

**St Patrick's Pontifical University
Maynooth
Ireland**

***RES ET SACRAMENTUM: AN ONTOLOGICAL
UNDERSTANDING OF THE
SIGN AND REALITY
IN SACRAMENTS AND ITS RELEVANCE***

Lijan Kunjumon

A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Theology in partial fulfilment of
the requirements for the Degree of PhD in Theology

Director: Dr. Neil Xavier O'Donoghue

May 2024

Res et Sacramentum: An Ontological
Understanding of the *Sign and Reality* in
Sacraments and Its Relevance

Acknowledgements

I thank God Almighty for His unfailing love and grace which persevered me throughout the course of this study. I am thankful, also, to all who have offered guidance and advice in bringing this thesis to its fulfilment; in particular, my thesis director, Dr. Neil Xavier O'Donoghue for his gifted patience and wisdom, to Dr. Seamus O'Connell, Dr. Noel O'Sullivan for their valuable time and Most Rev. Denis Nulty, Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin for his kind support throughout my studies. I cannot forget my colleagues in Naas parish especially, Fr Liam Morgan for his words of motivation and finally I wish to thank my parents for their encouragements and prayers in this journey.

Ave Maria, gratia plena

CONTENTS

Acknowledgements.....	iii
Abbreviations.....	ix
INTRODUCTION.....	1
Chapter ONE	
Contemporary Sacramental Theology.....	6
Part I: Theology of Symbolism.....	8
1. KARL RAHNER: Sacraments, Word and Symbolic Reality.....	8
1.1 The Saving Character of the Word.....	11
1.2 The Function of the Church as the Basic Sacrament.....	12
1.3 The Nature of the Sacraments.....	14
1.4 The Theology of The Symbol.....	15
1.5 Rahner's Theology of Symbolic Reality and Dialogical nature of the Sacraments.....	18
Conclusion.....	19
2. L. M. CHAUVET: Sacraments, Symbolic Expressions of Christian Existence.....	20
2.1 The Symbolic Order.....	22
2.2 Language in Chauvet's Theology.....	23
2.3 Different Elements of Symbolic Order in Chauvet's Theology.....	25
2.4 Scriptures and Sacrament.....	27
2.5 The Sacraments as Ritual Symbols.....	28
2.6 Chauvet on Sign and Symbol.....	30
2.7 Grace of the Sacraments.....	32
2.8 Symbolic Efficacy.....	33
2.9 Chauvet's Sacramental Theology and their impact on the Understanding of the Dialogical Nature of the Sacraments.....	35
3. MICHAEL G. LAWLER: Prophetic Symbols of the Church.....	37
3.1 Prophetic Symbol.....	38
3.2 Symbol and Sacrament.....	39
3.3 Symbol.....	39
3.4 Sign and Symbol.....	40

3.5 Prophetic Symbol as Religious Symbol.....	41
3.6 A Critique on the Role of Prophetic Symbols in Michael G Lawler.....	44
3.7 Limitations in Communicating Divine truths.....	45

Part II: Sacrament, A Personal Encounter

4. E. SCHILLEBEECKX: Sacraments, Encounters with Christ.....	46
4.1 The Two Dimensions of Schillebeeckx's Sacramental Theology.....	48
4.2 Christ, the Sacrament.....	48
4.3 The Church as the Sacrament of Christ.....	52
4.4 A Critique of Schillebeeckx's Sacramental Theology and its Implications in the Dialogical Nature of the Sacraments.....	58
Conclusion.....	59

Part III: Sacrament, Symbolic Liturgical Actions of the Presence of God

5. HERBERT VORGRIMLER	60
5.1 The Sacramental Economy of Salvation.....	61
5.2 Creation and Election as Sacrament.....	62
5.3 Jesus Christ as the Primordial Sacrament.....	63
5.4 Church as the Fundamental Sacrament.....	63
5.5 Jesus Christ as the Author of the Sacraments.....	67
5.6 Sacrament- Event of the Word of God.....	67
5.7 Sacrament as Mediation of Divine Grace.....	69
5.8 Vorgrimler's Sacramental Theology and the Dialogical Nature of the Sacraments.....	71
6. EDWARD J KILMARTIN.....	72
6.1 The Basic Dimensions of Kilmartin's Sacramental Theology.....	74
6.2 The Seven Principal Rites of the Church.....	75
6.3 The Church of the Holy Spirit.....	76
6.4 The Concept and Constitution of the Christian Sacrament.....	77
6.5 The Sacraments and the Intercession of Christ.....	81
6.6 Faith and Fruitfulness of the Sacraments.....	84
6.7 An Analysis of Kilmartin's Approach to the Dialogical Nature of the Sacraments.....	85
CONCLUSION	87

Chapter TWO

Sacraments: The Key Interpretive Principles.....	89
1. Dialogue: Fundamental to Sacraments.....	89
2. Incarnation and the Sacramental Economy.....	90
3. Jesus Christ, The Primordial Sacrament.....	92
4. Church as Sacrament.....	98

Chapter THREE

The Origin of Sacraments.....	103
1. <i>Mysterion</i> and the Sacraments.....	104
1.2 <i>Mysterion</i> in the Bible.....	107
1.3 Pauline Concept of <i>Mysterion</i> and the Christian Sacraments.....	108
2. A Brief History on the Classical Definition of Sacrament.....	110
2.1 Patristic Definition of the Sacrament till the Medieval Period.....	116
3. The Institution of the Sacraments.....	120
3.1 Contemporary Approach.....	120
3.2 A Brief Glance Through the New Testament.....	123
3.3 An Implicit Institution?.....	124
4. The Influence of Trent on the Current Approach.....	127
5. Development of a Theological Approach Within Tradition.....	129
6. Modernist Approach.....	131
7. The Manner of Institution.....	132
7.1 Institution of the Sacraments in Specific Manner.....	133
7.2 Institution in a Generic Manner.....	133
7.3 Edward Schillebeeckx on Institution.....	136
7.4 Karl Rahner.....	138

Chapter FOUR

Sacrament and Sign, The Key Instruments in the Dialogue.....	142
1. Sign or Symbol or Both?.....	142
1.2 Signs and symbols: A Comparison.....	144
2. Symbol: A Definition.....	147
3. Signs and Symbols in Sacramental Context.....	148
3.1 Signs and Symbols in Liturgical Celebration.....	152

4. Signs, Sacrament in Saint Augustine.....	153
4.1 Structure of the Sign: Word and Element in Augustine.....	156
5. The Components of Sacramental Sign.....	158
6. Matter and Form of Sacraments.....	158
7. Sign that Communicates Grace.....	161
8. A Concise View of Instrumental Causality According to Saint Thomas.....	161

Chapter FIVE

Sign and Reality, *Res et Sacramentum*.....

1. Development of the Theology of <i>Res et Sacramentum</i>	165
1.2 Biblical Foundation of Sacramental Character.....	166
2. The Sacramental Seal in the Patristic Teachings.....	169
3. Augustine on <i>Sign</i> and <i>Reality</i> : The Donatist Controversy.....	174
4. The origin of <i>Res et Sacramentum</i> : The Berengarian Controversy.....	180
5. The Three Levels.....	184

Chapter SIX

The Theology of *Res et Sacramentum*

1. Eucharist, <i>Res et Sacramentum</i> and the other Sacraments.....	188
2. Baptismal Character: A point of Departure.....	191
2.1 Sacraments of Character and <i>res et sacramentum</i>	192
3. The Nature of Sacramental Character According to Saint Thomas Aquinas.....	195
3.1 A Unique Sign of Christian identity.....	195
3.2 Priestly Mission.....	197
4. Character as An Ontological Reality.....	198
5. The Indelible Nature of the Sacramental Character	202
6. Character in Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Orders.....	205
6.1 Baptismal Character.....	205
6.2 Confirmation and its Character.....	206
6.3 Sacramental Character in the Ministerial and Common Priesthood of Christ....	207
6.4 Holy Orders.....	209
6.4.1 The Three Hierarchical Grades of Holy Orders.....	210

6.5 Sacrament of Matrimony.....	213
6.6 Anointing of the Sick.....	214
6.7 Sacrament of Reconciliation.....	218

Chapter SEVEN

***Res et Sacramentum*, Its Relevance in the Sacramental World.....224**

1. Validity, Fruitfulness and Reviviscence.....	224
2. Sacraments and their Efficacy.....	226
2.1 Ecclesiological Nature of <i>Res et Sacramentum</i>	231
2.2 The Ecclesial Dimension of <i>Res et Sacramentum</i> in Sacramental Dialogue.....	233
2.3 Personal and Ecclesial Faith in Sacramental Dialogue.....	234
3. <i>Res et Sacramentum</i> and the Causation of Grace.....	236
4. Sacraments as Conditions for Receiving the Grace in Franciscan School of Theology.....	239
5. Thomas Aquinas' Instrument Efficient Causality of the Sacraments.....	244
6. Sacraments Contain Grace.....	246

CONCLUSION.....251

BIBLIOGRAPHY.....263

ABBREVIATIONS

ACW	Ancient Christian Writers Series
ANF	Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325
CCC	Catechism of the Catholic Church
CCCM	<i>Corpus Christianorum, continuatio mediaevalis.</i>
CCL	<i>Corpus Christianorum: Series Latina</i>
CSEL	<i>Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum</i>
DS	Denzinger Heinrich. <i>Enchiridion Symbolorum.</i>
FC	Fathers of the Church Series
NPNF-1	Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers. First Series
NPNF-2	Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers. Second Series
PG	<i>Patrologiae Cursus Completus. Series Graeca.</i>
PL	<i>Patrologiae Cursus Completus. Series Latina.</i>
PTS	<i>Patristische Texte und Studien</i>
ST	Thomas Aquinas. <i>Summa theologiae</i>
WSA	The Works of St. Augustine: A Translation for the 21 st Century Series

ABSTRACT

Res et Sacramentum: An Ontological Understanding of the Sign and Reality in Sacraments and Its Relevance

This research is based on identifying the structure of the sacramental economy as communicative. God communicates and the believer responds, with a response which involves a personal effort and a free will. This response, in turn, becomes the basis of the communicative process involved in a sacrament. Yet, in order to enter into this dialogue, one certainly needs to know the language of the sacrament, a language which goes beyond the verbal to involve signs and symbols, along with verbal expressions or the Word of Faith, as well as bodily language or the gestures. These sacramental rituals or celebrations are actions which are transformed into symbolic actions. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches that these symbolic actions are already a language which is accompanied by the Word of God and the response of faith in order to give life to the faithful.

Therefore, this research is in relation to the communicative dimension of the sacraments that produce fruits or brings in the ultimate reality, the grace in a believer's life. This thesis, by revisiting the history of sacramental theology, seeks a new perspective on the fruitfulness of the sacraments. This is done by exploring the communicative aspects of the three dimensions of the sacraments as conceived by the medieval sacramental theology: i) the *sacramentum tantum*: the ritual, ii) the *res et sacramentum*: The first effect of the sacrament, which is both *sign* and *reality* and iii) the *res tantum*: the grace or the ultimate reality conferred by the sacrament.

The three aspects of the sacraments do have a major role in establishing a communication between the individual participating in the sacrament and the Creator. Thus, a greater exploration of these aspects is imperative to understand the efficacy of the sacraments and experiencing their fruits in one's life. This thesis aims to establish how this dynamics function and develop in the sacramental world, especially examining from an historical and theological point of view the role of the middle aspect, *res et sacramentum* and the *dialogical reality* it forms bringing in the fruitfulness of the sacrament.

INTRODUCTION

Although the sacraments have multiple definitions, varying from the classical definitions of the Church Fathers to the definitions based on the currents of the time, it is firmly understood that these are the divine mysteries by which God communicates with His people. That sense of communication is pivotal to our understanding of sacraments, as they must be seen to be inherently communicative. As the primary instruments of this human-divine communication, the sacraments are primarily dialogical.¹

God communicates and the believer responds, with a response which involves a personal effort and a free will. This response, in turn, becomes the basis of the communicative process involved in a sacrament. Yet, in order to enter into this dialogue, one certainly needs to know the language of the sacrament, a language which goes beyond the verbal to involve signs and symbols, along with verbal expressions or the Word of Faith, as well as bodily language or the gestures.

This research is based on identifying the structure of the sacramental economy as dialogical. It shows us how God communicates and the faithful respond in the sacramental celebrations. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* defines the sacramental economy as the communication of the fruits of Christ's paschal mystery in the celebration of the Church's sacramental liturgy. This communication entails a dialogue, through actions and words in the liturgical celebrations.² These sacramental rituals or celebrations are actions which are transformed into symbolic actions. Hence, the term ritual or rite could be used as though it

¹ International Theological Commission, *The Reciprocity between Faith and sacraments in the Sacramental Economy*, Vatican (2020), 65-71.

² CCC, 1076.

were synonymous with the term symbol or symbolic action.³ The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches that these symbolic actions are already a language which is accompanied by the Word of God and the response of faith in order to give life to the faithful.⁴

These symbolic actions with the use of material elements in the sacramental liturgy are the actions of Jesus himself. By this very fact the sacraments are effective *ex opere operato*.⁵ It is important to realize that the sacraments are effective independent of the quality of the faith or the dialogue that a believer engages in. That is to say, the efficacy of the sacramental action is due wholly and exclusively to Christ and not to the faith of either the recipient or the minister of the sacrament.⁶ Our concern here is not in relation to the efficacy but rather to the communicative dimension of the sacraments that produce fruits or brings in the ultimate reality, the grace in a believer's life.

Hence, the significance of this study needs to be situated within the contemporary cultural and ecclesial situation of those who receive the sacraments in the tradition of the Catholic Church. If the theological tradition has taught that the properly celebrated sacraments are valid and effective, how does their fruitfulness depend on the context? one may also well ask what exactly contributes to this fruitfulness? The disposition one ought to possess or the faith one must have or something else. Down through the centuries several teachings have evolved enabling a better understanding of the sacraments and their various aspects. However, despite these developments, the debate on this issue seems cyclical. The issue pertains to how we might best understand the experiencing of the sacramental effects for

³ Michael G. Lawler, *Symbol and Sacrament, A Contemporary Sacramental Theology* (New York: Paulist Press, 1987)18.

⁴ CCC, 1153.

⁵ DS 1608, The Council of Trent, Decree on the Sacraments, (Session 7), can.8, on the Sacraments in General.

⁶ International Theological Commission, *The Reciprocity*, 68.

the individual. And this understanding should lead one to a more pragmatic than a conceptual resolution.

The aim of this thesis is not to introduce a brand-new theory to the area of sacramental theology. Instead, it would propose that a feasible solution to this debate might be found by revisiting the history of sacramental theology and seek a new perspective on the fruitfulness of the sacraments. This is done by exploring the communicative aspects of the three dimensions of the sacraments as conceived by the medieval sacramental theology, namely,

- i) the *sacramentum tantum*: the ritual, like the pouring of water and the word formula in baptism.
- ii) the *res et sacramentum*: The first effect of the sacrament, which is “both sign and reality,” a reality caused by the external rite, which is a symbol or sign of the second/final effect.
- iii) the *res tantum*: the element which is “only a reality” the grace or the ultimate reality conferred by the sacrament⁷.

This thesis seeks to affirm that the sacrament is a self-communication of God, but within a whole process which, from celebration to the achievement of the fruit of the sacrament, is not autonomous as it involves human effort and response in free will. As a result, the sacraments are dialogical, needing a response from the subject to the Creator. The three aspects of the sacraments, therefore, do have a major role in establishing a communication between the individual participating in the sacrament and the Creator. Thus, a greater exploration of these aspects is imperative to understand the efficacy of the

⁷ Michael Schmaus, *Dogma*, Vol.5, *The Church as Sacrament* (Kansas City: Sheed and Ward, 1975) 34.

sacraments and experiencing their fruits in one's life. These three aspects of the sacraments are connected sequentially, each leading to the other, together resulting in the effect of the sacrament. This thesis aims to establish how this dynamics function and develop in the sacramental world, especially highlighting the role of the middle aspect, *res et sacramentum*.

Since *res et sacramentum* is both a *sign* and a *reality*, how is its functioning understood in this communicative process? If it were to be seen from the *sign* aspect, then it should be understood as instrumental for the dialogue. On the other hand, if it is to be seen as a *reality*, can we take this as grace? How do we place its role in the communicative aspect of a sacrament as it is technically a compound state?

Further to this, speaking on the *res et sacramentum* the *International Theological Commission* describes it as “something that a valid sacrament transmits as a constitutive part of the sacramentals action of grace.”⁸ For instance, a valid Baptism produces sacramental character. That is, the proper celebration of the sacraments with the proper *matter* (in the case of Baptism, clear water and not sparkling water or any other forms of liquid) and proper *form* (the formula, “I baptize you in the name of the Father...” is used and not “we baptize you in the name of the Father.”)⁹

Here, the issues pertaining to validity, and things like *matter* and *form* would stem from the legality or licitness of the sacraments,¹⁰ which is more of a matter of canon law. Therefore, having both the aspects of sign and reality in *res et sacramentum* and corresponding to the foregoing questions can it be viewed just as a product of a valid sacrament? How does this play in the communicative aspect of the sacrament?

⁸ International Theological Commission, *Reciprocity*, 66.

⁹ Note of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of Faith, *Gestis Verbisque*. On the Validity of the Sacraments, Vatican, 25th January 2024.

¹⁰ The issues of validity and licitness are explained in the last chapter of the thesis. cfr pp.224-225.

In search of answers to these questions, this research aims for a better understanding of the dynamic functioning of *res et sacramentum* within the sacramental system by developing an ontological exploration of the *res et sacramentum* for its embedded communicative significance in a sacrament in bringing out the fruits of the sacraments in recipients.

The growing influence of secularism in today's world means that often the core theological vision is subsumed into a context where its significance is lost. The need for bringing the society to sacramentalism is still present and often the sacraments are adapted to suit this need as moments of celebration and ritualization but without the sense of their origin or their prophetic impact. This thesis would argue that the sacraments are neither automation nor something that quenches the societal need, instead, there is much more to it, a personal involvement, a communication at the core of the sacrament, in the communication of God with a free will. If the dialogical nature of the sacramental celebration is foregone, it leads to a magical type or ritualism.

The essential elements of this thesis, particularly the idea, the nature of the sacramental economy and the *dialogical reality* that they form in the *res et sacramentum* will be examined from an historical and dogmatic theological point of view. It is historical as it explores the historical situations within which the idea of *res et sacramentum* was developed and specifically formulated. Its purpose is also to lay bare the connection between the context and theology of this aspect of the sacrament. A full understanding of the historical development of this notion is essential to its contemporary restatement. Hence it is also dogmatic.

Chapter ONE

Contemporary Sacramental Theology

The key factor in this initial chapter is to elucidate the factors that play a pivotal role in the exploration of the understanding of sacrament in the Catholic Church. This understanding of sacraments is vital when it comes to matters of faith. The aim of this chapter is not simply to explore the general concept of sacraments. Instead, I aim to find the crucial aspects that make more sense to our understanding in terms of understanding the dynamic aspects that actively play in bringing about the results of the sacraments.

The notion of Sacrament has multiple definitions beginning from the Church Fathers up to modern times, from classic to popular, from complex to simpler for the ordinary. What basically matters here is the different approaches that can be taken in reaching these definitions and understanding of the term sacrament in our Christian lives.

The issue that pertains to our query here is the best outcome of the sacrament, the fruitfulness. Why does it depend on the context and not exclusively on the efficacy? Sacraments are effective *ex opera operato*, which we shall discuss in the latter part of this thesis. Does it mean that all the sacraments are fruitful irrespective of the cooperation of the subjects? If cooperation is needed what sort of cooperation is expected from the subject? What makes it fruitful? What contributes to its fruitfulness, is it the faith or the disposition one must have?

How do we approach this issue in the world of sacraments to resolve it viably? Since sacraments are also liturgical acts, do we approach it from a liturgical point of view? If it were to be the case, one must confine his research in terms of liturgical practice or the rite of the sacrament. That would make it more ritualistic and sometimes almost magical, merely following the rubrics. Can we

approach this issue from a mere dogmatic point of view? In other words, if one were to follow the beliefs of the Church and practice their faith accordingly, can they achieve the fruits of the sacraments? Does it not make it purely mechanical not having any spontaneous involvement?

The fact is one cannot confine sacramental acts to mere pastoral activity, dogmas, or ritualistic event. There is surely a pitfall in this sort of approach. For a sacrament to be fruitful, there is more to it, an involvement in the sacramental act. A personal involvement, an involvement which brings the whole of subject, their body, mind and spirit in the actualization of the sacrament.

How do we approach the issue of our concern here? Whether it be pastoral or merely liturgical or any other pertaining issues it is our perspective that really matters. So, in this regard what approach shall we take? While the fruitfulness of the sacrament depends on various factors like faith, disposition and understanding of the sacrament etc., the grace of God which is manifested in the results of the sacrament is brought sometimes even without our awareness. But, certainly not without our cooperation. Hence, one cannot underestimate the grace of God to be something magical which also undermines the whole purpose of sacraments and our sense of freedom.

Since no approach is exhaustive, this study aims to investigate some of the current trends in the field of sacramental theology. The initial part of this thesis lays the foundation for our discussion, especially, understanding Sacrament from different point of view, different theologians, to enlarge our vision on the whole concept of sacrament to reach a resolve to our queries here presented.

Part ONE

Theology of Symbolism

1. KARL RAHNER: Sacraments, Word and Symbolic Reality

Karl Rahner, a German Jesuit priest and theologian is considered to be one of the most influential Roman Catholic theologians of the 20th century. He has done a good deal of work on the sacraments¹ and his style is not that easily accessible. Hence, it's crucial to have a general vision of his overall theology before dealing with his sacramental notions. His thought is certainly complex, and necessary consequence of his careful originality; he tries to connect the antiquated scholastic and contemporary language.²

Herbert Vorgrimler describes Karl Rahner as a Kerygmatic theologian who wants to liberate theological formulas and concepts from the rigidity they have acquired as mere tools in the Church's theological tradition. He speaks of the peculiarities of Rahner's style consisting of two components and an 'alienating' effect which secures their sequence and coordination. The first component is an attempt or the summing up of all the past achievement of theology in secondary clauses and in innumerable participles. And the second component is the element of religious

¹ Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, vol.IV, trans. Kevin Smyth (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1966) and vol.XIV, trans. D. Bourke, 1976. The notion of sacraments is dealt extensively in the vol.IV and XIV of the *Theological Investigation* from two different stances. There are at least 4 volumes in the series *Theological Investigations* on Sacraments. See also, Vol.X, trans. D.Bourke, 1977, and Vol.XXIII, trans.J. Donceel & H. Riley, 1992, Besides, his other referral works: *The Church and the Sacraments* (London: Burns & Oates, 1963), and *Foundations of Christian Faith. An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity* (New York: Crossroad, 1997).

