

J. Y. LACOSTE, *Expérience et absolu. Questions disputées sur l'humanité de l'homme*, Paris, PUF, 1994

PART I: PRESENTATION

INTRODUCTION

In his book, *Expérience et absolu. Questions disputées sur l'humanité de l'homme*, Lacoste deals with the problem of religious anthropology. When talking about religious anthropology, his first concern is the question of human experience in contact with the Absolute. He fulfills this project by taking Heidegger as his interlocutor. Heidegger, indeed, understands anthropology as the interpretation of a human person who already knows, from the beginning, what it means to be human¹.

Lacoste's concern is to go beyond this kind of subjectivity or the mere religious feeling, as suggested by Schleimacher, by focusing on the humanity of human person. This humanity, he locates it in the essential relation of being, that is, in the liturgical relation with the Absolute. By liturgy he means, in a broad sense, "the logic that presides at the encounter between human and God"². For that reason, the phenomenology of liturgical act will be the way he tries to rethink religious experience and the focus from which he inquiries on the humanity of human person.

HUMAN PERSON AND HIS PLACE

A. TOPOLOGY AND LITURGY

1. Place and World

First of all, Lacoste starts by showing how far the question of being and that of "place" are linked³. For him the experience of "here" and "there" is so important that it is proper to the body as well as to the consciousness. He makes a difference between place and space. Whereas space is a geometrical concept that defines materially the contour of things, place is other than space; it provides us with details of life or existence. Its logic is the logic of topology. And this has to be understood not only externally, but also internally, for the mere reason that ipseity and corporeity are undisociable.

As Heidegger suggests, Lacoste claims that "the experience of the self is 'co-experience' of place as much as it is 'co-experience' of time"⁴, because we cannot come back to ourselves by ceasing to be among things where we have 'place'.

For Lacoste, however, place does not mean World. Referring to Heidegger, who is the first to have shown the importance of 'locality' (our-being-in-the-world) as the transcendental note of the humanity of human person, he gives the concept of place an embracing understanding. In that sense, he defines the World as the horizon of place.

¹ Y. Lacoste, *Expérience et Absolu*, p. 10

² Idem, p. 2

³ Idem, p. 7

⁴ Idem, p. 4

By definition a horizon is something impassable that runs away before us as one tries to approach it. Essentially, the logic of place is the logic of corporeal existence, that of proximity of things and of our stronghold over them⁵. But, by displaying itself as World and by having horizon as structure, ‘place’ escapes from seizure as well as it escapes from measure. This does not mean, nevertheless, that things become out of seizure; what he means is that the world displayed as horizon around a place we occupy is in a perpetual withdrawal with regard to that place and to our presence within it.

The consequence of this perception is that, for Lacoste, “the World proceeds to the permanent critique of the experience of “here” by that of “there”⁶. Its horizon structure challenges the tamed finitude of our place and the things we encounter within it.

Given this situation, the *being-there* (l’être-la or Da-sein) is a *being-in* (un être-dans). In other words, our relationship to the world is characterized by our inherence and its logic is the logic of *immanence*. What Lacoste means here by inherence is this kind of immanence proper to one who is confronted with the limits represented by a horizon. This makes the world as well as the place, an ecological reality. If the place is perceived as world and locality is lived as being-in-the world, it is because what is accessible to us detaches itself from inaccessibility of a horizon.

2. Openness and Strangeness

According to Lacoste, the world is close and distant at the same time; but we cannot abstract from it without losing every conceptualization of what we are. Why is it like that? Heidegger, in *Sein und Zeit*, calls this ontological openness, *Erschlossenheit* (disclosure).

In fact, our relationship to the world is that of a subject to an object, where the world is other than consciousness and the latter expressing the capacity of the self (or the ego) to be related to the world. To put it in Husserlian terms, we would distinguish in the consciousness a sphere of activity where the intentionality governs as well as the relationship of “the self to the self” (de soi a soi) and that of the “self” to the world” (de soi au monde).

