1. Christian worship is always centered in the death and resurrection of Christ. 2. Worship is the action of the entire assembly. 3. More of the Scriptures are proclaimed. 4. Holy Communion is celebrated weekly. 5. Baptism is communal. 6. The images of God used in prayer and praise are expanded. 7. When making changes, assemblies at least consider what other denominations do and what from the past has been lost.” Gail Ramshaw, *Christian Worship: 100,000 Sundays of Symbols and Rituals* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 137.

agenda, this present chapter asks how the two modes of analyses of the second, third and fourth chapters—cognitive scientific inquiry and an ethnographic account—can illuminate and converse with the proposals for liturgical theology and practice. As the final section of Chapter One indicated, a common agenda for reform may be discerned around four foci: the prayer of thanksgiving over the water, the unique character of the Easter Vigil, the scope of concern at baptism and at Easter Vigil, and the baptismal water itself.

II. Prayer Over the Water

In the set of proposals for the prayer over the water detailed in Chapter One, the prayer over the water functions as a vital part of the Easter Vigil liturgy, and receives significant careful description. The mode of thanksgiving in which the prayer is to be prayed anchors the prayer in a theocentric disposition toward the cosmos, stretching out toward the cosmos in an all-embracing gesture of gratitude. Such a prayer encourages liturgical participants to know all of creation as a gift, beginning through the act of praise for the “goodness” of water.² The element of water takes a primary place in the prayer, and is set in motion during the prayer. The prayer begs God to act in human lives and in creation in much the same way that water acts in the natural world: burying, giving life, cleansing, washing, and bringing to birth. The cosmology implied in the prayer helps those who pray the prayer to know the earth as a relatively small, precious, watery place—full of life and located in a much wider and largely waterless universe. The prayer, especially in Schmemmann’s account, functions not as an act that renders a small pool of water “holy water” in contradistinction to all other “profane” water, but rather primarily as an epiphany of the sacred character of all water. Experiencing such an

² Gordon Lathrop, *Holy Ground: A Liturgical Cosmology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 105.

epiphany, one is able to see all water as participating in the renewal of the cosmos, which is a restoration to its original goodness. In sum, the prayer over the water holds a significant place in the vigil and places the assembly in a posture of thanksgiving for water and for the entire cosmos—a cosmos that is created good and is even now being restored. From such a perspective, one might know the earth's preciousness and fragility, even as one comes to know the waters of the earth as the biblical waters by which the creation is restored and renewed.

Marshalling the cognitive scientific data and the ethnographic account of the Easter Vigil under study, the section below examines the role of the prayer over the water in the vigil liturgy, looking particularly at the significance of the prayer in the experience of the assembly, the role of the movement of water during the prayer, the epiphanic character of the prayer, and the character of the prayer as a prayer of thanksgiving.

In the accounts of participants in the Easter Vigil under study, the prayer attained a more modest role than the one described by the liturgical theologians in Chapter One. Nonetheless, some participants in the Easter Vigil highlighted the role of the prayer of thanksgiving over the water in the vigil. Those who mentioned the prayer tended to highlight the pouring of water and the connections between the poured water to the water-images simultaneously being spoken. Those who named images from the prayer also tended to highlight the “biblical importance” of water or the action of the divine alongside or in the action of the water. Thus, for some, the prayer of thanksgiving over the water indeed connected to the element of water and simultaneously evoked images of divine action.

The water poured during the prayer, consistent with the water in use generally in the vigil liturgy, was captivating for participants. Participants described being drawn to the visual and audible dimensions of the pouring of the water. Given this capacity of water and the patterns of its use observed in the vigil, water, in fact, may be seen as one of the chief tools by which points in the liturgy are “aesthetically marked.”³ Cognitive scientific analysis points to the non-instrumental use of water (such as the slow, measured pouring of water into an already filled font by three people dressed in robes) as a signal to participants to search for metaphorical interpretations of the action and element of the water. In general, participants were captivated by the pouring of the water and responded to the non-instrumental pouring of the water with metaphorical and theological interpretations of the water.

Most participants who described the prayer over the water described the pouring of the water in more significant terms than those in which they described the prayer itself. A cognitive scientific principle of ritual analysis suggests that physical actions and objects in the ritual space exert a strong pull on the theological imagination.⁴ Actions, particularly those such as the pouring of water that occur in a SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schema, may be especially captivating in ritual.⁵ In the accounts gathered in this ethnographic project, both the “words” and the “pouring” were understood to be “about” water, and even about God. Yet it appears that the pouring of water initiated a generally stronger activation of the participants’ theological imagination than did the text of the

³ Richard Bauman, "Performance," in *Folklore, Cultural Performances, and Popular Entertainments: A Communications-Centered Handbook*, ed. Richard Bauman (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 41.

⁴ Mark Turner and Gilles Fauconnier, "Metaphor, Metonymy, and Binding," <http://markturner.org/metmet.html>.

⁵ Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner, *The Way We Think: Conceptual Blending and the Mind's Hidden Complexities* (New York: Basic Books, 2002), 81, 85.

prayer. One participant described the water poured during the prayer as “living, moving water, because our God is a living, moving God.” It may be that such a statement is an interpretation of the text of the prayer, but it seems more likely that it is an interpretation of the pouring of the water. Thus, the pouring of the water together with the prayer over the water shows evidence of activating conceptual blending, though it is not clear how much of the blending involves the detailed content of the prayer. The pouring of the water, however, seems to be prominent in the blend.

Schmemmann critiqued an understanding of the prayer of thanksgiving over the water that understood the purpose of the prayer to be concerned with making the water in the font into “holy water,” in contradistinction to all other water, thereby rendering all other water “profane, i.e. religiously meaningless.”⁶ There was no evidence of such a clearly dichotomous sentiment in the congregation studied. Schmemmann hoped, however, that the prayer over the water would function as an “epiphany” about the true nature and destiny of all water and the world. In such an epiphanic vision, Schmemmann hoped that participants in the baptismal rite would come to trust that natural matter was not being “replaced” with some other substance by divine action but rather “restored” to being “the means of communion with God.”⁷

While a number of participants seemed to have experienced some dimensions of the “epiphany” that Schmemmann described as the revelation of the true character of all water, the accounts offered by members of the assembly under study were considerably more restrained than Schmemmann’s. Some participants indeed found connections

⁶ Alexander Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World: Sacraments and Orthodoxy*, 2nd rev. and expanded ed. ([Crestwood, N.Y.]: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1988), 131-32.

⁷ ———, *Of Water and the Spirit: A Liturgical Study of Baptism* ([Crestwood, N.Y.]: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1974), 49.

between the character of baptismal water and the waters outside of worship, though the connections were generally one of similarity rather than shared essence. And, despite the many images of free-flowing and naturally occurring bodies of water that animated the prayer of thanksgiving over the water, when participants in the vigil themselves likened the baptismal waters to water outside of worship, the extra-liturgical water named was normally domestic, piped water rather than natural, free-flowing bodies of water. In fact, in the one instance in which natural bodies of water were associated with baptismal water, the association was one of anti-type. The waters in the font peacefully “rippled,” while the waters of “lakeshores and oceans” were “chaotic” and “not like” baptismal water.

The epiphany that Schmemmann describes—that all water may be known as “holy water”—involves, in cognitive scientific terms, the ascription of a “common essence” to all water.⁸ Some participants in the vigil did describe a common essence between different bodies of water, though this common essence did not extend outside of the worship space. The water in the baptismal font—even after the water had been changed numerous times—remained, for some of the newly baptized adults, “the same” waters of baptism in which they had been baptized, that had occupied the font before their baptism, and that were sprinkled on them in sprinkling rites. One of the newly baptized adults even spoke of the “power” and “intensity” of receiving what she described as the same baptismal waters sprinkled on her weeks later in a sprinkling rite in Sunday worship. Some other participants made remarks that suggested a sense of common essence between the baptismal waters and the waters used for sprinkling. The pastor, in a sermon

⁸ On ascription of essence in ritual, see Jesper Sørensen, *A Cognitive Theory of Magic*, Cognitive Science of Religion Series (Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2007), 95-110.

on Maundy Thursday, first described the water of baptism at the Easter Vigil in theological terms as waters that “heal and forgive, restore and renew,” and then said that the water poured over the congregation’s feet in the footwashing is “this same water.” Thus, while some clear examples of ascription of common essence to the baptismal water were documented among the participants in this Easter Vigil, the common essence was limited to waters within the liturgical space, far short of the wide epiphanic vision described by Schmemmann.

Among participants in the Easter Vigil under study, the prayer was neither named nor described as a thanksgiving, and was, in fact, only rarely identified as a prayer. The prayer was more typically described for example, as “words,” “promises” or something that was “retold.” Some participants only mentioned the pouring of the water and did not mention the simultaneous “words” being said at all. No participants mentioned the prayer apart from the pouring of water.

An analysis of the conceptual metaphors of the prayer may illuminate some factors behind the absence of a motif of thanksgiving in the local descriptions of the thanksgiving prayer. Perhaps the most basic understanding of thanksgiving is that of a response to a gift given. The cognitive scientific analysis in Chapter Three identifies two image schematic patterns in which water serves as the source domain for a schema in which one entity gives or delivers something to another receiving entity. The first pattern is associated with the CONTAINER schema, in which something emerges out of the CONTAINER and is able to be seen or grasped by something or someone outside of the CONTAINER (e.g., something floats to the surface, is retrieved out of the depths of the CONTAINER, or simply emerges, perhaps by way of the logic of buoyancy). The entailed

force of the water is weak in this case. Whatever the water delivers emerges without schematic predictability, and likely with the assistance of some other force besides that exerted by the water. The second and much more common pattern is associated with the SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schema. In this schema, the water delivers something from a SOURCE along a PATH to a GOAL. Unlike the CONTAINER schema, a SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schema derived from water always by definition entails the pattern of something being delivered to—flowing into—the GOAL. The force entailed in the water schema makes this a predictable and forceful element of the schema. Further, the schema can be constructed to equate the GOAL of the system with the self. This widely used schematic structure is deployed, as shown above in Chapter Three, to describe the incoming flow of money, information, inspiration, immigrants, emotion, energy, healing, salvation, and even God. When the GOAL is blended with the self, the entity delivered to the GOAL is typically evaluated as either strongly desired or strongly unwelcome. Thus, the two image schemas arising from water charted above include a relatively weak schema in which the gift emerges from a CONTAINER of pooled water, and a relatively strong schema in which the gift flows as or with inexorably flowing water into a GOAL, with the GOAL often being the self.

The text of the prayer over the water used at the Easter Vigil in the ethnographic study of the previous chapter, while saturated with both water imagery and the language of thanksgiving, only evokes such a strong gift-giving schema in the petitionary section of the prayer, and not in the thanksgiving section of the prayer. (This pattern is not unusual for such a prayer. Examples of the prayer over the water, throughout history and across traditions, are infrequently marked by strong SOURCE-PATH-GOAL water-imagery

that is structured as flowing toward the self/assembly/earth in the thanksgiving section of the prayer.⁹ A number of exceptions to this pattern are noted in Chapter Six.) The thanksgiving section of the prayer includes the text

Holy God, you are the river of life, you are the everlasting wellspring.
 Glory to you for oceans and lakes, for rivers and streams.
 Your waters are below us, around us, above us: our life is born in you.
 You are the fountain of resurrection.
 Praise to you for your saving waters:
 Noah and the animals survive the flood,
 and the Israelites escape through the sea.¹⁰

The opening address to God includes two images animated by a SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schema: “river of life,” and “everlasting wellspring.” However, in this case, there is no GOAL identified into which either the “river” or the “wellspring” flow. And, perhaps more fundamentally, both are mentioned not in the context of thanksgiving but rather in the opening address to God.

The water images of the thanksgiving are largely CONTAINER images: oceans, lakes, waters that surround, flood, sea. The few SOURCE-PATH-GOAL images within the thanksgiving section do not identify a GOAL, nor do they clearly specify what the flow is carrying (the flowing waters include unspecified “rivers,” “streams,” and a relatively vague “fountain of resurrection”). The presider omitted from the published prayer a line that praised God “for cloud and rain, for dew and snow.” While this thanksgiving phrase similarly leaves the GOAL of the *cloud*, *rain*, *dew* and *snow* unspecified, two entailments of SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schemas frequently arising from the source domain of

⁹ A diverse set of prayers over the water can be found in Thomas F. Best, *Baptism Today: Understanding, Practice, Ecumenical Implications*, Faith and Order Paper (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2008). and E. C. Whitaker and Maxwell E. Johnson, *Documents of the Baptismal Liturgy*, Rev. and expanded ed., Alcuin Club Collections No. 79 (London: SPCK, 2003).

¹⁰ The prayer is an abbreviated form of Prayer V in Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, Leader's desk ed. (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2006), 589.

precipitation, and especially from *rain*, is the universality of the GOAL and the fructifying power of the rain at the GOAL of the earth.¹¹

None of the *actions* in the thanksgiving section of the prayer is structured by a flowing-water SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schema: life is born within (or perhaps out of) the CONTAINER of water, Noah and the animals float above the dangerous upper boundary of the flood-CONTAINER, and the Israelites emerge on the free, safe side of the lateral boundary of the sea-CONTAINER.

The petitionary section of the prayer, however, includes a number of SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schemas, at least one of which employs the source domain of water to convey a sense of gift given. The final petitionary line of the prayer asks, “satisfy all our thirst with your living water, Jesus Christ, our Savior,” in a blend in which Jesus, the living water, flows from God, the SOURCE, to the wide first-person-plural GOAL, “all our thirst.” Two other SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schemas arising from water imagery are also found in the petitionary section of the prayer, but, rather than portraying images of gifts given, the schemas invoke the power of water to remove unwanted entities, rather than deliver desired entities: “wash away the sin within us” and “drown the evil around us.”¹²

Thus, the prayer used at the vigil under study gave thanks for bodies of water that were structured by a variety of image schemas, none of which was a strong example of a

¹¹ Matthew 5.45-48 describes the “perfect” universality of God who “sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.” Isaiah 55.10-11 invokes the strong and dependable power of rain: “the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there until they have watered the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and succeed in the thing for which I sent it.”

¹² Of course, the washing away of sin and the flooding of evil may be understood or received as a gift. The distinction here, however, concerns the schematic shape in question. The schema that structures the washing of sin/flooding of evil motif is distinct from that schema that involves receiving such a washing (or any other thing) as a gift. The washing of sin/flooding of evil is structured schematically by a flow that powerfully moves an undesirable trajectory away from the self to an unseen and separate GOAL. The image schematic pattern of receiving a gift is structured by a flow that carries a desired trajectory from a SOURCE to the self that is also the GOAL.

SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schema. And only one of the petitions in the petitionary section of the prayer imaged the water flowing in a gift-bearing capacity—toward “thirst.” Thus, if the act of thanksgiving is associated with gifts flowing to the entity of the self—even a self widely construed as the earth—then the prayer used at this vigil had very few image schematic structures that suggested such thanksgiving. While the prayer used the language of thanksgiving and was saturated with rich water imagery drawn from both the natural world and the images of scripture, its image schematic structure did not entail thanksgiving for gifts borne of flowing water carried to the praying assembly as a GOAL. Crafting the prayer in images that frame the waters as a gift flowing toward the GOAL of the world (in which participants are able to recognize themselves in the “self” to which the flow is directed) may encourage fuller participation in the prayer as an act of thanksgiving.

This section explored the place of the prayer over the water, especially considering the significance of the prayer in the accounts of the members of the assembly, the role of the movement of water during the prayer, the epiphanic character of the prayer, and the character of the prayer as a prayer of thanksgiving. In sum, the analysis of the prayer over the water indicated a role more modest for the prayer than the role generally described in the proposal outlined in Chapter One. The movement of the water during the prayer—in this case, the pouring—both captivated the attention of the participants and initiated the construction of theologically imaginative conceptual blends. These blends associated the moving water with the text of the prayer, though, in the descriptions the participants offered, the specifics of the prayer text remained vague, while the image schematic pattern of the movement of the water was sometimes linked to

theological statements schematically structured by the pattern of the pouring water. Participants experienced “epiphanies” regarding the connection between baptismal water and other bodies of water, though the connections were not as wide as those described by Schmemmann: the connections were made between baptismal water and piped, domestic water, and between water in use in other liturgies and rites. Participants offered little sense of the prayer over the water being a prayer of thanksgiving. The prayer used at the vigil—a truncated version of a published prayer—was clearly marked by images of both water and thanksgiving. Yet an image schematic analysis of the water images in the prayer shows that the water images in the thanksgiving section of the prayer are largely CONTAINER images, or other images that do not suggest gifts flowing to the GOAL of the assembly or the earth. The analysis suggests that the inclusion of SOURCE-PATH-GOAL images of the water flowing, bearing gifts, toward the GOAL of the praying assembly (and to the wider world) may strengthen the sense of the prayer as a prayer of thanksgiving for abundant gifts received, centered in the images of water flowing.

III. The Unique Character of the Easter Vigil

All four liturgical theologians examined in Chapter One made strong claims for the centrality of the Easter Vigil in the annual experience of participants, and for the uniquely fitting character of the Easter Vigil for the celebration of baptism. Many participants in the Easter Vigil under study described the unique significance of the Easter Vigil in terms quite similar to the normative proposals explored in Chapter One. Kavanagh called the vigil the “Mother of Feasts.” Participants in the studied vigil called it *the queen of all feasts, the highest holy day, the most beautiful service, magnificent and exquisite*. Lathrop described it as “the center of the year.” Participants in the vigil called

it the center of our life, the most important service of the year, and a huge part of my annual journey. These descriptions depict the vigil liturgy as the CENTER of a CENTER-PERIPHERY image schema, and as high or uppermost in a SCALE schema.¹³

The vigil, according to the proposal of Chapter One, is uniquely suited for baptisms due especially to the rich symbolic field generated by the vigil liturgy and its pivotal place within the liturgical and ecological year. Indeed, while the vigil, as is typical for ritual events, functions as a CONTAINER for the actions that occur “within” it, the CONTAINER for the night of the vigil is imaged as unusually vast.¹⁴ Near the beginning of the service, the cantor sang the extended prayer of thanksgiving for the light and the candle and repeatedly sang out, “this is the night” during the prayer. The prayer, repeating the phrase “this is the night,” goes on to proclaim that it is “in” this night that “the True Lamb is slain” and “the Paschal Feast” is kept, the Israelites crossed through the sea, sin is purged away, grace is renewed, holiness is restored, Christ rises from hell,¹⁵ night becomes as clear as day, and “heaven and earth are joined—things human and things divine.”¹⁶ All of these occurrences are framed as taking place inside the CONTAINER of “this night.”¹⁷ Six times during the prayer, the assembly itself sings the

¹³ Among other entailments, the CENTER-PERIPHERY schema frequently entails a strong sense of identity (who one is as an individual) as related to the CENTER of the schema. The schema also, according to Mark Johnson, plays a role in defining “my orientation toward my world.” Mark Johnson, *The Body in the Mind: The Bodily Basis of Meaning, Imagination, and Reason* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 125.. See Johnson’s description of the SCALE schema in Johnson, *The Body in the Mind*, 124-25..

