

**Christian
Spirituality 4.
Faces, Places and Spaces:
Visualization and
Spatialization in Christian
Spirituality**

Introduction

What is Christian Spirituality?

Christianity Spirituality is the *quest* for a *fulfilled* and *authentic* life, that involves

- taking the beliefs and values of Christianity
- and weaving them into the fabric of our lives
- so that they "animate," provide the "breath" and "spirit" and "fire" for our lives

Introduction

Today, we will look at:

1. Visualizing the Divine
2. Becoming part of the Christian Story
3. Rhythm of Faith: Structuring Time

The Visualization of the Divine

God cannot be seen

Can we visualize God, and satisfy the
human longing to know God, to see and
touch the face of God – without
compromising the transcendence of God?
Should we even try?

The Visualization of the Divine

One answer: No, we should not try. Any image of God we create might become an idol.

The Second Commandment (Exodus 20:4-5): **You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or worship them.**
(NRSV)

The Visualization of the Divine

Reformed tradition in Christianity discourages all religious art. Heidelberg Catechism:

Question 96: What does God require in the next commandment?

Answer: That we should not portray God in any way, nor worship him in any other manner than he has commanded in his Word

Question 97: So should we not make use of images?

Answer: God cannot and should not be depicted in any way. As for creatures, although they may indeed be depicted, God forbids making use of or having any likeness of them, in order to worship them or to use them to serve him

The Visualization of the Divine

Most Christian traditions hold we worship not the image, but the reality pictured in the image.

Icons are an integral part of Orthodox church.

An **iconostasis** – a screen of icons – separates the altar from the nave

- Use of icons generated fierce controversy and violence in Eastern Christianity because of the concern they could become idols. The veneration of icons was officially sanctioned at the **Synod of 843**, now celebrated on the Second Sunday of (Great) Lent as the **Feast of the Triumph of Orthodoxy**

The Visualization of the Divine

Some important justifications and stepping-stones for visualizing the divine:

- the Incarnation
- God is the creator
- The sacraments

The Visualization of the Divine

Visualizing God: The Incarnation

Jesus is the “image of the invisible God”
(Colossians 1:15) and the “exact
representation” of God (Hebrews 1:4)

Significance:

- Jesus is the “authorized” image of God
- Focusing our thoughts on Jesus opens a window to the Living God

The Visualization of the Divine

The Symbol of the Cross

The symbol of the faith since at least the late second century has been the **cross**, a reminder of:

- death of God made Jesus is the foundation of human redemption
- the resurrection of God made Jesus has defeated death

The Visualization of the Divine

The Symbol of the Cross

We are baptized under the sign of the cross
Churches include a cross, and are often
made in the shape of a cross

"Sign of The Cross:" form of Christian
spirituality, often used in times of
danger, anxiety

"message of the cross" = shorthand
summary of the gospel (1 Cor. 1:18-25)

The Visualization of the Divine

Visualizing God: The Creation

God created the universe: therefore, something of the character of God is present in creation

Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179): **“all creatures are an indication of God”**

Hugh of St Victor (d. 1142): **“For the whole sensible world is like a kind of book written by the finger of God. . . and each particular creature is somewhat like a figure, not invented by human decision, but instituted by the divine will to manifest the invisible things of the wisdom of God”**

The Visualization of the Divine

Visualizing God: The Creation

Significance:

Learning about and appreciating the natural world – the handiwork of God – is a *spiritual activity*

The Visualization of the Divine

Visualizing God: The Sacraments

The sacraments, such as

- the Eucharist, with its "*matter*" of bread and wine
 - Baptism, with its "*matter*" of water
- are visible, concrete signs that point to a divine reality (the "*res*")

The Visualization of the Divine

Visualizing God: The Sacraments

Poem *Adore te devote* (Thomas Aquinas):
the sacraments:

- offer ways of discerning God, although the discernment is "bare shadows" rather than the full reality the sacrament points to
- focus the mind and heart on God
- remind us of our redemption through Christ's death
- encourage us to imagine the future vision of the face of God in heaven

Adore te devote (Thomas Aquinas)

**Godhead here in hiding, whom I do adore
Masked by these bare shadows, shape and
nothing more;**

**See, Lord, at they service low lies here a heart
Lost, all lost in wonder at the God thou art**

O thou our reminder of Christ crucified.