Here the real paradox appears because the world is not a being (étant), but the condition under which a being is given to us. Moreover, our inherence to the world is not fundamentally a question of consciousness⁷. In other words, before the very act of consciousness the world already invades the *Dasein*. As the *Dasein* is open to the world, it has no protection with regard to it. That is the reason why, against Leibniz, Lacoste’s claim is that “*Dasein*, in a sense, is only doors and windows”⁸. But as there is no being-in-the-world that is reflected in consciousness, this latter becomes dispossessed of every constituting function.

In a nutshell, we can say that “consciousness does not create opening to *Dasein*. On the contrary, opening is the first condition of the exercise of consciousness. The logic

⁵ Idem, p. 9

⁶ Idem, p. 10

⁷ Idem, p. 11

⁸ Idem, p. 12

of inherence is that of a sovereignty that the place under the figure of world exercises with regard to the ego⁹. This openness explains why some persons refuse to exist by referring to the only model proposed by the Heideggerian *Dasein*, but instead refer to the Absolute.

While the world is the condition of our being, it is not, however, our home. The being-in-the-world is fundamentally determined as *Unzuhause*, that is, as being-not-at-home (une non-domiciliation). Despite the fact that we belong to the world by our inherence and openness, it is not, however, our original relation to the world. We belong to the world, but the world does not belong to us; its reality invades us and determines us. Hence, “the world is simultaneously native and foreign land. The condition of *Dasein* is that of a stateless person: *Umheimlichkeit*, the strangeness¹⁰.”

This is not an accidental character of *Dasein*, but an essential one. This condition does not come from metaphysical hazard or from a fake relation with the world, but it is the constitutive truth of the being-in-the-world, which is denied by the very daily experience in the world. When *Dasein* discovers this reality (in *Sein und Zeit*) it seems to be taken over by a kind of anxiety, where it is led back to its origin. There it experiences abandonment “dereliction”, in the solitude¹¹.

3. World and Earth

Here Lacoste points out that in later Heidegger there is a real turn (*Kehere*) in his thought, moving from the concept of ‘World’ (*Sein und Zeit*) to that of “earth” (*Hölderling*) and whose goal is to think of being from itself than from beings. One of the issues at stake of this change is the recognition or to use his term, the restitution of the country (*patrie*), as a radical right to foil the anxiety of the *Unzuhause*.

The earth ‘counter-distinguishes’ (*contredistingue*) the openness of *Dasein* by offering itself as what that can shelter and protect to the extent that the world cannot be thought of without the earth and vice versa. The earth becomes the bearer of all things (*omnipotante: das alles Tragende*) and the foundation that shuts on itself (*der sich verschliessende Grund*). “It is on earth that the historical humanity founds its house in the world”¹². The earth makes the world a dwelling where we are at home.

This change with the stress on the right to be in the house as one who dwells in it contradicts Heidegger’s position held in *Sein und Zeit*. World and Earth are no longer seen as strangers to one who is confronted by their openness and shelter. On the contrary, the idea of home (*patrie*) becomes very central as a place of proximity with regard to the origin.

What is still interesting to signal here is that ‘human’s belonging to the earth’ is understood less and less as ‘place’ and more and more as historical milieu where every person can feel at home¹³. That is the reason why the latter Heidegger will say that the

⁹ Idem, p. 12

¹⁰ Idem, p. 13-14

¹¹ Idem, p. 5

¹² Idem, p. 16

¹³ Idem, p. 17

crisis of home is above all (about) others. As consequences of this thematisation: daily gestures stop being superficial; instead of anxiety there is joy and serenity; there is a re-finding of atavistic confidence to be linked to the earth; the finitude of the world with its possibility of death ceases to be tragic. Henceforth, ‘the act of dwelling’ becomes ‘an act of building’ (act de bâtir)¹⁴.

4. The infinite Relation and the Dialectic of World and Earth

Having showed the shift that happened in the later Heidegger and its implications, Lacoste deals with Heideggerian theory of the “Fourfold” (*das Geviert*), which grows out of the encounter with ‘*Holderlin* and the essence of poetry’ between 1930 and 1940. The duality human and world/earth is now replaced by a structure of locality’s four terms. This Fourfold – *Earth/Haven* and *Mortals/Divine* – is intended as clarification of the components of what had been called ‘place’, the site from which an individual *Dasein* projects and maintains its world.

