



## Chapter 3

# Betwixt and between (and beyond?) two Barnards: An invitation to liturgical research as synergistic assent

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### Abstract

This chapter gives a brief overview of three ways of approaching liturgical research, namely, the historical, ritual, and theological approaches.

The historical and ritual approaches are briefly outlined with the help of two influential liturgical scholars at the University of Pretoria. David Fagerberg and Gordon Lathrop set the scene for integrating the historical and ritual approaches as liturgical theology.

### The ABCs of liturgical studies at the University of Pretoria

What a privilege to be writing this chapter!

I would like to address you as a fellow traveller when it comes to the study of ... and here I should have inserted liturgy and homiletics, but I waiver, or perhaps I should say the liturgical study of ... God, but God is not an object to be studied.

So, how are we to describe this field?

The answer, for me, lies partially with Conor Cunningham's description of (practical) theology as not a

subject but a task.<sup>1</sup> For me, theology is a journey with – and to – the Infinite Beauty, Truth and Goodness that is God (Hart, 2013).

But let us take a step backwards.

As a green lecturer in the Practical Theology Department specialising in homiletics (the study of preaching) and especially liturgical studies, I attempt to stand in enormous shoes that have walked the road before me at the University of Pretoria. Wepener & Bartlett (2014:2) hail such scholars as, among others, A.C. Barnard, Cas Vos, Hennie Pieterse and Julian Müller (my doctoral supervisor). In this chapter, I aim to introduce three approaches to doing liturgical research: history, ritual studies, and the theological approach. It will be impossible to do justice to all the scholars mentioned here who contributed to this field.

With a predilection for alliteration and stretching a point or two, I will focus on two Barnards: A.C. Barnard (the historical approach) and Marcell Barnard (the ritual study approach).

To mention Marcel Barnard is to refer almost automatically to Cas Wepener (lecturer at the University of Pretoria from 2010 to 2019), who is an internationally renowned practical theologian specialising in liturgical studies. Cas Wepener, together with his friend and collaborator Marcel Barnard have had a massive influence through their writing and the supervision of students in South Africa and beyond (Barnard et al., 2014, 2022; Wepener & Barnard 2010). Of course, one should not throw the giant of homiletical and liturgical studies, Johan Cilliers, to one side!

In this chapter, I aim to take a leaf from the methodological overview of liturgical studies in South Africa of Wepener and Barnard by conveying how the legacy of liturgical

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1 See the YouTube video, 'Why Study Theology with Conor Cunningham. Retrieved 22 March 2024 from [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tuZazV6MyGM&ab\\_channel=UniversityofNottingham](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tuZazV6MyGM&ab_channel=UniversityofNottingham)

studies (and I will say something later on about homiletics) at the University of Pretoria specifically can help us to do fruitful research. I hope to make a small contribution by building on this legacy by introducing a hitherto relatively unexplored emphasis (liturgical theology) approach for liturgical research in the South African context.

### **What's in a name?**

One of the conundrums we face when entering the field of the study of liturgy is what to call it. Is it liturgical studies, liturgics, or liturgical theology? The answer is yes, or in other words, it could be called all by three names, and my hunch is that each title carries a slightly different approach to the study, I will use liturgics, liturgical studies, and liturgical theology as the nomenclature for the three approaches to the field that I discuss briefly in this chapter.

### **Four ways of three approaches**

As in many a field, there are various ways in which one could divide a (sub)discipline. Schattauer (2007) Identified three disciplinary approaches to liturgy: liturgical history (I will call liturgics), liturgical theology, and liturgy studied as ritual and symbol (which I will call here liturgical studies). Schattauer summarises the three approaches to liturgical study as follows: 'The aim or purpose of liturgical study turns toward the current practice of worship to understand where it came from (history), what it means (theology), and how it operates (ritual/symbol)' (Schattauer, 2007: 123).

Kimberly Hope Belcher also makes a threefold division for liturgical studies:

I see there being three main divisions to the field of liturgical studies, each of which can be approached according to multiple methods of its own. The three main divisions, as I see them are liturgical history (sometimes called liturgiology or 'study of the liturgy'), ritual studies, and sacramental theology. Each impinges on other fields of

## Practical Theology and Mission Studies

study, and there is also a considerable amount of overlap between these divisions; 'liturgical studies' is almost an interdisciplinary field. (Belcher, 2011)

It is important to note that Belcher recognises that the three approaches overlap and can be engaged in with various methodologies. Later on in her post, she speaks of sacramental or liturgical theology.