² George Vass, *The Sacrament of the Future: An Evaluation of Karl Rahner's Concept of the Sacraments and the End of Time* (Herefordshire: Gracewing, 2005), viii.

piteousness which in most of Rahner's works is found dispersed amid rigorously scientific statements. Vorgrimler calls this sudden turn of style, the alienating effect.³

And hence, when it comes to his sacramental theology, the theology of the symbols seems to dominate most of the theologians. As a matter of fact, the theology of the Word and the theology of the symbols do go hand in hand in Rahner's approach to the whole concept of sacraments. While the series, *Theological Investigations*, volume IV of Rahner deals extensively on Sacraments based on the theology of symbols, in the latter part of the series volume XIV, he posits a theology of the Word as the basis for a theology of the sacraments. According to which the sacrament figures as the supreme human and ecclesiastical stage of the *word* in all its dimensions which has been uttered in the Church as such.⁴

Just as Otto Semmelroth centered his theology around the sacramental mystery of the Church, his Jesuit colleague Karl Rahner expanded and deepened this dialogue at a more primordial level. That is, Word and sacrament are the essential expressions of God's redemptive dialogue with humankind. He explored how underlying this mystery of the Church was the presence of a word of Grace, reconciliation and eternal life: Jesus Christ.⁵ Therefore, Rahner points out a common misjudgment in the field of theology of distinguishing the Word and Sacrament as two different entities. As a result, one has the impression that in the past the only task for theology is to work out the difference between sacrament and Word as clearly as possible. He enjoins the theologians of both Protestant and Catholics to seek afresh for a common point of departure in investigating the question of the institution and the existence of sacraments in the Christian Church. According

³ Herbert Vorgrimler, *Karl Rahner: His Life, Thought and Work*, Trans. Edward Quinn, (London, Burnes & Oates, 1965) 11-14.

⁴ Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, XIV, 137.

⁵ Paul Janowiak, *The Holy Preaching: The Sacramentality of the Word in the Liturgical Assembly* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2000), 27.

to Rahner, this point of departure is the distinctive theological character of the word uttered in the Church as the eschatological presence of God. And hence, amidst the controversies of the Catholic and Reformation theologians, the real position, seems to be this: one must first recognize clearly what happens to words between men and women as a result of factors in history and in concrete human living. The fact is that they are liable to great variations. It is the event of grace that makes the word uttered in the Church and through the Church distinguishing. In short, the Word, which is in principle exhibitiv, and, moreover, exist in the Church as the eschatological presence of God's salvation in the world.⁶

One must also recognize that the variability of the human word in general, as due to factors in history and in concrete human living, also applies to this word of the Church and in the Church. Recognizing all these factors one arrives at a notion of sacrament in which the sacrament is understood as one quite specific word- event within a theology of the Word. In other words, it doesn't mean that the specific character of sacrament is not just any other kind of word which has a justified place within the Church. Rahner maintains that the matter or element in a sacrament has only a secondary function in terms of presenting the significance of the word. It is because the inherent quality of the sacrament is determined by the word. Rahner would also remind us that, although there is an intrinsic difference between the seven sacraments of the Catholic Church, they also have a common nature at least in a comparable sense. And yet in the case of Marriage and Confession, the theology of sacraments recognizes a uniformity. These two sacraments consist merely in the word. That is, they are enacted in words alone, and therefore the true nature of sacraments as such must consist in the word. However, this doesn't imply anything against the binding prescriptions governing the use of the element or the matter, in the case of other

⁶ Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, XIV, 136-137.

sacraments. He explains: “in the case of other sacraments for the very reason that as a matter of quite general principle the validity and effectiveness of a word in a social dimension can be dependent upon conditions which are positively laid down to accompany or to be combined with the pronouncing of this word.”⁷

Along with all these factors prompting us to take the theology of the Word as the starting point for his theology of sacraments, Rahner mentions three in particular: The event character of the Word, an exhibitiv character; the doctrine of the Church as the basic sacrament of salvation.⁸

1.1 The Saving Character of the Word.

Rahner argues that the theology of the Word and the theology of the sacraments is intrinsically connected. That is to say, the supreme point of the theology of the Word is the theology of sacraments. He lays out a few points here to defend his stance on this argument. First of all, he expounds the salvific nature of the Word. Rahner’s comparison of the Word of God with the word used in our day-to-day life is noteworthy. There is this single, focused nature of the human word of communicating information; However, they differ from one another, and it is only a matter of degrees they differ. In the same manner it must be noted that the word conveying catechetical information has certainly not the same character as word as that which proclaims the death of the Lord (the Eucharist) or that which assures the individual in his concrete situation of the forgiveness of his sins (Confession). According to Rahner, a point on which Catholic and Protestant theology could agree is that the word achieves the full realization of its own nature in those cases in which it has an exhibitiv character, in which it is addressed to the hearer in ways that brings salvation to him. Here, Rahner feels the need for a further clarification to denote its fuller sense of the word as

⁷ Ibid., 137-138. The same idea is also presented in *Theological Investigations*, vol IV, 253-286.

⁸ Ibid., 139.

he speaks of its higher nature unparallel to anything in this world. The Word of God in its full and original sense is not to be understood of as belonging to the level of instruction in a propositional form. Rather, it is to be conceived of as an exhibitiv word, a word that renders present. It is in it and through it that the reality is foremost given and moreover the word is constituted by the reality which it reveals itself in this way.⁹

Richard Lennan observes that, Rahner's view connects the created grace of the sacraments to the uncreated grace of God.¹⁰ For Rahner, apart from grace, the Word of God as revelation would not really be, or continue to be, the Word of God in any true sense at all. Rather, it would be degraded to the level of a human word about God, though one which might perhaps have been caused by God. The Word of God in the strictest and truest sense, therefore, can exist at all only as an event of grace. Hence, Rahner claims, it must have an exhibitiv character. It must be a saving event.¹¹

1.2 The Function of the Church as the Basic Sacrament

Another approach to his theology of the Word and sacrament is a doctrine of the Church as a basic sacrament of the salvation of the world. In Vass' opinion Rahner's sacramental theology is implicit in his ecclesiology.¹² It is in virtue of the Church's entire reality and her very nature as determinative and constitutive, that the Church constitutes this basic sacrament. For Karl Rahner, the Church is in fact intended to be the sacrament of the salvation of the world and of the unity of mankind. And this is a unity in God which brings about salvation. In other words, between the Church on one hand and salvation and unity on the other, a distinction is drawn and at the same time a connection is established. Kenan Osborne argues that the idea of the Church as a basic

⁹ Ibid., 139-140.

¹⁰ Richard Lennan, *Tilling the Church: Theology for an Unfinished Project* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press Academic, 2022), 73.

¹¹ Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, XIV, 141.

¹² Vass, *The Sacrament of the Future*, 1.

sacrament makes no sense, in the writings of theologians like Karl Rahner, unless Jesus, in his humanity, is also seen as a fundamental or primordial sacrament. Osborne also maintains that “the two are understandable only in their mutuality, so that one really cannot accept Jesus as the primordial sacrament unless one also accepts the Church as a basic sacrament, and the Church as a sacrament presupposes Jesus as the primordial sacrament.”¹³

This connection is characterized as ‘sacramental’ signifying that Church is a sign in history which reveals on a historical level and thereby also ‘effects’ that will of God towards the world which creates salvation and unity.¹⁴

Rahner regards the nature of the Church as fulfilling two roles in one when he states:

She [the Church] is both the proclaiming bearer of the revealing word of God as his utterance of salvation to the world, *and at the same time* she is the subject, hearkening and believing, to whom that word of salvation of God in Christ is addressed. Thus we regard the Church as the believing one who preaches and as the proclaiming one who believes both in one.¹⁵

For Rahner, Catholic theology of the Word should be understood simply as that which is sustained in grace as the self-communication of God. Also, it must be understood that the word of the gospel is always sustained by a grace which is *de facto* effective by the power of God and not merely by goodwill on man's part. In short, in virtue of her faith, the Church is the sacrament of salvation for the world because she points to and makes present the grace in the world which will never more disappear from the world. The Sacramental sign of grace is an effective sign insofar as through it

¹³ Kenan B. Osborne, *Sacramental Theology: A General Introduction* (New York: Paulist Press, 1988), 10-11.

¹⁴ Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, XIV, 142-143.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 143.

precisely this will of God to bestow grace reveals itself at the historical level.¹⁶ On this salvific aspect and the societal nature of the Church according to Rahner, Geoffrey Kelly puts this way: it is through this historically conditioned and societally structured Church that the grace of God in Christ is symbolized and made visible in tangible form in sacraments.¹⁷ Thus, the general effectiveness of the Church as sacrament, can be conceived of in the real and symbolic effectiveness of the individual sacraments.

1.3 The Nature of the Sacraments

Rahner, for his extensive search in sacramental theology that envelopes a wide range of array of the issues subjected to scrutiny, must always be applauded. In line with the Council of Trent, he treats Eucharist as the source of other sacraments. Following his argument that the sacraments constitute the highest stages in the Word of grace in the Church in its character as exhibitiv and as event, he highlights the Eucharist or the Last Supper as the Word of grace to the community.¹⁸ Hence, Francis Schüssler Fiorenza states: “Karl Rahner wanted to present a sacramental theology in continuity with that of Thomas Aquinas while enlarging upon it by pursuing the insight that the nature of sacraments as signs is at the heart of Sacramental theology, thus avoiding an exaggerated sense of the causal protection of an entity of grace.”¹⁹

It is important to note that, on the nature of the sacraments, especially on the institution, Rahner has a unique understanding. The sacraments in general have been instituted by Christ to the extent that the Church as such derives from Him. He further explains that the sacraments were instituted by Christ even supposing that the fact that Christ had brought them into a conditional mode of

¹⁶ Ibid., 143-144.

¹⁷ Geoffrey B. Kelly, *Karl Rahner: Theologian of the Graced Search for Meaning* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993) 281.

¹⁸ Rahner, *The Church and the Sacraments* (London: Burnes and Oates, 1974) 82 ff.

¹⁹ David N. Power, “Sacraments” in *Systematic Theology: Roman Catholic Perspectives*, 2nd edition, Francis Schüssler Fiorenza and John P. Galvin, Editors (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2011), 481.

existence (*causatio in esse condicionado*) had never been known to anyone, and supposing no individual sacrament had been conferred, that is caused actually to come into concrete existence.²⁰

Following the dogmas of the council of Trent, Karl Rahner examines that the two sacraments of initiation, namely, Baptism and Confirmation for the most orthodox Catholic theology, are closely interconnected than the rest of the sacraments. He says there is a certain lack of precision intrinsic to the doctrine that there are seven sacraments. He points out again that the sacrament of order, subsumes within itself a multiplicity of sacramental conferements of office. It has not even clearly been laid down about these that the Church has not the power to decide what their number and content should be. Without denying that the sacraments derive from Christ, Rahner asserts that they are seven such radical and exhibitve words of grace in the Church. It is not just simply laid down as given by the authority of the Church but implies an historical decision on the part of Church herself. Rahner calls a radical and exhibitve word of grace of this kind a Sacrament. He sums up by stating that the existence, meaning, and range of these words to a large extent dependent on the will of the Church which utters them.²¹

1.4 The Theology of The Symbol

Part V of the volume IV of the theological investigation on the sacraments Rahner treats the theology of symbols. For Annice Callahan, this theology of symbol is a requisite in order to understand Rahner's insight into the mission of the Church as the symbol of Christ in the world, as "sacrament of the world's salvation", because it serves as a central principle of interpretation in his theology.²²

²⁰ Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, XIV, 146. An elaborated idea of this can be found in the footnote of the page.

²¹ Ibid., 147-148.

²² Annice Callahan, *Karl Rahner's Theology of Symbol: Basis for his Theology of the Church and the Sacraments in Irish theological Quarterly*, Vol.49,1982, issue: 3, 195.

The first principle Rahner puts forward as the basic principle of it is as follows: all beings are by their very nature symbolic, because they necessarily express themselves in order to attain their own nature²³.

To Rahner, in general, symbols should be thought of as making actual, real and present that which they symbolize or the symbol renders present what is revealed. He opines that not everything we call symbol fit into this category. Genuine symbols are called symbolic realities while signs, signals and codes are symbolic representations. A symbol of an anchor, a fish and so on indicates a lower degree of the symbolic than for instance a religious image. The task that Rahner would assert here is to explore the highest and most primordial way one reality can represent another. From an ontological point of view, this is a supreme and primal representation, in which one reality makes another present, primarily for itself and for only secondarily for others, as symbol. In other words, a representation which allows the other 'to be there'.²⁴

A reality consists of essence and existence according to Rahner. Hence, all beings are multiple, and can be essentially the expression of another in this unity of the multiple and one in this plurality by reason of its plural unity. A being is, of itself, unparallelly plural in its unity. In short, the symbolic reality is the self-realization of a being in the other, which is constitutive of its essence.²⁵ In the standard catholic teaching, there is nothing new in saying that the sacraments both cause grace and symbolize it. For Karen Kilby, what makes Rahner's approach most outstanding here is

²³ Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, IV, 224.

²⁴ Ibid., 225.

²⁵ Ibid., 234.

the fact that the symbol and the symbolized should not be thought of separately. Instead, the sacraments symbolize and at the same time cause grace precisely in symbolizing it.²⁶

Regarding the theology of symbolic reality, Rahner's theology of the Word is strictly a theology of the symbol, and indeed the supreme form of it. The Logos is the 'Word' of the Father, His perfect image, His self-expression. In his own words: "The Logos is a symbol of the Father, in the very sense which we have given the word, the inward symbol which remains distinct from what is symbolized which is constituted by what is symbolized, where what is symbolized expresses itself and possesses itself."²⁷

Hence, Theology of symbolic reality is based on the truth that the Logos, as Word of the Father, expresses the Father in the 'abbreviation' of His human nature and constitutes the symbol which communicates Him to the world. The Church, therefore, is the symbolic reality of the presence of Christ in the world. And it continues the symbolic function of the logos in the world.

Rahner's theology of symbolic reality can be summarized thus: God himself is the reality of salvation and it's given to humankind and grasped by them in the symbol, that exhibits this reality as something present, by means of the symbol formed by it. Therefore, sacrament, according to Karl Rahner, is defined as the supreme realization of the efficacious Word of God, in the full actualization of the Church which is decisive for the individual salvation. In short, it is an efficacious word. The word and the sacramental actions participate in the symbolic character of the sacrament and hence in its quality of being *word*. The sacramental action too has the character of a word. It designates something, it reveals something that is of itself hidden. It too is a word.

²⁶ Karen Kilby, *Karl Rahner in Fount Christian Thinkers Series*. ed. Peter Vardy (London: Fount, Harper and Collins, 1997) 41.

²⁷ Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, IV, 236.

1.5 Rahner's Theology of Symbolic Reality and the Dialogical Nature of the Sacraments

Karl Rahner's theology clarifies the fundamental function of dialogue in sacramental actions by exploring the interaction between the human and divine within the sacramental framework. He shows a deep awareness of the relational nature of faith by emphasising the sacraments as interactive experiences where believers engage with God's mercy. Rahner's method is still criticised, though, for possibly simplifying the nuances of these interactions and shifting towards an abstract symbolic interpretation that could weaken real experience participation. Paradoxically, this appeal for cognitive and narrative conversion can alienate those who are rooted in traditional practices that oppose such theological transformations, even though he promotes a transformational understanding of religious symbols that goes beyond basic interpretations.²⁸ Particularly, the Eucharist's necessity as the Savior's Sacrifice, which is essential to comprehending the entirety of sacramental life, highlights that the sacraments are essential experiences with divine grace rather than merely symbolic ones.²⁹

In exploring the complexities inherent in Rahner's theological framework, it becomes evident that his emphasis on symbolic reality often leads to significant ambiguities, particularly regarding the role of the sacraments. This ambiguity can undermine the dialogical nature that the sacraments are meant to embody, as the interaction between divine grace and human response may become obscured.

For example, although Rahner believes that divine grace can be felt at any time in life, his method runs the risk of weakening the unique experiences that sacraments are meant to promote.³⁰ The

²⁸ Joseph Ratzinger, *Called to Communion: Understanding the Church Today Called to Communion* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1996), 13-21.

²⁹ Ratzinger, *Called to Communion*, 83-93.

³⁰ Karl Rahner, *The Christian Commitment: Essays in Pastoral Theology* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1963), 40.

sacramental act itself may be overshadowed by the focus on existential experiences, which would turn it into a symbolic act rather than genuine spiritual encounters. The idea of negative interpretives, which draws attention to the linguistic and ritualic gaps that Rahner's framework frequently ignores and thus fails to adequately recognise the depth and richness of liturgical practices, lends credence to this criticism.³¹ A more nuanced understanding of this relationship within Rahner's framework is also necessary, as Kavanagh notes that a lot of what is referred to as liturgical theology frequently does not accurately reflect how liturgy shapes theology or even relates to it.³²

Conclusion

When considering Rahner's theory of symbolic reality, it is clear that although his understanding of the dialogical character of the sacraments greatly contributes to theological discourse today, there are few drawbacks. Rahner's focus on the symbolic element runs the risk of diminishing the sacramental reality by reducing the intense experience of the divine to only symbolic components. This viewpoint could unintentionally result in a reduction of the sacraments' inherent effectiveness, separating the faithful from the material grace that these rites are meant to impart. Additionally, Rahner's emphasis on the sacraments as symbols of a deeper reality must contend with the critique that such an approach risks reducing the transformative potential of communal ecclesial life. As seen in the call for a missional ecclesiology, these sacraments ought to reflect not only a communal understanding of faith but also an active engagement with the mission of God, a dialogue, bridging the gap between faith and practice.³³ Finally, even though Rahner makes a significant contribution

³¹ Aidan Kavanagh, *On Liturgical Theology*, (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1984), 74-85.

³² Kavanagh, *Liturgical Theology*, 79—83.

³³ Eugene R. Schlesinger, *Missa Est! A Missional Liturgical Ecclesiology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2017), 46-53.

to our knowledge of sacramental conversation, his theology calls for more research and analysis in order to confront these fundamental issues in the larger framework of sacramental life of the Church.

2. L. M. CHAUVET: Sacraments, Symbolic Expressions of Christian Existence

Louis Marie Chauvet was a priest of the Diocese of Luçon, France who taught sacramental theology at the Catholic University in Paris from 1974. His first major work entitled *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, is recognized as a significant contribution to the field of sacramental theology.

The size and complexity of this work must have been a factor in the eight-year delay before it appeared in English, and it posed as a challenge to the classic theory of how sacraments work.³⁴

The influence of his thoughts was enriched by his streamlined and updated presentation of the same work translated in English as the *Sacraments: The Word of God at the Mercy of the Body*, published in 1997, has had greater popularity. A major influence on Chauvet was the German Philosopher Martin Heidegger and therefore his works have been widely acclaimed and seen as an example of postmodern sacramental theology.³⁵

Here, Chauvet provides a new sacramental interpretation of Christian existence by investigating the sacramental structure in a symbolic order.³⁶ In his work on sacramental theology, he draws on

³⁴Mervyn Duffy, *How Language, Ritual and Sacraments Work: According to John Austin, Jurgen Habermas and Louis Marie Chauvet* (Rome: Gregorian University Press, 2005) 139.

³⁵Conor Sweeney, *Sacramental Presence After Heidegger: Onto-theology, Sacraments, and the Mother's Smile* (Oregon: Cascade Books, 2015) 53-56.

³⁶Louise Marie Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, trans. Patrick Madigan and Madeleine Beaumont, (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1995), 1.

various disciplines of anthropology, linguistics, exegesis, ethics, liturgy, Christology, ecclesiology and so on to further his notions.

Chauvet begins his theology of sacraments with the path of language and symbol. Joseph C. Mudd explains that Chauvet, in order to achieve his goal of a sacramental reinterpretation, undertakes to free sacramental theology from the constraints of metaphysics of cause and effect.³⁷ He posits the basic theological question: what do we learn about Christian faith and Christian identity from the fact that the sacraments have always been their very fabric? He explains basing the argument on the fact that from its very origin the Church has always celebrated the sacraments, in particular Baptism and Eucharist. Ever since then no one becomes a Christian except by receiving these sacraments.³⁸ The question he seeks to answer here is: what does it mean for the faith that things are so? The answer that is given throughout his work *The Sacraments* can be formulated as follows:

the fact that Christian identity cannot be separated from the sacraments (in particular those of initiation) means that faith cannot be lived in any other way, including what is most spiritual in it, than in the mediation of the body, the body of a society, of a desire, of a tradition, of an history, of an institution, and so on. What is the most spiritual always takes place in the most corporeal.³⁹

Chauvet lays out three theoretical models by presenting the main theme of his notions on the whole concept of sacraments: The salient point of the sacraments is the gratuitous communication of God with the believers and any weakening of this affirmation would diminish the sacraments of their

³⁷ Joseph C Mudd, *Eucharist as Meaning: Critical Metaphysics and Contemporary Sacramental Theology* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2014), 3.

³⁸ Chauvet, *The Sacraments: The Word of God at the Mercy of the Body*. Translated by Madeline Beaumont (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1997) x-xi.

³⁹ Chauvet, *The Sacraments*, xii.

essential originality. Among the different models of answer to explain the interconnection essential in every sacrament, between the action of God and the human action of the Church, are three which are of more particular interest for us:

- 1) the objectivist model proposed chiefly during the scholastic period of the 12th and 13th centuries, eminently by Thomas Aquinas (1228-1274)
- 2) the opposite subjectivist model, a response to the preceding, which succeeded in certain circles of the Catholic world and also in the work of the great Protestant theologian Karl Barth (1886-1966) and
- 3) the model of Vatican II, following Thomas Aquinas, while making important corrections to his thought. And it is precisely the dynamism of the Vatican II model that will lead one to wonder whether another model is not possible today, a symbolic model which will change the approach of the three preceding models.⁴⁰

2.1 The Symbolic Order

In Duffy's view, Chauvet, describes the world which human beings experience as the symbolic order.⁴¹ For Chauvet, the sacraments are seen as one element of Christian existence. Chauvet details the main element of his whole schema here. He explains that for every single person, the body is the place in which the most internal and most external meet or the external place in which the internal finds its structure. Such a structure is "symbolic". The symbolic order exactly assigns this meaningful coordination of the many elements that compose a human existence in the strict sense. He establishes in his first chapter of *The Sacrament* that it is within the symbolic order one

⁴⁰ Ibid., xiii.

⁴¹ Duffy, *How Language, Ritual, and Sacraments Work*, 157.

becomes a “subject” or a “person.” And in the second chapter Chauvet concludes the proper consequences concerning the Christian subject following a discussion on the relation of these elements in the succeeding chapters.

The human subject in language and culture is the foundation to his arguments on the whole concept of symbolic model. Defining from an anthropological viewpoint of the sacrament, Chauvet points out that it is something independently of faith. That is, the sacraments are expressions in word and rite proper to the particular religious group that Christians are. Since they are expressions, they belong to what is called language. Speaking on his ideas of the inter connection between the sacraments and language, he explains:

[the Sacraments are] first verbal language, of course, but also the language or quasi language of gestures, postures, movements, which are all forms of body language. Now, what is language? This is a vast and complex question. Language is not an “instrument” but a “mediation”. The least one can say is that this statement is far from self-evident.”

This metaphysical scheme has come to us from the ancient Greeks, beginning with Plato.⁴²

2.2 Language in Chauvet’s Theology:

Pierre Hegy stresses Chauvet’s view on language as symbolic stating that we become human through language.⁴³ Chauvet, while considering language as an instrument, the subject or a person is in an immediate relation to reality. This reality enters the person's mind in an organic way, in the form of an image or a concept or in a mental realm. Therefore, the subject can easily communicate to others all to himself as to another what he has perceived of reality. Language,

⁴² Ibid., 3.