The shift appearing here is that human person dwells no more in the world or earth, but rather in between the divines and earthly realities. There is an ethics of poetic dwelling. To dwell poetically means to stand in the presence of the divines and to be touched by the essential proximity of things¹⁵. In that sense, earth becomes earth only as it is the earth of heavens that is itself only heavens because it acts from high upon the earth¹⁶. There is an expectation of a “big beginning” (le grand commencement) or “what comes” (ce qui vient). This “high upon” is what Lacoste calls ‘Infinite Relation’.

In other words, the ‘Infinite Relation’ refers to the entire wholeness of the relation between all the elements of the fourfold. It stands for the integral dimensions of the ‘place’¹⁷. In this way, the ‘place’ is redefined and exceeds the limits of the world. At the same time, as the sacred performs the role of correlation between the *Geviert*, this leads to the enlargement of the sphere of the immanence. Thus, the *Geviert* substitutes to being-in-the-world and becomes a ‘mega lieu’ (archi-lieu) which provides details of what is and, then, that of human person’s humanity.

Lacoste draws two consequences from this theme. The first is a paradoxical enchantment of the world: with the enlargement of the immanence and the presence of the Fourfold the *Dasein* stands in the proximity of gods or the divines, even if these do not deserve the name of God¹⁸. Then, the mediation of the sacred becomes indispensable to whom would like to know the world¹⁹.

The second consequence is that the proximity with gods within the *Geviert* (quadripartite) conceals the absence of God and reveals it as the theme of thought outside the range of Heidegger’s thinking. That is the reason why for Lacoste in Heideggerian

¹⁴ Idem, p. 18

¹⁵ Idem, p. 16

¹⁶ Idem, p. 19

¹⁷ Idem, p. 19

¹⁸ We will see later the reasons why they do not so.

¹⁹ Idem, p. 19-20

thought “the mortal become closer to a sacred which is immanent and not a transcendent God”²⁰.

After this explanation about the shift that happened in Heideggerian’s thought, Lacoste comes back to the theme of World/earth and tries to oppose them. He points out that the relation between world and earth as referring to earlier and later Heidegger is a twofold deployment of what was called ‘place’ and this deployment is original or initial.

World and earth are, in fact, two antagonistic figures of one reality whose antagonism is embedded in common ground; they are a double secret of place²¹. That is why, according to him, the “place has the dialectical power of giving itself as world and earth without one of the figures becoming original or fundamental”²². Thus, the status of homelessness is a possibility given more than a reality. From that perspective, it can be said that our native conditions of experience cannot anticipate our domiciliation or no-domiciliation.

Even if Lacoste recognizes the importance of the twofold displaying of the place, his claim is that “the fullness of our locality (as well as that of essence) would lack to communicate if the place was displayed only as world or earth. (...) The serene dwelling of earth, the familiarity of heavens and the sacred are not the only mode under which to really experience our relation to the place”²³. It is for that reason he will find a third way in liturgy or religion.

5. Liturgy as Transgression

Despite the openness of *Dasein* and its deployment as ‘quadriparti’, Lacoste points out that Heideggerian phenomenology cannot give rise to an Absolute who is a person and a promise of relationship. Only such a perception of Absolute builds up the right of liturgy in the interpretation of the relation we have with the world and the earth.

It is from here that Lacoste takes distance from Heidegger. As he says, “neither in its deployment of place as world nor its deployment as earth is liturgy included in the topology”²⁴. In order to show the relevance of this perception, he insists on the importance of physical gestures of the sacrifice, and the architectural expression of devotion as liturgical features.

Lacoste makes clear that his own definition of liturgy is intended to define the phenomena and in that sense embraces these phenomena, as indeed the whole of spiritual life. Liturgy, for him, is essentially a labor (oeuvre) of freedom and work (travail) of ‘over-determination: it exceeds the inner logic and system of topology. Only a *deliberation* institutes liturgy and a *decision* defines a liturgical dwelling. Because liturgy exceeds the being-in –the –world and the relation to the earth, “it holds the secret of topology”²⁵ in the sense that it adds to topology what topography could never contain.