¹⁴ See the general description of the CONTAINER image schema in Johnson, *The Body in the Mind*, 21-23..

¹⁵ Heightening the uniqueness of this claim, the prayer personifies the night, attributing to this night the unique witness of Christ’s resurrection: “O night truly blessed which alone was worthy to know the time and hour in which Christ arose again from hell!” Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, 647.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ The published version of the leader’s guide for the service also offers an additional layer of symbol associated both with the candle and “this night.” Just before the candle is lighted from the fire, the presiding minister may chant, “Christ, yesterday and today, the beginning and the ending. To Christ belongs all time and all the ages; to Christ belongs glory and dominion now and forever.” As these words are spoken or sung, the candle is to be inscribed by the presiding minister with a cross, with the letters

phrase “this is the night” back to the cantor. Thus, the night of the Easter Vigil is marked by the ritual action itself as a CONTAINER in which events of the highest significance take place.

In addition to the strong framing of the night as itself a vast CONTAINER, the ritual events that actually take place in the vigil liturgy amass layers of symbol. Many participants did indeed single out the symbolic depth of the vigil liturgy as deepening their appreciation for the practice of baptism conducted within the vigil. Two specific clusters of symbols seemed especially to function as lynchpins between the overlapping sets of symbols associated with baptism and the Easter Vigil: the image of the death and resurrection of Christ, and images of renewal, refreshment and rebirth, including many associations with the life-giving properties of water. These clusters of symbols seemed to grow in significance as participants discovered the way in which the images arose in both the larger service of the vigil and the rite of baptism within the vigil. With the vigil night itself imaged as a vast CONTAINER containing not only the participants but also ancient events and layers of conceptually blended images, it is perhaps apt to describe the participants in the night of the vigil as “immersed”¹⁸ in the images of the Easter Vigil, “covered” with them.¹⁹

The water images in the wider vigil service outside of the baptismal rite were found primarily in the readings from scripture. Four of the twelve appointed Old Testament readings were selected for the vigil liturgy observed for this study.²⁰ Water

Greek letters Α and Ω, and the numerals of the current year, e.g. 2009, with each of the four numerals inscribed in the four quadrants formed by the cross.

¹⁸ Lathrop, *Holy Ground*, 169.

¹⁹ Aidan Kavanagh, *On Liturgical Theology: The Hale Memorial Lectures of Seabury-Western Theological Seminary, 1981* (Collegeville, Minn. Liturgical Press, 1992), 158.

²⁰ *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* appoints twelve readings and responses for the vigil that are largely similar to other mainline ecumenical lectionaries related to the *Revised Common Lectionary*. The

occupied a central place in three of the four Old Testament readings (while fire was a primary symbol in the fourth), and one of the two New Testament readings was centered in the theme of baptism. All of the water images from scripture in this vigil liturgy were structured by a CONTAINER schema: the primordial deep of the first creation narrative out of which the earth emerged (Genesis 1); the water of the Red Sea in which the armies of Pharaoh were sunk (Exodus 14);²¹ the sea water that swallowed Jonah (Jonah 1); and the baptismal water imaged as a burial with Christ into death (Romans 6). All of the sung responses to the readings also included water imagery. As in the readings themselves, the image schematic structure of the water images in each of the responses also included CONTAINER schemas: the *depths of the sea*, the *deeps of the ocean*, *into the depths like a stone*, and the *heart of the seas*.²² Thus, the water imagery in the wider vigil outside of the baptismal rite was structured largely by way of the CONTAINER schema and with almost no evidence of the SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schema. As will be seen in Chapter Six, the full set of twelve Old Testament readings and responses appointed for the vigil includes numerous water images structured by the SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schema, though, again, those images did not appear in the readings selected for the vigil under study.

A further mutually strengthening element shared between the vigil and the baptisms also appeared both in the proposals offered in Chapter One and in the ethnographic account of Chapter Four: the vigil's central place in the catechumenal

instructions for the service indicate that some readings may be omitted, though four of the readings are not to be omitted: Genesis 1, Exodus 14, Isaiah 55, and Daniel 3.

²¹ In this case, the water also functioned as a BOUNDARY schema, crossed by the Israelites, and, as the waters rushed together to cover the Egyptians, as a SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schema.

²² Following Daniel 3, the fourth reading, the response included, in addition to the image of the sea, also the image of "every shower of rain and fall of dew" and "springs of water." These images can certainly represent a SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schema, though the text in which they appear simply names them among a long list of creatures that are all called upon to bless God. Their SOURCE-PATH-GOAL structure is not connected to any other entity, i.e. they are not depicted as coming from a particular SOURCE, flowing over any specific PATH, or flowing toward any given GOAL.

process of baptismal preparation. The alignment of two significant annual processes (a year-long preparation for baptism and the Easter liturgical cycle of thirteen weeks with its high point centered in the vigil) underscored the sense of the vigil occurring at an especially powerful convergence of events. Both processes share a common CENTER in the vigil, in two different CENTER-PERIPHERY schemas. Participants in the vigil examined for this project not only identified the long duration of the process as lending weight and significance to the celebration of the vigil, but also mentioned the size of the baptismal party, the seriousness with which the candidates and the pastor took the process, the presence of sponsors, and the character of the adult candidates' commitment and free choice to pursue baptism. Thus, two cycles that were both considered of great significance—the preparation of adults for baptism and the liturgical year with its annual high point at Easter—were not only blended in the minds of participants, but also were in fact *physically* linked in the event of the vigil. The blending space of the vigil physically embodied what Alexander Schmemmann described as the “paschal celebration of Baptism and the baptismal celebration of Pascha.”²³ Accomplishing this conceptual blend, discerning the “connection between Baptism and Pascha,” is, for Schmemmann, the “key... to the totality of the Christian faith itself.”²⁴

It would be misleading, however, to characterize the vigil under study as deriving its strong connection between baptism and pascha only from the elements described above. One major factor (not mentioned in the liturgical theological proposal outlined in Chapter One) that seemed strongly to strengthen the association between baptism and the vigil was the relatively large attendance at the vigil. In fact, members of the baptismal

²³ Schmemmann, *Of Water and the Spirit*, 37.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

party all reported that they were deeply moved by the large number of people present in the assembly for the vigil. They spoke of being moved by seeing “so many people” who were “watching and supporting us,” and then cheering and applauding in an “outpouring of love and acceptance.” Members of the assembly, who were at that moment in the liturgy facing the baptismal party, reported that they themselves, at that same moment, were moved by the number of participants in the baptismal party and the seriousness, joy, and pride they observed in their demeanor. Thus, during the baptismal rite, as the assembly and the baptismal party faced each other, both groups found the size of the other group to be theologically significant: the baptismal party was moved by seeing the number of people offering care, affirmation, and support for them at the moment of their baptism, and the assembly was moved by seeing the number of people intently entering the covenant and commitment of baptism, and becoming fellow members of the church with them. In short, the sense of large numbers of people in both the baptismal party and in the assembly mutually strengthened the sense of the weight of the vigil and the baptisms.

Many of the participants in the vigil spoke of their sense of the significance of their own baptism (often having been baptized long ago, not at the Easter Vigil, when they were an infant) being expanded by their participation in the vigil with its baptisms. Both observing the baptisms and receiving the water of the sprinkling were cited as ritual events in which participants were struck by the power or importance of their own baptism. One can imagine that a ritual such as the Easter Vigil with dramatic baptismal initiation might actually cause the opposite effect: that those who had not themselves been baptized in such a dramatic rite might feel distanced both from the present rite and

from their own baptism. However, a number of factors may contribute to the sense of participants' renewal of baptism at the Easter Vigil. As suggested above, the vigil night itself is at times imaged as a vast CONTAINER that holds ancient events in salvation history, the death and resurrection of Christ, and the promise that in this night "all who believe in Christ are rescued from evil and the gloom of sin, are renewed in grace, and are restored to holiness."²⁵ Thus, the CONTAINER of the night is imaged as holding its participants in saving events. More, through the activity of the mirror neuron system, the observation of baptisms may provide a sort of subconscious embodied experience of the baptisms being observed. The baptisms at the Easter Vigil took place on a raised platform and were visible for all to see, enabling the sort of empathic observation that facilitates what Jordan Zlatev labels a mimetic schema.²⁶ Further, the sprinkling rite physically embodies the widespread renewal of baptism: the water from the central font is sprinkled widely over the entire assembly, bringing the CENTER of a CENTER-PERIPHERY schema outward to the PERIPHERY.²⁷ Finally the rite of the affirmation of baptism for the entire assembly that immediately follows the baptisms directly invokes the baptisms of all those previously baptized. The assembly is invited to affirm the faith confessed at baptism and to recommit to the way of life entered through the covenant of baptism. Thus, within the blending space of *one* ritual (i.e. the Easter Vigil) *another* set of rites is ritually addressed: the past baptisms of the members of the assembly. In this way, the Easter Vigil liturgy is able, in one sense, to manipulate and reconceptualize, metonymically, the

²⁵ Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, 646.

²⁶ See Jordan Zlatev, "What's in a Schema? Bodily Mimesis and the Grounding of Language," in *From Perception to Meaning: Image Schemas in Cognitive Linguistics*, ed. Beate Hampe (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2005).

²⁷ On the CENTER-PERIPHERY image schema, see Johnson, *The Body in the Mind*, 124-25.

significance of the past baptisms of the assembly. At the heart of an event marked out as strongly baptismal, the past baptisms of participants are called into the conceptual blend, equated with vigil baptisms, and renewed both through spoken recommitment and the sprinkling of water over all of the assembly.²⁸

This section examined two proposals outlined in Chapter One: that the Easter Vigil may serve as a central orienting point in the experience of participants, and that the vigil is especially suited for the practice of baptism. The language used by participants to describe the vigil placed the vigil strongly in the CENTER of a CENTER-PERIPHERY schema, and at the high end of a SCALE schema. The longest prayer of the vigil images the vigil night itself as a vast CONTAINER holding within it not only the present ritual participants but also the renewal of “all who believe in Christ,” and great events of salvation history, including the exodus from Egypt, and, most centrally, the resurrection of Christ. The congregation repeatedly sings “this is the night” in response to the extravagant descriptions of the many realities contained within the night. In the vigil under study, the water images in the wider vigil service *outside* of the baptismal rite were largely CONTAINER images, arising in the four Old Testament readings and in the responses to the readings. In contrast, the full set of twelve readings appointed in the congregation’s published worship resource includes numerous SOURCE-PATH-GOAL water images in the readings and in the responses to the readings. Images of Christ’s death and resurrection and images of renewal (often through water) blend the service of the vigil with the rite of baptism, and create a strong sense of interconnection between baptism and the vigil in the

²⁸ Laurie Patton describes a similar, though more complex, process in Hindu rites in which entire rituals are metonymically represented with small gestures in the midst of other larger rituals. Thus, once the gesture is associated with the previous ritual, the previous rituals can be invoked, renewed, manipulated, and even practiced through small and simply performed gestures. Laurie L. Patton, *Bringing the Gods to Mind: Mantra and Ritual in Early Indian Sacrifice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 21.

descriptions of the participants, mutually strengthening the sense of centrality for both the vigil and the baptisms. Further, the common center shared by both the catechumenal process and the liturgical year placed the vigil at the CENTER of two distinct and significant CENTER-PERIPHERY cycles, both of which address questions of identity and orientation. The participants' perception that a large number of people were baptized, together with the perception of a large attendance at the service further increased the sense of the vigil and the baptisms as CENTRAL and significant. Finally, members of the assembly described a deepening of their appreciation for their own baptism through their participation in the vigil. Such an experience may draw on a number of ritual patterns: the image schematic structure of the night of the vigil as a CONTAINER in which participants dwell together with strong baptismal and theological realities; the empathic, bodily nature of the observation of baptisms at the center of the vigil; the rite of sprinkling that physically connects all the members of the assembly to the baptismal water; and the specific invocation of past baptisms at the heart of the vigil, which may allow for a metonymic reconceptualization of such previous baptisms, blending images and experiences of the Easter Vigil "backward" into such baptisms.

IV. Wide Scope of Concern

The liturgical theological proposal discerned in Chapter One advocates a widening of the concern of the vigil toward cosmic and ecological significance. The proposal critiques approaches to the vigil that tightly focus on the death and resurrection of Christ to the exclusion of the Old Testament and cosmic/ecological symbolism that is in fact, the proposal argues, integral to the significance of Christ and his death and resurrection. The proposal further critiques the related pattern in which the motif of sin

and forgiveness is seen as exhausting the theological significance of the vigil. Rather, the death and resurrection of Christ and the theme of sin and forgiveness are to be perceived in their wider cosmic and earth-renewing context.

The proposal may be understood, in cognitive scientific categories, as advocating an expansion of the conceptual blending to be accomplished in the Easter Vigil. As demonstrated in Chapter Two, ritual itself, and in this case the Easter Vigil, functions as a blending space in which image schematic, metonymic, and metaphoric elements interact in a combined mental space, yielding new conceptual patterns. Rather than diminishing the place of the death and resurrection of Christ or the theme of sin and forgiveness in the ritual blend, the proposal outlined in Chapter One suggests that other inputs into the blend be strengthened, especially including the cosmic and ecological strata of symbols. These cosmic and ecological elements are considered to be integral to the significance of the Easter Vigil, and, in many ways, already embedded in the texts and gestures that are traditionally part of the rite.

In the accounts of liturgical participants in the vigil under study, few, if any, participants characterized the vigil exclusively in terms of sin and forgiveness and/or a narrowly focused death and resurrection of Christ. While those images did arise in some accounts, they were not the primary motifs in which the vigil or the baptisms were characterized. Rather, the motifs of washing away burdens or old identities, joining a community, the slaking of spiritual thirsts, commitment, communal renewal, and personal renewal were most prominent.

Based on the responses of participants in the vigil, it appears that while, indeed, the motifs of the death and resurrection of Christ and of sin and forgiveness were

conceived in a conceptual blend together with other supplemental inputs, the cosmic and ecological motifs were a minor aspect, at best, of the conceptual blend. The most prominent supplemental inputs into the blend appeared largely to deal with individual renewal.

Given a proposal such as the one examined here, blending theory inquires into the inputs into the conceptual blend. If the motifs of death and resurrection and sin and forgiveness are to be supplemented, from what source will the other inputs enter the blend? The motif of therapeutic personal renewal is well attested as a dominant cultural frame for religious participation in North America.²⁹ It is therefore no surprise that such a conception would emerge from a contemporary liturgical conceptual blend. The liturgical theological proposal detailed above, however, describes the cosmic and ecological themes of the Easter Vigil as already largely available in the texts, signs, and actions of the rite, along with the cosmic signs associated with the date of the vigil (springtime, equinox, sun, earth, full moon, night). The prominence of such signs, the proposal suggests, needs to be heightened and enlarged in order for their significance to be grasped.

The nature of conceptual blending as a blending of distinct coherent mental spaces raises questions about the conceptual availability of those cosmic and ecological signs for the actual participants in the rites. What conceptual access do participants have to concepts such as the vastness of the universe, the interconnected nature of living creatures, the nature of watersheds, or the astronomical logic of the schema by which the date of Easter is determined? If these already-complex conceptual clusters are to be

²⁹ See Robert Neelly Bellah, *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life*, 1st Perennial Library ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1986).

“heightened” in the conceptual blend of the Easter Vigil liturgy, then these inputs will need to be largely in place and conceptually available at the outset of the vigil liturgy. The domestic, piped water sources such as baths, showers, and fountains that participants conceptually blended with the baptismal waters could be blended because they were already known and conceptually available to the participants prior to the vigil liturgy. Concepts that are not known cannot be blended.

It is worth recalling a caution from Chapter One. Kevin Irwin worried that Easter Vigils could become so centered in the baptismal process that the baptismal imagery might eclipse the cosmic and ecological signs of the vigil.³⁰ Irwin singled out monastic communities as a setting that might especially be able to enact Easter Vigils rooted in natural and cosmic imagery, as they are sometimes connected to the work of farming, and they simply do not have baptisms. While there is of course no sure way to gauge the relevance of Irwin’s caution to the experience of the congregation under study, it is true that the baptismal motif was very strongly evident in accounts of the Easter Vigil, and at least one participant simply stated that “the entire service is about the baptism,” while another went so far as to describe the “drama” of the numerous baptisms as “over the top.” Indeed, compared to the many spirited accounts of baptism at the Easter Vigil, explicit references to ecological and cosmic significance were rare and fleeting. The initiatory imagery in the vigil liturgy under study occupied the CENTER of the rite, both in terms of the chronology of the vigil and in the descriptions of the vigil participants. In the CENTER-PERIPHERY schema, the CENTER is often associated with both a sense of

³⁰ Kevin W. Irwin, "The Sacramentality of Creation and the Role of Creation in Liturgy and Sacraments," in *Preserving the Creation: Environmental Theology and Ethics*, ed. Kevin W. Irwin and Edmund D. Pellegrino (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1994), 92-93.

orientation in the world and with core identity.³¹ Thus, if the vigil itself is analyzed by way of a CENTER-PERIPHERY schema, then an analytical question related to Irwin's concern would inquire into how ecological and cosmic imagery might strongly emerge at the CENTER of the vigil liturgy.

