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## The Place of the Proclamation of the Word of God

On August 29, 1946, a certain man from the International Committee of the Red Cross was taking part in the cleaning up of the former Auschwitz concentration camp. He found a page from the Hebrew Bible in the room where inmates were killed with gas. The page was crumpled and partly burnt. He saw on it a part of Psalm 133: “How good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell together as one!” Ernesto Manichelli, a monk from the Camaldoli community who has recalled this event, sees in God’s Word an invitation to life in a fraternal community along with the Word of God. Life goes on even when the conditions of this human community and the Word of God contradict each other. Although the flesh and bone of this human community is destroyed – and even when it becomes smoke rising from above a crematorium – becomes a miracle. Thus the living Word writes the history of life – the secret of life – along with subsequent generations.<sup>1</sup>

### 1. God Speaks to Man

The reader of the Old Testament books can easily find excerpts that describe encountering God proclaiming His Word to Man. God said to

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. E. Menichelli, *La Parola genera la chiesa e la chiesa custodisce la Parola*, „Vita Monastica” 39 (1985) nr 163, p. 9.

Noah and his sons: “See, I am now establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you” (Genesis 9:9). This annotation does not present a bilateral pact, but rather sentences that God accepted and decided to put into life. God “took upon His shoulders” the realization of the mission contained in His Word. It is worth noting that God’s covenant with Noah and with all living creatures took place after an altar was built for the Lord and burnt offerings were given up to Him. However, it is not the altar and sacrifice given upon it that dominate in this Biblical scene, but rather a monologue, the proclaimed Word of God that is a blessing for humanity and a covenant with humankind. The arc placed on the clouds, a rainbow stretched between heaven and earth and seen by humanity, also recalls God and His words about His eternal covenant.<sup>2</sup> One can get the impression that nature, the space created by God, is supposed to be a natural impulse stimulating God’s memory to think about His words, about the covenant proclaimed by Him.

God summons Abram of Ur of the Chaldeans and speaks to him. During this summons, God’s Word deals with the future of the nation of which Abram would be the protoplast (cf. Genesis 12:1–2). The confirmation of the Word of God – the covenant – occurs in the ritual form established by God in the least appropriate time of day, “[w]hen the sun had set and it was dark, there appeared a smoking brazier and a flaming torch, which passed between those pieces” (Genesis 15:17). When there was a lack of natural light, when fear and anxiety overcame Abram because of God’s Word to him (cf. Genesis 15:13–16), smoke and fire passed through the quartered animal sacrifices that God Himself chose and asked Abram to prepare.<sup>3</sup>

At this point, it is worth recalling that on the paschal night during the Hebrew’s exodus from Egypt, when God asked to kill the lamb and mark Hebrew homes with its blood, the same God passed through Egypt, asking for His Word to be respected. God’s Word as the right to respect it was offered to the Israelites during their exodus from slavery. During

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Pięcioksiąg*, oprac. S. Wypych, Warszawa 1987, p. 65 (Wprowadzenie w Myśl i Wezwanie Ksiąg Biblijnych, 1).

<sup>3</sup> Cf. T. Żychiewicz, *Stare Przymierze*, Kraków 1985, p. 99.

this journey, Moses was the one who referred God's Word to the chosen people (cf. Exodus 24:3) and who also wrote down its contents (cf. WJ 24:4). Meanwhile, the very inscription of God's Word – God's Law – in the form of a book was given to the Levites and placed next to the Ark of the Covenant (cf. Deuteronomy 31:24–26).

This law – the Word of God (the Torah) – was to be read to all the Israelites on the Sukkot every seven years in a place selected by God Himself (cf. Deuteronomy 31:10–11). Perhaps this annotation from the Book of Deuteronomy should be understood as a seven-year cycle of reading the law? With the passage of time, usually during particularly painful experiences, the Word of God is proclaimed with increasing frequency. In Israel, there appears and becomes commonplace “the celebration of the Old Testament Word of God.”<sup>4</sup>

The Book of Nehemiah mentions the form in which the Word – the Law – should be read. Ezra the Priest stood on a wooden podium made specially for celebrating this ceremony and read to all the men and women gathered in the square. Meanwhile, the Levites' task was to explain specific excerpts they heard during this reading (Nehemiah 8:1–8). This was not read on the day of the Sabbath,<sup>5</sup> but it was related to the ceremony celebrated in Jerusalem and was specially, not arbitrarily chosen for that occasion.<sup>6</sup> It is difficult to say what should be understood by the expression “reading of the Word,” or what was read.<sup>7</sup> Nonetheless, the referenced excerpt from the Book of Nehemiah suggests an established rituality that accompanied the reading. The Book of the Law was placed on an elevation. Before it was read from, all those gathered saw the moment it was

<sup>4</sup> C. Capomaccio, *Monumentum resurrectionis. Ambone e candelabro per il cero pasquale. Iconografia e iconologia del monumento nella cattedrale di Sessa Aurunca (Caserta)*, Città del Vaticano 2002, p. 6 (Monumenta Studia Instrumenta Liturgica, 22).