Martha H. Brundage (2018:166) reflects on her experience of the *Societas Liturgica* of 2017. In her estimation, three research methodologies were also employed:

- Ethnographic and practice studies that investigated the concrete questions of how churches engage in the liturgy.
- Social scientific methodologies were employed to help explain liturgy and help design worship.
- Historical methods that investigate the views of historical figures and how they would relate to current practice.

She calls for a fourth method, namely theology. What she means by 'theology' is elucidated by the kinds of questions she would like to have asked - by way of example:

- How does the Doctrine of the Trinity – the immanent and not just economic Trinity – inform our liturgical practices?
- What do the theological virtues have to do with Eucharistic practices?
- How does the Doctrine of the Incarnation – that mysterious coincidence of God and man – inform our baptismal rites?

One could translate what she means by stating that she is suggesting that systematic theology is also a primary research avenue into the Liturgy. If one combines Brundage's ethnographic and social science approaches, one would also have the threefold division of a focus on the anthropological/ social scientific study of ritual, historical studies of the development of Liturgy and a theological focus.

### Chapter 3

In their overview of liturgical studies in South Africa, Barnard & Wepener (2022:210–220) discern three stages within liturgical studies:

- The Past ('looking back'): This stage could be equated with the historical method in liturgical studies (2022:210).
- The Present ('looking around'): This stage could be strongly associated with what Schattauer (2007) calls 'Liturgy studied as ritual and symbol' (In fact, this is exactly how Barnard (2000) formulated it in his inaugural address at the University of Amsterdam: *Liturgiek als wetenskap van christelike riten en symbolen*).
- The Future ('looking forward'): There is no easy parallel with the third leg of the stool constructed so far.

Arrestingly, they associate these three phases of liturgical research with the Three persons of the Trinity: The Past: 'Theopraxis', The Present, 'Christopraxis'; and the Future of liturgical studies (specifically in Africa) as 'Pneumapraxis'. Going forward with their liturgical research, they call for a deeper engagement with what they call the 'spiritual ontology' in the African context.

Wepener and Barnard verge on but do not venture far into trinitarian theology (and anthropology) when they call for 'an anamnestic liturgical research methodology in which Theo-, Christo-, and Pneumapraxis converge as a trinitarian liminal flow' (Wepener & Barnard, 2022:220).

Later, I will say something about the relationship between trinitarian and liturgical research. I will here confine myself to making a taxonomy of three dimensions of liturgical research that, in some ways, aligned with the project of Barnard and Wepener. Still, the categorisation here would slightly differ from theirs.

As can be surmised from the above short description of the approaches to liturgical studies that various liturgical studies scholars take, the engagement with this field of study can be approached in different ways, and these paths could be categorised according to other markers.

I do not deduce that these scholars intend to divide mutually exclusive categories of liturgical research or to try to indicate that one way of arranging various approaches is superior. Here, we have overlapping and intersecting components of liturgical research with a conglomeration of multiple possible combinations. It would seem, however, that a family of approaches centred around historical, empirical, and (systematic?) theological study could be discerned.

For this chapter, I will call the historical approach 'liturgics', the more empirical ritual approach 'liturgical studies' and the approach of theological meaning 'liturgical theology'.

Under each of these sections, I will very briefly discuss A.C. Barnard and Marcell Barnard with the very distinguished *et al.*'s understanding of what liturgy is. Flowing from that, what their preferred research methodology would be to accord with that understanding of liturgy, and what their understanding of the aim of the liturgy, and concomitant with that, liturgical research, should be?

### **Again, a threefold (trinitarian?) taxonomy**

In many ways, my 'taxonomy' of the discipline accords with that of Wepener and Barnard (2022), but I will arrange them primarily according to the approaches' aim. I will categorise the three approaches of the broad schools of ethical theory: deontological, utilitarian and virtue ethics.