This section considered the scope of concern at the Easter Vigil, given the proposal charted in Chapter One that sought to broaden the concern of both baptism and the vigil. The proposal critiqued a constricted focus on the two motifs of the death and resurrection of Christ and sin and forgiveness. Such a narrow focus was portrayed as resisting the wider themes of liberation and cosmic and ecological renewal especially found in the Old Testament readings of the vigil. Such a proposal may be understood as advocating an increased complexity in the conceptual blend at the vigil baptisms. In the observed vigil, participants did not focus exclusively on sin and forgiveness or on a narrow image of the death and resurrection of Christ. However, in general, participants also did not describe the vigil in strongly ecological or cosmic terms. Rather, the wider concern of the vigil often appeared as individual renewal. A cognitive scientific inquiry thus raises questions about where the cosmic and ecological images are input into the conceptual blend of the vigil and baptismal liturgies. In fact, the observed vigil seemed somewhat to correlate with Kevin Irwin's caution about the possibility of initiatory images overwhelming the ecological images of the vigil: the CENTER of the rite was often described as baptismal. One response to Irwin's concern, rather than suppressing the baptismal and initiatory elements of the vigil, is to ensure the input of cosmic and ecological imagery at the CENTER of the rite.

³¹ See Johnson, *The Body in the Mind*, 125.

IV. Water as an Element

The liturgical theological scholarship outlined in Chapter One makes a number of claims and proposals regarding the use of the physical element of water in the Easter Vigil. While important distinctions are made in the much more detailed account in Chapter One, a coherent account of a general consensus among the liturgical theologians can be sketched here. Perhaps the most foundational of their claims is that water serves as an extraordinarily effective vehicle for symbolic meaning. Alexander Schmemmann characterizes water as the ideal symbolic element.³² Moreover, the proposal argues, water's symbolic strength is especially apparent at the Easter Vigil, in which water carries many of the symbols of the wider vigil liturgy. The symbolic power of water at the vigil is especially facilitated by the central place of the baptismal rite within the vigil liturgy, the plentiful use of baptismal and water imagery throughout the wider vigil liturgy, and the connections to the other cosmic, elemental, and ecological signs associated with the springtime setting of the vigil. And even before the liturgy water carries symbolic associations from elsewhere, including its characteristics of flowing freely, sustaining life, cleansing, and destroying. Together with such claims, the proposal generally advocates that the Easter Vigil be animated by the use of a large amount of clean water that is set in motion, engaged bodily, and gathered at a strong and central water-place to which all have access. Behind this proposal is yet another claim: reforms in the use of the physical element of water at the Easter Vigil can effect changes in the patterns of belief and theological reflection in liturgical participants.

How do liturgical participants come to recognize and perceive a large amount of water, and how does such a perception function in experience and conceptual thought?

³² Schmemmann, *Of Water and the Spirit*, 40.

The cognitive scientific analysis of Chapter Three showed that both CONTAINER and SOURCE-PATH-GOAL image schemas are employed to signal large amounts of water. The CONTAINER image of the source domain of pooled water often maps great depths and large quantities of an entity. The word *depths* itself often signals both the domain of water and overwhelming quantities.³³ The general conception of flow in the SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schema typically entails an ongoing and therefore generous amount of a flowing entity.

The water employed in the Easter Vigil under study appeared in both CONTAINER and SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schemas. The CONTAINER schema was suggested by the clear basin of the font filled with water before the beginning of the liturgy, and later when the infants were immersed during their baptisms. The SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schema was activated by the water poured out during the prayer, poured during the adult baptisms, and sprinkled on the assembly.

Most of the participants in the Easter Vigil analyzed in Chapter Four described the amount of water gathered for the vigil as generous, large, and even “more water than I’d ever seen used before.” Some described the CONTAINER of the baptismal basin as “huge.” Despite the general conception of the font as large, the font did not function strongly as a *center* in the accounts of participants. Rather, the location of the font in “front” of the worship space appeared more significant. While the baptismal basin is indeed larger than most commonly used domestic bowls of water (the bowl is 1’ deep, 2.5’ in diameter, and 3.25’ above the floor, including the height of the stand), the bowl

³³ See Chapter Two, above. For two analyses of water-depth schematically representing vast quantities, see William P. Brown, *Seeing the Psalms: A Theology of Metaphor*, 1st ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 111. and Riika J. Virtanen, “Water Imagery in the Writings of Don Grub Rgyal,” in *The Sixth Nordic Tibet Research Conference* (Stockholm University 2007), 8.

itself is smaller than all but infant bathtubs. For some participants, the amount of water used in the baptismal rite was explicitly related to their past experience of baptism; many participants contrasted the water or the font to past “birdbath” baptisms they had known. Thus, the CONTAINER for the baptismal water far exceeded their “idealized cognitive model” (ICM) of a baptismal font.³⁴ It also probably exceeded their ICM of a bowl used for filling with liquid. More, the CONTAINER of water was certainly capable of containing the infants baptized in it (and indeed the infants were nearly fully submerged in the water). As discussed above in Chapter Three, the schema of bodily containment within water is a powerful one in human perception, communicating perhaps most strongly danger and lack of control. According to emerging research in the neurosciences, close observation of the actions of another body appears to trigger muscular and affective empathic responses in the observer that are associated with actually physical performing or experiencing the action under observation. Thus, a full bodily immersion may cause empathic bodily affective and muscular sensations of immersion in the observer, thus strengthening the perception of great quantities of water, even when the container of water is much too small for actual bodily immersion of the adult observer.³⁵

The SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schema arising from flowing water also signals great quantities. In the Easter Vigil under study, the pouring of water during the prayer of

³⁴ An ICM is a generic image schematic representation of a certain class of conceptual entity. For example, for many North Americans, the ICM of “bird” would be structured by schematic dimensions similar to that of a sparrow or robin. While an ostrich would be identified as a member of the category “bird,” the ostrich would, in some ways, for many people, be perceived outside the expectations of the ICM. See Chapter Four, “Idealized Cognitive Models,” in George Lakoff, *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things: What Categories Reveal About the Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 68-76.

³⁵ On the mirror neuron system’s tendency to simulate observed bodily actions, see Chapter Two, above, and Giacomo Rizzolatti and Laila Craighero, “The Mirror-Neuron System,” *Annual Review of Neuroscience* 27 (2004). Such empathic mechanisms also appear to exist for affective dimensions of experiences of pain and distress. See Tania Singer, Ben Seymour, and John O’Doherty, “Empathy for Pain Involves the Affective but Not Sensory Components of Pain,” *Science* 303 (2004).

thanksgiving, the pouring of water during the adult baptisms, and the sprinkling of water over the assembly were structured by the SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schema. The motif of *pouring* water within this schema especially tends to structure blends in which the flow is imaged as vast. While the source domain for pouring water, as noted in Chapter Three, appears typically to be based on the image of human-scaled, domestic poured water from a container (as opposed to arising from larger pouring source domains like waterfalls), the pouring schema is also often used to convey great amounts of an entity flowing powerfully, including, for example, the pouring out of rivers, sunlight, and inspiration pouring out to an artist. Even images of pouring with negative connotations tend to signal a full emptying of the SOURCE, and a considerable pouring out of entities: pouring money down the drain, or pouring out one's life.³⁶ Thus the image of pouring appears to entail a sense of abundant flow and large quantities.

As noted above in Chapter Four, participants in the Easter Vigil associated the fullness of the water at the sprinkling rite with the inclusive nature of the sprinkling, i.e. "everyone" was sprinkled. The schematic shape of the sprinkling rite bears some imperfect similarities to the image of rain as SOURCE, though participants did not invoke the connection between rain and sprinkling.³⁷ Rain, as analyzed in Chapter Three, is also

³⁶ George Lakoff, "Light Is a Fluid," http://cogsci.berkeley.edu/lakoff/metaphors/Light_Is_A_Fluid.html. and Brown, *Seeing the Psalms*, 121.

³⁷ However, this observation about the connection between rain and sprinkling arises from remarks volunteered to me by a participant in an Easter Vigil celebrated at a recent liturgical conference in Long Beach, California. The participant said that at this particular vigil, for the first time, he found a powerful connection between the sprinkling rite and the abundance, goodness, and generosity of *rain*. He said that he believed this "epiphany" struck him at this particular Easter Vigil because the baptismal rite was conducted outdoors on a grassy area. The natural elements and the outdoor setting, made him, he said, when he was sprinkled with water, say "Oh! Rain!" As he described this to me, he looked up, closed his eyes, smiling, and held his hands in the orans posture. He went on to connect the generosity of rain with the generosity of God poured out in baptism.

often associated with a powerful downward motion, an inclusive nature, and an inundating capacity.

Thus, it is not simply the absolute quantity of water that suggests a large or abundant amount of water in the baptismal rite at the Easter Vigil. Rather, the *image schematic structure* of the water in the vigil under study contributed to the sense of a large quantity of water. The CONTAINER of the water pool exceeded many participants' idealized cognitive model of *font* (and, in any case, was larger than typical household bowls into which water is poured), and the observable immersion of the infants in the font may have contributed, by way of mimetic schematic and mirror neuron activity, to empathic embodied simulations of the experience of immersion in the water. The image schematic pattern of pouring typically entails the conception of large amounts, abundantly flowing. And the image of sprinkling perhaps draws on associations with rain, which frequently maps to inundating downpours and a widespread, non-discriminating flow toward all. In any case, the sprinkling engaged with water many (apparently nearly all) of the hundreds of people in the assembly during the vigil.

The motif of a great amount of water combines with a number of other images to animate conceptual blends evidenced in the Easter Vigil. The abundant nature of the water was described as corresponding to the “abundance of God’s love and... desire;” the wide sensory availability (through sight and sound) of the poured water and the sprinkling over the entire gathering were described as ways of marking the wide and inclusive nature of the gathering. The image of the large quantity of water appeared to be part of a conceptual blend in which the largeness of the water blended with the large public nature of the baptisms, the large size of the baptismal party, and the large

significance of the occasion of the Easter Vigil. Further, schematic representations of large quantities of water tend to entail large potential energy and force, “far beyond human control.”³⁸ The power of the abundant water included both the force to wash or destroy and the fructifying energy to cause life to spring up. Thus the motif of the large amount of water contributed schematic shape to a number of the theological images animating participants’ descriptions of the significance of the rite: the generosity of God’s love and desire, the inclusive nature of the liturgy and the church, the significance of Easter and the vigil in particular, and the cleansing and life-giving power of God.

Flow and Life-Giving Power

The presence of the full bowl of water at the Easter Vigil was often contrasted to the dry “barren” and “parched” font that was surrounded by dry branches filled only with stones during the season of Lent. The “sudden” movement of the font being filled for the Easter Vigil marked a sense of relief from the “thirsty” and “depressing” dryness of the font during Lent. Participants tended to stress not simply the presence of the water in contrast to the lack of its presence during Lent, but emphasized rather the *pouring* of the water or the *sudden appearance* of the water, i.e. the movement of the water into what had been a dry and barren place. This description corresponds to a pattern observed in Chapter Three’s analysis of the conceptual metaphors arising from water: that a lack of flowing water in the source domain frequently entails a suppression of energy and life, and even the threat of death in the conceptual blend. The initial pouring of water into the font at the vigil and the contrast between the dry font of Lent and the full font of Easter were drawn into a conceptual blend that highlighted the life-giving power of water. The life-giving nature of water was perhaps most strongly signaled in this case by the lack of

³⁸ Ayako Omori, "Emotion as a Huge Mass of Moving Water," *Metaphor & Symbol* 23, no. 2 (2008): 135.

water during Lent. In any case, the lack of water signaled the threat of degradation and death while the water that then flowed into that place signaled the life-giving and life-restoring power of water.

The pouring of the water into the font during the baptismal prayer was the object of more engaged, theologically imaginative attention than the pouring of the water in the baptisms of the adults. Certainly, less water was used for the baptisms than for the prayer (three pitchers were emptied during the prayer while one pitcher was used for all four baptisms). And yet, beyond the amount of water used, the image schematic differences between the pouring during the prayer and the pouring of the baptism may also contribute to differences in the theological significance arising from the action of pouring. First, the water poured at the prayer was completely emptied in a single pouring action (albeit a relatively slow and measured action). As noted above, this image schematic pattern, even in cases of relatively slow and measured pouring, tends to suggest an abundance of flow along the PATH and a generosity of flow from the SOURCE. The pouring at the baptisms, however, was far from a complete emptying of the SOURCE, as all four baptisms were conducted with a single pitcher of water. Thus, the pouring at the prayer suggested a much more complete and generous flow from the SOURCE. Second, one of the most significant entailments of poured water is its relentless and nearly unstoppable flow.³⁹ Even flowing streams may be dammed along the PATH, but water pouring out can only be stopped at the SOURCE. During the baptisms of the adults, the water poured out from the pitcher was poured and then stopped at the SOURCE repeatedly, twelve times, over the course of the four baptisms. It is unlikely that the image schematic pattern arising from

³⁹ Edward G. Slingerland, *Effortless Action: Wu-Wei as Conceptual Metaphor and Spiritual Ideal in Early China* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 153.

such pouring would entail a sense of relentless flow and unstoppable. The powerful image-schematic pattern of *overflowing* seems unlikely to be entailed. Further, in a ritual situation that may be expected to embody generosity, abundance, and complete self-giving from the SOURCE of the baptismal waters, the repeated pulling-back and halting of the poured water at the SOURCE constructs what may well be dissonant and unhelpful images of rationing and frugality.

In fact, one of the baptized adults, while joking about which members of the adult baptizands had been more or less soaked at the baptism, invoked the rationed nature of the pouring. One of the baptized did not receive much water, he said, because the presider “thought he going to run out.” While obviously there is no evidence in such a statement of any theological conceptions being linked to the rationed pouring, it is, however, clear from the statement that the pattern of rationed water was internalized as the pattern by which the adults were baptized. Thus, in this case, measuring and stopping the poured flow at the SOURCE before the SOURCE was completely emptied prevented the image schematic pattern of pouring from including one of its strongest sets of entailments: abundance and generosity.

One of the striking images of the proposal outlined in Chapter One is that the baptismal water,

for all of its ordinary abundance on this blue planet, comes from beyond our circle, from oceans, sky, winds, and mountains in common action. It comes ‘from God,’ as even our secular culture can sometimes say in naming the uncontrollable... All water is sacred, flowing from beyond here.⁴⁰

The water is sacred because its SOURCE is sacred: it flows from God, and flows from the “common action” of the ecological cycles of the planet. As noted above, such imagery

⁴⁰ Gordon Lathrop, *Holy Things: A Liturgical Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 94.

did not arise in local descriptions of the significance of the vigil. Rather, conceptual blends of the water involved domestic sources of water such as showers, baths, and city fountains. The possibility of knowing the baptismal waters in the worship space as flowing from a wider ecological SOURCE seems dependent, first of all, upon some familiarity with such source domains: the hydrological cycle at work on the landscape and in bodies of water. Further, ascription of such qualities to the SOURCE of baptismal waters may also depend on a sense of the waters flowing from a particularly *uncontrolled* SOURCE, such as the planet's wild places, from places beyond immediate reach, and from God. Thus, the markedly controlled and rationed pouring of the water for the adult baptisms seems unsuited for structuring a conceptual blend in which the wild ecological places of the earth and some aspects of God are imaged as the SOURCE of the baptismal waters. The restrained and controlled pouring of the water does not schematically correspond to an image of the uncontrollable.

The bodily interaction between the water and the adults being baptized was described in a relatively consistent manner. Many participants described the PATH of the water as flowing over the heads of the adults into the GOAL of the font. As noted above, the amount of the water poured over their heads was often described as large, and often explicitly in contrast to the small amount of water used in the infant baptisms participants had grown up seeing. Thus, the pouring action during the baptisms of the adults exceeded the size of the participants' ICM of baptismal water.

The PATH of the flow of water over the adults was typically specified as being poured over their *heads*, and the heads of the adults were frequently described as "bowed" or "leaned over" or "lowered" or "facing down." Thus, it appears that in

addition to the schematic pattern of pouring water, another familiar and meaning-laden image was discerned in the baptisms of the adults: the bowed head. A number of descriptions of this posture by participants seemed to suggest that the posture appeared awkward, and one participant explicitly critiqued the way in which the heads of the adults faced down. No participants spoke of the bowing of the heads as helpfully significant or symbolic to them. Thus, it appears that this posture may have created a dissonance in the conceptual blend constructed around the baptismal act. The bodily patterns involved in such ritual blends are difficult to ignore in constructing theological meaning. Sorensen writes, "it is difficult if not impossible... to interpret kneeling before a statue of a god as an act of subjugation."⁴¹ While the adult candidates in this case were not "kneeling before a statue of a god," they were perceived to be "facing down" and "bowing their heads," a posture strongly associated with deference and submission. This posture may also have blended suggestively with the downward flow of the water. Any object moving in a PATH, Mark Johnson writes, schematically suggests a "force" exerted at some level of "power and intensity" against some "target."⁴² Even more, downward flowing water frequently entails a representation of strong downward force, often characterized as "relentless... massive,"⁴³ and "unmanageable."⁴⁴ Thus the bowed heads of the adults together with the poured water over their heads represented what could be seen as a schematic system in which the heads were bowed in submission under a powerful,

⁴¹ Jesper Sørensen, "The Problem of Magic: Or How Gibberish Becomes Efficacious Action," *Semiotic Inquiry* 25, no. 1-2 (2005): 23-24.

⁴² Johnson, *The Body in the Mind*, 43-44.

⁴³ Eric Johnson, "Proposition 203: A Critical Metaphor Analysis " *Bilingual Research Journal* 29, no. 1 (2005): 71.

⁴⁴ Daniel Andriessen, "Knowledge as Love: How Metaphors Direct the Way We Manage Knowledge in Organizations " in *The 5th critical management society conference* (Manchester, UK2007), 7.

downward directed, subjugating force.⁴⁵ No participants suggested such an interpretation, but, as mentioned above, a number of participants appeared to challenge the appropriateness of the bodily posture in the baptism of the adults.

With the pitcher of water described as the SOURCE, and the heads of the adults occupying the PATH, the GOAL of the water in the adult baptisms was described as the *font*, i.e. “the water was poured over their head into the font.” As noted above, during the baptismal act, the significance ascribed to the font was often simply that of a collecting basin for the water and as a gathering place for the baptismal party. No theological meaning seemed to be attached to the font’s image schematic character of GOAL, despite the potential for such ascription of meaning to the GOAL of a flowing water schema.