²⁰ Idem, p. 21

²¹ Idem, p. 22

²² Idem, p. 23.

²³ Idem, p. 24.

²⁴ Idem, p. 26.

²⁵ Idem, p. 27.

That is the reason why liturgy is above all else a ‘transgression’ of topology. What follows makes it clear.

B. PLACE AND NO-PLACE

1. Saint Benedict’s Vision: the Exclusion

While the first part of his book Lacoste has based his analysis on philosophy, in the second part, he jumps into spirituality and the theology of the church’s fathers. He refers to the mystical experience of St Benedict, where he draws a principle that liturgy exerts a power of subversion within topology.

The core of St Benedict’s experience is that instead of *inclusive existence* of one who is in the world, the alternative of taking distance from it as a spectator is possible. That experience consists in ceasing to be in the world – phenomenologically speaking – by making oneself excluded²⁶. The exclusion under question is not an ontological reality, but the horizon through which we live. Thus, the topology of inherence can be, at least ontologically, exceeded because of this experience of exclusion as new relation to the world.

In two points, Lacoste tries to explain this occurring excess:

a) The exclusion does not over-impose itself to being-in-the-world. It is a violent phenomenological paradox through which “the relation of inclusion gives up its place to another relation which is the relation of confrontation”²⁷.

In fact, for the human person who stands liturgically before God, the world ceases to be a horizon and appears as what that is not. In such experience, liturgy foils the laws of topology; the place does no more define human person in terms of ‘inherence’ unless secondarily. In other words, human could ‘have place’ (*avoir lieu*), but without that his being-in-the-world provides the details of that place. This is the work of ‘grace’

b) The subversion of topology by the liturgy is thinkable only in terms of *eschaton*, that is an eschatological anticipation. Since historicity and being-in-the-world are interrelated, when the relation of human inherence to the world is broken, the horizon of historicity is simultaneously exceeded. That is why Lacoste claims that “When the world is at distance, history is also at distance”²⁸.

In fact, its reality is not annihilated, but in between-time (*entre-temps*) because the worshiper dwells in the fulfillment of history which is the *eschaton*. And this fulfillment contains an aggression because by subverting the topology, liturgy redefines the “place” not as being –there, but as being-towards, which gives rise to relationship.

To this vision of St Benedict, Lacoste adds the reference of “icon” that reminds us Marion’s theological endeavor to name God by referring to icon. His reference recalls specially icon on which Christ-child is represented handling the terrestrial globe in his hand.

²⁶ Idem, p. 28

²⁷ Idem p. 30

²⁸ Idem, p. 31

For Lacoste, this is a theological paradox. What he means by this paradox is that, for him, the incarnation is the expression of the dwelling of the Absolute among human beings in-the-world. The holding of the terrestrial globe in God's man hands means that the world which is for human beings "no-transcendatable" (intranscendatable) can be symbolically objectified and the objectification can go up that it rests in God.

The lesson to be retained is that the human person who totally rests in God escapes the world's rules and participates in God's reign on the universe²⁹. In this way, human's liturgical identity confirms and criticizes at the same time his topological identity for the mere reason that by eschatological order it is situated in the world, but at the same time it takes off world's status of horizon.

Even if the common modes through which a human person determines liturgically his being-there does not allow any kind of ecstasy, which is God's special grace, nonetheless liturgy has to do with topology or the logic of locality. It is for that reason that Lacoste tries to explain the relation to the world in referring to the ascetic experience.

2. Reclusion

The 'localty' is a fundamental datum of human existence even for the 'reclused' (le reclus) who is in his cell. The 'Place' always deploys world/earth as denial and promise of home even when a monk chooses to live in ascetic conditions. However, "by consenting to-be-there, the "reclused" uses in fact, the place or almost for being nowhere. His reclusion is liturgical labor, where the gestures performed in the presence of God subordinate all that belongs to the topologic³⁰.

From the experience of reclusion, Lacoste states that by identifying the world's horizon and that of his cell, the 'reclused' is one who is disinterested in the logic of topology. Even when the world and earth invade him, he is within them only in order to face the Absolute's requests. That is why *symbolically, his place is a no-place*³¹.