### **Literature and liturgy liturgics in a deontological frame**

A.C. Barnard spent his academic career at the University of Pretoria. Perhaps the capstone of his work was the 1981 publication of *Die Erediens*, for which he was awarded the Andrew Murrey Prize. We will focus our discussion on that publication. Barnard and Wepener (2022:211) are spot on when they opine that 'For A.C. Barnard, liturgy refers only to worship services of churches such as Sunday worship, funerals and weddings'. But the 'only' is quite comprehensive! In the following section, I have translated what A.C. Barnard

considers to be the purview of liturgy and attempted to put it in a numbered list.

### **The object of research: The worship service**

According to Barnard (1981:52), liturgy encompasses:

1. All the words and actions of the complete worship service, including the sermon (the sermon's content excluded) and the Lord's Supper.
2. Other actions such as baptism, confirmation, and ordination.
3. Other services, which include prayer services, bible studies in the congregation, and marriage and funeral services.
4. The design and composition of the worship service.
5. The prayers, liturgical formularies, and liturgical songs.
6. The different elements of the worship service in their own right but also in the way they cohere.
7. The liturgical year, the church building, and liturgical attire.
8. The dynamic of the worship service as it relates to daily life and the practice of faith.

On Barnard's first point, I must strongly demur (although there is not sufficient space here to argue the issue) that I see the homily and the content of the homily as part and parcel of the liturgy itself.<sup>2</sup>

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2 Foley's (2016:161–162) reflection of the Homily being not only *in* but also *of* is an important reminder that I associate with: 'To suggest that the first and central characteristic of a homily is that it is liturgical may appear to be stating the obvious. On the other hand, there have been periods in the history recounted above when the preaching in the liturgy was not of the liturgy and appeared as a pause or parenthesis, especially in the Eucharist. The homily, however, is not only in *but essentially of the liturgy*, which means that such preaching itself is a liturgical event. There are multiple practical and theological consequences of this assertion. From a practical perspective, an authentic homily needs to be in dialogue with the whole of the liturgical context.' (Emphasis mine)

According to Barnard liturgics (what he calls *Liturgiek*) is the science of liturgy. The doctrine of the worship service in its totality studies scientifically the essence of the content and design of the complete worship service of the Christian congregation and everything that relates to it. Barnard maintains that this study is undertaken using the Scripture, historical sources, and how the liturgy is instantiated in the contemporary context and how it should take place. This study happens in a thetical, empirical and critical way employing the best scientific methods (Barnard, 1981:52–53).

### *Methodology of research: Textual study*

Let it be said that studying all the dimensions of the worship service and all that relates to it could be an endlessly fascinating research endeavour. Much exciting work can be done from the most quotidian of questions, such as what clergy wear to conduct services in a particular tradition, to broad liturgical and historical questions, as Barnard & Wepener (2022:219) invite us to do. Studying ‘texts (biblical, confessional, historical) as research methodology’ (Wepener & Barnard, 2022:211) is still a valid and fruitful way of going about liturgical research in our day.

### *The aim of research: Liturgy as it should be done*

The aim of research, according to the A.C. Barnard (1981:52–53) view of liturgical science is already implicit in his definition: ‘soos dit in die konkrete lewe vandag plaasvind en moet plaasvind.’ (the worship service is studied in the way it actually takes place and should take place.) Wepener and Barnard (2022:211) succinctly summarise the approach of A.C. Barnard as follows: ‘This text-based methodology was aimed at deriving liturgical principles from doctrine and Scripture in service of *solī Deo Gloria* in and for the Reformed tradition.’

One could translate A.C. Barnard’s aim into other liturgical traditions. The objective could be to research authoritative texts to derive principles there from to reform the concrete instantiations of liturgical celebration in the

current context. One could describe the aim of this approach as deontological.

**Ethnography and empathy: Liturgical studies in a utilitarian frame**

The second approach, which could be classified primarily by its research methodology, is the empirical turn in liturgical studies in which Cas Wepener played a significant part (cf. Barnard et al., 2022; Wepener, 2006; Wepener & Barnard, 2010; Wepener et al., 2011). Wepener and Barnard (2022) ably describe this second approach, and it is worth quoting in full:

The starting point is always the rite of liturgy *as it is performed*. In addition, liturgical ritual is understood to include much more than the church service and certainly more than the liturgy of the established churches. Online liturgy, events, life cycle rituals, and religious rituals-symbolic phenomena in culture, nature and at home are also the subject of research. (Author's emphasis)

*The object of research: The liturgical ritual*

It is clear from this approach that liturgy is defined much more broadly. Barnard et al. (2014:47) describe the research object as a 'liturgical ritual'. They explain: 'Liturgical' refers to the theological perspective of worship, 'ritual' to its cultural-anthropological aspects.'