⁴³ Pierre Hegy, *Worship as Community Drama: Introduction to Liturgy Evaluation*, (Oregon: Wipe &Stock, 2019) 26.

here, is treated as an instrument since the human subject is posited before it.⁴⁴ As an act of performative language, David N. Power argues that sacramental expression is not a matter of mere repetition. To explain how the Church uses the language of tradition, sacramental theology must incorporate a theology of the Spirit. Power also maintains that Chauvet captures the presence and functioning of the Spirit as the way in which the Christian community is related to the Risen Lord.⁴⁵

For Chauvet, with respect to language as mediation, the underestimation of language as primary mediation betrays all the mediations. The fact is that one cannot be a human being without language. Even to invent language one must think of it hard in order to be able to think of it one must already be in language. For Chauvet, language teaches us the very definition of human being. There is a mediation in any signifying relation in the human world. It is constructed by language and generally speaking, culture. The subject or a person construct itself as a subject precisely by constructing reality as world. In that sense, language is a construction game in a twofold sense. In an objective sense, the construction of reality as world and subjectively, of construction of the subject at their whim. Chauvet compares the subjectiveness here to building like the Legos with which children learn how to build all sorts of machines with pulleys or all sorts of castles and thus how to build themselves. The mediation of language and culture, thus, can be compared to a filter, or to a lens which forms on the human eye in the womb. Even though such a lens is invisible, it is used by everyone from the very first moment of life. Due to its subtle nature, it is constantly forgotten and causes everyone to qualify as the most natural thing in the world what is in fact a wholly cultural one. For everything is filtered through it, and it is precisely this filtering that makes raw reality into a world.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Chauvet, *The Sacraments*, 4.

⁴⁵ Power, "Sacraments" in *Systematic Theology*, 489.

⁴⁶ Chauvet, *The Sacraments*, 5-10.

Glenn P Ambrose eloquently sums up the direction of Chauvet in this regard. According to him, Chauvet, in his writings, has sought to place his theology within a symbolic logic distinct from an onto-theo- logic. His guiding motivation is founded in his belief in the “sacramentality of the Christian faith”. For Chauvet, this phrase is the expression of the need for the Christian faith to be inscribed in corporeality. Ambrose comments that this corporeality cannot be grasped apart from the symbolic order understood as a system of connections between different elements and levels of culture that constitute the world of human beings.⁴⁷

2.3 Different Elements of Symbolic Order in Chauvet’s Theology

a) “symbol” comes from the Greek *sym-ballein* which means “to put together,” to place side by side the elements of a whole, somewhat like the different pieces of a puzzle. Founded on this meaning Chauvet, interests us here in the idea of *placing side-by-side*.

b) To speak of “symbolic order” is exactly to point out that the different elements of the cultural puzzle are amalgamated, and that each element gains its significance only by being put back into this normal entity as varied as human societies are. For the same reason, it used to distinguish the symbolic from the “imaginary.”

C) the third element of the symbolic is its reference to the other. This “other” is neutral: it designates the agency under which or in the name of which the subjects agree with one another. As an example, Chauvet refers the linguistic community in a society. That is, the simple fact of speaking English between us requires that we act under the agency of this “other” which is the English-speaking linguistic community past and present. As for Christians, to attain their identity,

⁴⁷ Glenn P Ambrose, *The Theology of Louise Marie Chauvet: Overcoming Onto-Theology with the Sacramental Tradition* (London: Routledge, 2012) 3.

they must be part of the symbolic order proper to the Church. This symbolic womb is distinctive within which each person is born as Christian through initiation. Naturally this symbolic order is rooted in the general culture, but it reshapes it bringing the culture new directions, so new that Christians understand the meaning of their own lives differently from Atheists or Muslims. Chauvet highlights that one becomes a Christian only by adopting the “mother tongue” of the Church. The sacraments are an important element, but not the only one.⁴⁸

Regarding the mediation of the Church, Chauvet is of the opinion that one can be saved without being a Christian, that is, without belonging to the visible Church. But one cannot be a Christian without belonging to the Church. It is because Christian identity begins with the confession of Jesus as Christ, confession from the origins that has constituted the Church. In this sense, as opposed to Karl Rahner, for Chauvet, there are no anonymous Christians.⁴⁹

Phillipp Tovey, on the symbolic order in Chauvet’s theology, remarks that Chauvet’s position is clearly within a post-modernist world, and he is multidisciplinary in his approach to synthesize his sacramental theology. He makes the symbolic order the key setting of his approach to sacraments, and while he talks about both Baptism and the Eucharist as paradigmatic expressions, his approach widens out to the other sacraments and sacramentals. For Tovey, Chauvet tackles cultural issues particularly in his work *The Sacraments* but does not deal with inculturation directly.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Chauvet, *The Sacraments*, 11-17.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 29.

⁵⁰ Phillip Tovey, *Inculturation of Christian Worship: Exploring the Eucharist* (London: Routledge, 2019) 17.

2.4 Scriptures and Sacrament

To Chauvet, there is something sacramental about the scriptures, in the sense that they are the sacrament of the Word of God. On the contrary, the sacraments of faith exist only as a concrete form of this Word. It furthers to three theological reflections:

a) the first concern is the veneration traditionally shown to the book containing God's Word, almost on a par with the Eucharist. Consequently, it is in the word and the Eucharist that the bread of life is offered. According to Chauvet, to communicate in the Eucharist without having previously contemplated on the word appears nonsensical.⁵¹

b) the second reflection aims at attracting attention to the interval that exists between the scriptures and the word:

The scriptures are truly the sacrament of the word, but precisely, they are only *its* sacrament. There is no pure and simple identity between the two. This is why for Christians the word of God is not immediately the Book, but someone, the One who fulfills the book, Jesus, the Christ. The consequence of this is that there is no sacred language in the strict sense of the term. Saint Paul's "neither Greek nor Jew" can perfectly apply here: the letter can be Hebrew, but also Greek, Latin, English, Chinese, whatever.⁵²

A profound scriptural theology serves the basis for Chauvet's sacramental outlook of the Church when he indicates that the reader sees the letter of the scriptures as the sacrament only because it announces something other than itself. This theology proves a simple yet deep understanding of the sacramentality of the scriptures. For Chauvet, this sacramentality of the Word of God prohibits

⁵¹ Chauvet, *The Sacraments*, 43-45.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 45.

any fundamentalist reading. And therefore, by its very constitution Sacred Scripture is made to be proclaimed in the assembly, not to be read in a book open flat on the desk in one's office and in an individual manner. The liturgy of the Word is not merely a festive outgrowth of our scriptures as Word of God. In his own words:

[the Word of God is] really the sacramental manifestation of the essence of the biblical text. In other words, the Bible never reaches its truth as Word of God as fully as in the liturgical act of its proclamation where the ancient text is, as it were, raised from its death by the living voice of the reader, then by that of the homilist who unfolds its timeliness.⁵³

Going further in his argument, Chauvet opines that the scriptures bring about the sacraments. The sacraments are like the precipitate, in the chemical sense, of the scriptures as word. They are rites indeed and one cannot have a grasp of them theologically without carefully considering their ritual modality. The liturgy of the sacrament, which is observed in every sacramental celebration is not based on random choice. Hence, it is theologically clear that every sacrament is a sacrament of the Word. In other words, the Word itself mediated under the ritual mode, different from the mode of scripture.⁵⁴

2.5 The Sacraments as Ritual Symbols

Chauvet is quite clear on the dimension of language in the rites of the Church. To him the structure of Christian identity exercises an original function. To achieve this, we must begin with their practice or their celebration. And this celebration is a language having a twofold character: it is fundamentally both symbolic and ritual. The relevance of Symbol is evident when one sees the

⁵³ Ibid., 47.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 47-49.

sacraments as expressions by means of language. But their language is not that ordinary, of a peculiar type, since it is primarily symbolic. These symbols function the better the less we explicitly think of them. They are less target of speech than *space* within which speech takes its proper understanding. Chauvet characterizes symbol by four traits: 1) fitting together 2) crystallization 3) recognition or identification 4) submission to the communal other.⁵⁵

Here, what characterizes the symbol is not its material value in quantity or quality but its *relation* with the whole to which it belongs. The performance of a symbol is linked not to the value of its “content” but to its relation. Hence, one understands that it is impossible to transfer a symbolic element from one cultural or religious system into another or from one context. For example, a gesture perfectly effective as a symbol in an African liturgy cannot, without dysfunction, be used in a Western liturgy; a posture, very meaningful in a celebration for young people, may appear inappropriate in an adult group; the sort of language or movement, well adapted to a mass celebrated during a weekend in the woods, is apt to create some type of uneasiness, even with the same group of persons, if it is transferred to the parish Church on the following Sunday. Chauvet, here, clearly states that a purely “natural” symbol does not exist. The symbolic element represents the whole of the world to which it belongs; This is why it *is* what it represents. Obviously, for Chauvet, it is not “really” but “symbolically” what it represents.⁵⁶

c) In the symbol, the joining of the elements causes the *recognition* or the *identification* of the persons as partners in the same contract as used in antiquity. Chauvet says: “such is without a doubt one of the major functions of the symbol: it allows all persons to *situate themselves as*

⁵⁵ Ibid., 68-70.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 72.

subjects in their relation with other subjects or with the worlds of these other subjects or with their own worlds.”⁵⁷

As an example, he would present here is of the evocation of one’s childhood world: a certain object, a certain melody etc., can bring back one's early years. Whereas the sign, on the other hand, belongs to the order of knowledge. The sign designates significations, and the symbol assigns a place to the subject.

d) lastly, the symbolic identification is possible only because the subjects are under the agency of the *other* - this other, what subjects them to a common “symbolic order” and allows them to form a *community*. For example, Jesus for Christians, ideology for Marxists and so on.⁵⁸

2.6 Chauvet on Sign and Symbol

Chauvet has a distinct argument compared to many other theologians in this topic. Symbol is not the same as sign. A sign belongs to the order of knowledge or information or else value, whereas the symbol belongs to the order of recognition or communication between subjects as subjects and is outside the order of value. The sign is “saying something about something” that is, on the side of the transmission of information or knowledge. Whereas the symbol is “saying to someone” that is, on the side of communication with a subject recognized as a subject and situated in its place as a subject. They are ruled by two different principles. That is, the symbol must not be understood in relation with sign as if it were a more complex, more ornate, more aesthetic expression of it.⁵⁹

Based on Chauvet’s notion of symbol, Judith Marie Kubicki observes that the semantic field of

⁵⁷ Ibid., 72.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 73-75.

⁵⁹ Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 112-114.

the word symbol has been extended to every element, object, word, gesture, person, and functions like a password, to recognize one another and identify themselves.⁶⁰

To Chauvet, Symbol and sign are the two poles of all human expression. Although the two “symbol” and “sign” do not function at the same level, they are nevertheless the two poles of all human expression. Neither symbol nor sign exists in a chemically pure state. There is necessarily something of the sign in the most poetic language and the most symbolic work of art, and in the most objective discourse of science, there is necessarily something of the symbol. These two poles of language interact in different degrees. Although the symbol depends on a principle of functioning different from that of a sign, it does not minimize the importance of the “sign.” Our mind needs two legs to walk straight like our body and that is sign and symbol. Left to itself, the latter would drift into all sorts of fantasies. The concept Symbolization is an important element in Chauvet’s theology. It is an act and not an idea. Like the act of symbolization, sacraments belong to the order of “doing”; they are not “ideas”. this “doing” is symbolic. Its aim is to properly join Christ and the Church and in a comprehensive sense, God and humanity and within the Church, the members among themselves. For Chauvet, only differences can be symbolized, and such a symbolization is possible only because Christ and the Church are rigorously differentiated.⁶¹

Another dimension of the symbol is that it precedes value; in this sense, it is “gratuitous.” This latter term is one of the features of the signification of “grace.” The aim of the sacraments is to establish between humanity and God a communication called “grace.” Hence for Chauvet, the symbol seems the fitting approach to the sacraments and it has a twofold theological interest.⁶²

⁶⁰ Judith Marie Kubicki, *Liturgical Music as Ritual symbol: A Case Study of Jacques Berthier’s Taize Music* (Leuven: Peeters, 1999), 100.

⁶¹ Chauvet, *Sacrament*, 77-79.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 75-85.

2.7 Grace of the Sacraments

Grace, like the symbol, is outside the field of “value” or “usefulness.” The two adjectives “gratuitous” and “gracious” indicate this clearly. To this, Chauvet explains that as gratuitous, grace is not something due, it depends entirely on the generosity of God, who alone takes the lead. And as gracious, since grace relates to beauty, to this way of being pleasing which cannot be calculated and is given freely. He compares the biblical images of grace to that of *manna* in the desert. Understood in the same manner, the grace of the sacraments has no value that can be calculated. It is not a product in the market of values and usefulness. Its name, “grace” indicates that it is not an “object” to be received. The grace of the sacraments must be regarded as the process of “receiving oneself” as daughter or son, as sister or brother in Christ through the Spirit. Chauvet calls this efficacy symbolic.⁶³

Regarding the mediation of the gesture which gives a body to the word shows clearly that one must realize what is being expressed. This is why the gesture and the word are not only revealers of this identity as daughters and sons or as sisters and brothers, but they also claim to be its agents, so to effect it. The symbol is bearer of the convictions of the Church’s faith - the faith of today. Whereas the ritual gesture and word are the act of a common “we,” and the faith of yesterday. It is because this ancient formula came to us from tradition and not from the convictions of anyone individual. As for the faith of Christians, such a rite is or claims to be so forcefully operative that its symbolic efficacy can be understood from two angles. From the participant’s angle, the fact of giving thanks to God in this manner and confers effectiveness on their identity of daughters and sons, of sisters and brothers in Christ.⁶⁴ Mervyn Duffy’s observation on the general orientation of Chauvet is

⁶³ Ibid., 85-86.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 86-90.

noteworthy at this point: Chauvet draws explicitly on the work of J L Austin, but his main philosophical influence is Martin Heidegger as the main inspirer of the critical theory of ideologies which has criticized hermeneutics. The reach of symbol and sacrament is significant in Chauvet. Fundamentally it critiques the established instrumental theory of the efficacy of sacraments and aims to reshape the sacramental theology on a new philosophical basis.⁶⁵

2.8 Symbolic Efficacy

For Chauvet, not only is language efficacious but *it is what is most efficacious*. On this he writes:

However, let us hasten to specify that what is meant is a *symbolic* efficacy. By now it is clear: such an efficacy does not designate, as in science or technology, a transformation of the world but a transformation of subjects, a “work” that is produced in them and allows them to accede to another way of being. Any symbolic efficacy belongs to the order of language. ...Some words save; some words kill. Symbolic efficacy in any case touches *the subject to the quick*. Speech is really the hearty “bread” which keeps human subjects going. This bespeaks its efficacy. It is the most important efficacy one can think of because it is a condition of the very possibility of arising and perduring as a subject.⁶⁶

The nature of the efficacy of the sacraments is such that it has nothing of a guarantee. The self-gift God offers through the sacraments does not depend on the personal faith of the subjects. Instead, God gives freely through the power of the Spirit; but the fruitfulness of this gift in those who receive it depends on their faith.

⁶⁵ Duffy, *How Language, Ritual and Sacraments Work*, 141.

⁶⁶ Chauvet, *The Sacraments*, 91.

The sacramental mystery, at the same time, is a revealer and an instrument of Christian identity. In its primarily symbolic dimension, language dispenses this twofold function simultaneously. Besides, the symbol, like grace, is outside the value system. For these two reasons, the symbolic root seems to us to provide an approach much more like the sacraments than that of instrumentality applied by the scholastics of the 12th century, and still dominant in our own day.⁶⁷

The language of the rite is an important theme in Chauvet. He understands sacrament as a rite, but the rite does not become a sacrament unless it is in-dwelt by the Word of God and converted by the Holy Spirit. This language as he sees, is a symbolic language. One of the main characteristics of symbol is its *spareness* to which Chauvet pays much attention in his theology of sacraments. The performance of symbol does not depend on its “value,” it is discreet: a small amount of water is sufficient to symbolize the immersion into death with Christ in Baptism and a little bread and wine are enough, from the symbolic viewpoint, to call people to the Eucharist or to represent the whole of creation and human work contained in it. For Chauvet, in this act or the rite, the symbol shows it is not the real. “Or rather it is the real and it is not the real at the same time. It is not, since it only represents it; it is, since it represents it, that is, makes it present by a few fragments.”⁶⁸ Since it represents the real, the symbol *places it at a distance*. A beautiful example from the celebration of mass, the sign of peace must remain relatively careful and prudent. It is not replacing the real, which must be lived all week long. As a result, for this gesture to be something genuine, there is no need for lengthy display of affection with every participant.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Ibid., 91-95.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 97.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 97-102.

In essence, the sacraments state that the Word of God wants to enter our bodies, that is our lives, and that for anyone indwelt by the Spirit the road of the God of Jesus Christ necessarily uses the human road.⁷⁰

Over several decades of a remarkable academic and pastoral career, Chauvet has produced a systematic exploration of why and how sacrament liturgy is essential to Christian faith. For Bruce T Morrill, Liturgical theologians largely tend to approach the topic based on the history and elements of the Christian rites, whereas Chauvet, does so in the style of a fundamental theology.⁷¹ He adds “if Chauvet’s fundamental theology of the sacramental structure of Christian faith strikes the reader as paradoxical, then that can only attest to its success in articulating something of the tragic beauty of the paschal mystery.”⁷²

2.9 Chauvet's Sacramental Theology and their Impact on the Understanding of the Dialogical Nature of the Sacraments.

It is imperative to acknowledge the radical departure from conventional metaphysical frameworks that have long dominated ecclesiastical discourse in the examination of Louis-Marie Chauvet's sacramental theology. The dialogical nature of the sacraments is significantly impacted by Louis-Marie Chauvet's understanding of sacramentality, underscoring the need for a more relational theology. Chauvet encourages a reassessment of the interpretation of the Eucharist within a context that emphasizes the dynamic interaction between divine and human experience by transcending an exclusively metaphysical framework. This change is crucial, as it confronts the constraints of

⁷⁰ Ibid., 113.

⁷¹ Philip Borden and Bruce T Morrill, ed., *Sacraments: Revelation of the Humanity of God. Engaging the Fundamental Theology of Louise-Marie Chauvet* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2008) xv.

⁷² Borden, *Sacraments: Revelation of the Humanity of God*, xxii.

conventional sacramental theology, which frequently falls prey to excessively causal or static interpretations of sacramental presence.⁷³

While Chauvet's sacramental theology provides valuable insights into the nature of sacraments, it also demonstrates limitations that impede a fully dialogical comprehension of these rituals. His emphasis on the ontological aspects of the sacraments is a primary limitation, as it can obscure the relational dynamics that are inherent to sacramental interactions. This method has the potential to diminish the depth of dialogue that should exist by minimizing the active participation of both the divine and the community in the sacramental experience. Additionally, Chauvet's frameworks neglect to incorporate the corporeal aspect of ecclesial existence, which is currently being investigated in theological discourse.⁷⁴ Thus, Chauvet's limits in sacramental theology impede a broader acknowledgement of the dynamic, dialogical relationships that characterize the Church's sacramental life.

Finally, Chauvet's theological approach, notably his sacramental theology, has been criticized for emphasising abstract concepts over practical ecclesial reality. This argument is based on the claim that his approach frequently ignores the intricacies inherent in faith communities' lived experiences.⁷⁵ Furthermore, dealing with held beliefs in biblical exegesis can expose how these biases influence theological discussion, suggesting a more integrated approach that respects both tradition and modern circumstances.⁷⁶

⁷³ Jason Gary Del Vitto, *Encountering Eucharistic Presence Within a Postmodern Context: A Dialogue Among Chauvet, Schmemann and Zizioulas* (Doctoral dissertation, Duquesne University, 2013), 38-43.

⁷⁴ Anthony J. Kelly, "The Body of Christ: Amen!": The Expanding Incarnation." *Theological Studies*, 71 (2010): 792-816.

⁷⁵ Jakob Karl Rinderknecht, "Order, Out of Order: Rahner's Tectonic Proposal for an Ecumenical Difficulty." *Horizons* 42 (2015): 341-367.

⁷⁶ Nathan Emmanuel, "Truth and Prejudice. A Theological Reflection on Biblical Exegesis." *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* (2007): 281-318.

3. MICHAEL G. LAWLER: Prophetic Symbols of the Church

Michael G. Lawler is the Amelia and Emil Graff Professor Emeritus of Catholic Theological Studies at Creighton University. He is one of the few theologians who has broadened the narrow focus of the traditional concerns of Sacramental and Liturgical Theology since Second Vatican council.⁷⁷ Lawler, in his *Sacramental Theology* underscores the importance of understanding the dynamics of symbolizing in the Liturgy. Like Louise Marie Chauvet, he points out the importance of the action of the human subject in symbolizing.⁷⁸

3.1 Prophetic Symbol

Theology of symbols forms the basis of Michael G Lawler's sacramental theology, especially, the notion of prophetic symbol. He identifies this as a prophetic action in the Bible. For instance, prophet Jeremiah buys a potter's earthen flask and smashes it on the ground in front of a startled crowd and proclaims in prophetic words what he is doing. Each prophet explains to the people the meaning of his actions, which also clarifies us the meaning of a prophetic symbol. As Jeremiah smashes his pot to the ground and breaks it into pieces (Jeremiah, 19:11), as Ezekiel cuts and burns and scatters and shreds his hair (Ezekiel 5:5), So God will shatter and burn and shred Jerusalem for its faithlessness. The prophetic action, which Lawler calls prophetic symbol, is a human action that proclaims and celebrates in representation the action of God. The meaning and the reality proclaimed in representation by Jeremiah or Ezekiel is not the shattering of a cheap pot or shredding hair, but a clear message from God to Jerusalem for its infidelity.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Susan A Ross, *Extravagant Affections: A Feminist Sacramental Theology* (New York: Continuum, 2001), 25.

⁷⁸ Kubicki, *Liturgical Music as Ritual symbol*, 101.

⁷⁹ Lawler, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 5.

Lawler explains prophetic action as an action which proclaims and makes real in representation some other action, a representative action. Prophetic action is also a representative symbol. However, this prophetic, representative, symbolic action is not limited to those few who are designated as prophets.⁸⁰ he commenced that through the prophetic action of a sacrament a person participates in the paschal mystery of Christ.⁸¹

Lawler interprets the institution of the Eucharist in the context of *seder* meal which was established as the memorial of the exodus, (Exodus 12:14) In that great *seder* meal, the head of the family took, and still takes, unleavened bread and explains to the other members of the family that it represents and makes real for those present the affliction suffered by their ancestors in Egypt. It was at such a meal in the New Testament that Jesus instituted the sacrament of the Eucharist (1Cor 11:23-24; Mt 26:26; Mk 14:22; Lk 22:19) Lawler contends that the Hebrew words probably spoken by Jesus at the supper do not mean what we mean today by *body*, that is, a part of a person, that part which is buried after death. And for *blood*, that is, another, liquid, part of a person the part that flows, for instance, when the body is pierced. Based on Bernard Cook's arguments,⁸² Lawler states that the Hebrew word *Basar* does not mean a principle or an element of a human being, but rather the entire human being in its concrete individuality, with the emphasis on its external manifestation. Thus, according to Lawler, Jesus' use of the word *body* at the last supper denotes his entire self. Also, the use of the word *blood* at the last supper by Jesus must be taken in a concrete sense as referring to His totality as a living being. It is not the physical body and blood

⁸⁰ Lawler, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 6.