The baptism of the infants took place within a CONTAINER schema in which the infants were dipped into the font three times. In the accounts of the participants, the sense of vulnerability in the CONTAINER of the water seemed to be strengthened by the nakedness of the infants: they were “totally unprotected,” as one participant said. The other characteristic of the infant baptisms by which participants may have associated the category of vulnerability was the “shock” registered by the infants in the immersion, demonstrated by their loud and distressed crying. In fact, beyond the obvious sense of empathy that some participants expressed for the upset infants, recent fMRI neuroscientific research suggests that the observation of subjects experiencing pain triggers affective pain responses in the brain of the observer, correlated to the location

⁴⁵ Here I am suggesting that the submissive posture of the baptizands’ heads may have triggered a conceptual blend in which the downward force of the water was blended with a “massive” and “unmanageable” subjugating force. As noted above, the measured and rationed pouring of the water in this particular event was unlikely, *on its own*, to trigger strong entailments of *relentless*, *massive*, or *unmanageable* force.

and intensity of the pain observed in the subject.⁴⁶ Thus, the “shock” described by participants in the vigil at the baptism of the infants may not only be a description of an observed experience of another, but may be, on some levels, the experience of the observer.

The proposal outlined in Chapter One calls for a strong and significant place for the baptismal water in the Easter Vigil. The water is to be plentiful, set in motion, engaged bodily, apparent in images in the wider liturgy, anchored in baptisms that themselves form a central focus of the rite, and connected to the wider ecological waters of the earth. Participants in the vigil under study emphatically found the element of water to be of strong significance in the vigil and the baptismal rites. Participants described the amount of water in use as abundant. A number of image schematic factors may have contributed to this perception. Many of the water uses exceeded the ICM of the participants: a large bowl for the font, poured water for the adult baptisms, and a pool of water in which infants were immersed instead of sprinkled. The schematic pattern of an (infant) body completely within a water-CONTAINER may activate mirror neuron and mimetic schema mechanisms that make the image of immersion in the depths especially strong. The image of pouring, especially when the SOURCE is completely poured out, may signal abundance and generosity in the flow of water. These water images, already schematically marked as abundant, in turn blended with other images of largeness in the vigil, mutually reinforcing the perception of massive quantity. The significant movements of the water included the transition from a dry, “barren” font in Lent, to a water-filled font at the Easter Vigil, as well as the significant pouring of the water at the prayer over

⁴⁶ Singer, Seymour, and O'Doherty, "Empathy for Pain Involves the Affective but Not Sensory Components of Pain."

the water. The SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schema in the rite held a number of entailments. The SOURCE of the water, while at times imaged as God, was not construed as flowing from the wider hydrological cycles of the earth, perhaps because of a lack of familiarity with the cycles, a lack of a clear invitation into such a conceptual blend, and the dissonance of the rationed and repeatedly halted pouring of the water during the baptisms of the adults. The PATH of the flow in the adult baptisms poured over the bowed heads of the adults, and was the object of some explicit critique, perhaps because the schematic structure could be interpreted as heads being bowed in submission under a powerful, downward directed, subjugating force. The GOAL of the flow in the adult baptisms, according to the structure of the descriptions of the baptisms, was the font. The baptisms of the infants in the CONTAINER of the font were described by participants frequently in terms of vulnerability, perhaps because of the nakedness of the infants and the entailed constrictions on agency experienced from within a CONTAINER—and especially so for a water-CONTAINER. The crying of the infants and the perception of the “shock” they experienced in the water may also have contributed to such a sense of vulnerability.

VI. Summary and Concluding Thoughts

This chapter has marshaled cognitive scientific analysis and ethnographic study to illuminate four critical foci identified in the liturgical theological accounts of Chapter One: the prayer of thanksgiving over the water, the unique character of the Easter Vigil, the scope of concern at baptism and at Easter Vigil, and the baptismal water itself. In sum, this analysis found a relatively modest role for the prayer over the water even as the pouring that accompanied the prayer was captivating for participants and initiated imaginative theological conceptual blends centered in the element of water. There was

little evidence of the prayer catalyzing epiphanies about the character of all the waters of the earth, though some conceptual blending of domestic, piped water sources with the baptismal water was in evidence. Participants did not characterize the prayer as a thanksgiving, perhaps partly because the image schematic structure of the prayer did not schematically represent gifts flowing toward the assembly.

The vigil was strongly characterized as a CENTER in the life of the congregation studied, existing at the center-point of both the liturgical year and the catechumenal process. According to the accounts of the participants, the baptismal center of the vigil strengthened the significance of the vigil; and the setting of the vigil strengthened the significance of the baptisms. The night of the vigil was at times structured as a vast CONTAINER, entailing unity between ancient, saving acts and the present-day participants and their ritual actions. Participants in the vigil expressed a sense of renewal in their appreciation for their own baptism, though very few had been baptized at an Easter Vigil. A number of ritual elements seemed to nurture this sense of renewed baptism, including the structure of the vigil as CONTAINER, the prominent baptismal theological images, the observation of strongly embodied baptisms, the inclusive rite of sprinkling, and the ritual engagement with past baptisms in the affirmation of baptism.

While the vigil liturgy studied did not evidence a narrow focus on sin and forgiveness or the death and resurrection of Christ, little widening of the theological horizon toward the ecological and cosmic was in evidence in the accounts of the participants. Rather, the themes of individual renewal were prominent. One possible explanation is that the initiatory themes eclipsed the possibility of cosmic and ecological conceptual blends. However, it is not clear how strong the cosmic and ecological inputs

into the ritual blending space actually are, and how they might be interpreted as being at the center of the rite.

Water was experienced as abundant in the vigil liturgy under study. The bodily immersion of the infants in a CONTAINER of water may have activated mirror neuron and mimetic schematic processes through which participants experienced empathic bodily responses to the baptisms. In addition to the font (which often exceeded participants' ICM of *font* and *bowl for water*), the pouring of water, especially during the prayer when the pitchers were completely emptied in a single motion, may have schematically entailed a large quantity of water. The perception of a large amount of water existed in a conceptual blending space with other images of largeness in the vigil, in a mutually strengthening blend. In accounts of the participants, the SOURCE of the baptismal water in the adult baptisms was at times imaged as God, the PATH was typically described as the head of the adults, and the GOAL was typically described as the basin of the font. The descriptions of the infant baptisms highlighted the motif of vulnerability, likely arising from the nakedness of the infants, the entailed sense of danger of being inside a water-CONTAINER, and the crying of the infants as they entered the water, experiencing what many described as "shock."

Having collated a significant amount of data flowing in three streams toward the baptismal water of the Easter Vigil, we now turn to the final chapter, in which three focal practices are, in light of the analysis thus far, explored as exemplars of eco-theological orientation at the waters of the Easter Vigil.

CHAPTER SIX

**THREE PRACTICES FOR ECO-THEOLOGICAL ORIENTATION
AT THE WATER OF THE EASTER VIGIL**

I. Introduction

This final chapter proposes examples of liturgical (and an extra-liturgical) practice that, informed by the insights of the previous chapters, may issue in eco-theological orientation at the Easter Vigil especially by way of engagement with the element of water. The previous five chapters demonstrate that baptismal water at the Easter Vigil can indeed play a strong role in orienting participants to their wider world. This final chapter builds on a common conviction of the liturgical theologians of the first chapter: that reforms in liturgical practice yield shifts in patterns of orientation and commitment.¹

The three practices described below give practical shape to the theoretical insights of this project. While much of the preceding work in this project has been concerned with distinctions and analysis, this final chapter offers some possibilities for ritual practice that might arise out of such analysis. The second and third sections of this chapter address rather familiar topics for the reform of baptismal rites: the prayer over the water and actual method of baptism. The first section, however, is unusual. It explores the possibilities of enriching the baptismal water imagery of the vigil through actual engagement with local watersheds. Associating such a practice with a liturgical event may be unexpected.² But such a practice may be less strange than an age in which some

¹ See the introduction to the task of liturgical theology—with an eye to reform—in Gordon Lathrop, *Holy Things: A Liturgical Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 4-11.

² However, liturgical historian Samuel Torvend recently suggested such a practice for young people preparing for affirmation of baptism at confirmation. In a personal communication, Torvend quoted from a recent workshop he led: “When thinking about the meanings of baptism, students can be guided on a

participants in the Easter Vigil, encountering in the vigil abundant images of naturally flowing water, have themselves not meaningfully encountered such water on the landscape. And for many of the world's Orthodox Christians, it would, in fact, be strange *not* to gather at natural bodies of water at least once a year, on the Feast of Epiphany, or Theophany, for the Great Blessing of Waters, when the year's most significant set of baptismal imagery is proclaimed and prayed at local waterways as the waters are blessed in a rite in which some local customs call for full bodily plunging in the water and drinking directly from the body of water.

II. Going Out to the Water

The people of Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the region along the Jordan were going out to John, and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan.

Matthew 3.5-6a

Baptism first emerges in the New Testament as a pilgrimage event. In the scriptural accounts of the baptismal ministry of John the Baptist, the baptisms are portrayed as taking place away from population centers. The crowds must “go out” from the populated places to encounter the water of baptism, on the edge of the wilderness. The section below outlines a similar movement out of densely built population centers that could add depth to the significance of baptism, especially its eco-theological significance at the Easter Vigil.

project to trace the actual sources of the congregation's baptismal waters. For instance, in Seattle, our water comes from the Cedar and Tolt Rivers - both snow and rain sources. Once they know the source, young people can be guided to trace the route from the water's origin - for us many miles away - to the font. That project can be part of a project on welcoming the natural world into worship and displayed in the area where the assembly gathers for coffee after the liturgy.” Samuel Torvend, "Welcoming Nature's Music into Christian Worship," in *Association of Lutheran Church Musicians Biennial Conference* (Minneapolis, Minnesota 2009).

Gail Ramshaw critiques an approach to Christianity that she labels “fantasy time,” in which “attending a liturgy is like watching *Star Trek* on television or going to the Renaissance Faire.” Such an approach to the faith, she writes, seeks to escape the difficult realities of life, if only for short amounts of time. Ramshaw continues,

It is the thesis of this volume that Christian religion, far from being an escape from life, is the fundamental way that the community lives. Religion is the process of sharing and incorporating the community’s primary values, and the church articulates this process in its use of images. Our images are to be deep.... We do not only wade in God’s water; we swim in God’s rivers, we drown in God’s sea. If the images presented in the Sunday liturgy are too shallow, they will not supply enough water to quench the thirst of so many people and so complex an assembly.³

Christian images are to be deep, strong, and connected with the realities of life, Ramshaw writes. Her critique may well function as a corrective to two distinct mistakes: the diminution and even abandonment of central Christian symbols in liturgy in favor of seemingly more accessible images on the one hand, or, on the other hand, an embrace of the classic symbols and rituals of Christian liturgy primarily on an aesthetic level, treating them as ornamental and relatively removed from the pathos of life.⁴ These approaches leave the classic, deep images of Christian liturgy weakened or relatively inaccessible to liturgical participants.

There may be yet another way, however, in which the central symbols of Christian liturgy are weakened. In this third scenario, it is not primarily something within the liturgical space that evacuates the central images of their power. Rather, the liturgical participants lose familiarity with some of the central symbols through a lack of

³ Gail Ramshaw, *Treasures Old and New: Images in the Lectionary* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002), 49.

⁴ On the distortion of the beautiful into a pure aestheticism, see Edward Farley, *Faith and Beauty: A Theological Aesthetic* (Aldershot, Hants, England ; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2001), 91ff.

engagement with them *outside* of the worship space. The members of the assembly lose touch with the source domains of central Christian images.

One of the theoretical keys to this latter point is that conceptual blends are, by their nature, only constructed of inputs that one actually experiences or knows. What is not known cannot be blended. Therefore, the liturgical metaphors or conceptual blends that are related to water sources in the wider world will have the potential to entail certain depth dimensions only to the extent that liturgical participants have conceptual or embodied access to such water sources.⁵ With diminished experience of flowing rivers and deep pools of water on the landscape (i.e. the source domains for the metaphors) these central Christian symbols are indeed drained of some of their power and depth. While one may have lexical familiarity with certain natural bodies of water, there are dimensions of meaning that are not fully accessible at such a level. As is clear in the analysis of conceptual metaphors involving the source domain of water above in Chapter Three, much of the structure of conceptual blends involving water draws on embodied, sensory knowledge: the force and threat of the ocean wave; the cool, pure taste and emerging, flowing nature of spring water; the pervasive sense of danger in a landscape of drought; the destructive and life-giving qualities of a rainstorm; the peacefulness of still waters beside green meadows; the bountiful sensory panorama of a river giving life to an entire valley. One may learn *about* such things, but bodies *know* the deep dimensions that are integral to the significance of many water images and conceptual blends.

With the help of science fiction films and literature, it is possible to imagine a future society that only has experience with water in its humanly channeled, processed,

⁵ Encounters with the landscape and natural environment are shown to be an important part of conceptual blends in Chris Sinha and Kristine Jensen de Lopez, "Language, Culture and the Embodiment of Spatial Cognition," *Cognitive Linguistics* 11, no. 1 (2000).

and piped state. While relatively few people now live in such conditions, overall interaction with lands and waters in their relatively natural state in the United States appears to be on a marked decline. Rapid urbanization is certainly a contributing factor, but some studies point to subtler cultural shifts.⁶ One study points to the rise of a phenomenon the authors label “videophilia.” After comparing numerous other possible explanatory trends, their data suggest that videophilia is the most significant contributing factor to the decline in visits to United States national parks, with such park visits considered a metric for gauging larger patterns of engagement with the natural, non-anthropocentric world:

The decline in per capita visits to US national parks since 1988 is significantly correlated with several electronic entertainment indicators: hours of television, video games, home movies, theatre attendance and internet use... We may be seeing evidence of a fundamental shift away from people’s appreciation of nature...to ‘videophilia,’ which we here define as ‘the new human tendency to focus on sedentary activities involving electronic media.’⁷

Thus, for many Americans, regardless of whether their liturgical experience is “like watching *Star Trek*,” their private lives are indeed increasingly tuned into *Star Trek* and other on-screen entertainment, while simultaneously—and perhaps consequently—becoming less engaged with the natural, non-anthropocentric world.

The findings in the ethnographic study conducted as part of this project may reflect such trends. Despite liturgical texts overflowing with images of water in its natural state, the conceptual blends that participants described that they had constructed out of the

⁶ The percentage of global population living in urban centers will have risen from 20% in 1950 to 48% in 2015, and urbanization generally leads to less access to natural settings. Rashid M. Hassan et al., *Ecosystems and Human Well-Being: Current State and Trends: Findings of the Condition and Trends Working Group of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment*, The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment Series (Washington, DC: Island Press, 2005), 189, 469.

⁷ Oliver R. W. Pergams and Patricia A. Zaradic, "Is Love of Nature in the U.S. Becoming Love of Electronic Media? 16-Year Downtrend in National Park Visits Explained by Watching Movies, Playing Video Games, Internet Use, and Oil Prices," *Journal of Environmental Management* 80 (2006): 393.

inputs of baptismal water and water outside the liturgical space almost solely involved piped, centrally controlled water supplies. In the descriptions of these (urban) participants, water in its natural state appeared only once, and then as a strong anti-type to the waters of baptism. While there are certainly other possible explanations for the lack of conceptual blends involving free-flowing, natural bodies of water, a lack of engagement with such bodies of water may well be a factor: the members of the congregation studied, in general, are emphatically urban in their orientation, tend to visit other cities for vacations, and typically seek out the built urban landscape for recreation.

The distinction between naturally flowing and centrally controlled water sources is not only an ecologically significant distinction. Three different studies of water examined for this project all demonstrated consistent social significance to conceptual blends when the source domains of piped water and naturally flowing water were opposed. Metaphors arising from centrally controlled, piped water images tended to be used to structure concepts associated with control, limited access, and hierarchy, while concepts based on metaphors of naturally flowing water tended to be characterized by concern for equality and justice, freedom from control, and a critique of hierarchy.⁸ Wolf-Andreas Liebert, in particular, theorized that the advent of centralized, piped, water supply offered an experiential pattern that strengthened the emerging conceptual logic animating a system of centralized monetary supply and control.⁹ Thus, in addition to the basic familiarity and ecological knowledge at stake in the experience (or lack of

⁸ See Chapter Two, above, and Daniel Andriessen, "Knowledge as Love: How Metaphors Direct the Way We Manage Knowledge in Organizations " in *The 5th critical management society conference* (Manchester, UK2007), 10-12., Wolf-Andreas Liebert, "The Emergence of the Metaphor Model 'Money Is Water' in the Nineteenth Century," in *The Ecolinguistics Reader: Language, Ecology, and Environment*, ed. Alwin Fill and Peter Mühlhäusler (London ; New York: Continuum, 2001), 103., Edward G. Slingerland, "Conceptual Blending, Somatic Marking, and Normativity: A Case Example from Ancient Chinese," *Cognitive Linguistics* 16, no. 3 (2005): 577.

⁹ Liebert, "Money Is Water," 101-04.

experience) of natural bodies of water, a number of studies point to significant shifts in orientation and worldview arising from a shift away from metaphors associated with naturally and free-flowing water forms, toward metaphors associated with centrally controlled, piped, water-supply systems. Therefore, even prior to considering ecological care and concern, it appears that diminished familiarity with naturally flowing water on the landscape may degrade important sets of symbolic repertoire, resulting in the weakening of some of the appreciation of central images of water in Christian liturgy and also possibly encouraging shifts in worldview toward more controlled and hierarchically structured patterns of relationship.¹⁰ Such a worldview, in a sort of feedback loop, may be responsible for increased manipulation and disruption of ecological systems.¹¹

But the basic ecological factors are also strong. A statement from the United States Environmental Protection Agency describes the ecological importance of becoming oriented to one's watershed:

Children learn about their place in the world—their street address, city, and zip code—at a very early age. But there is another important dimension to our lives that is also important to our sense of place: our watershed or ecological address.