<sup>5</sup> Cf. I. Cardellini, *I sacrifici dell'antica alleanza. Tipologie, rituali, celebrazioni*, Cinisello Balsamo (Milano) 2001, p. 350 (Studi sulla Bibbia e il suo Ambiente, 5).

<sup>6</sup> Cf. N. Bonneau, *Il lezionario domenicale. Origine struttura teologia*, trad. R. Fabbri, Bologna 2012, p. 19 (Studi e Ricerche di Liturgia, 40).

<sup>7</sup> Cf. C. Balzaretto, *Neemia 8: una comunità che legge*, „Parola Spirito e Vita: Quaderni di Lettura Biblica” (2001) nr 1 (43), p. 84.

opened, to which they responded by rising. The reading was accompanied by a blessing expressed by Ezra, to which the people responded: "Amen." Those gathered responded with a gesture of raising their arms. Next, those gathered bowed and kneeled with their faces facing the ground. In this way, they professed their faith that they were standing before the Lord. This description indicates that those summoned recognized God's presence.<sup>8</sup> "The rabbinical tradition saw in this congregation the beginning of the synagogue devotion that is practiced to this day."<sup>9</sup>

By again referring to the paschal feast celebrated on the most important day in the Israelites' calendar, the chosen people not only are to prepare the lamb to be eaten, but also to eat it, celebrating this supper so that the *mirabilia Dei* articulated by God in the history of this people and presented to Him would find the fundament at the heart of consuming this meal. The purpose of prophesying God's Word – the Haggadah – during this supper is to remember God's redeeming interventions. Those participating in the paschal feast are to participate in it in such a way as if they themselves were leaving Egypt for freedom and experiencing the truth about God's caring activity.<sup>10</sup>

Old Testament descriptions in which the Word of God was accompanied by a sacrifice have been noted. Despite such a clear connection of these two realities, the Hebrew religion does not have a unity of the table of the Word and sacrifice comparable to that in our Christian understanding. In the synagogue, devotion consists of a proclamation of the Word and of commenting upon it. In it, there dominates a commentary to the Word of God and a prayer carried towards Jerusalem. Meanwhile, in the Temple the devotion consists of offering sacrifices on regular days, on special

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<sup>8</sup> Cf. G. Boselli, *Lambone tavola della Parola di Dio. „Apri il libro alla presenza di tutto il popolo”* (Ne 8, 5), [in:] *Uno spazio per celebrare il mistero. Costruiti come edificio spirituale per un sacerdozio santo* (1 Pt 2, 5), Roma 2012, p. 80–81 (Bibliotheca Ephemerides Liturgicae. Sussidi Liturgico-Pastorali, 23).

<sup>9</sup> L. Bouyer, *Od liturgii żydowskiej do liturgii chrześcijańskiej*, tłum. A. Janik, [in:] *Eucharystia*, red. P. Góralczyk et al., Poznań–Warszawa 1986, p. 129 (Kolekcja Communio, 1).

<sup>10</sup> Cf. J. Drozd, *Ostatnia Wieczerza Nową Paschą*, Katowice 1977, p. 41 (Attende Lectioni, 4); J. Janicki, *U początków liturgii Kościoła*, Kraków 2002, p. 112.

occasions, and in private intentions.<sup>11</sup> Was there some sort of developed and described liturgy of the Word in the Temple in Jerusalem in the time of Jesus Christ of Nazareth?<sup>12</sup> One thing is certain: Jesus Christ taught in the synagogue and the Temple, and this probably was not an isolated instance.

For some time, researchers have wanted to reconstruct the Hebrew lectionary that was used in Jesus Christ's time.<sup>13</sup> Are we able to prove some form of a regulated Sabbath liturgy that characterized synagogues before the third century?<sup>14</sup> Researchers are not satisfied with any of the hitherto undertaken reconstructions, while the contemporary Hebrew lectionary, which has many versions, developed in the sixth century.<sup>15</sup>

## 2. Teachings about Jesus Christ's Kingdom of God

When preaching about the Kingdom of God, Jesus Christ Himself chose the places where He proclaimed His Word. He did this on a mountain

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<sup>11</sup> Cf. I. Cardellini, *I sacrifici dell'antica alleanza*, op. cit., p. 249–480.

<sup>12</sup> Johann Maier notes the Psalms sung by the Levite cantors in the tower located between the courtyard of men and women. These songs were accompanied by the offering of sacrifices. Cf. J. Maier, *Między Starym a Nowym Testamentem. Historia i religia w okresie drugiej świątyni*, przekł. E. Marszał, J. Zakrzewski, Kraków 2002, p. 269–272 (Mysł Teologiczna, 36).