⁸¹ Susan K. Wood, "The Paschal Mystery: The intersection of Ecclesiology and Sacramental Theology in the Care of the Sick" in *Recovering the Riches of Anointing: A Study of the Sacrament of Sick*. An international Symposium. The National Association of Catholic chaplains. Edited by Genevieve Glen (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2002), 11.

⁸² See Bernard Cooke, "Synoptic Presentation of the Eucharist as Covenant Sacrifice" in *Theological Studies*, 21 (1960): 25-27.

of Jesus that are proclaimed and made really present in the prophetic, symbolic action of the supper, but Jesus himself in his total personal reality. Lawler argues that “This is my body” to a first century Jew, meant “this is me”⁸³

3.2 Symbol and Sacrament

Lawler, in his theology of symbols, observes that men and women live not only in a physical world, but also, and more importantly, in a human world which is a world of meaning. In that world, they ask not only what a person, action, or thing *is*, but also and more importantly what it *means*. It is the answer to the question of meaning is what precisely comprises the human world. Men and women are so enfolded in this world through linguistic forms or artistic images, or in mythical symbols and religious rituals, that they do not know any reality directly and immediately, but only indirectly through the mediation of one or more of these symbol systems.

Therefore, Lawler perceives the religious ritual in biblical language as *prophetic symbol* and identifies it as sacrament. He substantiates his point by quoting Victor Turner’s notion on the religious rituals: “prescribed formal behavior for occasions not given over to technological routine, having reference to beliefs in the mystical beings or powers.” Thus, for Lawler, the smallest unit of such ritual is the symbol. Ritual, therefore, is complex symbolic action.⁸⁴

3.3 Symbol

Lawler defines symbol thus:

symboling is a specifically human process in which meanings and realities, intellectual, emotional and personal, are proclaimed, realized and celebrated in representation in a sensible reality within

⁸³ Lawler, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 6-7.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 16

a specific perspective. The sensible reality in which the meanings and realities are proclaimed is thereby transformed into a symbol. In that religious activity called prophetic symbol or sacrament, the sensible reality which proclaims, realizes in representation and celebrates is an action which is transformed into symbolic action.⁸⁵

Such symbolic action is technically known as ritual. Lawler, in his theology uses the term ritual as though it were synonymous with the term symbol. The only distinction that he would make here is that ritual is identified more specifically as symbolic action.⁸⁶

A symbol and its meanings are related in a dichotomous way. In other words, although they are distinct theoretically, they are so correlated that neither one is definable without the other. This dichotomous relationship between a symbol and its meaning to Lawler corresponds to the relationship between body and soul. As the body is the manifestation of the soul, so is the symbol the manifestation of meaning. There are no symbols without meaning. The relationship between a symbol and the meanings embodied and expressed in it can only be understood by knowing the fact that a symbol and its meanings coexist for a human interpreter, or neither really exists at all. For all human purposes it is the symbol that serves as the meanings and the realities which it symbolizes in representation. Thus, it could be said that a symbol is the reality it symbolizes.⁸⁷

3.4 Sign and Symbol

Both sign and symbol communicate meaning, but quite differently. A sign signifies some known entity like smoke to fire, barber's pole to barber shop etc. A symbol, on the other hand is mysterious as it points to something relatively unknown that is presumably existing. A sign communicates

⁸⁵ Ibid., 16.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 16-17.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 17.

abstract and objective meaning, whereas a symbol communicates subjective meaning or something living. Moreover, there is a subjective dynamism to a symbol which employs a strong attraction or fascination on the individual. Thus, one can say that a sign is something that has no life, on the other hand a symbol is alive. To Lawler, in order to get a grip of prophetic symbol or sacrament in depth mere reason is not enough. Instead, there is much more involved in the comprehension of this reality.⁸⁸

3.5 Prophetic Symbol as Religious Symbol

The prophetic symbol is just one kind of the genus symbol. Therefore, it will have all the properties of the genus symbol. To explore further on prophetic symbol, the difference between a simple sign and symbol should be recalled. First of all, to Lawler, a simple sign relates to something on a one-to-one basis, and it can refer to a certain individual or thing. A sign is not something that is mysterious; every aspect of it is clear. Whereas a symbol does not relate to what it signifies, especially on a one-to-one basis, but on a one for many basis. A symbol is loaded with many meanings, and once it has caused an interpreter to take account of its many meanings, its work continues. For there is always more depth of meaning to be explored in it, more questions to be asked of it, due to its the abundance and richness of its meanings. To Lawler, the human mind can never get to the bottom of a symbol and be done with it. A symbol, any symbol, is mysterious. Another difference between a simple sign and symbol is this: signs make known what they signify. Whereas symbols may concretely present what they symbolize.⁸⁹

⁸⁸ Ibid., 18-20.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 21-22.

For Lawler, a prophetic symbol is not just any symbol; it is a specifically religious symbol. It will have, therefore, the characteristics of a religious symbol. Although slightly different, Lawler borrows the characteristics of religious symbols from Paul Tillich here:

The first one that is usually listed, that it points to realities and meanings beyond itself, is nothing more than a simple definition of the genus “sign” to which religious symbol, and therefore prophetic symbol, belong as a species. A second characteristic of religious symbols, that they participate in the reality to which they point, is a crucial one for prophetic symbols. For people who believe in and live into them, prophetic symbols proclaim and realize and celebrate in representative reality the saving presence and action of God.⁹⁰

As an example, a simple action with water in natural reality is the creative action of God in prophetic, symbolic reality.

Another dimension of the characteristics of religious symbols and also prophetic symbols that Lawler would give us is that they open up dimensions of reality which the human animal cannot reach otherwise. In his view, the prophetic symbols realize sacred reality and so participate in that sacred reality, and they do so in a way that could not be done without them. Unlike a simple sign, a prophetic symbol, is not just a carrier of information but is also a stimulation of personal action and reaction that would affect the total being of a subject. Symbols, therefore, represent a personal way of knowing as distinct from a logical one.⁹¹

Furthermore, to Lawler, the meaning that is embodied in symbols is not defined in clear and distinct and logical concepts. A specified conceptual knowledge is part of the knowledge resulting

⁹⁰ Ibid., 23. Also see Paul Tillich, “The Meaning and Justification of Religious Symbols” in *Religious Experience and Truth*, ed. Sidney Hook (New York: NY University Press, 1961), 3-11.

⁹¹ Ibid., 25.

from symbolic activity, but the concepts are confused and so the meanings remain mysterious and not transparent.⁹²

Lawler is of the opinion that both the prophetic symbols and the knowledge that is communicated in them are reflected upon by Christian theology. Yet, no amount of reflection, analysis or demonstration can exhaust the meanings expressed in the notion of sacrament. The fact is that their meanings remain mysteriously full and rich because the symbol itself is the bedrock in which the meanings are achieved and beneath which it is impossible to go.

The symbolic way of knowing something is quite different from a scientific way. It is through seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, smelling, imagining, remembering, associating, doing, leaving, experiencing one reaches the symbolic mode of knowing. In order to find the meaning, for Lawler, a true symbol must be lived into.⁹³ We must say, Lawler, in developing the view of symbol, has taken an entirely different approach. “To say *symbol* is not to say *not real*, but rather *fully real*, that is, representatively and concretely and effectively and personally real.”⁹⁴

Prophetic symbols, in fact realize sacred reality specifically by symbolizing it. Eucharist as a symbol of the presence of Jesus for the community or Church means that God and Jesus are proclaimed, realized and celebrated as present in these rituals, really, truly and substantially present, as the familiar theological phrase states it. Lawler has two reasons for this: Anthropological and Theological. It is anthropological because all symbols make present what they symbolize. Theological, in the sense God and Jesus are reported to have identified their presence with this meal symbol of bread and wine.⁹⁵ Such an approach is very much commended

⁹² Ibid., 25-26.

⁹³ Ibid., 26-28.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 28.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 28.

by Peter Leithart pointing out Lawler's anthropological insights bearing on sacramental theology.⁹⁶

Lawler defines Sacrament as: "...a prophetic symbol, established by and modeled upon Christ the symbol of God, in and by which the Church, the body of Christ, proclaims, realizes, and celebrates for believers who place no obstacle that presence and action of God, which is rightly called grace."⁹⁷ According to Tobias Okoro, Lawler's definition of sacrament is not broad as Augustine's definition in enumeration as there is a careful distinction between sign in the broad sense and sacrament in the strict sense.⁹⁸ A sacrament is not a simple sign, and its meanings are not simple meanings. It is that kind of specialized sign called symbol and, indeed, that very specific kind of symbol called prophetic or religious symbol. The prophetic symbols let sacraments be important, but not ultimately; their function is only as symbolic instruments of this relationship within the Christian community. God and His people relate not exclusively in certain number of sacraments, but in many prophetic and symbolic ways-not exclusively within the Christian community, but also outside it. It is God who justify, bestow grace and save ultimately and not the sacraments. God saves and justifies all men and women alike who place no impediment to His saving action.

3.6 A Critique on the Role of Prophetic Symbols in Michael G Lawler

The sacraments are viewed as dynamic exchanges between the divine and the human experience in Lawler's sacramental theology. A key component of this paradigm is the idea of prophetic symbols, which Lawler contends are tools for communication that express spiritual truth and encourage active engagement in the religious community. These biblical and liturgical symbols

⁹⁶ Peter J. Leithart, *Blessed are the Hungry: Meditations on the Lord's Supper*, (Moscow: Canon Press, 2000), 157.

⁹⁷ Lawler, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 51.

⁹⁸ Tobias Okoro, *Dancing the Post-modern Tune: The Future of the Sacrament of Reconciliation Among the Igbo People in Religions and Discourse*, Vol.51 (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2010), 9.

encourage a sense of the sacred in daily life by involving the believer in a dialogical process that goes beyond simple ritual observance. Though prophetic symbols might deepen understanding of sacramental effectiveness, they also run the risk of becoming unduly subjective, which could weaken the sacraments' objective character. For these symbols to be effective, they must be able to accurately depict divine truths while preserving their prophetic integrity, which highlights the necessity for balance between individual interpretation and collective comprehension.⁹⁹

3.7 Limitations in Communicating Divine Truths

The endeavour to convey divine truths frequently encounters intrinsic constraints, especially with the prophetic symbol as examined in Michael G. Lawler's sacramental theology. This issue stems from the intricacy of interpreting sacred symbols, which may not universally convey meaning across diverse cultural and theological settings. The prophetic symbol, although designed to communicate divine messages, may result in misunderstandings that conceal the core of those truths. Catechesis, as a ministry of the Word of God, is essential for propagating fundamental truths; however, its efficacy may be undermined by historical and contextual variables, particularly the change of teaching practices since the early Church.¹⁰⁰

In essence, although Lawler's sacramental theology provides insightful analysis of the dialogical character of the sacraments, it is necessary to evaluate the shortcomings of the prophetic symbol within this perspective. The focus on the prophetic role could unintentionally eclipse the transforming potential of sacramental grace, therefore leaving practitioners with a more abstract view of their spiritual experience.¹⁰¹ Therefore, in order to gain a more thorough understanding

⁹⁹ Charles Taylor et al., *Church and People: Disjunctions in a Secular Age* (Washington, D.C: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2012), 17-24

¹⁰⁰ Naiju Jose Kalambukattu, "Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara: A Catechetical Scion" *Herald of the East* 15, no.2 (2023): 109-114.

¹⁰¹ Philip L. Reynolds, *How Marriage Became One of the Sacraments* (Cambridge: University Press, 2016), 69-81.

of these essential components of faith practice, it is imperative to adopt a novel approach that recognises both the dialogical and transcendent aspects of sacramental theology.

Prophetic symbols are essential in sacramental theology because they help frame how the sacraments are understood and experienced. Instead of being passive signs, these symbols actively interact with the believers and promote a lively exchange between the divine and human worlds. According to Lawler, prophetic symbols provide a deep level of sacramental experience, but they also have some disadvantages, especially in that they might mask the simpler elements of sacramental grace. The implication is found in the fact that these symbols serve two purposes: they can both enrich religious activities and make it more difficult for the faithful to receive the sacraments.¹⁰² Thus, in order to prevent the intended meanings from becoming entangled in ambiguity and ultimately impacting the relational dynamics inherent in sacramental exchanges, the link between (prophetic) symbols and sacramental involvement must be carefully examined from a dialogical point of view.

Part Two

Sacrament, A Personal Encounter

4. E. SCHILLEBEECKX: Sacraments, Encounters with Christ

Edward Schillebeeckx was a gifted and creative theologian who worked as an adviser to the Dutch bishops and had done important interpretive and critical work on an unofficial basis during the Second Vatican Council. He was renowned for his fresh and creative interpretation of the sacraments. The famous work entitled *Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God* is a perfect example of the influence of existentialism in Schillebeeckx's theology. This book was talked about

¹⁰² Taylor, *Church and People*, 17-24.

outside Catholic circles and had been translated into ten languages. John Bowden, who knew Schillebeeckx and has translated several of his works calls him an “International Theologians’ Theologian.”¹⁰³

The idea of encounter is principal in Schillebeeckx’s sacramental theology. He uses the existentialist notion of personal encounter as a way of expounding the meaning and significance of sacraments regarded in themselves as an economy of salvation.¹⁰⁴ Olav Hovadelien also suggests that Schillebeeckx was influenced by existentialism and other currents of thought , focused especially on the problematic aspects of the way of thinking and living that are typical of modern life.¹⁰⁵

For Schillebeeckx, the characteristics of God as a close personal acquaintance to human is often lost in a too severely objective examination of the living core and center of religion. There used to be a tendency in sacramental theology to consider everything in terms of physical categories which was more intended towards something impersonal and mechanical. It was to look upon the sacraments as the general laws of cause and effect. As a result, Schillebeeckx states that, we appear to be merely passive recipients of sacramental grace, which seemed to be “put into us” automatically.¹⁰⁶

Hence, Schillebeeckx begins his theology of sacraments with the concept of human, personal encounter as the basis of sacraments. It is only through God’s own initiative that one comes into

¹⁰³ John Bowden, *Edward Schillebeeckx: Portrait of a Theologian* (London: SCM Press,1983) 1.

¹⁰⁴ Philip Kennedy, *Schillebeeckx, Outstanding Christian Thinkers Christian Series*, ed.Brian Davies (London: Geoffrey Chapman,1993) 62.

¹⁰⁵ Olav Hovadelien, “Edward Schillebeeckx” in *Key Theological Thinkers: From Modern to Postmodern*, edited by Staale Johannes Kristiansen and Svein Rise, (London: Taylor and Francis group,2013), 288.

¹⁰⁶ Edward Schillebeeckx, *Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God* (Oxford: Rowan & Littlefield Publishers, 1963) 3.

personal communication with Jesus. Since this happens in grace, an act of encounter of God and man on earth takes place only in faith called salvation. This encounter, from God's part is a disclosure of Himself. Or on the other hand, this encounter from our part is what we call sanctifying grace.¹⁰⁷

4.1 The Two Dimensions of Schillebeeckx's Sacramental Theology

The whole sacramental theology of Schillebeeckx evolves around two dimensions. Namely, Christ as the primordial sacrament and the Church as the Sacrament of Christ.

4.2 Christ, the Sacrament

Schillebeeckx saw the humanity of Jesus Christ as the primordial sacrament. The two-fold movement consisting of the bestowing of grace from above and the cults of love of God from below occurs in Jesus humanity.¹⁰⁸ For Schillebeeckx, the person of Man and God in Jesus Christ is the inherent nature of the sacraments. Elaborating on this he speaks:

The second person of the most Holy Trinity is personally man; and this man is personally God. Personal acts of the son of God, divine acts in visible human form, they possess of their nature a divine saving power, and consequently they bring salvation; they are the cause of grace.....Because the saving acts of the man Jesus are performed by a divine person, they have a divine power to save, but, because this divine power to save appears to us in visible form, the saving activity of Jesus is sacramental.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ Schillebeeckx, *Christ the Sacrament*, 3-5.

¹⁰⁸ Herbert Vorgrimler, *Sacramental Theology*, Translated by Linda M Maloney (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1992), 32.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 14-15.

From this argument Schillebeeckx derives his foundation of the notion of sacraments defining it as a “divine bestowal of salvation in an outwardly perceptible form which makes the bestowal manifest; bestowal of salvation in historical visibility.”¹¹⁰

The concept of bodiliness plays an important role in this encounter. Developing his sacramental theology from this point of view, he explains that it is in and through one’s bodiliness that every human exchange of man or woman, one with another, proceeds. Based on this argument, Armand Léon Van Ommen points out the emphasis Schillebeeckx places on the sacramental nature of the meeting between people.¹¹¹ For Schillebeeckx, the importance of the encounters through the body are so necessary that the inward self of a human manifest itself as a reality that is in this world through his or her being. It is in one’s body and through their body that a human is open to the “outside” and that they make themselves present to their fellow kind. Schillebeeckx argues: “Human encounter proceeds through the visible obviousness of the body, which is a sign that reveals and at the same time veils the human interiority.”¹¹² The man Jesus is *the* sacrament, the primordial sacrament, because this man, the son of God himself in his humanity is the only way to the actuality of redemption. Here Schillebeeckx, substantiates that the human bodiliness is human interiority itself in a visible form. Founded on this reasoning he furthers his ideas on the humanity of Christ manifested in the sacraments. Since Jesus’ human love is God’s own saving power realized in human form, His human serving acts are the divine bestowal of grace itself realized in visible form; that is, they cause what they signify and hence sacraments.¹¹³

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 15

¹¹¹ Armand Léon van Ommen (2018) “The Sacramental Nature of Peacemaking Rituals: a Case for a Sacramental Spirituality of Reconciliation” in *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church*, 18:1, 16-30,

¹¹² Schillebeeckx, *Christ the Sacrament*, 15.

¹¹³ Ibid., 17.

Jesus is not only the divine love tangible in his humanity, but, at the same time, as prototype he is the supreme realization of the response of human love to this divine offer. Therefore, whatever Christ does as a freeman is not only a realization in human form of God's activity for our salvation; it is also at the same time the positive human acceptance, acts as a representative for all of us, of this redemption offer from God. In this sense the man Jesus is personally a dialogue with God the Father. And therefore, the norm and source of every encounter with God. Schillebeeckx picks up the language of dialogue and encounter from Maurice Merleau Ponty and Christ's presence in the sacraments is interpreted in his theology within the frame work of phenomenology.¹¹⁴

Since Christ is already risen and ascended into heaven, his bodiliness, as the means of immediate communication, has vanished from our earthly life. So how can someone encounter the glorified Lord, who has withdrawn himself from our sight? For Schillebeeckx, the difficulty is even accentuated by Christ's own words: "it is the spirit that gives life; the flesh profits nothing". (John 6,64) And the bodily mediation in our encounter with Christ is meaningless since Jesus himself has said "it is good for you that I go" (John 16,7). Therefore, Christ makes his presence among us actively visible not directly through his own bodiliness, but by extending among us on earth in visible form the function of his bodily reality which is in heaven. And so, the earthly extension of the body of the Lord is precisely what the sacraments are: which is the Church. This invites us to have a clear insight into the general meaning of an earthly prolongation of Christ's glorified humanity.¹¹⁵

The characteristic that makes Christ's bodiliness significant in our discussion on the topic is the reality of resurrection. It is the fact that distinguishes Christ precisely as man to influence us by

¹¹⁴ James C. Livingston, *Modern Christian Thought: The Twentieth Century*, 2nd ed., Vol. 2, (Minneapolis:Fortress Press, 2006) 222.

¹¹⁵ Schillebeeckx, *Christ the Sacrament*, 40-41.

grace. At the same time it must be remembered that the mutual human availability is possible only in and through man's bodiliness. Whereas men who are dead and not yet risen again can exercise no direct influence upon us by mutual human contact. And this is of capital importance in this regard. Hence, the necessity for earthly sacraments so that the encounter between the glorified Christ and man on earth might take place in terms of mutual human availability. As earthly human creatures, we cannot encounter Christ in our living body because his glorification has made him invisible to us. If Christ did not make his heavenly body visible to us in some way in our earthly sphere His redemptive acts would no longer be accessible to us objectively. It also means that human mediation of Christ would be meaningless.¹¹⁶

But on the other hand, if Christ does not show himself to us in his own flesh, then he can make himself visibly present to and for us earthbound humankind only by taking up earthly non glorified realities into his glorified saving activity. Schillebeeckx here explains how the different elements that make the sacraments cause the grace they signify: "This earthly element replaces for us the invisibility of his bodily life in heaven. This is precisely what the sacraments are: the face of redemption turned visibly towards us, so that in them we are truly able to encounter the living Christ. The heavenly saving activity, invisible to us, becomes visible in the sacraments."¹¹⁷

And so, for Schillebeeckx, the sacraments are encounters of men on earth with the glorified man Jesus in a way of a visible form. They are the visible and tangible embodiment of the heavenly saving action of Christ. Schillebeeckx, here defines the most fundamental definition of sacramentality: "in an earthly embodiment which is tangible, the heavenly Christ sacramentalizes." That is, through His Church, Christ gives visible shape to his invisible gift of grace by making

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 43

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 43-44

himself present to us. Thus, the sacraments are the visible realization of Christ's mystery of saving worship here on earth.¹¹⁸

4.3 The Church as the Sacrament of Christ

Schillebeeckx reminds us that it was a custom in the past to distinguish between the soul of the Church, that is, the inward communion in grace with Christ and the body of the Church, that is, the visible society with its members and its authority. The Church according to him is a sign in the form of a society which visibly expresses Christ's grace and redemption. The Church, therefore, is not merely a means of salvation. Instead, it is Christ's salvation itself, it is, by a kind of identity, the body of the Lord. speaking of sacrament as an official act of the Church Schillebeeckx says that it is also a visible action proceeding from the Church as a redemptive institution and an official ecclesial act performed in virtue either of the character of the priesthood or of the characters of Baptism and Confirmation. This is how a sacrament is primarily and fundamentally becoming a personal act of Christ performed by a person in the Church who, in virtue of a sacramental character, is empowered to do so by Christ himself: an act *ex officio*.¹¹⁹

Thus, a definition of the Church as the primordial sacrament, would bring us to a general definition of the seven sacraments as encounter of Christ. Schillebeeckx explains:

Each sacrament is the personal saving act of the risen Christ himself but realized in the visible form of an official act of the Church. In other words, a sacrament is the saving action of Christ in the visible form of an ecclesial action. The validity of a sacrament is therefore simply its authenticity as an act of the Church as such..... To receive the

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 45.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 48-53.

sacraments of the Church in faith is therefore the same thing as to encounter Christ himself.¹²⁰

Kennedy translates Schillebeeckx's idea in a simpler fashion: "to encounter the Church is to encounter a sacrament of Christ who in turn is a sacrament of an encounter with God."¹²¹ We must say that Schillebeeckx's theology of presence is noteworthy here because the notion of Church as the Sacrament is incomplete without it. Schillebeeckx would call it a "presence in mystery" in all the sacraments. This presence in mystery is at its greatest in the Eucharist, because there Christ is really present by the power of transubstantiation, and in other sacraments Christ is present only in virtue of his redemptive act sacramentally embodied. Van Ommen in his article in the *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church* stresses this point. According to him, Schillebeeckx, in this regard, would refer to the sacraments, and the Eucharist in particular, as the focal point of the sacramental life where grace is administered.¹²² Daniel Minch too emphasizes this aspect arguing that Schillebeeckx considers the sacrament of the Eucharist as the performative theological hermeneutics.¹²³

For Schillebeeckx, the sacraments are an encounter, and they are the mediation between Christ and us, a mutual availability between the living Christ and us. He gives a threefold explanation to the historical orientation of the sacraments. First of all, they are an *anamnesis* or a commemoration of the past sacrifice of the cross. Secondly, they are a visible affirmation and bestowal of the actual gift of grace. In the third place, they are a pledge of eschatological salvation and a herald of the

¹²⁰ Ibid., 54.