**Living bread the life of us for whom he died,
Lend this life to me then: feed and feast my
mind,**

**There be thou the sweetness man was meant
to find.**

**Jesus whom I look at shrouded here below,
I beseech thee send me, what I thirst for so;
Some day to gaze on thee, face to face in light
And be blessed forever, with they glory's
sight.**

Becoming Part of the Christian Story

Narratives and stories of:

- our history
 - how we came to be who we are
 - the great historical figures and leaders of our past
 - lives of others who have tried to walk a path similar to our own
- help us discover our identity, who we are

Becoming Part of the Christian Story

The Old and New Testament contain a rich and grand set of narratives of our history that we are part of:

- Israel's exodus from Egypt
- God's acts of deliverance and providence celebrated in the Psalms
- the Gospel story of Jesus, his ministry, his death and resurrection
- the story of the expansion of the church in Acts and the Letters

Becoming Part of the Christian Story

An important part of Christianity

Spirituality is:

- learning the Christianity “story”
- personally “entering” into it and accepting it

Becoming Part of the Christian Story

Types of stories that are an important part of Christian spiritual literature:

1. The Story of Jesus

- liturgy of the Eucharist recalls the Last Supper and how the death of Jesus relates to the life of the church
- *Imitation of Christ* by Thomas a Kempis (1380-1471). Emphasizes the cross of Christ. Followers of Christ must take up their own cross and follow “the royal road the cross.”

Becoming Part of the Christian Story

Types of stories that are an important part of Christian spiritual literature:

2. Stories of Biblical Figures

- Hebrews 11: Old Testament figures of faith should be models for Christians
- for example: the faith of Abraham setting out from Ur

Becoming Part of the Christian Story

Types of stories that are an important part of Christian spiritual literature:

3. Stories of the Saints (Hagiography).

Biographies and stories of those the faithful from the past can provide encouragement and inspiration to those on still on their journey of faith

- For example, biographies of St. Francis of Assisi (1182-1226) have inspired and offered guidance for many

The Rhythm of Faith: Structuring Time

Ways in which Christianity has “structured time” to provide a spiritual “rhythm” of faith for our lives

1. The Christian Week
2. The Christian Year
3. The Monastic Day

The Rhythm of Faith: Structuring Time The Christian Week

Sunday:

- in early the Church became the day to celebrate the Resurrection
- took the place of the Sabbath as the day of physical rest and spiritual refreshment

Wednesday and Friday:

- set aside in early Christian communities for fasting
 - Wed: day Christ was betrayed
 - Fri: day Christ was crucified

The Rhythm of Faith: Structuring Time The Christian Week

Sunday as a "space to be set aside" stressed in writings of Susanna Wesley (1669-1742), mother of John and Charles Wesley:

**This is the Day that the Lord hath made; I will
rejoice and be glad therein
Glory be to Thee, Eternal Father of spirits, for
so kindly and mercifully indulging one Day
in seven to the souls Thou hast made.
Wherein it is their duty as well as happiness, to
retire from the business and hurry of a
tumultuous and vexatious world, and are
permitted to enjoy a more immediate and
uninterrupted attendance on Divine Majesty.
Oh Blessed Indulgence! Oh most Happy Day!**

The Rhythm of Faith: Structuring Time The Christian Year

Church Year of Western Christianity

Advent

- marks the start of the church year, four weeks before Christmas
- *adventus* = “coming” or “arrival”
- intended to focus on the two “advents” of Jesus
 - coming in humility as a human being at Christmas (the Incarnation)
 - coming in glory as judge at the end of time
- traditions: “Advent Wreath” or “Advent Crown”

The Rhythm of Faith: Structuring Time The Christian Year

Church Year of Western Christianity

Christmas

Celebrated December 25. Origin of the date debated:

- an old, popular theory is that the date was chosen to substitute for a pagan winter festival
- recent scholarship: early Church fathers (Tertullian ~200 and Augustine ~400) wrote that Jesus was conceived (Annunciation) and suffered on the same date – March 25. December 25 is 9 months from March 25.