<sup>13</sup> Cf. W. Chrostowski, *Synagoga i liturgia czytań w czasach Jezusa Chrystusa*, „Przegląd Powszechny” 105 (1988) nr 7–8 (803–804), p. 123–138; M. Rosik, *Judaizm u początków ery chrześcijańskiej*, Wrocław 2003, p. 136 (Papieski Wydział Teologiczny we Wrocławiu. Rozprawy Naukowe, 46).

<sup>14</sup> Cf. P. F. Bradshaw, *Alle origini del culto cristiano. Fonti e metodi per lo studio della liturgia dei primi secoli*, Città del Vaticano 2007, p. 46 (Monumenta Studia Instrumenta Liturgica, 46).

<sup>15</sup> Cf. T. Federici, *La Bibbia diventa lezionario. Storia i criteri attuali*, [in:] *Dall'esegesi all'ermeneutica attraverso la celebrazione. Bibbia e liturgia*, a cura di R. Cecolin, vol. 1, Padova 1991, p. 194–195 (Caro salutis cardo. Contributi, 6).

(cf. Matthew 5 : 1), in a synagogue (Mark 1 : 21), in the temple (cf. Matthew 21 : 23), and in a cenacle (cf. Luke 22 : 14–38). His Word is addressed to ordinary Jews, men and women, the elites (such as the scribes and Pharisees), members of the Sanhedrin, and among His disciples. One could say that according to Jesus Christ every place is good for proclaiming the truth about salvation and that every man can be its addressee. Only Herod, in front of whom Jesus Christ stood before His execution, did not receive any word (cf. Luke 23 : 9). During His trial, Jesus of Nazareth expressed His openness and the accessibility of His teaching. He says: “I have spoken publicly to the world. I have always taught in a synagogue or in the temple area where all the Jews gather, and in secret I have said nothing” (John 18, 20).

Jesus Christ’s presence in the synagogue in Nazareth, to which He went in accordance with His custom, is unique (cf. Luke 4 : 16). The synagogue became a place where Jesus proclaimed the Gospel about the Kingdom, healed the sick, and drove out evil spirits (cf. Matthew 4 : 23, Mark 1 : 39). In the synagogue, one can distinguish between two points, or poles. The first of these is the chair of Moses. This place was occupied by someone who was considered to be the authentic depositary of the living tradition of the Word of God.<sup>16</sup> This was the *hazzan* or the *archisynagogus* understood not as the head of the local Jewish community, but as the head of the sacral congregation.<sup>17</sup> Many gathered around the head’s chair, as it was there that the living Word present in tradition was looked for. This head likely asked Jesus Christ to rise and come closer to the podium in order to read the reading. The second point was the podium, the *bema*. This was something like a tribune situated in the center to which the lectern was fastened.<sup>18</sup> The lector reading from the podium was to be heard by all. This place expressed the presence of God’s Word among His people.

A new quality appears along with Jesus Christ’s presence in the synagogue in Nazareth. After He read an excerpt from the Book of Isaiah

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<sup>16</sup> Cf. L. Bouyer, *Architektura i liturgia*, przekł. P. Włodyga, Kraków 2009, p. 16.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. E. Mazza, *La basilica cristiana contemporanea. Progetti e plastici*, Ancora, 2007, p. 21 (Strumenti, 1); C. Capomaccio, *Monumentum resurrectionis. Ambone e candelabro per il cero pasquale*, op. cit., p. 9.

<sup>18</sup> L. Bouyer, *Architektura i liturgia*, op. cit., p. 20.

and complemented it with a commentary, those present were surprised at His “gracious words” (Luke 4:22) in which they had taken part. Here I see a third point that became manifest in God’s weekly service in the synagogue. There was an updating of the Word of God, which was realized thanks to the presence of the Anointed Messenger. In his letter to Titus, Paul the Apostle said: “For the grace of God has appeared, saving all and training us to reject godless ways and worldly desires and to live temperately, justly, and devoutly in this age” (Titus 2:11–12). It is no longer the head of the congregation sitting on the chair of Moses who is the guarantor of the living Word of God in history, but Logos – God’s Wisdom, the Son of God Himself, and the Word that became flesh. It was the Word Incarnate, as we can see in Luke’s pericope, which had the power to even provoke those participating in the synagogue office and in the first moment, in which the audience were full of admiration and ready to take Jesus’ life. Jesus Christ, the Word full of grace, Who was to be knocked down from the precipice, moved away from those gathered in the synagogue in Nazareth. In this place, the synagogue’s failure and its drama become evident. The place where the Word of God was proclaimed, commented on, and ready to be updated and fully realized in the Person of the Messiah did not recognize the presence of Christ in that time of grace and in His words of grace. The Word that came to be owned was rejected (cf. John 1:11).