¹²¹ Kennedy, *Schillebeeckx*, 62.

¹²² Van Ommen, "The Sacramental Nature of Peacemaking Rituals," 16-30.

¹²³ Daniel Minch, "Language, Structure, and Sacrament: Reconsidering the Eucharistic Theology of Edward Schillebeeckx" in *Approaching the Threshold of Mystery: Liturgical Worlds and Theological Spaces*, Edited by Joris Geldhof, Daniel Minch and Trevor Maine (Regensburg: Verlag Friedrich Putset, 2015), 111.

parousia, because the sacraments are the Sacramental presence of Christ either because of a real transubstantiation or because of the sacramentalizing of his eternally actual redemptive act in sacraments other than the Eucharist. For Schillebeeckx, the seven sacraments are the sevenfold ecclesial realization of the one mystery of redemption. He explains further on this: the outward element of the sacrament like symbols is the tangible manifestation of the act of redemption, and therefore indicates the particular aspects under which the redemptive act is present. For it is the creator of a symbol who determines freely the meaning his act expresses. And so, in sacraments, it is Christ himself who determines the meaning of the symbol, and it is only in faith that the Church can approach and appreciate the sevenfold manner in which Christ's act of redemption is sacramentally realized.¹²⁴

Again, speaking of encounter, Schillebeeckx emphasizes the personal touch involved in the sacramental word to mankind:

A sacrament is therefore a personal approach of Christ to a particular man. In the fullest sense of the word, a sacrament is a pledge of Christ's availability to a particular individual; the tangible pledge of his willing readiness to enter upon an encounter. The sacramentality of the economy of grace, in which grace comes from the Church to encounter us in visibility, gives rise to the quality of human peace and satisfaction peculiar to the sacramental bestowal of grace in contrast to the so called extra sacramental bestowal of grace.¹²⁵

Schillebeeckx's explanation on the validity and fruitfulness is quite straight forward. According to him, A valid sacrament is one the aspects of which is being realized for a particular subject and

¹²⁴ Schillebeeckx, *Christ the Sacrament*, 60-79.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 80-81.

yet not affected despite being fruitless. It is due to the fact that a specific contact with the visibility of the saving Church is still achieved in the sacramental realization, and given the inner receptivity of faith, this contact itself effects the bestowal of grace. Since the sacraments are signs of Christ's saving act in its actual grasp of a particular individual, even when on account of the recipient's interior disposition a sacrament remains fruitless, it achieves a certain fruitful effect on account of its validity. It cannot be an empty sign, for even in such a case it is still a sacramental prayer of Christ and his Church for the person receiving it. And for this reason, a sacrament can revive.¹²⁶

According to Livingston, Schillebeeckx's development of sacramental theology uses the phenomenological or experiential account in contrast to the Aristotelian categories of causality to explain the efficacy of the sacraments.¹²⁷ For Schillebeeckx, the encounter in the sacraments brings a double effect: the one in relation to the visible Church or the ecclesial effect and the other in relation to Christ and God or the religious effect, the grace. Here he conceives the first effect or the ecclesial effect to the medieval concept of *res et sacramentum* as the first effect which forms the sacrament for the grace effect that is bestowed in the sacrament. This ecclesial effect is always present in a validly administered sacrament. It means the core of the outward sacramental sign consisted in voluntary entry into contact with the visible Church. The sacrament therefore incorporates into the Church. As for the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Orders, the character functions as the ecclesial effect, the sacrament of the bestowal of grace. Schillebeeckx systematizes all the sacraments as sacraments of Commission. However, founded on a Thomistic theology, he restricts this terminology to those sacraments which confer a character. One does find that the first effect of the other sacraments, like the first effect of three sacraments of Commission,

¹²⁶ Ibid., 81.

¹²⁷ Livingston, *Modern Christian Thought*, 222.

is an ecclesial reality which becomes a sacrament of the bestowal of grace. Thus, the immediate effect of each sacrament, that is before the bestowal of grace, is the establishment of a special relationship to the visible Church. Schillebeeckx also has a traditional outlook on the notion of grace in the sacraments. He understands the sacramental grace as the grace that comes visibly from the sacraments and it is an immediate encounter with God, not an indirect meeting through creation.¹²⁸

Further to this, Schillebeeckx argues that the sacramental grace is the grace of redemption itself when applied to the sevenfold perspective of a Christian in the Church, according to the special symbolism and uniqueness of each sacrament. “Therefore, sacramental grace is the grace of redemption having a particular function with reference to a particular ecclesial and Christian situation of life, and to a particular human need.”¹²⁹

He also associates sacramental grace to sanctifying grace. The sanctifying grace which comes to us visibly in the Church, is specifically aimed and ordered to the particular ecclesial need of life and with the particular commissions of a Christian. In general, grace is not something which, once given to us, we are expected to assimilate by ourselves. God and the individual play active role in this encounter. This implies something that is generally called actual grace. Because the sacraments, in a unique manner give positive commissions which remain valid for the whole of life. They themselves are the basis of the subsequent actual graces which we need if the commissions are to be fulfilled. The sacraments also give the right to actual grace; this means that

¹²⁸ Schillebeeckx, *Christ the Sacrament*, 153-174.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 182.

man living by the sacraments is never alone, but that, united with the God who is ever active, he is carrying out his commissions as a Christian.¹³⁰

More than any other person Schillebeeckx was instrumental in showing that Catholicism could develop a theology of the sacraments which was both faithful to the insights of Thomas Aquinas and free of the minimalistic tendency of late scholasticism. His success in translating the ideas of Scholastic sacramental theology into more contemporary philosophical language was one of the major reasons why the bishops of Second Vatican Council felt secure in allowing Catholic theologians to reexamine the traditional teachings of the Church and to restate them in non-traditional ways.¹³¹ This is quite evident in Schillebeeckx's sacramental theology when he opines that it would be wrong to identify the life of the Church with that life which is confined within the bounds of the priesthood and the official sacraments. The exclusivity of grace is not just confined to sacraments alone. It also comes from communion among Christians and fellow beings. All this is included in practicing the Church's pattern of life, and even "receiving sacrament". Such contacts or communion with fellow humans are certainly able to develop into a true conversion- a 'confession.' The sacraments are the effective signs of grace, and it is by the sacraments that one journey towards the final goal- the sacramental way is our hidden road to Emmaus, on which we encounter our Lord.¹³²

¹³⁰ Ibid., 180-183.

¹³¹ Joseph Martos, *Doors to the Sacred: A Historical Introduction to Sacraments in the Christian Church* (London: SCM Press, 1981) 110.

¹³² Schillebeeckx, *Christ the Sacrament*, 211-222.

4.4 A Critique of Schillebeeckx's Sacramental Theology and its Implications in the Dialogical Nature of the Sacraments

The sacraments constitute vital points of contact between the divine and the faithful. This interaction cultivates a relational dynamic that encourages the congregation's active engagement, which is in stark contrast to Schillebeeckx's understanding of sacraments as predominantly encounters with Christ. Schillebeeckx's sacramental theology is somewhat incomplete because he emphasises a direct communion with the divine, but his framework neglects an essential aspect: the Holy Spirit's function in mediating these exchanges.¹³³ Furthermore, the notion of 'Deep Incarnation,' as examined by Edwards, underscores the significant interrelations among the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ and the totality of creation, encompassing elements of our evolutionary world. This perspective further enhances the discourse surrounding sacramental encounters and the divine presence throughout all dimensions of existence.¹³⁴

Additionally, an analysis of the liturgical components utilising a framework of negative hermeneutics uncovers the intrinsic voids present in these interactions, potentially fostering a deeper understanding of liturgical practices and their significance for communal worship.¹³⁵ David Fagerberg's examination of Liturgical Theology differentiates it from a generic theology of worship by highlighting two primary characteristics: *lex orandi*, grounded in the Church's historical rites, and *theologia prima*, a theology that arises from the liturgical community itself. This viewpoint emphasises the necessity of perceiving the sacraments not merely as rituals, but as essential elements of a dynamic theological process influenced by communal engagement and

¹³³ Denis Edwards, *Deep Incarnation: God's Redemptive Suffering with Creatures* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2019), 64-67.

¹³⁴ Edwards, *Deep Incarnation*, 64-67.

¹³⁵ David W. Fagerberg, *Theologia Prima: What Is Liturgical Theology?* (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 2022), 45-54.

historical context.¹³⁶ Ultimately a deeper understanding of sacraments as dialogical phenomena enriches the potential for transformative experiences in liturgical settings.

Conclusion

In conclusion, as compared to the sacraments' innate dialogical nature, Edward Schillebeeckx's sacramental theology has significant shortcomings even while it stresses an encounter with Christ that enhances the believer's experience. A more individualised faith that ignores the social and relational features of worship and community could result from this concentration on personal experience, which could unintentionally reduce the communal and relational elements essential to sacramental practice.

Schillebeeckx's paradigm may also result in an unduly subjective view of the sacraments, possibly ignoring the historical traditions and objective facts that create Catholic sacramental practice. As a result, by emphasising personal encounters over dialogue, his theology may cause a rift between individual Christians and the wider ecclesiastical body, ultimately compromising the sacraments' crucial function in promoting harmony and a common faith within the Church. This difficulty is reflected in current debates, which contend that in order to strengthen the church's sacramental life and purpose, a strong sacramental theology must strike a balance between individual experience and group involvement that includes a dialogical component can improve the sacramental experience by encouraging increased communal engagement while preserving the individual aspects of faith.¹³⁷

¹³⁶ Fagerberg, *Theologia Prima*, 63-72

¹³⁷ Ibid., 68-71.

Part III

Sacrament, Symbolic Liturgical Actions of the Presence of God

5. HERBERT VORGRIMLER

Herbert Vorgrimler (1929-2014) was a contemporary theologian, Professor, Dean in the University of Munster, Germany. According to Joseph Martos, Vorgrimler's sacramental theology continues in the grand tradition and spirit of Vatican II and is Ecumenical to a certain extent.¹³⁸ Experience of God and God's revelation becomes the founding principles for Vorgrimler's sacramental theology. And hence, for Vorgrimler, the sacraments are a unique way of having a relationship between God and humankind. Even though God seeks to have an intimate relationship with human beings, they are incapable of entering a communication with Him on their own. Therefore, God's self-revelation needs a mediation within the receptive capacity of humankind.¹³⁹

Church is one of the communities of faith for Vorgrimler. His theory is that God could be comprehended from outside one's self in the way He communicates through people, events, human deeds, or similar occurrence which involve nonhuman sphere of the created universe. When people exchange their experiences of God from these kinds of situations and reaches a common conviction and shared prayers to grow out of that exchange, the communities of faith arise like that of the Church. Vorgrimler sets his beginning point for his sacramental theology from the faith conviction that the understanding of God and his presence are not immediate to the humankind; instead, it is given only through mediation to us. Thus, his sacramental theology is fundamentally a search of this mediation and understanding it as God's very self.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁸ Martos, *Doors to the Sacred*, 139.

¹³⁹ Vorgrimler, *Sacramental Theology*, 5-6.

¹⁴⁰ Vorgrimler, *Sacramental Theology*, 7-8.

In Vorgrimler's theology this self-revelation of God consists in a symbolic expression. That is, God is present in a created medium that retains its organic distinction and yet transparent to an interpretive recognition of God. A turning toward this medium implies that it is a self-opening of the human person for God's self-communication caused by the grace of God, a grace that precedes human decisions. The things that happen in our lives, the people we encounter, our work and its products, or those events in life that really touch and shake us, all these can be so transparent to God that they reveal God's real presence. Our whole life in this manner, can be understood as the fundamental sacrament.¹⁴¹

The necessary precondition for understanding Sacramental theology according to Vorgrimler is the faith conviction that the self-communication of God has occurred in a unique and utmost form in Jesus of Nazareth. The self-overflowing love from God the Father is manifested in different ways, Word, Spirit and humanity. Sacramental theology, while focusing on the field of symbols, consider the two-fold direction of this movement. That is, from God to humanity in sending Jesus, and from humanity, together with son and Spirit for the glory of God the Father. Although the sacraments form an essential part of the Church's liturgy, this liturgy cannot be regarded as the highest form of the realization of the Church, because, God has not confined divine grace to the sacraments alone.¹⁴²

5.1 The Sacramental Economy of Salvation

The word sacramental refers to the faith experience that tells us the reality that is perceptible to the senses has something more than what is revealed on the surface. Vorgrimler chooses the word "sacramental" to begin with his topic here as it functions as a reference point proper to Christian

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 10-11.

¹⁴² Ibid., 16-20.

faith. Because underneath the reality that makes use of the external as its mediator is the reality of the transcendent God. For Vorgrimler, the word “sacramental” is more appropriate in this context than the word “symbolic.” In the sense of real symbols everything sacramental is symbolic. However, it doesn't mean that everything symbolic is sacramental because not every real simple mediates the presence of God. For Vorgrimler, the fundamental principle that serves the basis for his sacramental theology is:

“The salvific event that begins with creation is Christ- event and thus sacramental in a non-institutional sense. On the other hand, taking possession of creation that proceeds from the Spirit of Jesus Christ is sacramental in an institutional sense. This corresponds to a simple division of sacramental economy of salvation: creation and election as sacrament-Jesus Christ as primordial sacrament- Church as fundamental sacrament-the individual sacraments as actualizing fulfillments of the fundamental sacrament.”¹⁴³

5.2 Creation and Election as Sacrament

God initiates his presence in the consciousness of the human beings for an understanding with them and actuating the meaning and goal of their lives. He does this by means of the created realities. The humans are in no way of realizing this God who lives in a different dimension, except by means of some sensible mediation. When a religious interpretation is given to the experiencing of those realities, a fundamental faith results in human beings. Thus, a tangible expression to this faith through signs or symbolic actions, does create situations in which God is recognized. By choosing one people, God desires to convey His concrete will to the whole of humanity and to reside eternally among the humankind desiring to unite the love of God and humanity. However, God's encounter with his own people must still be mediated. The two outstanding “sacramental

¹⁴³ Ibid., 28.

structures,” the communication of God's word in human words and the assembly of those who worship and make reparation, exist for that mediation. It is noteworthy that these structures are dialogical in character, and it is in the assembly of the people of Israel that we find the Old Testament sacraments.¹⁴⁴

5.3 Jesus Christ as the Primordial Sacrament

This is another important aspect of Vorgrimler's Sacramental theology. In his very person, making visible of the presence of God, Jesus Christ was a sign. His whole life, especially his death our real symbols of the concrete presence of God. The sacramental character was quite evident in Jesus' life, especially in the world event that had the ability to make God present. Vorgrimler, refers a more serious Thomistic theology here especially that of Karl Rahner and Schillebeeckx in his approach.¹⁴⁵ Hans Gustafson states that to a certain degree, Aquinas ontology is rudimentary to Rahner's sacramental cosmology. An exploration of the mysteries of incarnation is the key to the task of inquiring about the possibility of perceiving the cosmos as pan sacramental. And Vorgrimler captures this Christian inclination in his sacramental theology.¹⁴⁶

5.4 Church as the Fundamental Sacrament

The Church, from the very early moments of its beginning, recognizes its complete dependence on Jesus Christ. She had its origin from the Holy Spirit to be a useful instrument of the continuing presence of Jesus Christ in the world. The Church was always conscious of this subordination and dependence required to provide the true service as the instrument of God for salvation. This service

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 29.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 30-32.

¹⁴⁶ Hans Gustafson, *Finding All Things in God: Pansacramentalism and Doing Theology Interreligiously*. (Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2015)81-82.

was rendered through word and sacrament in which the Church is actualized recognizing the presence of Christ as the one who really speaks and acts.¹⁴⁷

Vorgrimler acknowledges that the idea of Church as the primordial sacrament came from Otto Semmelroth and Karl Rahner post II World War. However, in order to avoid the clashing of the terminological confusion of simultaneous identification of Jesus Christ as the primordial sacrament, and to differentiate the highlight of Christ and the Church, Semmelroth later referred Church as the *Root Sacrament*. Rahner, on the other hand called it the *Fundamental Sacrament*.¹⁴⁸

Vorgrimler also uses examples from the history of the Church. He states that the earliest Church was in a very imperfect shape due to the Christians failure and their sins which caused damage to it. The Church, on many occasions, was tempted and even threatened to make of itself an independent organization against God's will. This was to react in the manner of this world to be fixated on its own traditions. The fact is, the task of the Church primarily is to mediate what has been given to it and not intended by God to the final form of humanity. This is because it will be surpassed in the reign of God.¹⁴⁹

As a community of faithful, the Church has an external dimension that points to something deeper. Whereas the inner dimension is based on the fact that Jesus Christ makes it his sign and instrument to carry out his work of renewing and reshaping humanity for God. Here, the external dimension is like an historically and communally structured sign that does not point to an absent entity but to a present reality, a real agent of the whole. Without the divine Spirit the human community that comprises the external reality cannot even hope and pray on its own initiative. Hence, the Church

¹⁴⁷ Vorgrimler, *Sacramental Theology*, 33.

¹⁴⁸ Gustafson, *Finding All Things in God*, 87.

¹⁴⁹ Vorgrimler, *Sacramental Theology*, 34.

itself is called a sacrament owing to the sacramental structure. This applies to a broader concept of the sacrament to the Church at a time when the narrower concept of sacraments did not even exist.¹⁵⁰

For a greater authenticity of Vorgrimler's in depth knowledge of the Church history, Ray Robert Noll points out Vorgrimler's approach to the two key ideas, namely that both Christ and the Church are sacraments in the broader sense. For Vorgrimler, these ideas derived from several Church Fathers, Church Councils, and Protestant Reformers who had voiced similar sentiments, particularly Augustine, Aquinas and Luther.¹⁵¹

Thus, the understanding of the Church as sacrament is also of great ecumenical significance according to Vorgrimler. The statement of the Church's sacramentality is of great significance to the position of the Eastern Churches. They have maintained a manner of thinking from the heritage of the Fathers of the Church that speaks of the cosmos as the universal sacrament and interprets all Ecclesiology in a Eucharistic sacramental manner. For him, there is no satisfactory general explanation to the concept of sacrament. Mainly because there is no general sacrament; instead, there are only concrete individual sacraments. In the history of the Church there have been several attempts to conclude what is common to all the individual sacraments in a single concept. However, these attempts due to their inadequacies have contributed something to our understanding of God and man relationship.¹⁵²

Vorgrimler sees sacraments as symbols compared to signs. The concept of symbol seemingly suited as a more precise term. Symbol is a "sign of recognition" that is fundamentally connected

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 34-35.

¹⁵¹ Ray Robert Noll, *Sacraments: A new Understanding for a New Generation* (Mystic, CT: twenty-Third Publications, 1999) 11.

¹⁵² Vorgrimler, *Sacramental Theology*, 38-43.

with recognition, understanding and communication. And the things that happen in the symbolic event are unimaginable without language and its critical function. Thus, for Vorgrimler, symbol and language concur in two essential aspects:

A reality “expresses” itself in a dramatic eventful “representation” and this is composed of materials drawn from our world of experience so that it does not immediately arise from its inner reality and yet is intimately connected with it. The inner reality that is intended is itself “there” in the eventful representation and dramatically “unfolds” itself out of that representation.¹⁵³

Vorgrimler suggests that the sacrament is a symbolic action in which the faithful act symbolically celebrating the liturgy as narrators and persons. These symbolic actions are the means and the ways by which the Holy Spirit makes present the historically unique saving activity of Jesus Christ. It is the Spirit of God who plays a major role in it. This means the “making present” of Christ’s activity does not happen only through human beings. At the same time, it does not happen without human beings either. The initiative is always from the part of the Spirit of God who supports the whole event causing the effects in the human persons. The Spirit strengthens them the faithful of their own activity in the Church.¹⁵⁴

All the same how do sacraments as symbolic actions mediate the presence of God? how can human symbols or gestures compel God to be present here? There is, in fact, mistaken ways of thinking in this regard. We tend to attribute to God a spatial distance from the world and human beings that is overcome by the sacraments that is quite erroneous. Because some basic theological preconditions are being forgotten here. For Vorgrimler, “that God in the Holy Spirit, is really present to God's creation, to God's humanity, and not in the shape of a static other, but in the

¹⁵³ Ibid., 69.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 71.

dynamism of God's loving desire, in constant self-communication.”¹⁵⁵ It is in the symbolic sacramental actions the Spirit of God opens the bars set up by human beings against God's presence. The Spirit actualizes and strengthens what “always ready” is. That is, the ability of symbolic actions, to make visible that which, from their very inner constitution, demands actualization.¹⁵⁶

5.5 Jesus Christ as the Author of the Sacraments

According to Vorgrimler, the modern notion of an “institution” or “inauguration” of the sacraments by God in Jesus Christ is deceptive because it suggests a juridical action at a particular point in time. Since the Church, for the fulfillment of the Kingdom of God, proclaims and makes present the everlasting grace to this world, it is a sacrament of salvation. Taking this into account the individual sacraments can be regarded as further developments and effective completion of this fundamental, sacramental essence of the Church. He argues:

The symbolic actions are not “invented” or “decreed” but have grown gradually and have been combined with narrative and explanatory words. They therefore possess many traits of what is conditional and accidental, but that which is essential and important in them is present in precisely *this* shape and form.¹⁵⁷

5.6 Sacrament- Event of the Word of God

Vorgrimler maintains that in so much as there have been sacraments, the symbolic actions in the sacramental celebrations have always been accompanied by words. They are not just interpretive words in the liturgical prayers and other sorts of explanations like homily, but also the narrational, reciting and proclaimed word of God.¹⁵⁸ On this idea, Susan K Wood argues that in Vorgrimler's

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 71.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 72.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 75.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 77.

theology there is an enriched understanding of both the sacramentality of the word and the word within the sacramental economy. To her, this brings us to a new dimension of the word event within the sacrament. That is, this word event within the sacrament cannot be restricted to the sacramental formula or even to a scripture reading within the sacramental ritual.¹⁵⁹

Another aspect to this notion is that a sacrament must always be seen in a liturgical context. Hence, it must be seen in a verbal context too. The fundamental pattern of the sacraments are prayers, and rightly they are prayers in the name of Jesus. These prayers are verbally expressed by the community of believers from minister and recipient depending on the content that goes with the situation in which each individual sacrament is being dispensed.¹⁶⁰ Lawrence Feingold indicates that Vorgrimler, speaking of sacraments from a liturgical point of view, has maintained an excellent position of the three-fold dimension of the present, the past and the future, which signifies and, in some way, makes present the past and the future. They refer to the past to such extent they are a memorial of the works of Christ's passion death and resurrection. This past event is made present as the cause and embodiment of the sanctification given by the sacrament. And the future aspect is the dimension of heavenly glory to which the sacrament is directed, and of which it gives a pledge, foretaste, and participation.¹⁶¹

In Vorgrimler's sacramental theology, there is something of great ecumenical importance with the renewal of the sacraments as a liturgy of prayer. This is in relation to both the Eastern Churches and the Churches of the Reformation also in Judaism from which the Church received the basic

¹⁵⁹ Susan K Wood, *One Baptism: Ecumenical Dimension of the Doctrine of Baptism* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2009) 86.