¹⁰ George Lakoff suggests a parallel theory: that the experiences and patterns of nuclear family life are often used to structure larger worldviews, especially including conceptions of national government. Lakoff links two distinctive and recognizable styles of parenting in U.S. culture—the “nurturant parent” and the “strict father” models—to the two dominant strands of political affiliation: liberal and conservative. See especially his theorization about the possible links between some practices of parenting and the process of political orientation in George Lakoff, *Moral Politics: How Liberals and Conservatives Think*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 339-83. What is particularly relevant here is that Lakoff suggests that experiences only available at the source domain of *parenting* (ostensibly far removed from national level politics) are in fact profoundly influential on one's political worldview by way of conceptual metaphor and blending. Thus, toward the end of *political* reform, Lakoff makes suggestions about strategies of *parenting* (strategies he also believes to be commendable on their own merits). It is in this sense that his theory shows some parallel to the practice presently being described in this project: richer experience in one domain (at the watershed) leads to a richer conceptual blend with another domain (Easter Vigil baptismal liturgy), even issuing in salutary shifts in worldview and orientation (eco-theological orientation).

¹¹ See Rosemary Ruether's critique of mechanistic conceptualization of ecological realities in Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Gaia & God: An Ecofeminist Theology of Earth Healing*, 1st ed. (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1992), 57ff. Similarly, see Jürgen Moltmann, *God in Creation: A New Theology of Creation and the Spirit of God*, 1st Fortress Press ed., The Gifford Lectures (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 20-32.

The future of the planet and the protection of the nation's water resources depend on a universal understanding and appreciation of watersheds.¹²

Thus, even before the conceptual blending that might combine images of the watershed with the imagery of baptismal water, the experience of coming to know one's watershed may be a crucial element of formation in developing an ethic of care for the wider environment.¹³ Such experiences in natural areas can be powerfully transformative. In fact, according to a number of studies, experiences in natural areas during childhood strongly correlate to active commitment to environmental justice and care in adulthood.¹⁴

Thus, exploring the depth of the classic Christian water images in the liturgy not only means renewing their use in liturgical events, but also may require, in this age of anthropocentric alteration of natural environments, reconnection with the source domains on which many of these metaphors are based: bodies of water that are part of a natural, relatively intact, living ecosystem. In other words, the deepening of images in liturgy in many places may involve some reconnection with the natural world, particularly with the bodies of water near the congregation.

The section below offers a set of practices through which congregations might engage their local watershed. The movement to reconnect people with their local watershed is already strong, and many resources and groups offer strategies for engaging

¹² Benjamin H. Grumbles, "Building Livable Communities Starts with a Watershed Address," United States Environmental Protection Agency, <http://www.epa.gov/owow/watershed/approach.html>.

¹³ See "Reflections on Water and Oil" in David W. Orr, *Earth in Mind: On Education, Environment, and the Human Prospect* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 1994), 54-59.

¹⁴ See Nancy Wells and Kristi Lekies, "Nature and the Life Course: Pathways from Childhood Nature Experiences to Adult Environmentalism," *Children, Youth and Environments* 16, no. 1 (2006). Richard Louv describes a 1978 study led by Thomas Tanner of the University of Iowa that showed that a strong trend among leaders of environmental organizations of childhood experiences of wonder in natural areas. See Richard Louv, *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder* (Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, 2005), 149.

local watersheds.¹⁵ The specific hopes of this diverse movement are generally rather simple and clear: that people might discover, enjoy, and respectfully attend to local bodies of water. Such an apparently simple relationship established through simple practices, these groups contend, fosters important connections and commitments to the waters, the lands, and the creatures of the watershed. For example, the Atlanta-based organization, Keeping it Wild, part of the Wilderness Society's Eastern Forest Program, sponsored a number of events in a series called "Where the Water Goes" in 2007 and 2008. These events provided urban Atlantans an opportunity, over three separate occasions, to explore and enjoy three different areas of the greater Atlanta watershed. The three events were roughly structured by way of SOURCE, PATH, and GOAL of the watershed respectively. Though the intent behind the event involved raising ecological consciousness, the events themselves did not take a didactic approach, but instead relied on experiences of wonder, inquiry, and discovery.

Given the particular concerns of this project, a number of specific lines of inquiry and activity may be especially valuable in the engagement with the watershed. The practices described below are not to be taken as a prescriptive whole, but rather as examples of entry points into the watershed that may generate important experiential and conceptual inputs into what may become conceptual blends between baptismal water at the Easter Vigil and the wider natural landscape and its waters.¹⁶

¹⁵ The U.S. E.P.A. maintains a searchable online database of 2,600 local groups organized around care of local watersheds. "Surf Your Watershed," United States Environmental Protection Agency, <http://cfpub.epa.gov/surf/locate/index.cfm>.

¹⁶ Water itself has recently been the focal point for a number of interdisciplinary inquiries, drawing together scientists, artists, philosophers, recreationalists, religious practitioners, ecological activists, and business leaders. The various perspectives are often experienced as mutually enriching. A helpful account of two pioneering interdisciplinary college courses centered in the element of water is Ari Eisen et. al., "Teaching Water: Connecting across Disciplines and into Daily Life to Address Complex Societal Issues," *College Teaching* 57, no. 2 (2009).

Many practices that may already be familiar in some congregations are well suited for events at or near water, and capable of fostering the sort of reconnection to water described below: picnics, retreats, outdoor ministry events, swimming, biking, non-motorized boating, camping, hiking, backpacking, and shore and stream restoration. The inquiries and explorations listed below may take place as a small part of such activities, or as a more intentional engagement with practices of the care of creation.¹⁷

The practices below could be adapted and supplemented to become a sort of curriculum in which the experiential nature of the practices could be widened into conversational and catechetical engagement around ecological and theological topics. Most of the practices described are concerned with encountering the watershed in its SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schema, both because the SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schema is closely related to the schematic structure of a full watershed, and because the CONTAINER schema is a simpler structure and may be experienced in a single locale. The underlying purpose of these practices is to develop a set of basic ecologically oriented inputs that are cognitively accessible for conceptual blending at the baptismal waters of the Easter Vigil.¹⁸

An Extra-Liturgical Field Guide

A number of relevant experiences and inquiries may add to the depth and texture of the perception of the SOURCE of water. How does the precipitation over the watershed form? From what source do local clouds gather their moisture? Where do the flowing

¹⁷ Lathrop writes that the preparation for baptism might include “acts of ecological responsibility together with acts of human solidarity and charity.” Gordon Lathrop, *Holy Ground: A Liturgical Cosmology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 113.

¹⁸ Accounts of the ecological principles by which watersheds function are widely available, from basic children’s books to internet resources to college textbooks. The United States Geological Survey offers an accessible introduction at <http://ga.water.usgs.gov/edu/watercycle.html>

streams in the watershed originate, i.e. where do they “rise”? This place will be a ridge or higher area on the boundary of the watershed. Can this water be safely drunk? What forms of life do the upper reaches of the watershed support? Where is the drinking water for the members of the congregation drawn, even if it is from another watershed? How does the coming of the season of spring, in particular, affect the water-source?¹⁹

Concerning the PATH of the water: what forms of life does the stream support, both plant and animal, both in and around the flow of water? What species are threatened, and why? What livelihoods, industries, recreation, and domestic uses does the water support, and how has that changed over time? What does the stream carry along its PATH, including nutrients, oxygen, living creatures, sediment and pollutants? How do different types of flow along the PATH affect the animals and plants in and around the stream? Is this water safe for swimming or drinking, and why or why not? How does the flow of the stream feel? Does human activity, including climate change, modify the flow of stream? How do cycles of flooding, freezing, drought, and other seasonal cycles affect the stream? How does underground water interact with the aboveground flow of the stream?

One of the defining characteristics of a watershed is that it flows to a common point, a GOAL. What does that place look like? How does the local stream affect the larger stream or body of water into which it flows? How does the flow continue on from that point? Where does the water in the local watershed eventually empty into a large pooled body, usually the sea?

¹⁹ The season of spring is generally characterized by rapid changes in the landscape, especially in and around watercourses. John C. Kricher and Gordon Morrison, *A Field Guide to the Ecology of Eastern Forests*, The Peterson Field Guide Series (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1988), 159.

In pooled water someplace along the flow of the watershed, how does it feel to be immersed in this water? Are there places where great depths of water can be experienced, through swimming, boating, or simple observation?

Because of the “fractal” character of the flow of water, once the contours of the wider watershed are known, the same patterns may be discerned on much smaller and more local scales. The flow of water over a roof and into a rain barrel, the flow of water through a lawn or garden, the underground movement of water around the foundation of a building, the flow of water from sidewalks and parking lots: all of these may be seen simultaneously as microcosms of the larger watershed even as they occupy a specific place within the flow of the larger watershed.²⁰ And conversely, the fractal character of the flow of water allows a local watershed to serve as a microcosm of a much larger system, e.g. the Mississippi River system, or the Amazon Basin, or the glacier-fed Himalayan river systems.

Perhaps much of the above list of questions appears as if it may be simply answered through text-based research. For some of the questions, this is at least partly the case. One important component of coming to know these waters, however, is the *embodied* exploration of the watershed. There are many reasons why embodied interaction with the watershed is important in this case. Such embodied practice is a key component in the development of rich image schematic representations of bodies of water.²¹ The thick, multi-sensory bodily experience in and around water is integral to an appreciation for the human meaning of water. Water, encountered bodily, is captivating

²⁰ Niclas. Burenhult, "Streams of Words: Hydrological Lexicon in Jahai," *Language Sciences* 30, no. 2-3 (2008): 187-88.

²¹ See Mark Johnson, *The Body in the Mind: The Bodily Basis of Meaning, Imagination, and Reason* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

and at times evokes wonder and gratitude. Human bodies swimming or simply entering natural bodies of water may raise questions—otherwise unasked—about what exactly is in the water.²² The bodily encounter with a water-place is normally a necessary part of coming to enjoy and even cherish such a place. On the importance of such attachment to place, Stephen J. Gould writes, “we cannot win this battle to save species and environments without forging an emotional bond between ourselves and nature... for we will not fight to save what we do not love.”²³ Thus, there are complexities in knowing the waters inside and outside of the liturgy. In short, bodily experience of the watershed and its landscape offers diverse and vital ways of knowing, some of which are unattainable through other means.

Whatever specific practices animate the encounter with natural bodies of water, one practice, however, may be considered uniquely relevant to the interests described here: prayer—specifically, prayer at the water, in thanks for the water and in intercession for its health. Perhaps the minister will step into the water for the prayer. The reasons for such practice can be named by way of the trajectories already embodied in this project.

²² Activist Christopher Swain began swimming rivers to draw attention to the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. As he gave interviews he found that another theme kept intruding on his cause. “The people in the media ... were willing to listen to my ten seconds about universal human rights, but what they really wanted to talk about was what was in the water. Did I realize that I was swimming through raw sewage? Did I realize that I had just passed a nuclear power plant? Did I have any idea how many toxic chemicals were in the effluent from the factories that I was stroking past? ... It’s very difficult to interest people in a water quality story... but if you’re in the water, people want to talk about what else is in the water.” Janet Babin, “Swimming for the Rivers: An Interview with Christopher Swain,” in *The Story*, ed. Dick Gordon (American Public Media, 2009). Swain realized that swimming waterways was a powerful way to draw attention to a problem otherwise largely overlooked, and has now swum thousands of miles to call attention to both the goodness and compromised quality of bodies of water.

²³ Stephen Jay Gould, “Unenchanted Evening,” *Natural History* 100, no. 9 (1991): 14. To this aphorism we might juxtapose a rough paraphrase of Augustine’s thought: “we *know* to the extent that we *love* rightly.” See Augustine, *On Christian Teaching*, The Worlds Classics (Oxford [England]; New York: Oxford University Press, 1997). See also James A. Nash’s discussion of Christian love in the context of ecological relationships, in which Nash explores love of the earth and its creatures by way of the categories of beneficence, other-esteem, receptivity, humility, understanding, communion, and justice. James A. Nash, *Loving Nature: Ecological Integrity and Christian Responsibility*, Churches’ Center for Theology and Public Policy (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1991), 151-91.

Cognitive scientific scholarship suggests that when ritual acts such as prayer involve physical objects or actions, the blending space that is created forms conceptual connections between the inputs, including even flashes of insight that often endure. Such praying, then, joining the church's prayer physically to naturally flowing waters, may establish persistent eco-theological connections between the waters of baptism and the wider waters of the watershed. In the ethnographic study conducted for this project, liturgical participants found the connection between the prayer and the baptismal water to be significant, and connected the baptismal water to baths, fountains, and showers, though they voiced almost no sense of connection between the baptismal water and the wider, natural bodies of water outside the liturgical space. Praying at the site of such extra-liturgical natural bodies of water establishes a direct connection between theological categories and these wider waters. Finally, and most centrally, Christians pray at the water because the water is a source of life for many creatures, and is itself a fellow creature, and thus deserving of prayer.²⁴ The prayer may include both thanksgiving for the water and intercession for its health.²⁵ The prayer may itself include a thanksgiving for baptism.²⁶

²⁴ On Christian prayer and regard for non-Christian creatures see Bronislaw Szerszynski, *Nature, Technology and the Sacred*, Religion and Spirituality in the Modern World (Malden, MA ; Oxford: Blackwell Pub., 2005), 96-97. and Larry L. Rasmussen, *Earth Community, Earth Ethics* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1996). For a remarkable reflection on the themes of engaging local waters through a wide, prayerful vision, see "The Columbia River Watershed: Caring for Creation and the Common Good," An International Pastoral Letter by the Catholic Bishops of the Region, <http://www.columbiariver.org/>.

²⁵ See the ecologically oriented "liturgical spirituality" connected to thanksgiving and beseeching for non-human creatures in Lathrop, *Holy Ground*, 79-89.

²⁶ The connection between these many themes may be seen in some celebration of the Great Blessing of the Water practiced on the Feast of the Epiphany (Theophany) among some Orthodox churches. The occasion marks the celebration of the baptism of Christ and often includes a blessing of local bodies of water. The blessing sometimes includes swimming in and drinking the water.

Recovering the Heights and Depths of Some Scriptural Imagery

Theologian Thomas Berry observes that humans today “seldom learn where their water comes from or where it goes,” and suggests that this ignorance contributes to a liturgical deficit: “we no longer coordinate our human celebration with the great liturgy of the heavens.”²⁷ Christian liturgy, as Gail Ramshaw described it above, is no escape or retreat from reality. The liturgy rightly does not withdraw from the “great liturgy of the heavens” or from the great liturgy of the waters, but rather draws on such ecological patterns to speak the deepest Christian truths about God and God’s earth. In order for the church to learn again the modest but vital knowledge of “where their water comes from” and “where it goes,” formation for liturgy may include intentional, attentive, bodily journeys, framed by prayer, out from densely populated and built environments to the relatively unmanaged, naturally flowing bodies of water that make up the watersheds in which all congregations live. Metaphors and images in worship may indeed call the church to extend its vision outward, especially in an age that has increasingly confined its vision to the anthropocentric built environment. As William P. Brown writes of the worldview proposed by the entirety of the Psalms,

any vision that falls short of encompassing the world in toto is... deemed deficient theologically. If the psalms can be taken as foundational, then the primary task of theology is to envision a *world*, not an enclave, a world that continues to be a work in progress, blessed and redeemed, a world in which metaphors serve as pointers.²⁸

Many of the very metaphors that would point in the Easter Vigil to a world made new draw much of their potency from bodily encounters with waters that flow outside the

²⁷ Thomas Mary Berry, *The Great Work: Our Way into the Future*, 1st pbk. ed. (New York: Bell Tower, 2000), 15.

²⁸ William P. Brown, *Seeing the Psalms: A Theology of Metaphor*, 1st ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 215.

liturgical space, in the wider world. Beyond the specific concern for the waters themselves, when members of the liturgical assembly follow the paths of flowing water beyond the worship space, they are inevitably led over the wider landscape. For the sake of that wider world and for the sake of the liturgy itself, when Christian assemblies have only experienced such waters vaguely or not at all, the people may again, as at the baptisms at the Jordan, go out to the boundary of the wild places and discover the powerful workings of water.

In sum, in an age in which increasing numbers of people have little or no meaningful experience with bodies of water in relatively ecologically intact states, groups of people from congregations may travel to such bodies of water for recreation, study, prayer, or service. Through engagement with this water members of congregations come to know, in addition to other salutary benefits, the rich hydrological patterns that animate biblical water imagery and metaphors that are especially in evidence at the Easter Vigil. Thus, participants in the Easter Vigil develop a repertoire of images of water flowing through the landscape and the watershed out of which they may construct conceptual blends, centered in the images of water and drawing on ecological and theological source domains.

III. Praying Over the Water

*You visit the earth and water it abundantly;
 you make it very plenteous; the river of God is full of water.
 You prepare the grain, for so you provide for the earth.
 You drench the furrows and smooth out the ridges;
 with heavy rain you soften the ground and bless its increase.
 You crown the year with your goodness, and your paths overflow with plenty.
 May the fields of the wilderness be rich for grazing,
 and the hills be clothed with joy.
 May the meadows cover themselves with flocks,
 and the valleys cloak themselves with grain;
 let them shout for joy and sing.*

Psalm 65.9-13

The crafting of prayers of thanksgiving over the water involves a host of concerns and interests, few of which are rehearsed here. However, given an eco-theological concern for the role of the water, the following section offers a number of focal points by which prayers over the water, especially those to be prayed at the Easter Vigil, might be edited, shaped, or composed. The examples offered from already extant Christian baptismal prayers over the water indicate that the emphases identified below are not unique to this project. Rather, they are noted here as examples of classic Christian practices that share a common spirit with this project.

This section describes a number of characteristics of prayers over the water that, according to the analysis of this project thus far, appear to foster responsible eco-theological orientation by way of the element of water, especially in the context of the Easter Vigil. There is no attempt here to be exhaustive of the diversity of images or theological concerns that guide a more complete examination of such prayers. The focus here remains on the specific concern of eco-theological orientation by way of the water at the Easter Vigil.