### 3. The Early Church

The pages of the New Testament are not only witness to the life and activity of the Word Incarnate, of the Word of God that became flesh and lived among us (cf. John 1:4; the constitution *Dei Verbum*, 17–18). The New Testament also indicates moments during which the post-Paschal apostolic community travels to the synagogues. It is in the synagogues of Damascus that the converted Saul’s good news about salvation and the truth about Jesus Christ, Son of God, are proclaimed (cf. Acts 9:19–20). Paul and his companions were invited by the synagogue elders in Antioch of Pisidia to express their words of encouragement to

the people (cf. Acts 13:15). They do so after reading an excerpt from law and from the prophets dealing with Jesus resurrected from the dead by God. This also happened in the synagogue in Iconium, where “a great number of both Jews and Greeks came to believe” (Acts 14:1). The synagogue along with its pulpit is then a suitable and ready place for those who believe in Jesus Christ to proclaim the Word of God. After the community of Christians was excluded by the Hebrews and supporters of the synagogue, private homes became the place where they gathered to proclaim the Word. A domestic *Ecclesia* was found in Corinth in Gaius’ home (cf. Romans 16:23), as was one in Jerusalem in the home of Mary, mother of John Mark (cf. Acts 12:12), and one in Laodicea in the home of Nymphas (cf. Colossians 4:15). We lack information about the use of some pulpit or other elevation in these *Ecclesiae* by those proclaiming the Word of God. Nonetheless, these households may have been equipped with some sort of table to celebrate the Eucharistic liturgy and in some form of pulpit to celebrate the liturgy of the Word.<sup>19</sup>

In Justin Martyr’s *First Apology* we can find two descriptions of celebration of the Eucharist. In the first description, the Eucharist is preceded by a baptism (cf. *First Apology* 65–66). The second description mentions the Sunday Eucharist (cf. *First Apology* 67). According to Enrico Mazza, Justin Martyr’s description of the Eucharist was equal to that of how the Eucharist was celebrated in the entire Roman Empire.<sup>20</sup>

On the so-called Feast of the Sun, there occurred a meeting of everyone living in cities in villages in one place. Then, the apostolic journals or prophetic scriptures were read for as long as time permits. Then, once the lector began to read, the head of the community implored and encouraged those present with the Word to follow these beautiful teachings. Next, they all rise and pray.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Cf. C. Capomaccio, *Monumentum resurrectionis. Ambone e candelabro per il cero pasquale*, op. cit., p. 10.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. E. Mazza, *La celebrazione eucaristica. Genesi del rito e sviluppo dell’interpretazione*, Cinisello Balsamo (Milano) 1996, p. 134 (Liturgia. Studi e sussidi, 11).

<sup>21</sup> Justyn Męczennik, *1 Apologia*, [in:] *Pierwsi apologety greccy. Kwadratus, Arystydes z Aten, Aryston z Pelli, Justyn Męczennik, Tacjan Syryjczyk, Milcjades, Apolinary z Hierapolis*,

According to Willy Rordorf, there was most likely some external obstacle that precluded reading of the apostles' journals or the prophets for however long one wanted during these meetings. This obstacle could have been the necessity to return to work for some time.<sup>22</sup> In the first centuries of Christianity, the Christians very frequently met to break bread in the morning.<sup>23</sup> Unfortunately, we do not have more specific information regarding the structure and procedure of the liturgy of the Word than that which was noted in the *First Apology*, which was written in the latter half of the second century. Was some sort of pulpit or ambo used for this liturgy? Everything suggests one should read from the Old Testament or from the Gospels.<sup>24</sup> These readings did not occur in a form known to our modern times. The Church did not yet have an established lectionary,<sup>25</sup> and there was a certain liberty in selecting the readings. Justin Martyr does not even mention singing the Psalms.

*Domus ecclesiae* from Dura-Europos documents the presence of Christians in the first half of the third century. With the passage of time, the domestic Church became *Domus ecclesiae*. Its specially prepared rooms could have housed approximately sixty people. On the ground floor, there was a place where baptism took place under the canopy as well as a hall for the congregation. Some researchers have suggested that they see the elements of an altar in the halls in architectural ruins,<sup>26</sup> while others claim that these were the remains from the place where the Eucharist was led

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*Teofil z Antiochii, Hermiasz*, z jęz. grec. przeł., wstępami i koment. opatrzył L. Misiarczyk, Polish edition ed. J. Naumowicz, Kraków 2004, p. 256 (Biblioteka Ojców Kościoła, 24).

<sup>22</sup> Cf. W. Rordorf, *Sabato e domenica nella Chiesa antica*, Torino 1979, p. 137–139 (Traditio Christiana, 2).