¹⁶⁰ Vorgrimler, *Sacramental Theology*, 78-79.

¹⁶¹ Lawrence Feingold, *Touched by Christ: The Sacramental Economy* (Steubenville: Emmaus Academic, 2021) 31.

structure of its highest sacrament, the Eucharist.¹⁶² Robert Noll, expanding Vorgrimler's thought indicates that:

just as in Christianity, where the ritual actions of the fundamental sacrament, the Church are derivatively called sacraments, so also in Israel the ritual actions of the Qahal Yahweh can also derivatively be called sacraments.¹⁶³

5.7 Sacrament as Mediation of Divine Grace

Sacraments are means by God's presence finds concrete ways of inserting itself human situations. That is, ways that are evident to human beings and ways that people can follow. This occurs in the liturgical symbolic actions of the sacraments. The presence of God is effective in different ways, which in itself justifies a differentiated view of sacramental grace according to the variety of the sacraments.¹⁶⁴

Founded on the notion that there is a connection between sacrament and concrete realization of the grace of God, we are prompted to ask whether the sacraments are necessary for human salvation. Vorgrimler answers:

On the one hand if God had prescribed by some legal action the necessity of one or several sacraments for salvation, God would at the same time have condemned countless human beings, since it would be clear to God how many obstacles there are to sacramental life for myriad humans.....On the other hand, the prompting of the Holy Spirit in revelation, in choice and, in call show that God effects his promise of salvation and saving presence on a path that leads to a people

¹⁶² Vorgrimler, *Sacramental Theology*, 80.

¹⁶³ Robert Noll, *Sacraments*, 13.

¹⁶⁴ Vorgrimler, *Sacramental Theology*, 87.

of God and a Church a path that individuals undertake for the others and which day, as God's witnesses, must invite others to follow.¹⁶⁵

Following from this perspective and dealing with the effectiveness of grace Vorgrimler has an extensive perception. The prospect of living in God's grace, of being justified and attaining eternal life does not necessarily mean that one has a specific knowledge of Church and Sacraments. This desire for the sacraments in people already anticipates this tangible expression of grace as an abiding basis for its effectiveness. Even without a visible connection to the Church, and even without the reception of his or her sacrament, a human being may receive sacramental grace if he or she, prompted by God, has serious, positive will directed towards Church and Sacraments. Christopher Carstens furthers this idea on Vorgrimler suggesting that both sacraments and sacramentals are signs and therefore, sacramentals working *ex opere operantis ecclesiae*, through the working of the Church, is another dimension of grace.¹⁶⁶

Further to this, regarding the Church and its sacramentality, Richard Lennan points out Vorgrimler's argument that in the centuries followed the Reformation, sacramental theology ceased to be a theology at all. The influence of the Canon Law, especially its regulations of the sacraments took over the broader considerations of sacramentality from the general consciousness of the Catholic community. Such were the circumstances that it was almost improbable to view the Church from the perspective of sacramentality.¹⁶⁷

However, for Vorgrimler, Sacramental theology perceives an internal ecclesial shaping of the sacraments. This means that when a human person becomes a recipient of the sacrament, that

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 88.

¹⁶⁶ Christopher Carstens, *Principles of Sacred Liturgy: Forming a Sacramental Vision* (Chicago: Hillenbrand Books, 2020) 154.

¹⁶⁷ Richard Lennan, *Tilling the Church: Theology for an Unfinished Product* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2022) 72.

person expresses a willingness to be a living member of the Church. One who decides to encounter Jesus Christ in the sacraments also expresses a positive desire to encounter the Church as well. Consequently, one cannot exclude the Church from this encounter. This connection, which the scholastic theology called *res et sacramentum*, brings into a special ecclesial relationship between the recipient and the Church.¹⁶⁸

Thus, for Vorgrimler, an individual sacrament always actualizes the Fundamental Sacrament that is Church and incorporates those celebrating the sacrament, in a way unique to each sacrament, into that Fundamental Sacrament. An acceptance of these ideas could liberate the sacraments from any ideological form of individualism in their saving application.

5.8 Vorgrimler's Sacramental Theology and the Dialogical Nature of the Sacraments

Vorgrimler's theological framework is fundamentally anchored in a Christocentric perspective of the sacraments. It asserts that these rites transcend mere symbolism, serving as vital means of grace that facilitate an encounter with the divine for individuals. Vorgrimler's emphasis on the objective nature of sacraments prompts critical enquiries into the dynamic interaction that exists between the believer and the sacred. Although he recognises the importance of faith in the reception of grace, his framework appears to inadequately highlight the relational and dialogical dimensions that are fundamental to sacramental practice. This limitation prompts additional investigation into the potential benefits of a more interactive comprehension of the sacraments, which may enhance the lived experience of faith, contesting Vorgrimler's interpretations and facilitating avenues for more profound theological dialogue.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁸ Vorgrimler, *Sacramental Theology*, 91-92.

¹⁶⁹ Paul Avis, *A Church Drawing Near: Spirituality and Mission in a Post-Christian Culture* (London: T&T Clark International, 2003), 7-18.

The study of sacramental theology fundamentally necessitates an acknowledgement of the interaction between divine grace and human receptivity. However, Vorgrimler's methodology frequently overlooks the communal dimensions that are essential to the effectiveness of sacraments. The emphasis on the subjective experience of the individual believer may result in a limited comprehension of the operational dynamics of sacraments within the wider ecclesial framework. Moreover, the focus on individual pneumatology in the context of sacramental theology necessitates a recognition of the communal charisms and ministries which play a vital role in shaping a unified ecclesial identity.¹⁷⁰

Recent studies highlight that, particularly within the framework of Trinitarian Ecclesiology as articulated by St. Thomas Aquinas, the relationship between created beings and the divine persons is profoundly linked to the concept of grace and its resultant effects. This connection elucidates the manner in which the Church manifests the visible mission of the Holy Spirit in conjunction with that of the Son during the Incarnation.¹⁷¹ The identified limitations indicate the necessity for a more comprehensive approach that harmonises individual belief with communal experience, thereby embodying the dialogical essence intrinsic to the sacramental reality.

6. EDWARD J KILMARTIN

Edward Kilmartin (1923-1994) was a Jesuit priest and a theologian of Liturgy from Portland, Maine and a Professor at the Pontifical Oriental Institute, Rome. As a theologian who followed a lifetime interest in the traditions of the undivided Churches of the first millennium, Kilmartin hoped for recovering common perspectives. He was also the principal drafter of the Roman

¹⁷⁰ John F. O'Neill, *Trinitarian Ecclesiology; Charles Journet, the Divine Missions, and the Mystery of the Church*, (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2024), 325-336.

¹⁷¹ O'Neill, *Trinitarian Ecclesiology*, 330-335.

Catholic response to the Lima document, especially the section on Eucharist, for the Secretariate for Promoting Christian Unity. On several occasions he was consulted by the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith.¹⁷² The work of Edward Kilmartin could be said to function as a bridge between scholastic sacramental theology and a more modern anthropological approach.¹⁷³

The ritual activities associated with the sacraments are the main highlight of Kilmartin's Sacramental theology. He situates the seven sacraments within a theology of creation and salvation history, with special attention given to Christology, Pneumatology, and Ecclesiology. The main identification of his theology is the Christian notion of symbol which is fundamental to the celebration of faith. Also, the elements that constitute the sacramental rite and their relationship to each other is developed. Another highlight of his theology is the nature of the sacraments as distinct from the word of God. This analysis of the distinction from the word of God forms the foundation for a theological explanation of the relative necessity of sacraments for the life of faith. The word and sacrament are the two fundamental interrelated ways of realization of the constant presence of Christ in the Church. This leads the way for a more elaborated presentation of the differentiated modes of Christ's presence in the liturgical and sacramental celebrations of the Church. Kilmartin also proposes a solution to the classical theme of the specific efficacy of sacramental celebrations.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷² M. M. Schaefer, "Kilmartin, Edward J." in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 2nd ed., Vol. 8. (Detroit, MI: Gale, 2003), 168-169.

¹⁷³ Carmina M. Chapp, "Kilmartin, Edward J." In *New Catholic Encyclopedia Supplement 2010*, Vol. 2. Ed., Robert L. Fastiggi (Detroit, MI: Gale, 2010), 643-645.

¹⁷⁴ Edward J. Kilmartin, *Christian Liturgy: Theology and Practice, 1. Systematic Theology of Liturgy* (Kansas City: Sheed and ward, 1988), 199-200.

6.1 The Basic Dimensions of Kilmartin's Sacramental Theology

For Kilmartin, a systematic theology of sacraments cannot be properly constructed without introducing a theology of creation. The considerations that determine the basic dimensions of a systematic theology of the sacraments for him are the extent of the redeeming work of Jesus Christ and the mission of the Holy Spirit by which the Church of Christ was established and sanctified.¹⁷⁵

Thomas Scirghi, identifying this aspect, points out that Kilmartin joins his contemporaries Edward Schillebeeckx and Karl Rahner in their *ressourcement*, that is, the return to the sources of the practice and doctrine of the primitive Church.¹⁷⁶

All the sacraments, in Kilmartin's view, are connected to the basic situations of the individual's lives. And hence, they are usually intended to sanctify the basic situations of the lives of Christians, in the individual and social domains. Through participation in these celebrations of faith, each one is made aware of moving from one phase of human life to the next, supported by the community of faith on the way to the completion that comes from God alone.¹⁷⁷

For many people the concept of sacrament is unclear in the present society. People by and large are quite content with the notion that sacraments are merely liturgical activities that take place in the Church. To them these liturgical activities are something that remains separated from the world and its history and even purely supernatural instruments employed by the Church. In this context, Kilmartin argues that when sacraments are seen as a personal expression of the faith of the Church

¹⁷⁵ Kilmartin, *Christian Liturgy*, 201-202.

¹⁷⁶ Thomas Scirghi, "Edward J. Kilmartin: Reuniting *Lex Orandi* with *Lex Credenti*" in *Primary Sources of Liturgical Theology: A Reader*. Edited by Dwight. W. Vogel (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2000), 101-102.

¹⁷⁷ Kilmartin, *Christian Liturgy*, 203.

of which Christ, in the Spirit, is the living source, a personalistic understanding of the sacramental grace is more likely to be the result.¹⁷⁸

6.2 The Seven Principal Rites of the Church

Kilmartin observes that from a sacramental perception of the created reality, the seven sacraments take shape as seven ways in which the Church actualizes itself as minister of Christ in the revealing of the mission of salvation. It is the symbolic actions and the accompanying Word of Faith that form the heart of these rites. Therefore, these sacraments announce that God's saving presence can be found in the human and social situations signified and how the subject or the recipient is to respond.¹⁷⁹

To Gabriel Pivarnik, one of the central aspects of Kilmartin's modern approach to sacraments is the recognition of the sacramental Church as the place of encounter with the divine.¹⁸⁰ Describing the Church as a Sacrament, Kilmartin, argues that we are not to remain at the level of abstract concepts. Instead, the significance of the Church activity and the effects of the communion of humanity with God and the unity of people among themselves must be displayed. Here he introduces the notion of encounter, a central anthropological category, based on H Wagner's theology. While the concept of encounter helps us to understand that, and how, the Church is a Sacrament, one must be conscious that the Church is in Christ in the Spirit. Hence, there is a necessity of the introduction of the theme of Pneumatology into the fuller explanation of the sacramental character of the Church.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 206-207.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 212.

¹⁸⁰ Gabriel R. Pivarnik, *Toward a Trinitarian Theology Of Liturgical Participation* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2012), 101.

¹⁸¹ Kilmartin, *Christian Liturgy*, 220.

Kilmartin elaborates these theories further. Based on the Dialogue Philosophy of Martin Buber a translation of “Encounter” employed as *Begegnung* includes the notion of engagement: a commitment of one person to another in the act of the encounter. Depending on what emerges from the meeting, the engagement can result in a commitment of both parties to a common action. To Kilmartin, some encounters lead to engagements that touched the very core of human and humanizing existence. In this sense, if a true encounter takes place between Christ and the communicant, a new action is issued with the social dimension.¹⁸²

6.3 The Church of the Holy Spirit

Another dimension of Kilmartin’s view of sacraments is that of the Church of the Holy Spirit. In the thirty-five-year long career of teaching and writings around Sacraments and Liturgy, Kilmartin became the center of attention among the Roman Catholic theologians for his emphasis on the activity of the Holy Spirit in the Liturgy of the Church.¹⁸³ The nature of the Church as Sacrament is fully realized on account of the Spirit energizing the Church. It is Christ who is encountered explicitly in and through the Church, whereas the Spirit works in a hidden way. Kilmartin maintains that the introduction of the concept Sacrament of the Spirit is a gain for Ecclesiology. It corresponds to the Pauline theology which pictures the Spirit as a living link between the Church and the risen Lord. The Church has a structure comparable to that of the hypostatic union and a characteristic role to play in the economic function of the Spirit.¹⁸⁴

The Church is a real society, of individual members who hold their own personalities. It is in the organized activity of the members that the life of the Church is expressed. This organized activity

¹⁸² Ibid., 220-222.

¹⁸³ Jerome M. Hall, *We Have the Mind of Christ: The Holy Spirit and Liturgical Memory in the Thought of Edward J. Kilmartin* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2001), xiii.

¹⁸⁴ Kilmartin, *Christian Liturgy*, 223- 225.

is the social structure of the Church, and it enables the members to realize a unity of activity, in which each one has a unique role to play. He argues:

Those who form the social organism are ontically united to the Spirit and serve as instruments of the Spirit. Hence the activity of the Spirit depends on them. The Holy Spirit works through the social structures of the Church, or, rather, through the members united in the social Organism. Through the activity of the members, the Spirit gains a certain visibility by reason of the variety of personal charisms which he bestows for the good of all for this reason the Church can be called sacrament of the Spirit.¹⁸⁵

6.4 The Concept and Constitution of the Christian Sacrament

In Regis. A. Duffy's view, Kilmartin's approach to a systematic theology of sacraments demands a serious connection between the Economic Trinity and its symbolization in Liturgy. And this is a systematic starting point that provides a greater appreciation of Christ as a basic sacrament.¹⁸⁶ For Kilmartin, Christian systematic development of the teaching about word and sacrament and their relationships always includes a consideration of their relationship to Jesus of Nazareth. There is a need to establish the Christological foundation of the authentic Christian understanding of symbol. Jesus Christ, the one mediator between God and humanity is the point of departure for a discussion of the connection between symbolic action and the word of God. To Kilmartin, God's self-communication is the ultimate depth of human intercommunication manifested in Jesus as mediator. The mediation of Jesus in his humanity is nothing other than God's movement towards human beings. Hence, a response to this mediation through faith, an individual is drawn into communion with God. Kilmartin also agrees that the unique mediation of Jesus does not exclude

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 225.

¹⁸⁶ Regis A. Duffy, "Sacraments in General" in *Systematic Theology: Roman catholic Perspectives*, Vol.2. ed. Francis Schussler Fiorenza & John P Galvin (Minneapolis: Fortress press, 1991), 187.

other mediations. Jesus' mediation constitutes the immediacy of the presence of God in the most radical sense possible in history. But it can be exercised through believers in their communication with one another and with those outside the community of faith.¹⁸⁷

Two observations of Kilmartin are relevant here in this regard:

First of all... God is always present to human beings in all situations of their lives, with this offer of self communication. Second, in the event of God saving activity and the response of believers, grace describes the active orientation of the creature to guard himself, grounded on God's self communication and corresponding to humankind's native openness in the areas of freedom, hope and love.¹⁸⁸

The preceding analysis of Kilmartin yield us to the authentic Christian concept of symbol, located at the center of salvation history, Jesus Christ. This very concept connects to the authentic meaning of symbol, rediscovered and developed in modern anthropology. He identifies the word and symbolic action as the elements of Christian sacrament. Thus, the sacramental celebrations symbolize human situations and make them, through the word of God, into situations of salvation, times of grace and signs of God's grace for its recipients. In sacramental celebrations particular boundary situations are no longer related to an undefined transcendent reality, but objectively to God's loving presence and fidelity, inviting the believers to a decision of faith. That is, sacraments, as activities of the community of faith, symbolize the transcendent presence of God in one's particular situations of life. They consist in the celebration of human and social situations, symbolized, and proclaimed to be filled with the saving presence of God, who makes concrete claims on the participants.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁷ Kilmartin, *Christian Liturgy*, 235-238.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 239.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 239-240.

However, the sacramental word has a function that is only parallel to the word of tradition that provides instruction about the meaning of human situations and the appropriate response to them. Moreover, the sacramental word is only comparable to the word of Christian tradition that provides facts about the mystery dimension of the human situation. As an example, catechetical instruction in the Church.¹⁹⁰

The persons involved in the sacramental celebrations are the triune God, Father, Son and the Holy Spirit along with the assembled community of faith. To engage itself in the dialogue of love the Holy Spirit enlivens the community of the faithful. As for the congregation or the assembled faithful, they have unique parts to play. It is the ordained ministers who preside over the sacramental celebrations and the subject in whose favor the celebrations take place and the the community as a whole.¹⁹¹

Kilmartin holds the view that the sacramental celebrations need to be experienced and understood as an integral part of worship. He blames the modern average Catholic theology of the Eucharist on Post Tridentine Theologians. To him, they espoused the idea of a sacrificial rite and sought to find the visible sacrifice of the mass in the separate consideration of the elements proposing a mystical mactation of Christ at the level of sacramentals signs.¹⁹²

Scirghi, in this regard, opines that Kilmartin is critical of the exaggerated focus upon the moment of consideration, which diminishes the rest of the liturgical celebrations. In Scirghi's view such focus fails to recognize the integrity of the sacramental celebration. It also obscures the presence of Christ, who is manifest in the assembly as well as in the elements and with the priest. In this

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 240.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 240.

¹⁹² Trent Pompulan, "Post-Tridentine Sacramental Theology" in *The Oxford Handbook of Sacramental Theology*, edited by Hans Boersma and Matthew Levering (Oxford: University Press, 2015), 355.

context, Scirghi argues that the priest functions in *persona ecclesia* rather than in *persona Christi*.¹⁹³

To Kilmartin, it is in their active engagement of faith the believers find themselves in the ideal realization of the sacramental celebration. He asserts that the earthly liturgy is a realization of the heavenly liturgy and only reach their full stature when each believer is turned to all the others in the openness of love. For a full realization of the sacramental celebrations as saving events there ought to be personal involvement, in faith, of layperson or ordained minister. Since the sacramental celebrations are acts of worship of God, for Kilmartin, the aspect of formal worship differentiates the sacramental celebrations from the various other forms of Christian preaching that serves the means of God's presence in all situations of life inviting one for the decision of faith.¹⁹⁴

In liturgy, through symbolic gestures, the community as a whole act out their response to a particular human situation which is signified. For the bestowal of grace signified in the sacramental rite, the Church prays through Jesus Christ in the word of the sacrament for the coming of the Spirit. To Kilmartin, the sacramental word is, ultimately, a confession of the synergism between the Spirit and the Church, and between the risen Lord and the Church, which alone can ground the sacramental event of sanctification. Kilmartin uses an analogy between the preaching of the word of God and sacrament to help to make understandable the nature of the sacramental word. The preaching of the word of God is the preaching of the faith in response to the obedience of faith. The act of preaching has a dialogical character, since it is a response to the word of God working inwardly in the preacher. The preaching of the preacher is a word about Christ. However, since it is a response of the word of God who, in the Spirit, is the living source of this preaching, the

¹⁹³ Scirghi, *Primary Sources of Liturgical Theology*, 102.

¹⁹⁴ Kilmartin, *Christian Liturgy*, 241.

activity is the preaching of Christ himself. It awakens in the hearer a response of faith, which is ultimately a response to the word of God working inwardly in the hearer. Kilmartin suggests that sacramental celebrations also have a character that is essentially dialogical. The formulas that are used in the sacraments are a response to the word of God working interior early in the Church. And hence, they are necessarily inserted into the prayer of Christ, his eternal intercession. Together with the epiclesis of the Church and the assurance given to us through the institution of the sacraments, the sacramental rituals represent infallibly the author of saving grace by the heavenly Father.¹⁹⁵

In short, the sacramental celebrations are symbolical actions enlivened by the prayer of the Church inserted into the prayer of the high priest, Jesus Christ. The sacraments are always an offer of the Spirit in accordance with the signification of the symbolic action and epiclesis. This is because the prayers are made in union with Christ are always heard by the heavenly Father. Sacraments, for Kilmartin, are the effective signs of Jesus Christ's divine human love of the Father which is manifested in the glorification. And the sanctification is expressed in the divine human love of humanity.¹⁹⁶

6.5 The Sacraments and the Intercession of Christ

The anabatic dimension the sacraments is seen as the intercession before God on behalf of the subjects in whose favor the celebrations take place. The Church makes this intercession in union with the eternal intercession of Christ. The ultimate aim of the intercession of Christ is to bring the subjects of the sacraments into union with Himself so that they will love the Father with the love

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 245-250.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 250.

of a son or a daughter in Christ.¹⁹⁷ Kilmartin furthers his explanation on this by emphasizing the role of the sacramental word in this regard. It is the sacramental word that serves as transparency for Christ's eternal intercession, as efficacious signs of Christ's divine human love of the Father. To this, Kilmartin's argument is:

...the sacraments are signs of the efficacy of Christ's eternal intercession, which elicited the response of the Father in the once for all Pentecostal event. That is, sending of the Spirit to establish the Church and sanctify those who accept the gift of God in faith. Therefore, sacraments are effective signs of the mystery of the sending of the Spirit by the risen Lord from the Father in at theandric act, sacrament of the transcendental act of the Father.¹⁹⁸

The relation between preaching and the sacraments also has a significance in Kilmartin's theology. To him, both sacraments and the preaching of the word are forms of expressions of the life of faith. They are indirectly the word of God; they differ in the intensity of the incarnation of the faith of the Church and in the intensity of the response that they can be expected to elicit, normally from those who engage themselves.¹⁹⁹ Kilmartin attempts to enrich the traditional concepts of Church and Liturgy by developing a dialogical model in which the congregation, in its dialogue with God through Christ and Spirit, take part in the trinitarian self-communication.²⁰⁰

Kilmartin's view is that the Sacraments belong to a category of liturgical activity in which the Church's role in the mediation of the saving grace of Christ is expressed in an explicit way.²⁰¹ The sacraments have a permanent nature towards the other liturgical forms of celebrations. According

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., 250.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 251.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 252.

²⁰⁰ John W. Riggs, "Christian Liturgy: Theology and Practice, Vol. 1, Systematic Theology of Liturgy. Edward J. Kilmartin." *The Journal of Religion* 71, no.4 (1991): 584-585.