Water's Life-Giving Power

The prayer may give thanks for the life-giving power of water. One of the classic, central themes of Christian baptismal imagery is the power of baptism to give and renew life. There may be no more potent image of such power than the capacity of water to bring life to the earth, especially in the season of spring. The most bio-diverse and densely populated natural areas on earth are also some of the most well-watered; the powerful fecundity and resilience embodied in such places flows from the gift of water. The *Liber Ordinum*, reflecting a liturgical heritage practiced long before its extant 11th century manuscripts, exults in the fructifying and renewing power of water, even directly addressing the water itself as a “celestial flood” in the blessing of the font:

You are borne upon the clouds and make fruitful the fields with joyful showers. Through you a draught bringing grace and life is poured out upon bodies hot with summer heat. You move quietly upon your tiny courses bringing life and fruitful sap, lest the dry lifeless earth deny their proper victuals to our bodies. The beginning of all things and their end exult in you, yet God has provided that by you we might know no end.²⁹

Prayers over the water at the Easter Vigil, on the night of resurrection, rightly give thanks for the gift of life that flows from water to all creatures.

Contemporary cultural images of power tend to emphasize coercion and destruction. As will be seen further below, the prayer over the water may portray water's power to give life as true power: a mighty force that is futilely resisted. Yet it is specifically the power to give *life*, and not the threat of death, that is the power described here. Many early images in baptismal prayers portray the life-giving power of God as evident in creation, evoking awe, and worthy of praise. The power that created the earth and all creatures is summoned to act in the present waters of baptism: “as the Holy Spirit

²⁹ "The Liber Ordinum," in *Documents of the Baptismal Liturgy*, ed. E. C. Whitaker and Maxwell E. Johnson (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2003), 168.

hovered over the waters at the creation and gave life to animals of every kind, let the Spirit hover over this Baptism,” a Syriac prayer over the water reads.³⁰

God’s creative power, evident in the springtime creation, is not portrayed in the prayer in sentimental terms. God’s life-giving power is not only imaged in an ATTRACTION schema, but also entails elements of REPULSION, given its awe-inspiring creative power:

You have compounded the creation from four elements, and in four seasons you have crowned the course of the year. All powers and intelligences dread you: the sun hymns you, the moon praises you, the stars hold converse with you, the light obeys you, the depths shudder before you, the springs of water serve you. You *spread out the heavens like a curtain* [Ps. 104]: you establish the earth above the waters: you *set the sand for a bound of the sea* [Jer. 5:22]. You pour out the air for humanity’s breath.³¹

Besides the theological richness of images of the divine that hold together beauty and terror,³² the REPULSION entailed in the schematic structure of such awe-inspiring images of cosmic creation helpfully orients humans to a sense of respectful human restraint when standing before panoramas of the created order.³³

A number of familiar images may be regarded here as subthemes of water’s power to give life. The image of *cleansing*—as a stream or flood washes away debris and impurities—can refer to the cleansing of sin, evil, or anything that impedes creaturely flourishing. The *Liber Ordinum* prays that “iniquities... be carried away in this pure

³⁰ "The Syriac-Maronite Rite," in *Documents of the Baptismal Liturgy*, ed. E. C. Whitaker and Maxwell E. Johnson (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2003), 104.

³¹ "The Byzantine Rite, Barberini Euchologian Fol. 170ff," in *Documents of the Baptismal Liturgy*, ed. E. C. Whitaker and Maxwell E. Johnson (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2003), 120.

³² For a provocative inquiry into the dynamics of beauty and terror, with special reference to the role of music and liturgy, see Don Saliers, "Beauty and Terror," *Spiritus: A Journal of Christian Spirituality* 2, no. 2 (2002).

³³ See Paul Santmire’s helpful treatment of the liturgically inculcated capacity to stand in awe of the non-human creation in “Standing in Awe of Nature,” in H. Paul Santmire, *Ritualizing Nature: Renewing Christian Liturgy in a Time of Crisis*, Theology and the Sciences (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008), 185-98.

stream.”³⁴ The Byzantine Rite can portray the effect of the water of baptism as a “a loosening of chains.”³⁵ Regarding the specific image of the washing away of sin, the conception suggested here of the power of baptismal water to wash away sin draws on the image schematic pattern of flowing water washing away debris, rather than the category of essence, in which a supernaturally charged object is ascribed an essential power to effect changes in another object simply by physical contact. In case of the transfer of essence, sins are understood to be forgiven simply by contact with the water. In cognitive scientific terms, this latter pattern is often referred to as contagion, or, in this case, more specifically, a CONTACT schema.³⁶ These are quite distinct ways of imaging the forgiveness of sin: the former relies on ecological images of flowing water; the latter relies on images of the invisible alteration of the essence of a distinct body of water.

The image of *thirst* alludes to the life-giving power of water by invoking the experience of the embodied desire for water. Humans share this experience of thirst with other animals, and certainly share in the need for water together with plants and the land itself. The image of thirst suggests a lack of water, though the category of thirst might enter the prayer not only as a petition for thirst to be quenched but at times as a thanksgiving for the quenching of thirst. A 16th century English pre-reformation prayer over the water addressed the water and blessed God, that God “for a thirsting people brought you forth from a rock.”³⁷ Prayers may blend together thanksgiving to God for

³⁴ "The Liber Ordinum," 169.

³⁵ "The Byzantine Rite, Barberini Euchologion Fol. 170ff," 121.

³⁶ A brief account of these categories, including some ritual analysis of Christian baptism, is found in Jesper Sørensen, *A Cognitive Theory of Magic*, Cognitive Science of Religion Series (Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2007), 102-11.

³⁷ "The Sarum Rite," in *Documents of the Baptismal Liturgy*, ed. E. C. Whitaker and Maxwell E. Johnson (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2003), 297.

the satisfied desires of humans together with the quenched thirst of the landscape.³⁸ The Orthodox liturgy of the Great Blessing of Water at Epiphany commemorates the baptism of Christ with two striking scriptural texts centered in images of water and the quenched thirst and abundant life of the now-jubilant landscape:

The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad, the desert shall rejoice and blossom; like the crocus it shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice with joy and singing... waters shall break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert; the burning sand shall become a pool, and the thirsty ground springs of water; the haunt of jackals shall become a swamp, the grass shall become reeds and rushes.³⁹

Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you that have no money, come, buy and eat! ...as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there until they have watered the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth, it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and succeed in the thing for which I sent it. For you shall go out in joy, and be led back in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall burst into song, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress; instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle; and it shall be to the Lord for a memorial, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.⁴⁰

The choice of this set of images for a baptismal liturgy models a striking confidence in the shared nature of human thirsts and the thirsts of the land—and offers to the sign of baptism euphoric images of a renewed landscape. Such a landscape both provides richly for human flourishing and also flourishes freely and wildly on its own. Everything in this panorama flows from God, and, in this liturgical context, speaks of the meaning of baptism. Images such as these, now in use among Orthodox Christians, may offer to many other Christians striking eco-theological reorientation to the significance of baptism and its waters.

³⁸ See the blessing of the font above in "The Liber Ordinum," 168.

³⁹ Isaiah 35.1-2, 6b-7. The full, appointed text is Isaiah 35.1-10.

⁴⁰ Isaiah 55.1a, 10-13. The full, appointed text is Isaiah 55.1-13.

Water's Purity

The prayer may approach the water for baptism as *pure* water. The *Liber Ordinum* names the unique purity of water in a prayer over the water that addresses the water itself: “you wash the whole universe about, cleansing all things, yet none cleanses you.”⁴¹ In one sense this is simply honest about that for which the prayer gives thanks: water itself, and not any of the impurities that may or may not be in it. Some argue that the prayer over the water should call attention to the problems of water pollution, unsafe drinking water, shortages of water, water disasters, or unjust distribution of water. In short, they argue that the prayer should name the *impure* nature of water, perhaps including the water in the font.⁴² These are valid and, ultimately, theologically inescapable areas of prayerful Christian engagement, but not in this prayer. Such concerns may be plainly and powerfully spoken as pleas to God in the prayers of intercession within the liturgy of the Word, along with regular prayer for those threatened by floods or drought. The water for which the font prayer gives thanks, however, “comes from God.”⁴³ Alexander Schmemmann describes the prayer as giving thanks over the pure waters of creation in their original goodness—an assertion that refers to the ontological goodness of the water (and therefore, according to Schmemmann, all matter⁴⁴), and not to some imaginary time in the past when all of the waters of the earth were pure. In fact, waters have always been more

⁴¹ "The Liber Ordinum," 168.

⁴² For such a suggestion, see Ann Patrick Ware, "The Easter Vigil: A Theological and Liturgical Critique," in *Women at Worship: Interpretations of North American Diversity*, ed. Marjorie Procter-Smith and Janet Roland Walton (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster/J. Knox Press, 1993).

⁴³ Lathrop, *Holy Things*, 94.

⁴⁴ Schmemmann writes that “the baptismal water represents the matter of the cosmos, the world as life of man. And its blessing at the beginning of the baptismal rite acquires thus a truly cosmic and redemptive significance. God created the world and blessed it and gave it to man as his food and life, as the means of communion with Him. The blessing of water signifies the return or redemption of matter to this initial and essential meaning.” Alexander Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World: Sacraments and Orthodoxy*, 2nd rev. and expanded ed. ([Crestwood, N.Y.]: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1988), 72.

or less nurturing of life, depending on their temperature, acidity, salinity, etc. However, the baptismal water that flows from God is ontologically, purely “good,” which is to say life-giving.

Rather than denying the reality of water pollution or the unjust distribution of water, this insistence on imaging the baptismal waters as *pure* may in fact be a strong critique against such real degradations of water. Paul Ricoeur’s *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia* indeed suggests that such “uptopic” thought (e.g. “pure” water) powerfully calls into question even entrenched ideologies that are received as axiomatic (e.g. human degradation of the world’s watersheds as a self-evident necessity). Given a vision of such a utopia,

the order which has been taken for granted suddenly appears queer and contingent. There is an experience of the contingency of order. This, I think, is the main value of utopias. At a time when everything is blocked by systems which have failed but which cannot be beaten—this is my pessimistic appreciation of our time—utopia is our resource. It may be an escape, but it is also the arm of critique.⁴⁵

Thus, the baptismal water—flowing with the utopian purity of the primordial waters of creation, of the river of life in the city of God, and, yes, of pure springs of water that water this earth—in its *purity* may function in the prayer as a challenge to the degraded waters flowing around and through assemblies.⁴⁶ The stunning utopian vision of a world flowing with pure, clean water may awaken thirsts that have been sublimated, or offer

⁴⁵ Paul Ricoeur and George H. Taylor, *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 300.

⁴⁶ Jared Diamond describes a phenomenon common among societies that have faced ecological (and therefore social) collapse: environmental degradation often occurs slowly enough so that no shocking change triggers a sense of emergency. Rather, over many years, but perhaps over only a relatively small number of generations, entire forests can be reduced to shrub land, fisheries can be decimated, and water quality can be degraded. The general phenomenon, often referred to as “creeping normalcy,” Diamond labels “landscape amnesia” in environmental cases. The drift into such amnesia, Diamond argues, is only checked by a “shock” that suddenly makes clear the distance between the ideal ecological state and the present conditions. See Jared M. Diamond, *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed* (New York: Viking, 2005), 425.

hopeful, promising images for those working for clean water. Prayers over the water at baptisms have begged God for such utopic renewal at the font, praying that God would “make a way through the wall of fire which protects the garden of paradise and open a flower-strewn path unto them that return.”⁴⁷ The struggle for clean water is daunting. Yet it is such intractable problems, Ricoeur writes, that may be punctured and challenged by utopian visions. Such imagery, Ricoeur writes, is “one of the most formidable contestations of what is.”⁴⁸

Thus, the life-giving waters in the prayer reflect the generative power of water for life on earth, the forceful flow of water that can sweep away debris and impurities, the thirst through which humans and all living creatures and the land itself long for the waters, and the purity by which the baptismal waters are known as ontologically good.

All Water

The prayer may follow a number of theological traditions in naming “all water” on earth as baptismal water. Many early Christian prayers described the baptism of Christ as sanctifying all the waters of the earth for baptism. Some of these prayers may have been crafted as a subtle correction of those who understood the waters of the Jordan to be more auspicious than local waters for baptizing. Apparently some were resisting baptism in local waters and instead making the pilgrimage to the Jordan for baptism.⁴⁹ A baptismal hymn currently in use in the Assyrian Church of the East proclaims that “from

⁴⁷ "The Liber Ordinum," 169. For an account of baptism as an entry into an ecological paradise, see Chapter Five, “The Portal to Paradise” in Rita Nakashima Brock and Rebecca Ann Parker, *Saving Paradise: How Christianity Traded Love of This World for Crucifixion and Empire* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2008), 115-40.

⁴⁸ Ricoeur and Taylor, *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia*, xxix.

⁴⁹ Killian McDonnell cites, among others, Tertullian, who critiques a preference for the waters of the Jordan over other local waters. McDonnell quotes Tertullian: “there is no difference between those John baptized in the Jordan and those Peter baptized in the Tiber” (*On Baptism*, 4:3; SC 35:70), cited in Killian McDonnell, *The Baptism of Jesus in the Jordan: The Trinitarian and Cosmic Order of Salvation* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1996), 76.

the time that our Savior was baptized in the Jordan the nature of springs has been filled with holiness.”⁵⁰ Martin Luther’s influential Flood Prayer eschewed images of the sacerdotal consecration of the baptismal water in the font, and rather offered thanksgiving for the cosmic consecration of *all waters* in the baptism of Christ in the Jordan. God, “through the baptism of . . . our Lord Jesus Christ, has sanctified and set apart the Jordan and all water for a saving flood.”⁵¹ A number of traditions see in Christ’s baptism in the Jordan not only a moment in which Christ is due honor for “descending” to the earth, but also an occasion in which all the earth is enduringly honored by Christ’s presence among the creation, and, vividly so, among the waters. The Mar Thoma church of India proclaims in its prayer over the water, “when He came up out of the water, heaven and earth honoured Him; sun, moon, stars and clouds praised Him who sanctified all rivers and streams.”⁵² Specifically invoking the hallowed nature of “all water” in this prayer extends the thanksgiving appropriately to the waters of the entire earth, and also invites participants to include all the waters of the earth in their conception of the baptismal waters.

Flowing Water

The images of water explored above include some images that entail flowing water, i.e. the water itself is active, and not simply schematically represented as an essence or a CONTAINER. In particular two sets of images especially represent flowing water: the images of water flowing forth or raining down and nourishing life on the

⁵⁰ "The Rite of the Assyrian Church of the East," in *Documents of the Baptismal Liturgy*, ed. E. C. Whitaker and Maxwell E. Johnson (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2003), 68.

⁵¹ Martin Luther, *Sintflutgebet*, or Flood Prayer (1523), in Frank C. Senn, *Christian Liturgy: Catholic and Evangelical* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1997), 289.

⁵² "Order of Holy Baptism and Chrismation (Mar Thoma)," in *Baptism Today: Understanding, Practice, Ecumenical Implications*, ed. Thomas F. Best (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2008), 429.

landscape, and those of water carrying away burdens or washing away debris in a powerful flow. As noted above, such flow of water activates the SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schema. Therefore, a number of considerations regarding the SOURCE, the PATH, and the GOAL schemas in the prayer over the water are relevant.

Flowing water: SOURCE

The SOURCE from which water flows in the prayer is God. The *Liber Ordinum* prays to God that the baptismal water might “from your throne pour down upon” those baptized.⁵³ Even images of God as the SOURCE of the waters, however, may blend with images of earthly sources of flowing watersheds. A prayer in current Lutheran use speaks of God’s actions in making the sources of water flow: “you water the mountains and send springs into the valleys to refresh and satisfy all living things.”⁵⁴ The blessing of the font in the Sarum Rite proclaims that the waters “flow from paradise” and “water the whole earth in four rivers.”⁵⁵ Christ may be imaged as the SOURCE of the baptismal waters. A Syriac blessing of the font begs God to provide the “water that flowed from the side of your only Son upon the cross.”⁵⁶ An inscription in the Lateran baptistery can see the water for a cosmic-scale bath flowing from Christ as the SOURCE: “here is to be found the source of life, which washes the whole universe, which gushed from the wound of Christ.”⁵⁷ Many prayers employ a classic fluidic image in the petition invoking the Holy Spirit: “pour out your Spirit.” Thus, God is imaged, even among the different persons of the Trinity, as SOURCE in the prayers. The prayer over the water appropriately images

⁵³ "The Liber Ordinum," 169.

⁵⁴ Thanksgiving at the Font II, in Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, Leader's desk ed. (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2006), 587.

⁵⁵ "The Sarum Rite," 297.

⁵⁶ "The Syriac-Maronite Rite," 105.

⁵⁷ "Baptistery of the Lateran: Inscription," in *Springtime of the Liturgy: Liturgical Texts of the First Four Centuries*, ed. Lucien Deiss (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1979), 264.

God as the SOURCE of the living and nourishing baptismal waters, signaling that, indeed, all water, in the font, on the landscape, and through history, “comes from God.”⁵⁸

Flowing water: PATH

The PATH of the baptismal water may be portrayed as flowing over the earth. A prayer currently in use in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)—to be prayed while the presider stands in the pool of water, pouring out water three times into the pool during the prayer—blends ecological and sin/forgiveness imagery in the flow of the water along the PATH: “you bless the earth with life-giving rain. You make the wasteland bloom... You cleanse us with the waters of forgiveness. You wash away our sins. From the rock you make the living water spring. You quench the thirst of your people.”⁵⁹ Having given thanks for all the water of the earth, the prayer may also give thanks for local waters, that are themselves imaged as part of the PATH of the flowing baptismal waters. The prayer at the Easter Vigil at a recent Lutheran liturgical conference in Minnesota extended the thanksgiving of the published version of the prayer with the addition of a single line giving thanks for local waters:

...Honor to you for cloud and rain, for dew and snow. *Praise to you for Cannon River and Wolf Creek, for Fox Lake and Mississippi River.* Your waters are below us, around us, above us: our life is born in you...⁶⁰

Such a prayer of thanksgiving places local waterways specifically into the conceptual blend of the prayer, and forms participants in the practice of gratitude for their own local bodies of water. If the prayer includes thanksgiving for a small local stream, a local

⁵⁸ Lathrop, *Holy Things*, 94.

⁵⁹ “A Representative Disciples Rite of Christian Baptism (Christian Church [Disciples of Christ]),” in *Baptism Today: Understanding, Practice, Ecumenical Implications*, ed. Thomas F. Best (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2008), 420-21.