The Rhythm of Faith: Structuring Time The Christian Year

Church Year of Western Christianity

Christmas

- Central theme: birth of Jesus, the Incarnation
- Service of Nine Carols and Lessons” originated at King’s College Cambridge

The Rhythm of Faith: Structuring Time The Christian Year

Church Year of Western Christianity

Lent

- begins on Ash Wednesday, 7 weeks before Easter
 - Old Testament: ashes on face / clothing a sign of repentance, remorse (Esther 4:1, Jeremiah 6:26)
- based on Jesus' 40 days of fasting in the wilderness after his baptism, before beginning his public ministry

The Rhythm of Faith: Structuring Time The Christian Year

Church Year of Western Christianity

Holy Week

- Palm Sunday

- commemorate Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem

- Maundy Thursday, Holy Thursday

- focuses on the Last Supper, final acts of Jesus before his death
- “Maundy” = corruption of Latin word *mandatum* (command). In the middle ages, services began in Latin with verse (John 13:34): **“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.”** = *mandatum novum do vobis...*

The Rhythm of Faith: Structuring Time The Christian Year

Church Year of Western Christianity

Holy Week

- Good Friday

- Focuses on the crucifixion, suffering, and death of Jesus, and the costliness of human redemption
- Most solemn day in the Christian year
- Observing the “Three hours of the Cross” from 12-3 pm began in the 18th century

The Rhythm of Faith: Structuring Time The Christian Year

Church Year of Western Christianity

Holy Week

- **Holy Saturday**

- often celebrated with a late evening vigil service with imagery of light and darkness

The Rhythm of Faith: Structuring Time The Christian Year

Church Year of Western Christianity

Easter

- The most important festival of the church year
- Marks the Resurrection of Jesus. Affirms:
 - identity of Jesus as risen Savior and Lord
 - the Christian hope of a personal resurrection

The Rhythm of Faith: Structuring Time The Christian Year

Church Year of Western Christianity

Pentecost (Whitsunday)

- Recalls the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles

Sundays after Pentecost, or “Ordinary Time”

The Rhythm of Faith: Structuring Time The Christian Year

Church Year of Western Christianity

Parallel to the calendar of seasons of the Church Year (Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter, Pentecost), is a *second* calendar of daily commemorations / celebrations of the lives of the Saints

The Rhythm of Faith: Structuring Time The Christian Year

Church Year of Eastern Christianity

Also has two “parallel” calendars

Primary calendar is centered upon the “Feast of Feasts” – **Pascha** (Easter)

Season of Pre-Lent

4 Sundays before “Great Lent”

1. **Sunday of the Tax Collector and the Pharisee**
2. **Sunday of the Prodigal Son**
3. **Meatfare Sunday** (the Final Judgment)
4. **Cheesefare Sunday or Forgiveness Sunday**
(Adam’s expulsion from Paradise)

The Rhythm of Faith: Structuring Time The Christian Year

Church Year of Eastern Christianity

Great Lent

- there is *no* Ash Wednesday. Lent begins the Monday after Cheesefare Sunday
- First Sunday (**Sunday of Orthodoxy**)
- Second Sunday (**St. Gregory Palamas**)
- Third Sunday (**Adoration of the Cross**)
- Fourth Sunday (**St. John of the Ladder**)
- Fifth Sunday (**St. Mary of Egypt**)
- **Lazarus Saturday** (Saturday before Palm Sunday)
- Sixth Sunday (**Palm Sunday**, start of Holy Week)

The Rhythm of Faith: Structuring Time The Christian Year

Church Year of Eastern Christianity

Holy Pascha (Easter Sunday)