<sup>23</sup> Cf. J. A. Superson, *Pora Mszy św. w pierwszych wiekach chrześcijaństwa*, „Liturgia Sacra” 15 (2009) nr 1, p. 10–13.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. M. Metzger, *Storia della liturgia eucaristica. Origine ed evoluzione della più importante celebrazione della vita cristiana*, trad. da O. Mendolia Gallino, P. Ambrosino, Torino 2003, p. 46.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. W. Dudzik, *Liturgia słowa pierwszych chrześcijan*, „Teofil” (2007) nr 1 (25), p. 126.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. J. A. Íñiguez Herrero, *Archeologia cristiana*, trad. di E. Zaira Merlo, Cinisello Balsamo 2003, p. 149 (Universo Teologia, 75).

(the bishop's throne).<sup>27</sup> Unfortunately, we don't know how the breaking of bread was done and how the liturgy of the Word proceeded, nor do we know if some sort of a pulpit was used for this liturgy of the Word.

Biblical texts used in the Church from the beginning of the second century began to take the form of a papyrus code, of a parchment notebook.<sup>28</sup> "However, transferring the Law from this sanctified form to a non-traditional format, one that did not command much respect, should have been considered to be sacrilege in the world of Judaism."<sup>29</sup> The form of a homily authored by Origen (d. 254) suggests that in his time there was a form of reading that we call *lectio continua*.<sup>30</sup>

#### 4. The Council of Laodicea

Laodicea is a city erected by Antiochus II (d. 246 BC). In it, a Christian community appeared fairly early.<sup>31</sup> A letter that we know from the Book of Revelation was directed to this community (cf. Revelation 3: 14–22). It is of a penitential nature. The letter is dominated by a zealous request for its addressees to change their ways in order to develop a close relationship with Christ.<sup>32</sup>

In the latter half of the fourth century, a synod occurred among this community. Its fifteenth canon was: "No one shall sing in the Church,

<sup>27</sup> Cf. J. C. Kałużny, *Miejsca spotkań eucharystycznych Kościoła w świetle źródeł pierwszej połowy II wieku*, [in:] *Starożytność chrześcijańska. Materiały zebrane*, red. J. C. Kałużny, vol. 2, Kraków 2010, p. 37.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. G. Liccardo, *Architettura e liturgia nella Chiesa antica*, Milano 2005, p. 32.

<sup>29</sup> M. Campatelli, *Lektura Pisma z Ojcami Kościoła*, przekł. I. Burchacka, Warszawa 2009, p. 132–133 (Ichtis).

<sup>30</sup> Cf. T. Federici, *La Bibbia diventa lezionario*, op. cit., p. 196.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. K. Zisler, *Laodycea*, [in:] *Praktyczny słownik biblijny. Opracowanie zbiorowe katolickich i protestanckich teologów*, pod red. A. Grabner-Haidera, przekł. i oprac. T. Mieszkowski, P. Pachciarek., Warszawa 1994, col. 642.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. C. Manunza, *L'Apocalisse come „actio liturgica” cristiana. Studio esegetico-teologico di Ap 1, 9–16; 3, 14–22; 13, 9–10; 19, 1–8*, Roma 2012, p. 163–283, 531 (Analecta Biblica, 199).

save only the canonical singers who go up into the ambo and sing from a book.”<sup>33</sup> The term ἄμβων can be seen in this canon. It deals with the place for the cantor, whose structure was not described. Reading Canon 15 urges one to ask question that require answer from specialized historians of the liturgy and of ancient Christian culture. Is the above-presented description the first use of the term “ambo” by Christians to indicate the place from which the Psalm was to be heard? Or maybe the ambo was the place where both the Psalm and the reading were to be heard? Does Canon 15 concern the singing of the Psalm during the canonical Liturgy of the Hours, during Mass, or perhaps during both?

## 5. The Syrian Churches

According to Noël Duval, after the time of the persecutions of Christians the private house was transformed and became a Christian church,<sup>34</sup> in or, in Jean Lassus’ view, “houses that had previously become basilicas.”

In the Middle East, the construction known as the Syrian church appeared quite early. It is the oldest type of Christian church, and is reminiscent of a Christian version of a synagogue. Both men and women – those who had received the sacrament of initiation – took part in the Synaxis. The limits of this space were the apse with an altar and a bema with a place from which celebration of the Eucharist was led; places for the altar servers; two pulpits (ambos) for the reading; and a throne for the Gospel known as the ark. At the beginning of the liturgy celebrated in such a church, a ceremony of the enthronement of the Gospel took place. On the western side of the bema, across from the Gospel, the head of the congregation stood. The congregants stood to his left and his right. The head of the congregation prayed facing the east, which was connected to

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<sup>33</sup> *Kanony synodu w Laodycei*, tłum. S. Kalinkowski, [in:] *Dokumenty synodów od 381 do 431 roku*, układ i oprac. A. Baron, H. Pietras, Kraków 2010, p. 113–113\* (Synody i Kolekcje Praw, 4).