⁶⁰ The emphasized phrase is an interpolation into Thanksgiving at the Font V, in Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, 589., prayed in the Easter Vigil at the *Worship at the Center* Conference: “Journey from Ash Wednesday to Easter,” at St. Olaf College, June 15-18, 2009.

pooled body of water, and the major body of water into which the local watershed eventually flows, this part of the thanksgiving prayer may offer a schematically diverse set of bodies of water for which to pray, and also perhaps contribute to the sense of an interconnected watershed, pouring and flowing with living water. Further, because the prayer includes both thanksgiving for the wide expanse of the earth's waters and thanksgiving for the very local waters of the congregation's watershed, the prayer may establish, by way of a CENTER-PERIPHERY schema, a sense of connection between the local waters and the wider waters of the earth, and, in addition, a sense of centeredness to the font and the baptismal waters. The font itself with its local waters flowing nearby may be seen, for a time, and for this community, as a center to the world's flowing water, an omphalos.⁶¹

The movement of the waters may be imaged in the SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schema as *flowing* and *pouring*. Such an image is reflected in the pattern of baptizing described in the final section below, and may enable participants to give thanks for the continuity of the flowing gifts of God from ancient times to the present, in this local place and far from here, and over the landscape and the baptized people. In the Rite of the Assyrian Church of the East, God is addressed as "a fountain of living water" through whom "the need of your creation is filled." From this fountain "generous gifts come... for the refreshment and support of our nature."⁶² The image of water-flow, and especially that of *pouring*, entails power, force, agency, abundance, and an ever-renewing quality in the flow of water. All of these qualities may be applied to God, to the waters of the earth, and to the

⁶¹ Lathrop, *Holy Ground*, 106.

⁶² "The Rite of the Assyrian Church of the East," 68.

waters of baptism. The choice of the word *pour* may seem insignificant, yet it correlates a number of classic theological and scriptural themes:

Sometimes the image is hidden away in a word or two. Think of the line from Joel that is proclaimed on Pentecost, “I will pour out my spirit.” This phrase, going by so quickly, incorporates the image of flowing water, the water within which we are born and without which we cannot live, in its description of the arrival of God’s Spirit. To grasp this image, we will want to recall God’s Spirit hovering over the creation, the divine Spirit poured out as oil over the head of the priest and the king, and baptismal water pouring God’s Spirit on the catechumen. It is helpful for us on Pentecost if at Maundy Thursday, only seven weeks earlier, our community poured out water over one another’s feet, enacting in the community that lively Spirit of God. One verb—pour out—can be a mighty flood, but it might trickle by unnoticed.⁶³

The baptismal flow, in fact, may be known as a “flood of grace,” as Martin Luther described it in his 1519 sermon on baptism.⁶⁴ Luther’s 1523 *Sintflutgebet*, or Flood Prayer, is oriented by the motif of the biblical deluge, and describes “all water” as a saving flood. This ecumenically influential prayer was part of a wider reformation effort aimed at recovering the significance of water in the baptismal rite, both through prayer texts such as the *Sintflutgebet* and through an expanded use of water in the baptismal rite. In composing the prayer with its strong water images Luther turned to classic baptismal images, “most notably,” Maxwell Johnson observes, “those associated with the biblical readings and prayers for the blessing of the baptismal font in Easter Vigil liturgies.”⁶⁵

Luther’s prayer embraces the image of *pouring* on a cosmic scale: the entire earth is

⁶³ Ramshaw, *Treasures Old and New*, 33-34.

⁶⁴ “Baptism is by far a greater flood than was that of Noah. For that flood drowned [people] during no more than one year, but baptism drowns all sorts of [people] throughout the world, from the birth of Christ even till the day of judgment [*Jüngsten Tag*]. Moreover while that was a flood of wrath, this is a flood of grace, as is declared in Psalm 29, ‘God will make a continual new flood.’ For without a doubt many more people have been baptized than were drowned in the flood.” Martin Luther, “The Holy and Blessed Sacrament of Baptism (1519),” in *Luther's Works* ed. Theodore E. Bachmann (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1960), 32.

⁶⁵ Maxwell E. Johnson, *The Rites of Christian Initiation: Their Evolution and Interpretation*, Rev. and expanded ed. (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2007), 323.

covered by God's "saving flood."⁶⁶ As explored in Chapters Three and Five above, while image schemas arising from controlled and channeled water-flow tended to map concepts of measured access, limited flow, and hierarchical control, images arising from free-flowing and especially pouring water sources mapped to concepts of freedom, abundance, generosity, and equitable distribution. Even before the metaphorical projection, the question of free-flowing water vs. centrally controlled or channeled water poses, itself, a number of political and ecological dilemmas. In all these cases, the image of *pouring* is not neutral.⁶⁷ Further, for entities perceived to be problematically cut off from a robust flow and only receiving a stagnant flow, one schematic solution was to "open the floodgates" to refresh the flow, restore it to life, and renew those who had been cut off from the flow. In sum, in prayers over the water, especially at the Easter Vigil, the motif of *pouring* entails a flood of significance.

⁶⁶ For an analysis of this prayer part of which is devoted to eco-theological concerns, see Benjamin M. Stewart, "Flooding the Landscape: Luther's Flood Prayer and Baptismal Theology," *CrossAccent* 13, no. 1 (2005).

⁶⁷ The free flow of water is of great importance in current theories of ecological health: "a growing consensus has developed among water professionals that the key to maintaining healthy freshwater ecosystems and the services that they provide is preservation (or restoration) of some semblance of the natural flow regime around which the native flora and fauna developed." David Katz, "Going with the Flow: Preserving and Restoring Instream Water Allocations," in *The World's Water, 2006-2007: The Biennial Report on Freshwater Resources*, ed. Peter H. Gleick and Heather Cooley (Washington, DC: Island Press, 2006), 30. Katz points out that the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of the United States now protects the "free and flowing conditions" of rivers and streams that fall under its protection. Katz, "Going with the Flow," 36. Further, the set of image schematic patterns related to free-flowing or controlled flow has ethical, political, and ecological entailments: "water flows through the Earth's lands in the same way it flows through our veins, bringing life and sustenance. Yet not all people have equal access to water. Like most natural resources, water flows to those who have power. Those with political and economic power are able to direct or stop the flow of water through cities and rural areas, drying up or flooding areas along the way, effectively denying the poor and powerless the health and sustenance that clean, safe, and affordable water provides." Meena Palaniappan, Emily Lee, and Andrea Samulon, "Environmental Justice and Water," in *The World's Water, 2006-2007: The Biennial Report on Freshwater Resources*, ed. Peter H. Gleick and Heather Cooley (Washington, DC: Island Press, 2006), 117.

Relatedly, the motif of “overflowing goodness” is a key theme in a number of eco-theological visions of Christianity.⁶⁸ In this vision, the goodness of God is seen overflowing through creation. The trajectory of God’s blessings is downward, poured out over the earth, and gathering in fecundity on the face of the earth. Cynthia Moe-Lobeda finds in Luther’s sacramental theology a vision of the creation “flowing and pouring” with the presence of God. Moe-Lobeda finds this vision to be a powerful orienting perspective from which to resist global economic forces that encourage a commodifying approach to the natural world.⁶⁹ In this vision, the sacraments are not individual commodities to be consumed, but rather a grateful reception of the activity of God who is continuously flowing in and through the creation.⁷⁰ In this sense, understanding the self as a GOAL of the flow of the sacraments—or even of the actual physical watershed—need not issue in an individualistic, consumeristic disposition. Rather, it may offer an orientation to the entire system, which is itself flowing and pouring with the goodness of God. This metaphor of flowing, or pouring, or overflowing, is a critique, Paul Santmire argues, of the neo-platonic metaphor of ascent that images the Good as enduringly beyond earth, in a SOURCE that is, for humans, the GOAL to which they are to ascend.⁷¹ In the motif of overflowing goodness, however, humans witness the goodness of God flowing through creation in a unidirectional flow toward the earth, while humans take up a “contemplative dominion” over the earth, over-seeing the whole of the earth in a gaze

⁶⁸ Paul Santmire refers to this motif specifically as “overflowing goodness” and sometimes as the “ecological motif” of Christianity. H. Paul Santmire, *The Travail of Nature: The Ambiguous Ecological Promise of Christian Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 60-73.

⁶⁹ Cynthia D. Moe-Lobeda, *Healing a Broken World: Globalization and God* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2002).

⁷⁰ See Moe-Lobeda’s section on sacramental practices, *Ibid.*, 114-29.

⁷¹ See Chapter Six, “Reenacting the Story Ritually: Beyond the Milieu of the Gothic Spirit” in H. Paul Santmire, *Nature Reborn: The Ecological and Cosmic Promise of Christian Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 74-92. and Santmire, *The Travail of Nature*.

that inspires contemplation, gratitude, and even love.⁷² Psalm 104, with its majestic images of life sustained by water through an entire valley, is, for Paul Santmire, the chief biblical example of such piety.⁷³

You, [Living God], make springs gush forth in the valleys;
 they flow between the hills,
 giving drink to every wild animal;
 the wild donkeys quench their thirst.
 By the streams the birds of the air have their home;
 they sing among the branches.
 From your lofty home you water the mountains;
 the earth is satisfied with the fruitfulness of your creation.
 You make the grass to grow for the cattle,
 and plants for people to use,
 to bring forth food from the earth,
 and wine to gladden the human heart,
 oil to make the face shine,
 and bread to strengthen the human heart.
 The trees of the Living One are watered abundantly,
 the cedars of Lebanon that God planted.
 In them the birds build their nests;
 the stork has its home in the fir trees.
 O Living One, how diverse are your creatures!
 In wisdom you have made them all;
 the earth is full of your creatures.⁷⁴

The pouring and flowing water of Psalm 104 illustrates many of the schematic structures of flowing water listed above: patterns of water on the landscape blended with the action of God; many connections to the SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schema; strong entailments of power, force, agency, abundance, fecundity, and ever-new flow; connections to other liturgical actions and scriptural images of pouring, flowing, and even flooding; and

⁷² Santmire, *The Travail of Nature*, 69-70.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 21-23.

⁷⁴ Psalm 104.10-17, 24. Adapted from Gabe Huck, Linda Ekstrom, and International Committee on English in the Liturgy, eds., *The Psalter: A Faithful and Inclusive Rendering from the Hebrew into Contemporary English Poetry, Intended Primarily for Communal Song and Recitation* (Chicago, IL: Liturgy Training Publications, 1994).

schematic complementarity with visions of God's goodness overflowing through creation and flowing and pouring through all things.

Flowing water: GOAL

The GOAL of a flow in the prayer over the water may be imaged as, widely construed, the *self*. This "self," in this case, may include all those baptized, the church, the land, and even the whole creation. The key point here is that the flow depicted in this prayer is directed toward an entity known by the participants in the first person. As demonstrated in Chapter Three, when a flow is imaged in a conceptual blend as flowing into an entity understood to be the self, the flow will be perceived as abundantly and unrelentingly given. As demonstrated in Chapter Five, the image schematic pattern of a water-borne gift is SOURCE-PATH-GOAL, and thus may naturally evoke thanksgiving.⁷⁵ The prayer over the waters from the Disciples of Christ quoted above conveys such a sense: "you bless the earth with life-giving rain. You make the wasteland bloom... You cleanse us with the waters of forgiveness. You wash away our sins. From the rock you make the living water spring. You quench the thirst of your people."⁷⁶ The flow is understood as directed toward the ecclesial self and the ecological self, and is prayed in thanksgiving by a community gathered around the water, and voiced by a presider *standing* in the water and even now *pouring* the water.

Thus, in thanksgiving, the prayer over the baptismal water may know the water to flow with life-giving power, from the pure waters of creation in their original goodness, cleansing sin and washing away other burdens, slaking the thirst of living creatures,

⁷⁵ Chapter Two demonstrated that such schematic patterns tended to evoke strongly evaluative responses from the party imaged as the GOAL. The responses were normally positive, though a few were resolutely negative. The key point is that the party at the GOAL has little or no sense of control over the abundant flow of the "given" entity that is flowing through the SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schema.

⁷⁶ "A Representative Disciples Rite of Christian Baptism (Christian Church [Disciples of Christ])," 420-21.

through all the waterways of the earth, washing the entire cosmos, flowing in the local waters of the watershed, flowing and pouring from God as an enduring flood, to those present in the liturgical assembly and to the ground on which they stand, bringing forth a vision of the present world restored to ecological integrity, and all known in the mode of thanksgiving and praise toward God.

Pouring water at the prayer

This section is concluded with a short consideration of the action of pouring water during the prayer. In the ethnographic study conducted as part of this project, the water poured out during the prayer took on what at times appeared to be greater significance than the actual words of the prayer. Chapter Five offered some possible explanations for this pattern. The action of pouring clearly stimulated the theological imagination of the participants and seemed to activate conceptual blending between the water poured during the prayer, the water poured during the baptisms, the action of God, and the water of the wider world. The specific images of the prayer, however, were rarely recalled by the participants. The section above offers possibilities for how the prayer itself might more fully take on the images of flowing and pouring, and thus perhaps conceptually blend more effectively with any pouring action associated with the prayer.

Regarding the pouring of water during or before the prayer, a few brief observations are sufficient. First, the assembly benefits from seeing and hearing the baptismal waters poured into the font before the baptismal washing. This action stimulates the theological imagination; may signal and privilege the outpouring action of God in the baptismal act; and may conceptually blend with the anticipated baptismal act, the motifs of the prayer over the water, and the movement of water over the landscape.

Second, the pouring may be evaluated for how adequately it signals generosity, abundance, dignity, and a free-flowing nature. Completely emptying any container used for pouring helps to signal complete generosity and abundance. There may be more effective ways to schematically represent abundance than pouring a slow, small, stream of carefully measured water. Third, any pouring of water associated with the prayer should yield to the primary act of baptism. If pouring of water is to take place at the prayer, it should not eclipse the more bountiful water-pouring or other water-actions of the baptismal washing itself.⁷⁷

IV. Baptizing in Water

Concerning baptism, baptize in this way: after speaking all these words, baptize into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit in living water. If you do not have living water, baptize in other water; if you are not able in cold water, in warm. If you do not have either, pour water on the head three times into the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Didache, 7.1-3⁷⁸

Because you are images of Christ, everything that was done to you is symbolic.

Cyril of Jerusalem, *Mystagogical Catechesis* 3.1

Even as Christians during the first centuries of church history were writing accounts of baptisms that described initiates being plunged three times under the water at their baptisms, those same early Christians were adorning their places of worship and their tombs with images of baptism that appear to portray a different posture and use of

⁷⁷ An influential Lutheran World Federation Statement offers similar counsel regarding the secondary symbols associated with baptism such as the candle, clothing, salt, etc. “The ‘explanatory symbols’ should never overshadow the water-bath itself,” the statement reads. “Chicago Statement on Worship and Culture: Baptism and Rites of Life Passage” in S. Anita Stauffer and Lutheran World Federation. Study Team on Worship and Culture. International Consultation, *Baptism, Rites of Passage, and Culture*, Lwf Studies, (Geneva: Lutheran World Federation, 1999).

⁷⁸ Everett Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church: History, Theology, and Liturgy in the First Five Centuries* (Cambridge, U.K. ; Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2009), 202.

water. Images of the baptism of Christ, by far the most prevalent early depiction of the act of baptism, typically show Christ standing in flowing water up to his ankles, knees, or waist.⁷⁹ Water or light sometimes pours down over his head, often from the figure of a dove above him. John the Baptist typically holds his hand above or on Christ's head. Frequently, trees grow beside the water.⁸⁰

It is not within the scope of this project to address this apparent divergence between text and image.⁸¹ However, it is interesting, for the purposes of this project, to note that baptisms of the first five centuries seem to have been typically practiced out of the sight of the full assembly of worshippers, with the newly baptized only being led into the assembly after they had been clothed in new robes.⁸² Thus, while the actual practice of the baptismal washing was largely hidden from the assembly, the artistic representations of baptism were often public and apparently used for devotional purposes. In short, despite what may have been practiced in the relative privacy of the baptistery, the most *public* shape of baptism in the first five centuries generally consisted of a person

⁷⁹ Even long after baptisms had moved indoors “almost without exception, the water depicted in the baptismal iconography is flowing, either from the spilled jug of the river god, to form a flowing stream across the whole scene... or gushing from a rock overhead in a kind of waterfall.” Robin Margaret Jensen, "Living Water: Images, Settings, and Symbols of Early Christian Baptism in the West" (Thesis (Ph D), Columbia University, 1991., 1991), 202.

⁸⁰ See the overview of early artistic representations of the baptism of Christ in Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church*, 123-31.

⁸¹ It appears probable that the early practice of baptism generally moved over time from naturally flowing, outdoor bodies of water to large indoor pools (some perhaps with flowing water) in which the baptizands stood, sat, or knelt, (usually without enough water for a complete bodily submersion) and had their heads plunged under the water three times. See the discussion of these questions in Ibid., 819-60., Johnson, *The Rites of Christian Initiation*, 1-100., John Baldovin, "The Empire Baptized," in *The Oxford History of Christian Worship*, ed. Geoffrey Wainwright and Karen B. Westerfield Tucker (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 85-94., Bryan D. Spinks, *Early and Medieval Rituals and Theologies of Baptism: From the New Testament to the Council of Trent*, Liturgy, Worship and Society Series (Aldershot, Hants, England ; Burlington, VT: Ashgate Pub. Ltd., 2006), 3-67., Maxwell E. Johnson, "The Apostolic Tradition," in *The Oxford History of Christian Worship*, ed. Geoffrey Wainwright and Karen B. Westerfield Tucker (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 32-44, 66-69., and Jensen, "Living Water".

⁸² Baptisms were typically conducted in the nude. On the privacy provided by baptisteries, see Jensen, "Living Water", 322.

standing upright in relatively shallow water while water or light poured down over their head.⁸³

Keeping in the mind the particular concern of eco-theological orientation by way of water at the Easter Vigil, and having explored the possibilities around a practice of engaging with local watersheds and analyzed imagery for the prayer over the water at baptism, the section below analyzes the bodily posture, actions, and shape and nature of the water of the baptism. The actual physical practices of baptismal washing are diverse among present-day congregations. The section below seeks to honor such diversity of practice even while illuminating some potential eco-theological associations in some particular shapes of baptismal washing that may be rich in significance especially in relationship to the Easter Vigil. The particular shape analyzed here, for reasons that will become clear below, is baptism by pouring water over the head of a baptizand who is standing (or sitting in the case of an infant) in pooled water.