A cursory glance at the research by Cas Wepener and his students gives ample evidence that we are out of the bounds of the formal church building and denominationally approved orders of service: Everything from service delivery protests (Wepener, 2015) to sporting events (Flynn & Wepener, 2016) are researched from a ritual-liturgical perspective.

*The aim of the research: Liturgia Condenda*

To classify Barnard et al.'s (2014) approach to liturgy and liturgical research as utilitarian would be a gross reduction and even unfair. They have, in fact, a very sophisticated and

nuanced view of the question of the functionality or utility of liturgy. On the one hand, they would fully concur with the wisdom they received: 'Liturgy is useless. Rituals have no end and serve no purpose; they have no function and are not productive' (Barnard et al., 2014:245).

Barnard et al. (2014) beautifully encapsulate in their typical both/and, theological-anthropological way, the non-utilitarian nature of liturgy with the metaphor of liturgical play:

God himself is a playing God. Play has theological dimensions. According to tradition, God created the world for his own pleasure, and our highest goal as creatures is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever...God would not play alone. He incorporates human beings into his joy. We may join the playing God, the *Deus ludens*, as playing men and woman, as *homo ludens*. (Barnard et al., 2014:255-256)

However, their understanding of a univocally non-utilitarian liturgy was deconstructed – 'Cracked open' (Barnard & Wepener, 2012). I will refer here to only one fruitful avenue of exploration that Barnard et al. opened up for us: Worship in the context of poverty (Barnard et al., 2014:263-265). One would be hard-pressed to argue that if the celebration of liturgy, which includes preaching and liturgical research, could contribute to the alleviation of poverty (Pieterse, 2009) and the increased well-being of people, would not be a valid pursuit because the received wisdom is that liturgical rituals 'have no end and serve no purpose; they have no function and are not productive' (Barnard et al., 2014:245).

On the contrary, It has to be said that Barnard et al. (2014:269-271) are at pains to stress that liturgy (and one could add liturgical research) serves a social function that would not entail a wholesale instrumentalisation of the liturgy.

*The methodology: Being on 'PAR'*

It has already been prefigured in various ways that the preferred research methodology for this approach is

participatory action research (PAR). Laudable in this approach is the fact that:

in PAR, *both problem-solving and active participation of the researcher are imperative, although it goes further by actively involving the respondents in all the phases of the research.* And all these qualities are essential to incorporate into a research methodology when rituals and their relation to social issues such as poverty are being researched. (Wepener, 2007:738; author's emphasis)

In line with this utilitarian view of liturgical research, and given pressing problems that need solving, one does not have the luxury of doing research for the sake of interest alone.

### **Theology and *theosis*: Liturgical theology and a virtuous frame**

We arrive now, after a too-short amble with giants of the field, where I try to elucidate my understanding of the field of study. Saying 'my own' is self-serving and misleading, to say the least, and I should rather say the understanding that I resonate with and would like to pursue, to wit, sacramental liturgical research.

I hope to illustrate what I mean by 'sacramental' with two descriptions of what the field of liturgical studies entails by visiting two exceedingly eminent liturgical theologians. Please welcome David Fagerberg and David Lathrop into the conversation. Fagerberg stands in the tradition of what is called liturgical theology. Fagerberg gives the same three 'phases' of liturgical research proposed to some extent, by Barnard and Wepener. Academy took it upon itself to study the liturgy historically (as in our context, A.C. Barnard did). Then, Fagerberg notes it was but the work of an academic moment for ritual studies to take off as a way of studying the liturgy, and it is here where Marcel Barnard and Cas Wepener played no small part. The multidisciplinary of this approach bloomed with various lenses to study the liturgy. Fagerberg mentions, by way of example, music, architecture, art, and a plethora of methodologies that enriched the study of liturgy. He draws

attention to *inter alia* ethnography and inculturation, in which Barnard and Wepener are leading voices. One could add here aesthetics – part of the beautiful contribution that Johan Cilliers (2012) made to the field in South Africa.