<sup>34</sup> Cf. C. Capomaccio, *Monumentum resurrectionis. Ambone e candelabro per il cero pasquale*, op. cit., p. 11.

directing oneself towards the enthronement of the Gospel and towards the altar behind the curtain. A reading of the Word of Good took place from two ambos. The first reading was read from the ambo on the south side, and the Gospel was read from the second ambo to the north of the bema.<sup>35</sup>

## 6. Basilica

Enrico Cattaneo, a historian of the liturgy, emphasizes that the space of the Christian basilica was divided up depending on the needs (the atrium, narthex, entrance, nave, apse, presbytery, transept, and pulpit) and as a whole was supposed to serve the order of the liturgy celebrated in it.<sup>36</sup> Based on the contents of the *Liber pontificalis* attributed to the entry concerning Pope Sylvester and dealing with basilicas built thanks to the activist of Emperor Constantine, we can find information about altars, the canopies placed above them, the beautiful and rich chandeliers, and the careful protection of the relics of the saints, above which the main altar was usually located.<sup>37</sup> Unfortunately, we don't have information about the ambos, which were likely also placed in new Christian basilicas. According to Giuliano Zanchi, the pulpit, the place from which the Word of God was proclaimed in Paleochristian basilicas, were not situated in the same place as in Byzantine and Syrian churches, that is on the axis of the main nave. In the West, the pulpit was not located on the axis of the main nave, but indeed, it was moved slightly to the right. Furthermore, very often there were two pulpits in the main nave separated from each other in basilicas. There was a space between them, and they were surrounded by marble railing. The *cancelli* – the railing with the pulpits – created a space for the choir. This is as if the proclaimed word was inscribed into the place from which singing arose. One could say that the proclaimed Word was to become song.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Cf. L. Bouyer, *Architektura i liturgia*, op. cit., p. 26–38.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. E. Cattaneo, *Arte e liturgia dalle origini al Vaticano II*, Milano 1982, p. 26, 32–35.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. *Księga Pontyfików 1–96 (do roku 772)*, tłum. P. Szewczyk, M. Jesiotr, oprac. M. Ożóg, H. Pietras, Kraków 2014, p. 60–82\* (Synody i Kolekcje Praw, 9).

<sup>38</sup> Cf. G. Zanchi, *La forma della Chiesa*, Magnano 2005, p. 62.

Frederic Debuyst notes that the Christian basilica made use of a mobile place for reading, while the bishop gave his sermon in the cathedral.<sup>39</sup> At the same time, architectural studies of basilicas from the fifth and sixth centuries indicate *soleae* discovered on ancient floors. Scholars speak of the existence of pulpits because of their presence.<sup>40</sup> In the late twentieth century, the Dutch historian Sible de Blaauw published the results of his research regarding the liturgy and architecture of three Roman major basilicas. His research shows that the pulpit appeared in Greek milieus in the early sixth century. This was an elevated platform resting on one or several columns. This structure was equipped with stairs and barriers. Such a structure appeared in Italy already in the sixth century. Meanwhile, the term “ambo” was introduced into the culture of the Latin language by Cassiodorus (d. approximately 580).<sup>41</sup>

It is worth noting that we have a large number of testimonies dated from the fourth to the sixth centuries in which the book of the Christians is presented as an open book. Only in the sixth century did there increasingly appear a visualization of the book enclosed in a rich binding.<sup>42</sup> In *Liber pontificalis* we read of Pelagius I (d. 561).

During this time, Narses and Pope Pelagius met and went in procession with hymns from St. Pancras of Rome and pious songs to St. Peter the Apostle. Pelagius, who held the Gospel and the Lord’s Cross above his head, went on the pulpit and in this way he justified himself to the entire people that he would do no evil to Virgil.<sup>43</sup>

This excerpt suggests that the Gospel Book was an object of devotion and a Christological symbol. Could not these several sentences be

<sup>39</sup> Cf. F. Debuyst, *Il genius loci cristiano*, op. cit., p. 26.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. F. Leto, *Lambone*, [in:] *Evangelario. Il libro della buona notizia*, a cura A. Vela, Padova 2013, p. 137–138 (Ascoltare, Celebrare, Vivere. Formazione, 13).

<sup>41</sup> Cf. S. de Blaauw, *Cultus et decor. Liturgia e architettura nella Roma tardoantica e medievale. Basilica Salvatoris, Sanctae Mariae, Sancti Petri*, vol. 2, Città del Vaticano 1994, p. 484 (Studi e Testi, 356).

<sup>42</sup> Cf. A. Petrucci, *Scrittura e libro nell’Italia altomedievale. La concezione Cristiana del libro fra VI e VII secolo*, „Studi Medievali” Serie 3 vol. 14 (1973) fasc. 2, p. 968, 970.