In other words, the ascetic does not escape the world – phenomenologically understood. But, as a human living in society, he foils its laws for the sake of more fundamental rule. This is an authentic, or to put it in his own word, a sensible and consistent experience: the relation to the Absolute implies a certain usage of place. It is by doing violence to the logic of place that one is interested in God without reserve.

In that sense, the training to liturgical experience opens us a space where the world or the earth does no more interpose between human and God. By transgressing the laws of topology, the ascetic insinuates that the dialectics of world and earth is not the whole truth of "place"³².

The way the 'reclused' is playing with his being-there and is dealing with his 'facticity' (facticité) comes from a desire for the *eschaton* (le désir de l'eschaton). So, by extremely impoverishing his relation to the place, and by subverting the sense of locality,

²⁹ The reference Lacoste makes of St Augustine's anxiety as expressed on page 25-26, not 1, allows the better understanding of what is at stake in his argumentation.

³⁰ Idem p. 33

³¹ Idem, p. 33

³² Idem p. 35

the ascetic claims his right for the freedom of transfiguring the logic of being-in-the-world on behalf of liturgical logic, and desires the eschatological institution of this transfiguration.

3. Disorientation

Going further in his analysis, Lacoste focuses his attention on the experience of *Xéneteia* through which a pilgrim monk refuses to dwell “here” and “there” or to consider the world as his “home”. With regard to the place and its dialectical deployment, this is possible only by an obvious decision. By acting so, the pilgrim becomes a “mètèque”, a non-autochthone who has no land, no country, no nation and whose citizenship is at the dimension of the world.

Thus, the decision to live as pilgrim invalidates the right to belong to a place whatever large that dwelling land (oikouménè) may be. Moreover, whatever may be the reason why he is running away, the motivations “that lead his perpetual running allow to perceive here again a symbolic subversion of place – and these reasons are also liturgical”³³.

Willing to give more precision to his argumentation, Lacoste comes back to the interpretation of the phenomenon of reclusion by stressing two points:

a) He shows that the free determination of the existence as transit denies the experience that the “place” is our land where we can live in peace, at home. In that sense, Heideggerian *Geviert* does not fulfill, but founds history and opens it, under the reserve of salvation that only God can give³⁴.

But, the problem with Christian experience, he says, is precisely the surprising no-realization of the *eschaton*. Hence, our experience is always lived through death and sin. In this line of idea, the institution of cenobite monarchism is an attempt to answer this major problem where at the margin of human’s city, human being tries and build up a city – as an earthly (mondain) icon of God’s city – where it is possible to live, by anticipation, according to eschatological dimension of his being³⁵.

Even if monarchism and *Xénetéia* share the same ascetic radicalism, this latter suggests more than that to the point that liturgical experience becomes an *ethical experience of conversion*. It is for that reason that for Lacoste, liturgical experience ‘forbids’ human beings to dwell on earth peacefully.

b) The fact that the pilgrim is a universal “mètèque” does not mean that Christian experience is related to the no-domiciliation of *Dasein*. On the contrary, the motivations for ascetic life are beyond the dialectic of world and earth.

That is the reason why the pilgrim monk has really one thing to tell us: that no immanent logic of place implies liturgical experience. Likewise, as liturgy does not arise from earthly (terienne) familiarity with the sacred, so it does take place as led by the lack

³³ Idem, p. 37.

³⁴ Idem, p. 38

³⁵ Idem, p. 38

of comforts of being-in-the world. It is a question of over-determination. In fact, liturgy is proposed as symbolic subversion of being-in-the-place³⁶.

4. Liturgy, beyond Earth and World

For Lacoste, the liturgical dimension of experience affects the topology that it over-determines. It breaks the world-circularity to the earth so that place and body may be thought in accordance to their origin or their fulfillment.

In that sense, reclusion and wandering are not nihilistic paradoxes; on the contrary, they remind us that there is a close interchange between corporeal and liturgical experience. By subverting the human relation to the place, liturgy suspends or breaks the indifference of the dialectical deployment according to which the world can be taken as a home or a strange land of universal exile³⁷.

