Extending the Sight of the Soul:

An Analysis of Sacramental Ontology in Theodore of Mopsuestia’s Mystagogical Homilies

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# Abstract

Mystagogy, the teachings given by a bishop to the newly baptized on the meaning of the liturgy and rites of the ecclesiastical Sacraments, emerges in the fourth century as a form of Christian catechesis which involved the experience of the liturgy, the explanation of the mysteries through typological interpretation, and it included the tacit conveyance of an “articulated worldview.” The worldview which is both contained within mystagogy and which serves as its historical context is that of the Platonist-Christian synthesis, as Hans Boersma calls it in *Heavenly Participation: The Weaving of a Sacramental Tapestry* (2011)*.* This patristic worldview hinges upon a foundational assumption of the sacramental participation of the created world in the eternal; that is, it hinges upon a sacramental ontology. This thesis seeks to highlight the ways in which this sacramental ontology is expressed and imparted to the catechumens throughout Theodore of Mopsuestia’s mystagogical teachings. It is the intent of this thesis to demonstrate that the Platonist-Christian sacramental ontology of the patristic era does not merely comprise the philosophical context for his mystagogy, but is indeed part and parcel of the mystagogical content of faith which Theodore offers in his catechesis. This investigation will explore examples from within Theodore’s general Christology and from his mystagogy which reveal the dynamic presence of this ontology, and also the unique emphases towards which Theodore, as a fourth century Antiochene thinker, is inclined.