<sup>43</sup> *Księga Pontyfików 1–96 (do roku 772)*, op. cit., p. 165–165\*.

the basis for a hypothesis about an already existing ceremony of the enthronement of the Gospel Book in the Roman liturgy?<sup>44</sup>

In the oldest of the *ordines*, *Ordo Romanus I*, which describes the liturgy of the Mass in the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome, the Gospel Book – the sign of the proclamation of the Word of God – takes place on an altar before sacrificial offerings were placed on that very same altar.<sup>45</sup> One should assume that the book was placed on the altar in a ceremonial way. The Gospel Book was placed on the altar and the altar was prepared for the celebration of Mass, which created a bond of unity made of the Word of God and the Eucharist.<sup>46</sup>

## 7. St. Augustine – North Africa

Augustine arrived in Rome after wonderful Christian buildings had been built there: the memorial basilica of St. Peter on the Vatican and the Archbasilica of the Most Holy Savior on the Lateran. Despite the enormous literary output left to us by St. Augustine, we do not have much information about the liturgical space where Mass was celebrated.

The first part of the liturgy of the Mass, the liturgy of the Word, was celebrated in a place located in the apse. Pasquale Testini notes that this architectural structure was known already before the rise of Christianity.<sup>47</sup> In Augustine's basilica, the apse was elevated compared to the flatness of the floor of the nave. A chair, also elevated with regards to the floor located on its fundament, was located in the peak of the apse. There was

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<sup>44</sup> Cf. R. Tichý, *La Procession de l'Évangile – un point faible de la liturgie?*, „Ecclesia Orans” 32 (2015), p. 156–157.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. M. Andrieu, *Les Ordines Romani du haut moyen âge*, vol. 2: *Les textes (Ordines I–XIII)*, Louvain 1960, p. 87 (Spicilegium Sacrum Lovaniense. Études et Documents, 23).

<sup>46</sup> Cf. E. Borsotti, *Il libro dissigilato per una fenomenologia cerimoniale dell'evangelario*, [in:] V. Asacani et al., *L'Evangelario nella storia e nella liturgia*, Magnano 2011, p. 121 (Liturgia e Vita).

<sup>47</sup> Cf. P. Testini, *Archeologia cristiana. Nozioni generali dalle origini alla fine del sec. VI. Propedeutica – topografia cimiteriale, epigrafia – edifici di culto*, Bari 1980, p. 582.

space for the presbyters and the altar servers around the bishop's chair. It appears that Augustine himself does not mention anything about the pulpit and does not use the term "presbytery," but he does speak of the *exedra*, or the elevation. Words of admonition and instruction came from the *exedra*, but it was also a place where the readings were read. Augustine's *exedra* does not refer to the bema of the Syrian churches. Angelo Marini's hypothetical reconstruction shows that two pulpits, or ambos, used for reading, were located in this elevation. Meanwhile, there was a stone railing between the *exedra* and the altar. The Church Father used a "lectionary" based on *lectio continua*, but he frequently made use of a selection of excerpts that were related to the celebrated mystery, time, or topic of the feast.<sup>48</sup>

It is worth highlighting the fact that the Word of God proclaimed by him frequently ended with a prayer encouraging to turn to the east and began with the words: *Conversi ad Dominum*.<sup>49</sup> The proclaimed Word gave direction to understanding of the revealed truths. Furthermore, turning in the same direction that the head of the congregation – Bishop Augustine, who also followed the revealed Word – was already facing draws an image of the entire community, the Ecclesia, which was directed towards the Almighty with its entire heart and body. However, at the same time many of those gathered in his basilica turned their backs to the place where the words were proclaimed during the *Conversi ad Dominum* prayer. Did such behavior during the listening of God's Word not arouse opposition? Giorgio Malherbe notes that moving of the body in the same direction by everyone must have caused some chaos in the congregation.<sup>50</sup> Noticing

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<sup>48</sup> Cf. A. Marini, *La celebrazione eucaristica presieduta da sant'Agostino. La partecipazione dei fedeli alla Liturgia della parola e al Sacrificio Eucaristico*, Brescia 1989, p. 110–111, 118.

<sup>49</sup> *Sermo LXVII*, [in:] *Sancti Aurelii Augustini, Hipponensis episcopi, opera omnia*, accurate J. P. Migne, vol. 5.1, Lutetiae Parisiorum 1865, col. 437 (*Patrologiae Cursus Completus. Series Latina*, 38). The full text of the Polish translation of the prayer can be found in: J. A. Superson, *Oltarz, krzyż i kierunek zanoszonych modlitw*, Kraków 2014, p. 38–39.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. G. Malherbe, *Lorientazione delle Chiese*, „*Rivista Liturgica*” 19 (1932), p. 296.

this chaos and perhaps even noise, Stephan Beissel claimed that this was a reason why bishops directed the apse towards the east.<sup>51</sup>

## 8. Hagia Sophia

The Hagia Sophia (the Church of holy wisdom) in Constantinople was one of the churches that the emperor Constantine began to build towards the end of his rule.<sup>52</sup> This church burned during the fire that took place in 404. A new pulpit was built from the preserved remains of the original pulpit; we can see this object in the gardens surrounding the Hagia Sophia in Istanbul.<sup>53</sup> Earthquakes in 553 and 557 damaged the construction of the building, and thus its dome collapsed in 558. Paul the Silentiary describes the rebuilt church and its renewed use for worship in 562 in a poem.<sup>54</sup> Paul the Silentiary was a court dignitary who had the office of a senator and was the head of the silentiaries, or high-ranking masters of ceremonies responsible for the congregation of the imperial consistory.<sup>55</sup> It is thanks to his preserved poem that we know what the place where the Word of God was proclaimed in the rebuilt Hagia Sophia looked like.