How does Lacoste interpret this indifference? According to him, place and body, which he calls carnality, are the prior conditions of liturgy and these denounce its historical site. Moreover, liturgy institutes what was called the “no-places” (non-lieux) of spaces by bringing them in a new order of meaning and a new order of finalities.

From this point of view, we understand why world and earth’s antagonism does not affect liturgy. The liturgical game is a game of whoever wants to exist before God; it is an over-determination; it does not depend on the sacredness or the no-sacredness of the place. It is for that reason that, for Lacoste, liturgy does not pronounce itself on the foundation it might find in some places or on our locality. Its order does not belong to native experiences, but to what recalls our ‘origin’. As it is done on behalf of eschatology, its language, as it were, is of origin and fulfillment.

Thus, Lacoste can conclude: “The liturgy is a human historical work. It is simultaneously that labor that takes big distances with regard to historical determinations of our being. By playing with the place beyond world and earth, it is then possible that it alludes to a mode of being faithful to the “‘origin’ where the world would not interpose between God and human and where world’s presence and God’s presence would be ”co-given”³⁸.

PART II: COMMENTS

1. From Dogma to Liturgy: from Segundo to Lacoste

For one interested in knowing how the dogma shapes the life of the Church, the book of Juan Luis Segundo, “*The Liberation of Dogma*”, offers some insights that can help grasp the past, the present and the future to which the Church tends.

In this book, in fact, J. L. Segundo offers an analysis, though from the point of view of the Latin American Theology of Liberation, of the history of the dogma inside the Church. He interprets the dogma as “a process of learning to learn” through which

³⁶ Idem, p. 39.

³⁷ Idem, p. 40.

³⁸ Idem, p. 42.

God's people try to "understand better their faith in order to provide meaning for their lives and communities"³⁹.

According to his analysis, the dogma is lived by the community, but inside the Church. But, as Vatican II puts it, liturgy is the summit to which the church's action tends and, at the same time, the source from which its virtue comes⁴⁰. In that sense, liturgy is not only the favored place the community of believers gives witness to their faith⁴¹, but also the place where they celebrate what they believe in the dogmas. From this point view, there is some agreement between Segundo and Lacoste. But is this agreement total?

In fact, the analysis Segundo makes of Liturgy is very restrictive. For instance, one would like to find more information about Liturgy and how within what he calls the liberation of dogmas it is possible to give a new impetus to Church's liturgy. This perspective is not clearly given in his analysis.

Moreover, the way he approaches liturgy is especially linked to its function as it is embedded within the administration of sacraments⁴². His stress is particularly directed to the importance and the place of lay people within the Church so that they may have same opportunities and same sharing in ministries. However, that is not the only dimension that liturgy has. There are also corporeal and spiritual dimensions, individual and community life dimension, or historical and ecclesiological dimensions, etc.

All that makes that his definition of liturgy is so broad that any service offered by the faithful is considered as liturgical⁴³. In my view, the best definition of liturgy should not be given by trying to justify a thesis, but rather by looking at liturgy itself. The

³⁹ J. L. Segundo, *The Liberation of Dogma: Faith, Revelation, and dogmatic Teaching Authority*, Wipf & Stock Pub, 2004, p. 13 & 134.

For reasons of intellectual honesty, a background of J. L. Segundo theology is necessary. J. L. Segundo is a Latin American Catholic Theologian and one of the founders of the Theology of Liberation. In his book on the Dogma, he provides a groundbreaking study of dogma in the Old Testament through the ages. His study is thorough, nuanced, courageous and sometimes controversial as he addresses central issues about the process of revelation and its content with the lens of the Theology of liberation. However, in a prophetic fashion, he tries to discern the signs of the times and restore an experiential basis to divine revelation and its dogmatic formulation with the intention of leading them to the core teachings that humanizing.

⁴⁰ *Sacrosanctum concilium*, # 10.

⁴¹ Kabasele Lumbala, *Celebrating Jesus Christ in Africa. Liturgy and Inculturation*, New York, Maryknoll, 1988, p. 2.

⁴² J. L. Segundo, *The Liberation of Dogma*, p. 213-219.