Fagerberg then makes an exciting move. It ties into where we began this chapter by listening to the witty (Northern) Irishman Conor Cunningham: He (Fagerberg) invites us in our liturgical research to not look solely at liturgy but *through* the liturgy at theological topics, amongst other things, time, cosmos social renewal, deification, death, and resurrection. As he puts it: ‘The liturgy that arises from the Church-in-motion invites us to look through itself at the whole cosmos’ (Fagerberg, 2023:141). Note that Fagerberg is not pitting looking *at* liturgy against looking *through* liturgy. We are obliged to what he calls ‘liturgiology’, consisting for him of the historical and ritual approaches to liturgy, for the traditionally normative that the former engenders and the community-building contribution that the latter gifts (Fagerberg, 2023:121).

Fagerberg is, however, convinced that there is a reciprocal but hierarchical relationship between what he calls liturgiology and what I have been classifying here as liturgics and liturgical studies on the one hand and liturgical theology on the other. Analogous to how biblical criticism is a necessary but preliminary pursuit in service of biblical theology. Hence, the liturgy’s historical and multidisciplinary empirical investigation is ‘made for’ liturgical theology like the ‘Sabbath is made for man’ (Fagerberg, 2023:128).

I was tempted to suggest the addition of the at/through distinction to the ‘betwixt and between’ liminal juxtapositions of Barnard et al.’s (2014) excellent book. Still, it is precisely what hierarchical relationship between the ‘at’ and the ‘truth’ (the at being in service of the through) that Fagerberg propagates that gives me pause.

When Barnard et al. use the concept of liminal, for example, bricolage/particularity, language/silence, image/sound, embodiment/performance, play/function and time/

space, you do not get the sense that language is ordered to silence, that image is in service to sound, or that space, for example, is ordered to time.<sup>3</sup> Instead, Kunin (1998, as cited in Barnard et al., 2014:69) proposes: ‘the liminal is neither fully one type of space (category) nor the other, it will take on aspects of both’. So rather than utilising the concept of ‘liminality’ to conceive of the relationship between the various approaches to liturgical research, the way that Fagerberg described the relationship between historical and ritual research and liturgical theology inspires me to use sacramental language, historical and ritual research participates<sup>4</sup> in liturgical theology that transcends it but cannot do without it.

This brings us, in this section, to what exactly Fagerberg’s definition of liturgy would be. I also juxtapose his definition with a summary of another scholar, Gordon Lathrop, who stands in the same tradition as Fagerberg, and then, by implication, what liturgical research could entail if one takes on board these two scholar’s definitions of liturgy.

*The object of study: Trinity, time, space, and more*

‘Liturgy is the *perichoresis* of the Trinity kenotically extended to invite our synergistic ascent into deification’ (Fagerberg, 2023:205).

To unpack what Fagerberg means by this compact but almost infinitely generative definition, a few notes would have to suffice to give us a glimpse. However, the gloss that Fagerberg (2010) himself gives to this expansive definition could provide us with a meaningful portal into what is at stake:

The Trinity’s circulation of love turns itself outward, and in humility, the Son and the Spirit work for the Father’s good pleasure for all creation, which is to invite our ascent to

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3 One could perhaps say that for Barnard et al. 2014, function is ordered to play.

4 I use the word ‘participate’ in the platonic sense of *methexis* as resourced by other thinkers in the radical orthodoxy movement of theology, as, for example, explained by Haynes (2011).

## Practical Theology and Mission Studies

participate in the very life of God; however, this cannot be forced, it must be done with our cooperation.

Clearly, we are not in 'Kansas anymore'; we have been taken up in a whirlwind into a deeper or higher dimension. Although it must be said that, speaking in an incarnational register, Kansas (or Kakamas) is taken up into the whirlwind of the Trinity's love.

In Fagerberg's rich conception, liturgy originates not in a human decision but in the life of the Trinity. Liturgy is not (only) the work of human beings but also part of the *Opus Dei*, the work of God; in fact, it is part of the 'massive work of God' that is the economy of salvation. (Fagerberg, 2023:141)

It is perhaps evident that if the 'Perichoresis of the Trinity' (the being of God – the Immanent Trinity), or even the 'Massive work of God' (the economic Trinity) would be the object of study, it could indeed, by no 'object' at all.