The architectural structure located in the central church described by him is called a tower or pulpit, which is slightly directed towards the east. This place is reserved for the book. Two stairwells lead to the platform

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<sup>51</sup> Cf. S. Beissel, *Bilder aus der Geschichte der alterchristlichen Kunst und Liturgie in Italien*, Friburgo in Brisgovia 1899, p. 82.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. R. Krautheimer, *Architettura sacra paleocristiana e medievale e altri saggi su Rinascimento e Barocco*, trad. G. Scattone, Torino 2008, p. 32 (Universale Bollati Boringhieri, 558).

<sup>53</sup> Cf. C. Valenziano, *Ambone e candelabro. Iconografia e iconologia*, [in:] *Gli spazi della celebrazione rituale*, a cura di S. Maggiani, Roma 2005, p. 69 (Bibliotheca Ephemerides Liturgicae. Subsidia, 133).

<sup>54</sup> Cf. M. Smorąg Różycka, *Dziedzictwo Bizancjum*, „Białostockie Teki Historyczne” 6 (2008), p. 35–36.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. M. L. Fobelli, *Un tempio per Giustiniano. Santa Sofia di Costantinopoli e la Descrizione di Paolo Silenziario*, Roma 2005, p. 9.

of this tower. One stairwell stretches on the night side, and the other on the morning side. They are made of marble. Meanwhile, the platform itself is reminiscent of a regular circle. It is also surrounded by marble tiles decorated with precious materials. All of this construction from which God's commandments are proclaimed rests against eight brindled columns. Two of them face the Boreas wind (to the north), two face the Notos wind (to the south), two face the sun (to the east), and two face the place where the night lives (to the west). The lower level of the tower was occupied by a choir of young priests. They probably were a special group of cantors whose purpose was to direct the singing of the entire congregation.<sup>56</sup> Above them was a ceiling shaped like a turtle shell. One entered the top tower through slightly rounded doors. They were on the east and west sides. Only the person responsible for the book came in through them. Beams were placed on the decorative capitals of eight columns, which made the tower appear as if it had a crown. Lamps that flickered in a lively way were placed on the beams, where two silver crosses were also placed. The tower, whose floor was a marble lawn, located within the church looked as if it were surrounded by the sea.<sup>57</sup>

## Conclusion

We live in a society that constantly changes and modifies signs that it creates and uses to surround itself. Likewise, the Church modifies its signs and their symbolism. The Church did not publish a canon of the rule of created the place where the Word of God was proclaimed inside the church building, which would have been in accordance with the teachings of the Second Vatican Council and its teaching. However, that's too bad. Perhaps then there could have been developed such a visualization of the Word of God that would allow those entering the church building to immediately realize how the Good News should be proclaimed there. The place from which the Word of God is proclaimed strengthens the listener's identity.

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<sup>56</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, p. 170.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, p. 98–117.

Crispino Valenziano of the Pontifical Institute of Sacred Liturgy, who deals with the topic of applying theological matters to the space where the liturgy is celebrated, reminds us that the pulpit never was used solely to treat the Sacred Scriptures with respect, but the most important event – and thus the most important word – that the pulpit in the church can transmit to us is that Jesus Christ's tomb is empty and that that tomb, next to which the Paschal light shines, is a constant invitation to discovering the secret of the table of the Word of God richly set in the life of the person.<sup>58</sup>

## Abstract

### The Place of the Proclamation of the Word of God

This article presents a chronological evolution of the place of the proclamation of the Word of God. On the basis of pericopes from the Old Testament, the places that God chose to speak with the man and then places chosen by Jesus Christ and the Church in its early centuries were indicated. Use of the term “ambo” (ἄμβων), which appeared in the Church probably at the end of the fourth century, became widespread, and over time it was adopted as the name of the place for the Liturgy of the Word and for the book.

## Keywords

Old Testament; Jesus Christ; the early Church; the Synod of Laodicea; Syrian church; Christian basilica in the West; St. Augustine; Hagia Sophia

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<sup>58</sup> Cf. C. Valenziano, *Lambone: aspetti storici*, [in:] *Lambone. Tavola della parola di Dio. Atti del 3. Convegno liturgico internazionale, Bose, 2–4 giugno 2005*, a cura di G. Boselli, Magnano 2006, p. 97–99 (Liturgia e Vita).

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