²⁰¹ Kilmartin, Sacraments as Liturgy of the Church, *Theological studies* 50 (1989), 527.

to him, the various other forms of celebrations of the faith of the Church, even if it is liturgical, they may come and go. The sacraments, on the other hand, are *permanent, constitutive elements of the institutional Church*.²⁰²

As chief rites, the sacraments have the same origin that of the Church. In other words, they originate from the same divine initiative by which the Church itself came into being. And hence, they are authentic indispensable ways by which the Church expresses its nature. Kilmartin maintains that God himself is the author of the sacraments and of the Church and therefore, the Church has a special claim on sacraments. It is through the Church and the sacraments that the mystery of salvation is always mediated to properly disposed subjects. The indisputable claim of the Church's authority over the sacraments is clearly expressed when he asserts:

But if the Holy Spirit inspired the Church to celebrate its faith in these special ways in times past, the same Holy Spirit continues to inspire the Church to make changes in its liturgical sacramental practice in accord with the demands of new historical and cultural contexts. The response of the Church to this prompting of the Spirit allows us to describe the Church as collaborator, or even coauthor in the formulation of the traditional liturgical sacramental rites.²⁰³

It has to be noted that Kilmartin, while bringing up the idea of coauthorship, does not imply that any of the sacraments, or the ritual activity applied in the celebration, are merely ecclesiastical rites, in the sense that the Church created them solely on its own authority. What really matters here is the Spirit of God. In other words, whatever the Church does in this matter stems from the

²⁰² Kilmartin, *Christian Liturgy*, 261-262.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, 262.

inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Donald J Goergen elaborates this idea of Kilmartin maintaining that the Holy Spirit is the key to the Church's collective memory.²⁰⁴

6.6 Faith and Fruitfulness of the Sacraments

When it comes to the fruitful participation in the celebration of the sacraments, Kilmartin's approach to the issue is quite laudable. He presents the fundamental condition for a fruitful reception of the sacraments. To him, the sacraments should not be considered as an intrusion into the lives of Christians. Rather, they meet a basic need of believers that would correspond to the very nature of humankind. The believer, according to Kilmartin, is one who has neither the first nor the last word, but rather is answerable to the first word, and must await a response to his or her answer. And so, the recipients of the sacraments are touched in the measure that they recognize themselves as instruction bound and respond in the obedience of faith. Sacraments and the faith of the Church are important aspects of Kilmartin's theology. It is through the liturgy the reality of the faith of the Church finds an objective articulation. The conventional forms of expression of this faith correspond to the gift of faith, which is a personal reality. Therefore, these forms of expression of faith enables the believers to draw out a subjective response. Sacraments are expressions of the faith of the Church and hence they signify God's free offer of grace and invite the response of faith from the participants.²⁰⁵

According to Kilmartin, the sacraments are human activities in which the faith of the Church as a whole and the faith of the concrete assembly is demonstrated. They are the means for God's self-communication and is received by believers in a fruitful way. For this the community expresses itself through human language and symbolic actions so that God's self-communication takes place.

²⁰⁴ Donald J Goergen, *Fire of Love: Encountering the Holy Spirit* (New Jersey: Paulist Press, 2006), 74.

²⁰⁵ Kilmartin, *Christian Liturgy*, 359-366.

More precisely, the whole of the liturgical action of the sacrament is a form of response from the subject to the inner world of God. This happens through the concrete participants of the celebration in agreement with the fixed forms of the expressions of the faith of the Church. Even the essential forms of the rites of the sacraments are a response of faith. They are fundamentally an invocation for the coming of the Spirit of sanctification, which corresponds to the meaning of the particular sacrament.

6.7 An Analysis of Kilmartin's Approach to the Dialogical Nature of Sacraments

While acknowledging the dialogical aspect of the sacraments, Kilmartin's method frequently oversimplifies the intricate relationship between tradition and modern liturgical practices. This criticism supports Yves Congar's claim that liturgy is "endowed with the genius of Tradition,"²⁰⁶ emphasising the need for a balance that honours both the revelatory aspects of sacramental acts and their historical context.²⁰⁷

Furthermore, in light of Louis-Marie Chauvet's objections, Kilmartin's framework occasionally ignores important metaphysical factors that support sacramental understandings, such as sacramental causality and Eucharistic presence.²⁰⁸ Kilmartin's theological contributions should be strengthened by a more nuanced examination of these components, making sure that his viewpoint takes into account the dynamic realities present in sacramental discourse. To develop a strong sacramental theology that is still applicable in modern ecclesial contexts, this re-examination is essential.

²⁰⁶ Yves Congar, *Tradition and Traditions: An Historical and a Theological Essay*, trans. Michael Naseby and Thomas Rainborough (New York: Macmillan, 1967), 434.

²⁰⁷ Tyler Sampson, "Scripture, Tradition, and *Ressourcement*: Toward an Anglican Fundamental Liturgical Theology," *Anglican Theological Review* 96, no. 4 (Spring 2014): 305-310

²⁰⁸ Joseph Christopher Mudd, *Eucharist and Critical Metaphysics: A Response to Louis-Marie Chauvet's Symbol and Sacrament Drawing on the Works of Bernard Lonergan* (Boston College, Doctoral Thesis, 2010), 42-46.

In conclusion, when analyzed through the prism of the dialogical nature of the sacraments, the investigation of Edward J. Kilmartin's sacramental theology reveals significant limits. Kilmartin provides a framework for comprehending sacraments as vessels of divine grace, but his approach frequently ignores the interpersonal and communicative aspects that are essential to sacramental efficacy. The need for a more comprehensive paradigm that balances individual and communal aspects of sacramental participation is further highlighted by acknowledging insights from a variety of sources, such as the reflections on *Missio Dei*²⁰⁹ and the significance of formation and Trinitarian Theology.²¹⁰ Kilmartin's method might gain from a more thorough discussion with these contemporary theological viewpoints.

Although Kilmartin offers a strong foundation for comprehending a person's relationship with God, his method frequently ignores the ways in which sacraments function as a dialogue that involves the larger church community. This oversight points to the necessity for further theological investigation that highlights the dialogical nature of the sacraments.

²⁰⁹ Paulo Suess, "Missio Dei and the Project of Jesus: The Poor and the 'Other' as the Mediators of the Kingdom and Protagonists of the Churches", *Sedos Bulletin* 44 (2012): 2–9.

²¹⁰ Christina Kheng, "Paradigm Shifts in Ministry: Insights from the Resurgence of Trinitarian Theology" *Sedos Bulletin* 48 (2016): 3–11.

CONCLUSION

The representative theologians that I have dealt with in this chapter elucidate the Roman Catholic understanding on Sacramentality in the last few decades. They were not only focal figures for the Church's understanding about sacraments, but they did so from different perspectives. Owing to our constrained room for discussion here and not wanting to risk a lack of focus on our concerned topic ahead, I do not wish to reiterate or summarize their theories here. The distinctive lens employed in the examining of these theologians and their emphasis on the sacramentality have given us an outlook on the different dimensions of sacramental theology. However, on different levels, the elements of Rahnerian, or Liturgical or Biblical or Postmodern Sacramental theology has not given emphasis on the dialogical nature of the sacramental world for its fruitfulness.

The aim of this thesis is not to introduce a brand-new theory to the dialogical nature of the sacraments. Instead, by revisiting the history of sacramental theology, simply seek a new perspective on the fruitfulness of the sacraments. This will be done by exploring the dialogical dimension of the three aspects of the sacraments as conceived by the medieval sacramental theology, namely, the *sacramentum tantum*: the rituals, signs or symbols in the sacraments; the *res et sacramentum*: the *sign* and *reality* of the sacraments; the *res tantum*: the grace conferred by the sacrament²¹¹.

This thesis aims to establish how this dialogue functions and develops in the sacramental world, especially highlighting the role of the middle aspect, the *sign* and *reality* of the sacraments or the *res et sacramentum*.

²¹¹ Schmaus, *The Church as Sacrament*, 34.

Although several scholarly articles have been written on the *res et sacramentum*, due to the scholastic influence, its theology mainly flourishes around the sacramental characters and the ecclesial effect it produces in all the sacraments. The ecclesial faith, which is objective, is decisive in the sacramental elements. However, sacramental theology has not paid much attention to the dialogical aspect of *res et sacramentum*. If the sacrament is dialogical, then its elements are dialogical too. This thesis aims to develop an ontological exploration of the *res et sacramentum* for its embedded communicative significance in a sacrament, especially seeking this dialogical dimension in bringing out the fruits of the sacraments in recipients. In this way expound the dynamics of this aspect which is an inevitable part of the sacramental world.

Chapter 2

Sacraments: The Key Interpretive Principles

There are numerous ways to approach the Christian concept of sacraments. In ordinary life when it comes to matters of faith people turn for guidance to the leaders of faith. The way the sacraments are perceived have always been a matter of debate among people of different Christian denominations and their leaders. Hence, our query here is not to substantiate the rights and wrongs of these approaches. Instead, to find a feasible and pragmatic approach that would be of significance to our faith journey.

Within this context, is it an outdated question to ask what is a sacrament? In the modern world, especially after the development of science and technology, where anything can be googled in an instant, this question may be of irrelevance to many. However, in the Catholic world, for the vast majority, this question remains pertinent. I believe a constructive and pragmatic definition of the notion of sacraments would enhance our whole purpose and approach to the road to the sacraments.

1. Dialogue: Fundamental to Sacraments

The Christian sacraments always involve a dynamic fashion among its recipients. In accordance with St Thomas, “whatever is received, is received in a manner proper to the recipient.”¹ John D Gerken interprets that through the reception of the sacraments, humankind enters a dialogue with Christ through the Church. The very action in the receiving the sacrament itself is a response like that of a reply made in an ordinary conversation.² And hence, dialogue is key to understanding

¹ ST I. 84. 1; III. 11. 5

² John D. Gerken, “Dialogue Between God and Man” in *Readings in Sacramental Theology*, ed. C. Stephen Sullivan (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1964), 78.

the sacraments. The term dialogue is not just mere words. Any human gestures participate in dialogue. Therefore, any visible manifestation of what goes on in the heart of man participates in dialogue.³ A dialogue in the sacrament is a Yes to Christ and No to human power, and hence the sacramental dialogue, it is the very essence of Christianity. It really adds up to the personal quality of our religious acts.⁴

2. Incarnation and the Sacramental Economy

God's salvific plan for mankind begin to be fulfilled from the very moment of Incarnation. The man Jesus who stayed with us for over thirty years, died, rose, and ascended into heaven. These mysteries which are crucial to our Christian belief, have their origin in the mystery of Incarnation. As the scripture testifies, Jesus did not want to abandon His people. Lawrence Feingold aptly puts this way "For a constant encounter with His own, He established the sacraments of the Church to be the principal means of encounter with His humanity between His Ascension and His second coming."⁵ St Leo the Great's remarks are quite apposite here: "what was to be seen of our redeemer has passed over into the sacraments, so that faith might be more perfect and more firm"⁶

Speaking on the strong connection between incarnation and the sacraments, Feingold states that the sacraments are mystical gates by which the divine life that entered our world in the incarnation still passes to us through Christ and his Spirit. Thus, in the incarnation Jesus forged

³ Gerken, "Dialogue Between God and Man", 80.

⁴ Ibid., 87.

⁵ Lawrence Feingold, *Touched by Christ: The Sacramental Economy* (Steubenville, Ohio: Emmaus Academic, 2021), xxxi.

⁶ Leo the Great, Sermon 74.2, in *Sermons*, translated by J.P. Freeland and A. J. Conway, FC 93 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1996), 326.

a way between heaven and earth.⁷ And the whole purpose of incarnation itself is to maintain the rupture that fell on the humankind after the sin in the garden of Eden. In that sense, the whole mystery of incarnation itself is a dialogue initiated from the part of the Divine to reach out to us.

Herbert Vorgrimler interprets the Incarnation as the history of God in humanity in a sacramental structure. In this process the movement proceeds from God and returns to Him after the whole course of human history. And this movement takes sacramental characteristics in the express promise and effective guarantee of God.

On the mystery of Incarnation, Cyprian Vagaggini expresses two dimensions: First, God communicates his divine life to mankind through sensible things. That would mean, through these tangible things humans are obliged to receive the divine life. Secondly, because of this communication from God, mankind is elevated to a divine mode of being and acting.⁸

This leads to our further enquiry into the subject of sacrament as dialogue, namely, The sacramental economy. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* defines the sacramental economy as “the communication of the fruits of Christ’s paschal mystery in the celebration of the Church’s sacramental liturgy.”⁹ And the sacramental celebration is a meeting of God’s children with their Father that takes the form of a dialogue, through actions and words. Thus, the Catechism calls this symbolic actions in the liturgy, a language in which is expressed God’s free initiative and His people’s response of faith.¹⁰

⁷ Feingold, *Touched by Christ*, xxxiii.

⁸ Cyprian Vagaggini, *Theological Dimension of Liturgy*, trans. Leonard Doyle and W. A. Jurgens (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1976), 300.

⁹ CCC, 1076.

¹⁰ CCC, 1153.

The word “economy” refers to interchange of goods. Since Christ has taken on what is ours, i.e., the human nature and the conditions of human life, to give us all a share of what is His, the divine life and the sending of the holy spirit till the end of time.¹¹ The *Catechism* teaches:

He [Christ] acts through the sacraments in what the common tradition of the East and the West calls ‘the sacramental economy’; this is the communication (or ‘dispensation’) of the fruits of Christ’s Paschal mystery in the celebration of the Church’s ‘sacramental’ liturgy.¹²

It is in the mystery of incarnation that God’s dialogue to humankind in a manner appropriate to our nature reaches its summit. Feingold maintains that the word becoming flesh in the history is the most important foundation for the fittingness of the sacraments. And this dialogue of God with humankind takes place in a sensible fashion appropriate for men in a mysterious way to the sensible signs of the sacraments. Thus, Sacramental economy is profoundly fitting for the Church in the Incarnated Word of God.¹³

3. Jesus Christ, The Primordial Sacrament

The sacraments have a profound Christological aspect. They exist and operate due to the Incarnation of Christ. It is the hypostatic union of Jesus that serves as the basis for their mystery aspect of imparting grace through the tangible signs.¹⁴ For Vorgrimler, Jesus’ whole life, especially His great moments including the Death of Him are real symbols of the concrete presence of God. He also points out that it is the theology of *μυστήριον* (*mysterion*) on which

¹¹ Feingold, *Touched by Christ*, 3.

¹² CCC, 1076.

¹³ Feingold, *Touched by Christ*, 15.

¹⁴ Feingold, *Touched by Christ*, 16.

the description of Jesus as the primordial sacrament is founded.¹⁵ In the New Testament the Greek word *mysterion* is used predominantly to denote the mystery of God's salvific plan in Christ and the Church which was hidden from earlier generations.¹⁶ In Saint Paul's theology, *mysterion* does not mean something secret, but God's saving plan revealed and realized in the divine *oikonomia*.¹⁷ Saint Paul in his letter to Ephesians 1, 9-10, explains: "He has made known to us in all wisdom and insight the mystery of his will, according to his purpose which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth." Feingold, on this text notes that:

The mystery is first the Incarnation of Christ, and especially His Paschal mystery; it is also the Church as the Body of Christ, which is the union of all the members with Christ and with each other in Christ, and the incorporation of the Gentiles into it; it is grace which communicates Christ's life to us, and it is the sacraments as the channels of grace that binds us to Christ in the Church.¹⁸

Many Church Fathers, which we shall deal with later, uses the term *Mysterium Dei*¹⁹ to address Jesus. In the Vulgate translation, Saint Jerome uses Latin terminology *sacramentum* to translate the Greek word *mysterion*.²⁰ Thomas Aquinas in his *Summa Contra Gentile* brings in the idea of the "fundamental sacrament" to appraise the connection between Christ and the Sacraments.²¹

¹⁵ Vorgrimler, *Sacramental Theology*, 30-31.

¹⁶ Odo Casel, *The Mystery of Christian Worship* (New York: Crossroad, 1999), 11.

¹⁷ Vorgrimler, *Sacramental Theology*, 31.

¹⁸ Feingold, *Touched by Christ*, 39.

¹⁹ Vorgrimler, *Sacramental Theology* 31.

²⁰ Feingold, *Touched by Christ*, 38.

²¹ *Summa Contra Gentiles* IV a.41. Trans. The English Dominican Fathers (Burnes, Oates & Washbourne) 1924.

According to Vorgrimler, it was Carl Feckes (d.1958) the first theologian coined the term *Ursakrament* or “primordial Sacrament” to explain the primacy of Jesus.²²

As Incarnate word of God’s dialogue to humankind, Jesus is the human image of Father in a unique manner. John’s gospel says, “whoever believes in him and accepts him obtain salvation” (14:9). God’s work of salvation was quite evident in Jesus earthly work. Edward J Kilmartin terms the salvific activity of Jesus as “theandric activity,”²³ which is the sacrament of the offer of the Spirit by the Father. He says, to the extent that it is received in faith, the Holy Spirit is vouchsafed by God, and it is through the free response of the recipient that this sacramental event takes place. In other words, when the offer of God’s self-communication is accepted freely, the activity of Jesus becomes the sacramental bestowal of the Spirit by the Father.²⁴

On the notion of Christ as the Primordial sacrament, Edward Schillebeeckx’s comments are noteworthy. Christ makes his presence among us in a tangible form by extending the bodily reality which is in heaven. And it is, precisely, the earthly extension of the body of the Lord that makes the sacrament. It is the resurrection that makes Christ “as man” to influence us by grace. It is as man Jesus is the mediator of grace and it is through His bodiliness our redemption rests.²⁵

Kilmartin resonates with Schillebeeckx as regards the humanity of Jesus. Jesus’ public life is a sacramental activity. It cannot be compared to any of the ordinary human activities in the history of the world. In the Old Testament, one may find prophets as instruments in the communication of the divine Spirit. As regards Jesus’ activities, it was never the same, instead the self-communication manifested in the incarnate word transcends qualitatively towards the rest. Jesus’

²² Vorgrimler, *Sacramental Theology*, 32.

²³ Kilmartin, *Christian Liturgy*, 215.

²⁴ Kilmartin, *Christian Liturgy*, 215.

²⁵ Schillebeeckx, *Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God*, 40-42.

ability to draw others to the Father stems from the mystery aspect of his humanity and divinity in the hypostatic union. In this sense, we can speak of Jesus as primordial sacrament of God's self-communication. Kilmartin, however, argues that the notion of Jesus as primordial sacrament has also a pneumatological dimension. Jesus' human expression of His love for the Father and His people resulted in the incarnation of the Holy Spirit, who is Jesus' transcendental love for the Father. Moreover, after the resurrection, Jesus becomes the full realization of divinity in humanity and the Holy Spirit becomes fully incarnated in his human love. Thus, the risen Lord becomes the fully primordial sacrament.²⁶

Karl Rahner provides a different perspective on this. He understands Jesus as the "sacramental primordial word of God" in the history of the one humanity.²⁷ Christ's whole life was full of grace as he continually transcended human nature in his words and in his actions. He became the perfect incarnation of God's grace. Also, in the person and the life of Jesus, the God-given self-transcendence reached its ultimate goal, the complete union with God. It is Christ who made it possible for others to stretch beyond their natural abilities and limitations in their lives. Due to this factor Christ remains a sacrament, a sure sign of what is humanly possible with the grace of God. He is, in one sense the source and in another sense, the sign of continual human self-transcendence.²⁸

Keenan Osborne has a slightly different approach than the foregoing contemporary theologians. From a Christological perspective, Osborne emphasizes that Jesus is the very reason for sacramentality. He argues that as the sacrament involves a relationship between "sign" and

²⁶ Kilmartin, *Christian Liturgy*, 213-214.

²⁷ Rahner, *The Church and the Sacraments*, 99.

²⁸ Rahner, "Current Problems in Christology," in *Theological Investigations*, Vol.1, trans. Cornelius Ernst, O.P. (Baltimore: helicon, 1961), 189-200.

“reality,” the divine nature should not be a part of this primordial sacramentality of Jesus. The sign in a sacrament has a different value to the reality and it is seen as secondary, dependent on relativized. It is the reality that plays a superior part in this relationship. Considering the sign/reality relationship within the Holy Trinity, God the Father is the reality and God the Son would be the sign. This would mean only the Father is God and Jesus would be less than God. This would risk us getting into the condemned heresies of *Arianism* and *Subordinationism*. In this sense, the divine nature must not be a part of this primordial sacramentality of Jesus. For Osborne, it is Christ’s human nature alone is the original sacrament. To justify his point, he asserts that the sign aspect of sacrament needs to be something perceptible, and this clearly is Jesus’ human nature. On the other hand, this perceptible aspect is not found in Jesus’ divinity or in His risen humanity, but only in His earthly humanity.²⁹

For Colman O’Neill, Christ’s humanity is a symbol and source of saving grace because it is the humanity of the world of God who exists in it and act in it in order to redeem us. He denotes the sacramentality of Christ to be archetypal. In other words, Christ as archetypal sacrament.³⁰ He implies that the pattern of Christ’s earthly existence is to be reproduced in all those who are drawn to him by the heavenly Father. The sacraments are signs of grace because they recreate in liturgical actions the saving actions of Christ in his humanity. They are causes of grace because Christ acts through them. The seven rites of the liturgy are sacraments because they are related to the foundational sacrament and sharing its symbolism and its efficacy. If we bear in mind their

²⁹ Kenan Osborne, *Sacramental Theology: A General Introduction* (New York: Paulist Press, 1988), 35-36.

³⁰ Colman O’Neill, *Sacramental Realism: A General Theory of the Sacraments* in *Theology and Life Series 2* (Dublin: Dominican Publications, 1983), 52-57.

relative status, we may say that they are sacraments only because they transpose the humanity of Christ into terms of Church ceremonial.³¹

It is quite apposite to go back to St Thomas to have a clearer conception on this idea. On the human nature of Christ, he says: Christ is the *res sacra sanctificans homines* of which sacraments are the signs.³² The “man” Christ is seen as a concrete, historical embodiment of the fullness of grace³³ and the sacraments as instrumental causes of grace explaining how the humanity of Christ could serve his divinity as a real cause of grace.³⁴ For Saint Thomas, the instrumentality of sacraments is a prolongation of the instrumentality of Christ’s humanity. His humanity joined to his divinity in hypostatic union, is an attached (*coniunctum*) instrument of the divine; his sacraments are detached (*separatum*) instruments by which the divine causality of grace, active in his humanity, reaches humans in place and time. Liam G Walsh comments on St Thomas’ argument of connecting the instrumentality of Christ’s humanity and the instrumentality of the sacraments supposes a real connection between the human action of Christ and the human making of sacraments.³⁵

Since Second Vatican Council, the sacramental theology has significantly developed, and it is still developing, making it hard to find the preciseness of the contemporary theological views on this notion of the Christological dimension of the sacraments. In this regard it would be safe to assume the teachings adopted from the Church Fathers and the various councils, which we deal at a later part of this work, would function at a more practical level for the moment.

³¹ O’Neill, *Meeting Christ in the Sacraments* (Cork: The Mercier Press, 1964), 97-100.

³² *ST*, I-II. 106.

³³ *ST*, III. 7.8

³⁴ *ST*, III.8.1.1

³⁵ Liam G Walsh, “Summa Contra Gentiles” in *The Theology of Thomas Aquinas*, Ed. Rik Van Nieuwenhoye and Joseph P Wawrykow (Notre Dame: University Press, 2005), 343-347.