An Image Schematic Outline of the Baptismal Washing

This pattern for baptism can be closely analyzed for its image schematic patterns and entailments. It quickly becomes apparent that the image schematic structure of the baptismal act in this pattern is complex. The baptizand first leaves the company of sponsors and crosses a BOUNDARY as they enter into the water-pool, leaving behind one distinct space and entering another. Infants are placed, sitting, in a bowl of water, while adults step into and stand in a pool of water. The water is of a comfortable temperature, and may be surrounded by natural signs of fecundity, including plants, flowers, and even trees. In crossing the boundary into the pool, they enter a schematic image of a

⁸³ No normative case for the embodied shape of baptism is being made here. My point is simply to note some apparent early diversity in bodily images of baptism and some precedent for images of baptism that are structured by the baptizand standing upright in water, while water (or light) pours over their head.

CONTAINER. AS noted above, humans in even a shallow pool of water are typically schematically represented as being *in* the CONTAINER of the water.⁸⁴ Being inside the CONTAINER of the water, the baptizand is subject to a complex set of schematic entailments, arising from both the generic CONTAINER schema and the particularities of the water-CONTAINER schema: being located in a distinct space in which mysteries may be hidden and discovered; separation from those outside the CONTAINER; a relative diminution of individual freedom and the giving-over of some control to the forces governing the CONTAINER;⁸⁵ a perceived tendency toward immersion; a sense of danger; a perception of unity with entities in the CONTAINER; being shielded from forces outside the CONTAINER; occupying a liminal position, both laterally (having crossed halfway through the water) and vertically (immersed in the water with the upper part of the body out of the water); and existing as a comparatively smaller entity within a larger schematic CONTAINER, with the CONTAINER sometimes functioning to suggest great quantity.⁸⁶

As the water is poured, another set of schematic structures is generated. Water is gathered—scooped up—from the large pool in a smaller container by the presider (or perhaps by the hands of the presider in the case of an infant). As the water pours out into the open air, the element of water takes on the conceptually significant shape of *poured* water. The water, being poured out generously above the baptizand's head, now may be seen to flow from a SOURCE, activating the SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schema for the action of the water. This schema typically entails the ascription of a *cause*, and an *intent* and *purpose* to the flowing action. Further, the unique schematic shape of pouring may suggest freedom, generosity, abundance, and a lack of constraint on the part of the entity

⁸⁴ See the discussion in Chapter Two above on the dynamics of the CONTAINER schema.

⁸⁵ Johnson, *The Body in the Mind*, 22.

⁸⁶ On these particular dynamics of the CONTAINER image schema, see Chapter Two above.

that causes the pouring. The water's PATH directly pours over the baptizand's head and body. Any clothes worn are soaked with water; infants may be naked and adults may be clothed in a simple, spare robe over a bathing suit, the robe itself gracefully cloaking their body and even itself being described, like the water, as "flowing." When water is poured over the baptizand's head while in the pool of water, a number of image schematic elements of immersion may be strengthened: the baptizand's head is, if just for a moment, beneath the flowing water, and the baptizand's body is now covered in water, from head to feet, perhaps activating numerous associations with complete immersion under the water. The water clearly flows in one direction, downward, in the same pattern by which water is known in other flowing bodies of water. The downward and flowing nature of the water-flow schematically entails force, power, and an irreversible trajectory. In an action often associated schematically with abundance and generosity, the SOURCE of water is completely poured out. The water flows in its PATH over the head and body and continues to flow into the pool. However, the pool itself is unlikely to be considered a sharply distinct GOAL, as the baptizand is *within* the CONTAINER of the pool, rather than *outside* of the CONTAINER's boundaries as was the case in the adult baptisms in the ethnographic account in Chapter Four. Thus, in any case, the baptizand is clearly perceived *as* (or is perceived to be *inside* of) the GOAL of the water-flow. As the presiding minister again scoops up water for the second and third cycles of pouring, the water gathered in the GOAL of the pool, now scooped up and poured again, flows in a cyclic relationship between SOURCE and GOAL.

After the three cycles of pouring, the baptizand now moves out of the pool. With the baptizand moving out of the CONTAINER, a number of image schematic shifts occur:

the baptizand is emergent out of a CONTAINER, and thus may be perceived as something being newly revealed; the sense of danger associated with containment, and specifically containment in a water-CONTAINER, recedes; a wider sense of freedom and agency on the part of the baptizand is entailed, as they are no longer limited by the boundaries and forces imposed by the CONTAINER; and the baptizand now emerges into the wider locale that surrounds the pool, together with the others who are gathered there.

In moving out of the CONTAINER, the baptizand also steps across a boundary, emerging on the opposite side of the pool from their initial entrance. Through the crossing over of the boundary onto the other side of the pool, the schematic pattern gives a spatial logic to the chronological before/after nature of the baptismal act. They may be assisted out of the pool, welcomed warmly, and dried by sponsors as they step out of the pool. Having crossed over, the baptizand may now be imaged as enduringly on the other side of the baptismal waters, regardless of where they now physically move.

Thus, this practice of baptism strongly draws on two primary image schematic patterns, CONTAINER and SOURCE-PATH-GOAL. These patterns are the two basic structures used to perceive and categorize bodies of water in the landscape, i.e. bodies of water are generally perceived as either pooled or flowing. These two patterns are also the two dominant image schematic patterns arising from the source domain of water. Together these two schematic patterns structure a large and diverse number of conceptual metaphors reviewed above in Chapter Three.

In the practice examined above, that of affusion while standing in a pool of water, the water is structured and set in motion in ways that clearly set out both image schemas—that of CONTAINER and SOURCE-PATH-GOAL. In both cases, the baptizand

occupies the center of the schema, where the force dynamics of the schema are maximally operative: in the center of the water-pool-CONTAINER; crossing through the pool from one lateral boundary to the opposite boundary; in the very center of the flowing water, embodying but not usurping the PATH and GOAL of the flow; standing in the CONTAINER that gathers the flowing water, where it may be raised up again to be the waters of the SOURCE. Significantly, other than the support and guidance offered to the infants who are necessarily carried through the rite, both infant and adult baptisms are structured by the same image schematic patterns.

Thus, analyzed according to image schematic patterns, an apparently simple act of baptizing shows great schematic complexity. (Compare, however, a common pattern of baptism in which an infant is held above a CONTAINER much smaller than their body, and a wet hand is placed on their head three times: the schematic structure has almost nothing in common with the baptisms described above.) The complex image schemas arising from the pattern of baptismal action described above are the skeletal structure with which abundant layers of imagery at the vigil may be blended. Some of that imagery may include the knowledge and embodied experience of watersheds, as outlined in the first section of this chapter. More imagery may be blended from the prayer over the water, explored in the second section of this chapter. However, there is one rich set of water images not yet fully explored in this project: the full set of readings and responses appointed for the vigil liturgy. (In the vigil studied in the ethnographic inquiry, four readings from the Old Testament were read; twelve Old Testament readings, however, are appointed. While the published rites themselves indicate that some readings may be

omitted, they specify four Old Testament readings that should always be included.)⁸⁷ In the vigil in the ethnographic inquiry, nearly all of the water images from the readings and responses were CONTAINER images. As the analysis below demonstrates, many of the water images in the full set of readings and responses are structured by SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schemas arising from images of flowing water. The potential schematic affordances between the readings analyzed below and the baptismal practice outlined above are substantial and plentiful.

Water Images in the Easter Vigil Scripture Texts

An examination of the appointed scriptural texts for the vigil demonstrates the astonishing blending space created by the vigil liturgy. The Old Testament readings of the vigil service include numerous images relevant to the conception of water:⁸⁸ the primordial waters of the first creation narrative, in which the earth emerges out of the CONTAINER of the depths of the waters (Genesis 1); the waters of the flood, in which the rains pour down in a SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schema to fill the earth-as-CONTAINER, out of which emerges a renewed earth (Genesis 7-9); the waters of the Red Sea form a boundary through which the Israelites cross, and which, flowing back in a SOURCE-PATH-GOAL movement, cover the army of Pharaoh as in a CONTAINER (Exodus 15); in the reading from Isaiah 55, the waters are mapped as the object of an ATTRACTION schema and at the center of CENTER-PERIPHERY schema to which all who thirst are invited, and, later in the reading, are imaged as “rain come down from heaven” in a SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schema resulting in the GOAL of the earth sprouting and growing; Baruch 3-4 images God as the

⁸⁷ Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, 648.

⁸⁸ Gail Ramshaw explores the Easter Vigil as the paradigmatic example of liturgical water imagery in a chapter on the scriptural image of water in Ramshaw, *Treasures Old and New*, 405-07.

“fountain of wisdom,” an out-flowing SOURCE; “clean water” flowing from God (as SOURCE) is sprinkled over God’s people (GOAL) in an act of cleansing in Ezekiel 36; the narrative of the dry bones in Ezekiel 37, while not specifically evoking pooled or flowing bodies of water, nevertheless highlights the absence of water, which, according to at least one participant in the Easter Vigil studied for this project, resulted in an ATTRACTION schema toward the water of the coming baptismal rite; the sea serves as a CONTAINER for Jonah, as well as a BOUNDARY between two spaces—Tarshish and Ninevah—perceived in starkly different terms.⁸⁹

The appointed sung responses to the readings are equally marked by water imagery: Psalm 136 gives thanks for God who “spread out the earth on the waters;” Psalm 46 carries images of both a threatening, turbulent sea-CONTAINER that swallows even mountains, as well as a river flowing through the city of God that brings gladness in a SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schema; Exodus 15 uses dramatic language to highlight the power, danger, tendency toward immersion, and deadly nature of the sea-CONTAINER in celebrating the defeat of the Pharaoh’s army; Isaiah 12 speaks of a “well of salvation” from which water will be drawn “with joy,” entailing both a CONTAINER schema for the well and perhaps a thirst-ATTRACTION schema in the water that may be drunk; Psalms 42-43 are animated both by a thirst-ATTRACTION schema and an overwhelming CONTAINER image, in which the psalmist is sunk under the churning waves;⁹⁰ following the Ezekiel

⁸⁹ Two additional Old Testament readings not appointed for use in the Revised Common Lectionary are included in the options for *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*. Neither of these two readings—Isaiah 61 and Daniel 3—explicitly invokes bodies of water. Yet the Isaiah reading suggests watered ground (“For as the earth brings forth its shoots, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring up before all the nations.” Isaiah 61.11), and the Daniel reading is structured by a blazing, threatening fire in the center of the narrative (one participant in the ethnographic study identified this reading, together with the Ezekiel 37 reading, as causing her to long for the water of the baptism, in order to “quench this thirst.”

⁹⁰ See the analysis of these Psalms above, in Chapter Two, and in Brown, *Seeing the Psalms*.

narrative of the Dry Bones, Psalm 143 constructs a conceptual blend of human physical thirst and spiritual thirst, together with a thirsty, parched landscape; Psalm 98 personifies the sea and flood waters, and calls on them to “roar” and “clap” for joy at the presence of God; Psalm 114, appointed in the Revised Common Lectionary as the response to the reading from Romans, constructs images of the sea and the Jordan River actively parting at the presence of God (a disruption of the BOUNDARY of these CONTAINERS of water), and, in a chiastic parallel, goes on to construct images of rock and ore turned to a “pool” and a “spring” (both CONTAINER and SOURCE).⁹¹

The New Testament readings, Romans 6 and an account from the Gospel of the empty tomb, do not explicitly make reference to bodies of water. However, the Romans text speaks of baptism as a “burial” with Christ out of which one rises to “walk in newness of life,” invoking the CONTAINER and BOUNDARY schemas. The Gospel reading narrates the discovery of the empty tomb, which of course is a resurrection theme related to baptism, but not here by way of water imagery.⁹²

These scriptural water-images are structured in ways that make them richly available for conceptual blends with the act of baptism, other images of the Easter Vigil, the flowing waters of the watershed, and the movement of God known especially in the mighty acts proclaimed in the vigil. Near the center of all these images in the vigil liturgy

⁹¹ Additionally, responses are appointed to the 10th, 11th, and 12th readings in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*. Jonah 2 is appointed as the response to the narrative of Jonah 1, and strongly highlights the imprisoning nature of the sea-CONTAINER. The appointed response to Isaiah 61, Deuteronomy 32, includes opening phrases that frame the text as water descending and appearing on the earth as nourishment for the land: “May my teaching drop like the rain, my speech condense like the dew; like gentle rain on grass, like showers on new growth.” The final response appointed in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* is the “Song of the Three,” 35-65, a lyrical all-encompassing invitation for the entire creation to praise God, including bodies of water on the landscape and rain, dew, frost, and snow.

⁹² The Gospel text in the Revised Common Lectionary is drawn from the synoptic Gospel appointed for the lectionary year. The appointed Gospel text at the vigil is always from John in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*. Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, 653.

the act of baptism may take shape. Between a baptismal act such as the one described above and the scriptural water images in the full set of readings for the vigil an astonishing number of rich, eco-theologically orienting blends may arise.

At the Center of the Year: A Schematic Structure

The baptismal action itself—the structure of the font, the movement of the bodies, the action of the water—functions as a central orienting image schema for conceptualization and experience of the act of baptism. And standing at this central baptismal place in the center of the Easter Vigil—“the center of the year”—it may hold profound orienting power for a congregation’s sense of its core identity, for its relationship to the wider world and its flowing waters, for its conception of God, and for the assembly’s sense of place in the cosmos.

But the image schematic structure of baptism is just that: an image schema, which is itself a structure and a field of bodily impressions that wait to be clothed in a wider horizon of conceptual significance and orientation. The act of baptism, as strong and conceptually influential as its schematic structure is, depends on a much wider field of inputs for the construction of liturgical and eco-theological significance. This chapter has highlighted two such sources that contribute to ecological and theological orientation: a practice of engagement with naturally flowing bodies of water in the local watershed, and a practice of eucharistic prayer at the baptismal water in which the shape of the overflowing, poured out, abundant, deep, life-giving waters is also the shape of the prayer itself.

V. Concluding Thoughts

This final chapter has explored the eco-theologically orienting character of three synergistic practices: the embodied exploration of a local watershed, the prayer of thanksgiving over the water at the Easter Vigil, and the act of baptism at the Easter Vigil. Exploration of the watershed was shown to offer thick, conceptual, embodied, ecological knowledge that forms an available input into conceptual blends focused in the baptismal water of the Easter Vigil. The prayer over the water, when centered in scriptural water imagery and informed by the heritage of such prayers through history, may inculcate and give rich, verbal expression to eco-theological orientation at the water of the Easter Vigil. The prayer may include images of the life-giving power of water; may evoke gratitude by way of images in which the schematic structure of flow is directed toward the assembly and the earth; may blend images of the actual act of baptism, biblical waters, a fecund landscape and watershed, and God's actions (including the washing away of sin, and mercy flowing unidirectionally toward the earth); and may offer a vision of pure water that stands as a critique to the normalized degraded waters of the earth. The water-washing of baptism was shown to have the potential to stand as a central schematic image at the center of the Easter Vigil, and even of the Christian year. Methods of baptism that rely on both affusion and immersion were shown to activate both the CONTAINER and SOURCE-PATH-GOAL image schemas, and, as such, to make such baptisms more effective in anchoring the full range of available eco-theological interpretations of baptism. These three practices by no means exhaust the eco-theologically orienting potential of the Easter Vigil. The analysis here nevertheless demonstrates that these three practices, centered in the element of water, may contribute to a practice and theological conception of

Christianity that knows the renewal of creation to be central to baptismal identity and the very meaning of the faith.

While the emphases and shifts in practice detailed above are relatively modest, the theological implications are nonetheless significant. The shifts in practice suggested above may re-orient liturgical participants in their ecological and theological sense of the world, including their conception of God and of the landscape. The practice of bodily engagement with the waters of the local watershed offers access to a primary knowledge of the source domain of many of the metaphorical characteristics attributed to God in the Easter Vigil and baptismal liturgies, and thus contributes to a number of particular theological conceptions of God and the land: God is the one who (like water) gives life to all living bodies; God exists as the source of life always nevertheless hidden in mystery, much as the source of water in a watershed is never precisely located because it flows from somewhere (from the sky, from multiple flows, from under the ground) beyond human grasping; all living things share a thirst for God, as the land and every living creature thirsts for water; God moves with power, including destructive power, but most notably and powerfully with the power to give life to creatures; there is an original purity to God's being that cannot be supplemented, and that, as such, is most attractive and nourishing; God's typical, trustworthy, movement is a fructifying descent, flowing from higher places to lower places, giving life to all along the path. These are not simply abstract theological concepts for those who explore watersheds. Rather, they are patterns of living relationships that hold a natural logic and may be deepened by study of scriptural correspondences and attention to baptismal theology.

The theology spoken in the prayer over the water underscores the theology named above, and may extend it. Such extensions may include the cleansing flow of God's mercy which washes away the accumulated debris of sin; the nature of all water as sanctified, "holy water," set apart by the baptism of Christ in the Jordan; the explicit naming of local, regional, and international bodies of water in the prayer as gifts even now flowing from God and thus to be treasured and nurtured; the conception of the goal of God's overflowing gifts as the entire creation. The water poured out at the prayer and in the baptism itself underscores a conception of God and God's gifts as free, abundant, uncontrollable, always new, and possessing agency.

In the iconic event of Christian baptism, therefore, filled with the significance blended into the event from multiple streams of sources (including exploration of the watershed and the prayer of thanksgiving), an image of God arises in which God is known reliably as outpouring, overflowing, descending from places beyond comprehension with life-giving power toward a thirsty creation, with humans receiving such gifts in a posture of thanksgiving together with the rest of creation, on an earth filled with sanctified watercourses all of which gain their life-giving power from an unpolluted purity that seems to flow from the original waters "in the beginning" and yet is available and being renewed even now. In the conception of baptism sketched here, humans place themselves, bodily, within this vision of the divine and of the cosmos. At this place, in the flowing waters of baptism at the Vigil of Easter, in an age of ecological emergency, humans may experience a re-orientation to God, to the waters, and to the creation flowing with the gift life-giving and life-renewing power. The renewal of individuals in baptism may in this way be inseparable from the renewal of the earth and its living creatures.

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