- **Bright Week:** each day of the week following Easter, services are celebrated with Easter splendor
- celebration continues for 50 days after Easter, until Pentecost

The Rhythm of Faith: Structuring Time The Christian Year

Church Year of Eastern Christianity

Holy Pascha (Easter Sunday)

- Weeks after Easter:
 - Second Sunday of Easter: **St. Thomas Sunday, the Antipascha**
 - Third Sunday of Easter: **Sunday of the Myrrhbearing Women**
 - Fourth Sunday of Easter: **Sunday of the Healing of the Paralytic (John 5)**
 - **Feast of Mid-Pentecost**
 - Fifth Sunday of Easter: **Sunday of the Samaritan Woman (John 4)**
 - Sixth Sunday of Easter: **Sunday of the Healing of the Man Blind from Birth (John 9)**
 - **Ascension**

The Rhythm of Faith: Structuring Time The Christian Year

Church Year of Eastern Christianity

Pentecost

- Each day of the week after Pentecost has a special dedication:
 - *Sunday*: Resurrection of Jesus
 - *Monday*: bodiless powers, the angels
 - *Tuesday*: John the Baptist
 - *Wednesday and Friday*: Christ's Suffering and Crucifixion
 - *Thursday*: apostles and St. Nicholas
 - *Saturday*: the Theotokos (from the Greek for "mother of God") and memory of the departed

The Rhythm of Faith: Structuring Time The Christian Year

Church Year of Eastern Christianity

Parallel to the primary calendar centered around the “Feast of Feasts” (Holy Pascha = Easter), is a second calendar of daily commemorations of the lives of Saints and other feast days through the year, including

- Sep 14: **Exaltation of the Cross**
- Nov 21: **Presentation of the Theotokos to the Temple**
- Dec 25: the **Nativity of Christ**

- Jan 6: the **Epiphany and Baptism of Jesus**
- Feb 2: the **Presentation or Meeting of Christ in the Temple**
- Mar 25: the **Annunciation**
- Aug 6: The **Transfiguration of Christ**
- Aug 15: The **Dormition (Death) of Mary**

Each of these other feast days is:

- preceded by some days of pre-festal preparation (a lent)
- followed by days of post-festal celebration

The Feast of the Nativity has a 4 week lent (corresponding to the Western season of “Advent”)

The Rhythm of Faith: Structuring Time The Monastic Day

Reaction to the secularization of the church in the Christian Roman Empire lead to formation of monasteries

- seen as the ideal way of life, with a goal of continuous prayer (impossible in outside world)
- pattern emerged of prayer 7 times during the day, once a night
 - Psalm 119:164: commends prayer at 7 points during the day; many psalms refer to prayer at night
- the times of prayers became known as “offices”
 - Latin *officium* = “an obligation”

The Rhythm of Faith: Structuring Time The Monastic Day

1. **Prime:** early morning prayer
2. **Mattins:** morning prayer
3. **Terce:** 9 am
4. **Sext:** 12 noon
5. **None:** 3 pm
6. **Vespers:** evening prayer
7. **Compline:** before retiring to bed

Night Office: time varied

The Rhythm of Faith: Structuring Time The Monastic Day

Terms for Prayer books with office

readings:

Daily Office

Daily Hours

Liturgy of the Hours

Horologion = Book of the Hours

(Orthodox)

The Rhythm of Faith: Structuring Time The Monastic Day

First *Book of Common Prayer* tried to make prayer part of daily life with two “offices” of prayer: morning and evening

The 1979 Prayer Book has short (< 5 minutes) prayers for *four* times during the day:

- morning
- noonday
- early evening
- evening

The Rhythm of Faith: Structuring Time The Monastic Day

Daily offices readings are available on the Internet.

*A contemporary Series of Daily Office
Prayer Books:*

The Divine Hours: Prayers for Summertime
The Divine Hours: Prayers for Autumn and
Wintertime

The Divine Hours: Prayers for Springtime
by Phyllis Tickle (Editor)
Doubleday, 2000 – 2001

References

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