⁴³ *Idem*, p. 218.

components allowing a more clear definition of liturgy are well known: a proper language, appropriate gestures, signs, symbols, a community and intentions⁴⁴.

What about Lacoste? He also has a broad understanding of liturgy, but unlike Segundo, his stress is on the ‘operative’ or acting function of liturgy and on the corporeal dimension of one who is worshipping. What is important to him is not the content of liturgy or the place where liturgy takes place, but what happens when someone is in liturgy with regard to that place. In other words, liturgy for Lacoste has no place; it is beyond cathedrals and basilicas⁴⁵.

If that is true, then, it is legitimate to say that for him too, liturgy has no identity. This point is part of the argumentation that postmodern theologians defend in their endeavor. For them, it is important to go beyond the confined limits of religious denominations and liturgical routines in order to embrace any religious experience and its liturgy. They see in such an approach an advantage susceptible of helping in the promotion of ecumenical endeavor.

As true as such approach can be, it has a problem. In fact, if by going toward others, we have to sacrifice the core tenants of what makes our faith and teachings unique, we compromise our identity. In the end, our identity will be diluted when encountering other world religions.

Moreover, for Lacoste, liturgy is first of all, “a labor of freedom” and the “work of decision”⁴⁶. In other words, without our consent and will, liturgy cannot happen. This reminds me of what I called above as the “intentions”. But, the problem such a restrictive vision raises is to know how to come to the right decision and especially to the discovery of a personal God through the practice of liturgy. That is why it is important to maintain that liturgy is also the work of God’s grace and not only as the human effort to worship God.

2. Lacoste and Jean Luc Marion in dialogue

Like Marion, Lacoste talks also about “Icon”. For Marion⁴⁷, the ‘icon’ is this visible mirror that renders visible the invisible. That is why it is different from ‘Idol’ that prevents our gaze to go beyond the mere image⁴⁸. Unlike Marion, Lacoste’s use of ‘icon’

⁴⁴ G. Luken, *Plaidoyer pour une approche intégrale de la liturgie comme lieu théologique: un défi à toute la théologie*, in *Questions liturgiques*, 68 (1987)/4, p. 242-255.

⁴⁵ These words are eloquent by themselves: “La liturgie ne se prononce pas sur les fondements qu’elle pourrait trouver en quelque propriété essentielle du lieu, ou de certains lieux, ou d’une certaine structure apriorique de notre localité. Se J. Y. Lacoste, *Expérience et Absolu*, p. 41.

⁴⁶ J. L. Segundo, *The Liberation of Dogma*, p. 27

⁴⁷ Jean Luc Marion is a French philosopher and theologian. He is specialized in Phenomenology and somewhat in Mystical and Patristic Theology. His work has to do with Descartes, Derrida, and Martin Heidegger and Edmund Husserl.

⁴⁸ J. ANSALDI, *Approche doxologique de la Trinité de Dieu. Dialogue avec J. L. Marion*, in *Etudes théologiques et Religieuses*, 62 (1987), p. 82-83. For more details about the thoughts of Marion and the distinction he makes between Idol and Icon, see J. L.

is provided in order to underline, through the theological paradox appearing in the statue of Child-Jesus handling a terrestrial globe, that liturgy opens the way to the inversion of the relation of inherence⁴⁹.

However, if by gazing at the child-Jesus we see God, the Lord of the Universe, we can say that the icon functions as Marion represents it. If on the contrary, our gaze does not go beyond the mere statue and remains confined there, then, it functions as idol. Once again, there is the problem of objectivity that has to be resolved. How to go up through the contemplation of human images or icons without falling in the pitfall of worshiping them as God? Are there some criteria allowing us not to get lost through the statues and icons we encounter in the world and to raise our mind to a personal God?

The comments I offer in this analysis refer mostly to the call of deepening the dogmas as it was required to me by the Seminar on the development of Dogmas.

Fr Felicien I. Mbala, PhD, STD

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Marion, *God Without Being*, University of Chicago Press, 1982. (The book is a translation of French: « Dieu sans l'être ». Presses Universitaires de France, PUF, Paris, 2002.

⁴⁹ J. L. Lacoste, *idem*, p. 31.