Logikē latreia (Romans 12:1) as a Definition of Liturgy

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I. Introduction: Paul’s Trinitarian View of Offering and Its Relevance Today

During this Pauline Year, we have been invited to examine Saint Paul’s message not as something static and archaic, but as living and relevant today. Here in Rome, it seems right to begin with Paul’s address to “all God’s beloved in Rome, who are called to be saints” (Rom 1:7). Considered to be Paul’s “theological chef d’oeuvre” and “magisterial compendium of his theology,” Romans is addressed to a community he had...
never met (Rom 1:13). We are still that community, to which Paul offers a theological frame and definition of Christian worship. I am referring particularly to the phrase λογικὴ λατρεία, or “rational worship,” in Romans 12:1, which the Church thereafter will often use to describe what it is doing during the liturgy. The passage in question reads as follows:

I appeal to you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

Does this define what liturgy is according to Saint Paul and as interpreted by Church Tradition: the sacrifice of our lives to the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit? In other words, is this phrase of the Epistle to the Romans, among the best known and most quoted New Testament texts, quoted in liturgical services with an understanding of its use by Saint Paul? Or is it used out of context to reinforce a predetermined and ultimately unrelated point of view? Many early commentators

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3 Although Romans 1:13–32 is addressed to the Gentile Christians of Rome, it also applies to Jewish Christians who are also living unrighteously (Rom 2).


5 The range of words used to translate λογική is discussed below.


7 Revised Standard Version (RSV). Unless otherwise indicated, all subsequent English quotations from the Bible are from this translation.

and Church Fathers were content to take phrases out of context and use them as they willed. Is that the case here?

II. Romans 12:1 in Context: The Unity of the Epistle

In the structure of Romans we see a contrast between the Gospel, which reveals God’s righteousness (Rom 1:1–17), and the idolatry and wickedness of all people (Rom 1:18–2). Because of our unrighteousness and falling short of God’s glory, we are “justified by His grace as a gift, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as an expiation by his blood, to be received by faith” (Rom 3:24–25). The phrase is reminiscent of the Epistle to the Hebrews, where Jesus acts as high priest, making intercession before God on our behalf (Heb 9:23–26). All cultic worship is personalized in Christ who is our model. This is also seen in Romans 6, where Paul speaks of baptism: Jesus “died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus” (Rom 6:10–11). Living in Jesus is only possible through the Holy Spirit through whom we put the deeds of the body to death and are raised from the dead (Rom 8:11–14). In order to live this reality fully, Saint Paul tells us to “present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual [or rational] worship” (Rom 12:1); this offering is to be “sanctified by the Holy Spirit” (Rom 15:16).

The section of Romans beginning with chapter 12 contains a παραίνεσις – an ethical exhortation – often associated exclusively with morality and considered to begin a new, independent section of Paul’s letter. However, Theodore of Mopsuestia (c. 350–428) observes that Paul often has the teaching


Given the grammatical congruence of logiké thysia and logiké latreia, as also their close semantic similarity, it must be admitted that such texts offer suggestive clues to the realms of ancient discourse in relation to which Paul makes his appeal in Rom 12:1-2. I would characterize Paul’s use of latreia in 12:1, vis-à-vis his application of that word in the two earlier passages, as a pristine example of dialectical engagement over what the political philosopher William E. Connolly calls “essentially contested concepts.” I shall argue that the eusebēs logismos of 4 Maccabees and the logiké latreia of Romans 12 are semantically equivalent terms; that... Romans 12:1-21â€”Read the Bible online or download free. The New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures is published by Jehovah’s Witnesses.Â 12 Therefore, I appeal to you by the compassions of God, brothers, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, a sacred service with your power of reason. And stop being molded by this system of things, but be transformed by making your mind over, so that you may prove to yourselves the good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

"Logikē latreia (Romans 12:1) as a Definition of Liturgy," Logos: A Journal of Eastern Christian Studies 52:1-2 (2011), 109-124. Daniel Galadza. Loading Preview. Sorry, preview is currently unavailable. You can download the paper by clicking the button above. Download pdf. As is well known, religious diversity was seen as a problem in early modern Europe. Once the realization dawned that the Reformation had resulted in a permanent religious schism within the populations of countries and cities, society aimed first at practical solutions. After 1700, however, we see the general acceptation of toleration not as a stopgap but as a Christian ideal, which in a short span of time gained almost general acceptance. The first two sections of this chapter will substantiate this observation. In the late autumn of 1653 two Arminian students of theology travelled from Amsterdam to Utrecht to... Latria or latreia (also known as latreutical worship) is a theological term (Latin Latrēa, from the Greek λατεία, latreia) used in Roman Catholic theology to mean adoration, a reverence directed only to the Holy Trinity. Latria carries an emphasis on the internal form of worship, rather than external ceremonies. Latria also applies to the Eucharist and Eucharistic adoration. In the 16th century, the Council of Trent made specific affirmations of the presence of Christ in the Eucharist and the...