In this sense, liturgical theology shares the burden of all types of theology. As Graham Ward colourfully describes the privilege and predicament of theology:

[I]t's not just the queen of the sciences, but it's the whore of the sciences. Queen of the sciences in so far as it caps them all but whore in so far as it has to trade on them all. Theology has no language of its own because we have no object that can we just simply claim. God isn't an object in the world, so theology always has to borrow its language from other things. (Ward, cited in Warlick, 2012:334)

As we have seen in these few pages, liturgical theology has recourse to 'borrow' from a vast array of disciplines, in the tradition of the University of Pretoria, from the historical study (Barnard, 1981) to philosophy and art (Barnard, 1981), and ritual studies (Barnard et al., 2014).

If we were to bring it 'down to earth', one could relate to a summation of Gordon Lathrop's version of what the liturgy essentially is:

## Chapter 3

This *Ordo* organizes a participating community together with its ministers gathered in song and prayer around the scriptures read and preached, around the baptismal washing, enacted or remembered, and around the holy supper. The *Ordo* is these things done together side by side. (Lathrop, cited in Moore-Keish, 2010:248)

Now, we are in a place where the ritual studies scholar, for example, can study and offer ritual criticism to a community that has assembled (Grimes, 2013). Echoing *the Lumen gentium* (Vatican Council II. 1964), Duba expands this meaning of the *Ordo* to include:

[A] burden for addressing justice issues in the world... *Ordo* represents the total ordering of the Christian life as it expresses itself in the assembly and as it leads to and flows from that assembly. (Duba, 2005:10)

From this broader definition of liturgy, one can also extend the scope of liturgical research to include *life* from the perspective of the liturgical assembly and how ‘life the universe and everything else’ relates to the worshipping assembly.

### *Methodology: Autoethnographic ascent*

From the above, it should be clear that liturgical theology would have no one clear methodological or disciplinary preference – it is ‘intrinsically and necessarily interdisciplinary’ (Geldhof, 2015:6). For Geldhof, this could relate internally to the theological encyclopaedia of the subdisciplines, such as systematic theology and biblical theology, and externally to disciplines as diverse as performance studies and gender studies.

One could elucidate on any number of approaches that could be espoused in pursuance of this ‘object’ of study. Still, an exciting avenue to pursue would be a very intentional and rigorous juxtaposition of autoethnographic reflexive research with a deep appreciation of philosophical and systematic

theological approaches, as I tried to do in my doctoral work (De Bruin, 2016).

*Aim: Pherichoretic participation*

According to the Fagerberian conceptualisation, one could say that there is a confluence of the object, the aim, and the research methodology, or to use the metaphor that Wepener et al. use, there could be said that there exists a perichoretic relationship between them.

The aim of liturgy, but also the objective of liturgical research, would be deification – participation in the very life of God. The ‘object’ of research, although it cannot be said to be an object at all, and the way of research is synergistic assent – what Wepener (2009) and Barnard et al. (2014) would call, in line with Van Ruler (1973), theonomic reciprocity.

Conceptualising liturgy in this fashion has another implication.

Suppose the liturgy, as conceived by Lathrop as the juxtaposition of three core symbols, is the way through which we participate in the Trinity and, at the same time, experience well-being and flourishing; in that case, all other rituals and all other life forms could be studied in relation to the practice of the Eucharist. Focusing specifically on the Eucharistic life and the Eucharistic world, could be a significant focus in the next chapter of the University of Pretoria’s contribution.

### **Conclusion – The aim of liturgical theology: *Theosis***

As has been said before, these assemblies in various forms could be studied from a ritual perspective, historical, semiotic, or any number of other angles. Still, it is perhaps in the ‘directionality’ that liturgical theology as it is conceived here, could be distinguished from the historical and ritual studies approaches

If liturgy is the *perichoresis* of the Trinity that we are called to participate in, and as Wepener and Barnard (2022:215) would have it – and I agree wholeheartedly with them – that

liturgical research is a faith practice, and that 'liturgical-ritual study is a part of liturgical ritual,' then it could follow that to participate in liturgical research could be a way of participating into the 'synergistic assent into deification'.

In this way, participatory action research of the liturgy and life as liturgy could be a way of participating in the action of the Trinity that saves the world by incorporating us in his own life.

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