4. Church as Sacrament

It was the Jesuit theologian, Otto Semmelroth, in 1959, who first described the Church as a sacramental sign³⁶ through which the ritual sacraments rest their bases. For him, the Church is essentially a sign of God's salvific plan in and through the mystery of incarnation. And it is through the Church as Sacrament the seven sacraments become meaningful.³⁷

As we have discussed earlier, Jesus, as man is the sign of redemption. But this sign remains nontangible or invisible up to the second coming. Hence, He has given it a prolongation in a visible form through the Church. On this idea, Cyril Vollert says, “As Christ is a sacrament of God, the Church is a sacrament of Christ. As the actions of the earthly Christ were the actions of God performed in a human way, so the actions of the Church are the actions of the new invisible Christ permanently carried on in visible form. Thus, the Church is a perfect living sacrament of Christ whose redemptive incarnation it announces and communicates.”³⁸

On this aspect, the Second Vatican Council, in the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church teaches that the role of the Church is that of a sign and instrument, that is, communicating with God and of the unity of the entire human race for the benefit of the faithful and the entire world. This is the nature and universal mission of the Church.³⁹ On the Pilgrim Church, the document teaches that the Church is a universal sacrament of salvation. “Christ lifted up from the earth, has drawn

³⁶ Kenan Osborne, *Sacramental Theology: Fifty Years After Vatican II* (Cincinnati: Lectio Publishing, 2014), 4.

³⁷ Otto Semmelroth, *Church and Sacrament*, Trans. Emily Schossberger (Notre Dame: Fides Publishers, 1965), 13-39.

³⁸ Cyril Vollert, “The Church and the Sacraments” in *Readings in Sacramental Theology*, ed. C. Stephen Sullivan (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1964), 92.

³⁹ *Lumen Gentium*, 1.

all men to himself. Rising from the dead he sent his life-giving Spirit upon his disciples and through him set up his Body which is the Church as the universal sacrament of salvation.”⁴⁰

Vorgrimler, contends that it is too abstract to explicate the idea of Church as Universal saving Sacrament. The existence of the Church is as concrete as the sacraments perform their functions as signs and instruments. He says: “The realization occurs in *martyria*, *leitourgia*, and *diakonia*, since in all three forms of the Church’s service in the effective saving will of God must be made apparent. The outstanding form in which the Church's liturgy is actualized is the praxis of the individual sacraments in concrete liturgical assemblies no matter how small it is.”⁴¹

Vorgrimler also states that as a community of people who believe in Jesus Christ, the Church has an external, visible dimension that signifies something beyond its tangible nature. Whereas the inner dimension of the Church is constituted by the fact that Jesus Christ makes it as a sign and instrument of his salvific act for the humankind. And hence, the external dimension of the Church is a structured sign manifested historically and communally pointing towards the one who is present, a real agent of the whole. The external reality, the community of believers cannot do anything on its own without the help of the Holy Spirit given to them. Consequently, the external reality always risks the danger of damaging the internal, divine reality due to its corruptible nature. Therefore, the Church is called sacrament in view of this sacramental structure. Vorgrimler reminds that the concept of sacrament was applied to the Church in a broader sense at the time when a technical or narrower concept of sacraments did not even exist.⁴²

⁴⁰ *Lumen Gentium*, 48.

⁴¹ Vorgrimler, *Sacramental Theology*, 40.

⁴² Vorgrimler, *Sacramental Theology*, 34.

Edward Schillebeeckx, on the other hand, situates the sacraments both Christologically and Ecclesiology. He interpreted the individual sacraments as a classical manifestation of Christ's divine love for humanity as the "gift of grace" and human love for God as the "cult."⁴³ As for Karl Rahner, the individual sacraments are the self-realizations of the Church at its highest level of existence. He describes the individual sacraments as the essential, fundamental realizations of the Church itself.⁴⁴

Vollert, sees the Church, from a wider perspective, as the larger sacramental society in which the seven sacraments are situated. He also addresses the Church as a "great sacrament" as its prime duty is to protect Christ in the world. She is the origin of the sacraments in the usual sense of the word, and therefore the Church acquires its sacramental structure from Christ himself. It simply means that whenever the salvific offer is imparted to any humankind, they enter into some relationship with the Church. Whether it be directly or indirectly. Even though such relationships vary in its grade and intensity, it cannot be totally lacking. In other words, whoever finds salvation, finds it in the Church. This means, even if the person is not associated with the Church in any form or manner, he or she is the beneficiary in an implicit manner which reflect a true relationship with the Church and its sacraments. It doesn't mean that every reception of salvation from the Church is invariably a reception of a sacrament in the technical sense. But, where the Church in its official, social capacity and activity confers saving grace, there we have the sacraments in the proper sense. In essence, without the Church, no sacrament act is possible.⁴⁵

In O'Neill's view, with her four marks that is found in the creed - of unity, holiness universality and Apostolic succession, the Church is a sign, elevated among the nations, of Christian

⁴³ Schillebeeckx, *Christ the Sacrament*, 74.

⁴⁴ Rahner, *Church and the Sacrament*, 21.

⁴⁵ Vollert, "The Church and the Sacraments," 92-94.

salvation. She is not just a sign, but an efficacious sign of salvation and hence more than a symbol. She has an active role in the realization of the salvation of the world while subordinating to Christ and her sacramentalism reaches its intensity in the seven principal rites which achieve what they signify. Due to the saving action of Christ himself in and through these major signs the Church proclaims her faith in these sacraments. O'Neill also adds that whoever or whatever belongs to the visible Church shares also in her sacramental presentation of Christ to the world. The visible Church formed by the body of faithful, is the manifestation in the world of the salvation procured by Christ.⁴⁶

And hence, as an efficacious sign of salvation, she is also a mystery. Henry de Lubac says, "The Church is a mystery; that is to say that she is also a sacrament. She is 'the total locus of the Christian sacraments,' and she is herself the great sacrament that contains and vitalizes all the others. In this world she is the sacrament of Christ, as Christ himself, in his humanity, is for us the sacrament of God."⁴⁷ Therefore, one must have faith in order to grasp the notion of Church, because it is fundamentally something we believe in. We profess it in our Sunday liturgy and hence it could rightly be called a mystery.⁴⁸ Several documents of the Second Vatican Council teaches that Church is a mystery. From these documents it is copiously clear that the official Church teaching centers a theology of the Church on mystery.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ O'Neill, *Meeting Christ in the Sacraments*, 98-99.

⁴⁷ Henry de Lubac, *The Splendor of the Church*. Trans. Michael Mason, Re print (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986), 63.

⁴⁸ Osborne, *Sacramental Theology*, 86-87.

⁴⁹ See Osborne, *Sacramental Theology*, 87. Osborne gives plentiful citations on the Council documents; the first draft which the bishops studied on the Church during the Council had a section entitled: *The Nature of the Church Militant*. Later in 1963 on the 1st of October the final draft on the constitution on the Church titled *The Mystery of the Church* was accepted. The notion of the Church as a mystery is mentioned in the same document in numbers 5, 39, 44, and 63; The other Council documents include, the Decree on Ecumenism, *Unitatis Redintegratio*: 2 and 20; The decree on The Training of Priests, *Optatam Totius*: 9 and 16; The Decree on the Missions, *Ad Gentes Divinitus*: 16; The Constitution on The Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*, 2 and 40; The Declaration on the

Of all the contemporary sacramental theologies, the dogmatic constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium* plays a pivotal role in the understanding of the Church as Sacrament. While interpreting the document *Lumen Gentium*, Osborne explains that the light of the world that is mentioned in the document is not the Church instead it is Jesus.⁵⁰ It has set forth at the very outset of the document that Christ is the light of humanity. There is a sense of community or social aspect that is found in the Church. Appropriately men and women are not mere individuals in a privatized sense, but individuals of a community of believers. It is, therefore, the Church who brings this light of Christ to the social or communal world. That is to say, the message of God that is being manifested in Christ is not something private, instead a public revelation. And hence, Church is not a group of private individuals, instead a community of believers in Christ.

One cannot see the Church as a mystery unless he sees Jesus as the light of the world. If anyone misinterprets the Church as the light of the world, they have already set the wrong foot. The Church is a sign or symbol of the reality Jesus.

In this sense, the individual Christian and the clergy or any member of the Church are sacraments of Jesus as long as they reflect the Lord. This reflection of Jesus is the key to the sacramentality of the Church. And hence it is vital that we understand the very foundation of the sacrament in order to appreciate its nature.

Church's Relationship to Non-Christian Religions, *Nostra Aetate*, 4; Also in an implicit manner found in the Constitution on the Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 25 and 7.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 87.

Chapter THREE

The Origin of Sacraments

The origin of the Church and the origin of the sacraments are inextricably connected, and the former is the basic premise for understanding the latter. The magisterium of the Church teaches that Christ inaugurated his Church by preaching the good news.¹ Nevertheless, the Church did not come to a clear comprehension of the sacraments and their nature immediately after it came into existence.²

The history of the doctrine of the sacraments gives us ample examples of the long process of development involved in the current doctrines in the Church. A more developed dogmas of the sacraments in relation to their nature and efficacy came into existence only after many centuries on the teachings of the Fathers of the Church and various theologians in the history of the Church.³ Therefore, the Tradition of the Church in shaping a community of believers is quite pivotal in this aspect. And in this regard, the origin of the sacraments is a fundamental question for distinguishing it from any other human rite. To answer such a radical question, one needs to analyze the constitution and nature of a sacrament.⁴

¹ *Lumen Gentium*, 5

² German Martinez, *Signs of Freedom: Theology of the Christian Sacraments* (New York: Paulist Press, 2003), 26.

³ *Dei Verbum*, 8 The Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, *Dei Verbum*, promulgated on November 18, 1965, provides a precise exposition of the transmission of the Tradition handed down from the apostles to the Church Fathers, which has formed the fundamental cornerstone of our faith. “What was handed on by the Apostles comprises everything that serves to make the people of God live their lives in holiness and increase their faith. In this way the Church, in her doctrine, life and worship, perpetuates and transmits to every generation all that she herself is all that she believes..... The sayings of the Holy Fathers are a witness to the life giving presence of this Tradition, showing how its riches are poured out in the practice and life of the Church, in her belief and prayer. By means of the same tradition the full canon of the sacred books is known to the Church and the holy scriptures themselves are more thoroughly understood and constantly actualized in the Church.”

⁴ Liam G. Walsh, *Sacraments of Initiation: A Theology of Rite, Word and Life*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: Hillenbrand Books, 2011), 74.

Our goal here is to investigate and analyze the numerous aspects that lead us to the origin of the concept sacrament. We begin by analyzing the biblical origins of the Christian mystery, its significance in sacramental theology, and the historical development of the notion sacrament in ancient Christianity, beginning with the early Church Fathers and continuing through Saint Augustine until it matures in the mediaeval era.

1. *Mysterion* and the Sacraments

The term *mysterion* and the sacraments have an essential cognate character. The New Testament, on the other hand, does not use terminology like mystery or sacrament to describe a symbolic act of worship.⁵ Nonetheless, these words give a key to comprehending a biblically based Christian sacramentality.

The Greek word *mysterion* is predominantly a Pauline concept,⁶ which is key to understanding the Christian concept of sacraments, especially, based on scripture sources. It means secret, secret rite, secret teaching, or mystery. In the Greco Roman world, mysteries applied mostly to their secret teachings, especially of a religious and political in nature, concealed within many strange customs and ceremonies.⁷

Our point here is to establish how the Church Fathers and the medieval theologians denoted the term *mysterion* to Christian worship over the course of the years.⁸ Some theologians like Jose`

⁵ Martinez, *Theology of the Christian Sacraments*, 28. Also see, Jose Granados, *Introduction to Sacramental Theology: Signs of Christ in the Flesh*, translated by Michael J. Miller (Washington DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2021), 65-66.

⁶ For an elaborate study on the biblical roots of *mysterion*, See Gunther Bornkamm, "Mysterion", in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. G. Kittel and G. Friedrich (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), 802-828.

⁷ Μυστήριον in *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd edition, Revised and edited by F.W. Danker (Chicago: The university Press, 2000) 661.

⁸ Herbert Musurillo, "Sacramental Symbolism and the Mysterion of the Early Church." *Worship* 39 (1965): 265-274.

Granados claim that by adapting the mystery religions of Hellenism, the sacraments were explained as mysteries by the Church. In such cults the history of divinity was represented, for instance, god Mithra, crowned by the sun and conqueror of the bull whose blood fertilized the earth with life. A follower of this cult associated with these events to achieve salvation. Also, there was an initiation rite that one had to go through in order to participate, which required an oath of silence to which one had experienced.⁹ This feature may relate to the etymology of *mysterion* that would have derived from the Greek verb “to be silent”.¹⁰

In the early Christian Church mystery was applied to ritualistic actions such as Easter, the mystery of the *pasch*, or the Eucharist.¹¹ Inspired by the sacred scripture, one of the Greek Fathers, Origen, amalgamated the early sacramental traditions. The whole concept of *mysterion* linked to scripture Church and Eucharist. Eusebius of Caesarea who Origen’s biographer referred mystery to denote Eucharist. He says: “First our savior and Lord himself offered sacrifice, and now all the priests of all nations who derive their priesthood from him do likewise, one in accordance with the canons of the Church they enact the mysteries of his body and blood under the symbols of bread and wine.”¹²

Towards the mid-fourth century, the term mystery or *mysteria* was used in conjunction with the sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist within the conception of the mystery of the Church. The faithful perceived the sacramental rituals as the *mysteria* as the dynamic actualization of the economy of salvation in Christ. Referring to this, German Martinez claims that the fundamental

⁹ Granados, *Sacramental Theology*, 67. Also see Bernard Leeming, *Principles of Sacramental Theology*, New edition. (London: Longmans, 1960), 386-387. Leeming, explaining the *Syncretist hypothesis* on the origin of the sacraments, gives a detailed picture about the mystery religions of the Egyptian and the Greco-Roman world.

¹⁰ T. J. Wellman, “Ancient Mysteria and Modern Mystery Cults,” *Religion and Theology* 12, nos.3-4 (2005): 308-348.

¹¹ Martinez, *Theology of the Christian Sacraments*, 31.

¹² Eusebius, *Demonstratio Evangelica* V, 3; PG 22:368. See E. Evans, *Tertullian’s Homily on Baptism* (London: SPCK, 1964), 13-17.

aim of the mystery celebrated in the early Church was to make historically present the reality of grace in the consecration of the believer.¹³

Sacrament and *mystery* were used interchangeably in the early Church; However, the word sacrament was widely used to signify the sacred sign that was visible and that brought about a hidden reality. Thus, there existed two words in the Latin theological tradition that were subtly different and yet related nuances, called sacramental mystery. Whereas, in the Greek theological tradition a single term was denoted for *mysterion* to refer both to the seven sacraments and to the mysteries like Trinity and the Incarnation.¹⁴

Speaking about the Latin Fathers Matthias Scheeben explains:

In its original meaning, the term “sacrament” can be synonymous with “mystery.”The Latin Fathers regularly use the word *sacramentum* as equivalent to the Greek *mysterion*. The difference pointed out later, that *sacramentum* connotes something visible, *mysterion* something invisible or hidden, does not originally appear. The Latin Fathers call entirely invisible things, such as the Trinity, *sacramenta*, while the Greeks refer to visible things, for example, the seven sacraments, simply as *mysterion*, because of the mysterious element in them. But in the course of time *sacramentum* came to mean, for the most part, visible things which in some way or other involve a mystery in the narrower sense, and which therefore are mysterious despite their visibility.¹⁵

¹³ Martinez, *Theology of the Christian Sacraments*, 32.

¹⁴ Benoit-Dominique de La Soujeole, “The Economy of Salvation: Entitative Sacramentality and Operative Sacramentality,” *The Thomist* 75 (2011), 538.

¹⁵ Matthias Scheeben, *The Mysteries of Christianity*. Trans. C. Vollert (St Louis: B. Herder, 1961), 558.

Thus, in the course of time, the Church in the Latin Christian tradition settled using the word *sacramentum* in an accurate theological sense signifying the sacred rituals of the Church.¹⁶

1.2 *Mysterion* in the Bible

The Greek idea of *mysterion* is expressed by the word *sod* in Hebrew and *raz* in Aramaic.¹⁷ *sod* is a group of counsellors with whom God decides the path of history.¹⁸ It also means the meeting of the council and the decisions made in it. The Aramaic word *raz* is translated into the Septuagint as *mysterion*. The prophets in the Old Testament were admitted to this sort of meeting so that they could reveal those lofty plans to God's people. This idea occurs again in the wisdom literature signifying the divine secrets of creation especially in the book of Sirach 43:32 linking the concept *mysterion* with the eschatological fulfillment. For instance, Wisdom 2:22.¹⁹ Although we find a certain critique of the mystery cults in these pages, they also narrate about wisdom in ritual terminology as an “initiate” (Wis 8:4). Besides, the term *mysterion*, more importantly, appears in the apocalyptic literature in an emphatic manner. Daniel is being depicted as the one who knows the divine mystery about history and hence interprets the dreams of the King (Dn 2:28; Mk 4:11; Rev 10:7). It is in the book of Daniel the word *raz*, first appears in the Aramaic of Daniel,²⁰ translated as mystery or mysteries. (Dan 2:18-19; 27-30 and 47). Including Daniel, *raz* also occurs twenty-one times in the Septuagint as *mysterion*. Some of the

¹⁶ Joseph Lienhard, “Sacramentum and Eucharist in St. Augustine,” *The Thomist* 77, no.2 (2013): 173-192. The author demonstrates how Augustine employs *mysterium* to refer to doctrinal matters and *sacramentum* to refer to ritual matters.

¹⁷ “Mystery” in *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and its Developments*. Editors, R.P Martin and P.H. Davids (Illinois: Inter Varsity Press, 1997), 782-783.

¹⁸ Raymond E. Brown, “Pre-Christian Semitic Concept of Mystery,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 20, no.4 (1958), 417-422.

¹⁹ Brown, “Pre-Christian Semitic Concept of Mystery”, 424-425.

²⁰ “Mystery” in *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and its Developments*, 782. The term *raz* is believed to be a Persian loanword; it first appears in the Aramaic version of Daniel.

examples we find in Tob 12:7; Jdt, 2:2; Sir 22:22; 27:16; Wis 6:22; 14:15. All these instances did not the eschatological and cosmic mysteries that are hidden but have been revealed by God to the prophets to the visionaries.²¹

The Rabbis, contingent on the scripture, engaged in teaching the mysteries of Torah as it contained the key to interpreting the book of history gaining its knowledge. Thus, it showed that someone who knows the Torah can interpret the eschatological will of God.²² Based on this context, theologians like Granados presents *mysterion* as an exegetical tool for construing biblical prophecies.²³

As regards the gospels, the *mysterion* appears only in one context, where Jesus explains to his disciples who looked for an explanation of the parables. Mk 4,11; Mt 13,11; Lk8,10. Whereas Pauline literature has *mysterion* in 21 places.²⁴

1.3 Pauline Concept of *Mysterion* and the Christian Sacraments

The term *mysterion* in the New Testament is used in a sense that is different from the one that is in use in today's language. The scripture does not seem to imply *mysterion* to designate the Christian rites. St. Paul employs the word to describe God's plan that is hidden for ages and revealed in the mission of his son Jesus. (Rom 16:25; Eph 3:9; Col 1:26.) For Paul, Christ himself is a mystery of God, revealed in the flesh (Col 2:2; 1Tim 3:16). It is in Jesus' obedience

²¹ Ibid., 782-783.

²² Bornkamm, "Mysterion", 823.

²³ Granados, *Sacramental Theology*, 68.

²⁴ Μυστήριον in *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, 662.

on the cross (1Cor 2:1-2) and in his victorious resurrection from the dead that the heavenly Father reveals His eternal plan for history (1Cor15:5) and brought it to a conclusion.²⁵

In Pauline literature the concept *mysterion* does not involve Jesus alone, segregated from the rest of created universe, but Christ as the one who restates the ages. Paul says: “He has made known to us in all wisdom and insight in the mystery of his will, according to his purpose which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.” (Eph 1:9-10). *Mysterion*, for him, is also a relational term that enable the partakers in salvation history to connect with each other. Thus, the Church belongs to the *mysterion* as well, since she extends to the world the fullness brought by Jesus. (Eph 1: 22- 23). In this manner, the *mysterion* could be conceived in the unity of all people, gentiles, and Jews in one body. (Eph 3:4- 6, 9-10). *Mysterion*, in this context, is entwined with another major concept of the Pauline theology, the Church which is the body of Christ.²⁶ For theologians like Andreas J. Köstenberger, this idea of union in the body, in Paul’s letters, is not only the organic union of the head with the with the members, but also a union that is so personal likening it to the bridegroom with his bride in “one flesh” as described in the book of Genesis 2:24.²⁷

Since *mysterion* is associated with the unity of mankind according to God's salvific plan, it presupposes an invocation of worship among the Israelites in the Old Testament. As an instance, there is a link between *mysterion* and worship in the ritual act of circumcision which the rabbis identified as *mysterion*. Given Paul's background and his scholarship in Jewish scripture one can fairly assume that he intended ritual as a sphere in recognizing God's plan for the world.

²⁵ Granados, *Sacramental Theology*, 65-66.

²⁶ W. Derickson, “The New Testament Church as a Mystery,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 166 (2009): 436-445.

²⁷ Andreas J. Köstenberger, “The Mystery of Christ and the Church: Head and Body, ‘One flesh,’” *Trinity Journal* 12 (1991): 79-94.

Granados contends that Paul, while adopting the term *mysterion*, has also been considering “ritual” in the sense of Christian liturgy.²⁸

As regards the references in the New Testament on *mysterion*, most of them occur in the Pauline literature. The salvation of the gentiles and Paul's Apostolic role as a revealer of this mystery are the largest number of references that can be found in his literature. The hidden wisdom of God is being revealed through the proclamation of the gospel (Rom16:25) and stands against to the wisdom (*gnosis*) cherished by the Corinthians (1Cor 2: 1,2,7). The mystery of faith denoted in 1Timothy is against false teachings in the Christian community. Here, the “mystery of faith” is something which is believed as truth while the “mystery of our religion” (1Tim 3:16) and it is mentioned in this brief confessional or hymn which has liturgical elements. In the epistles of Colossians and Ephesians the early Pauline idea of mystery is represented as something revealed that was formerly hidden (Rom 16:25 and 1Cor 2:7). In Colossians, this revelation is to the Saints (Col 1: 26-27) and in Ephesians, the mystery is directed to the Church (Eph 1:9) and to the apostles and the prophets (Eph 3:5) and the emphasis is on the revelation given to Paul (Eph 3:3).²⁹

2. A Brief History on the Classical Definition of Sacrament

We have seen above, although briefly, how Saint Paul offers a basis for relating the term *mysterion* to the Christian liturgy. It is noteworthy that the Church Fathers follow the Pauline teaching on the notion of mystery. Bornkamm states that the Church Fathers combined *mysterion* with typology and tends to explain a categorical meaning of the history of salvation in Christ and

²⁸ Granados, *Sacramental Theology*, 70.

²⁹ “Mystery” in *Dictionary of the Later New Testament*, 782-783.

His Church.³⁰ And hence, we find a frequent use of the term *mysterion* as a tool for exegesis to expound the Old Testament passages. Jesus Himself is the great *mysterion* in the events depicted in the gospels and it is only in Him contains the ultimate future of history to which everything tends.³¹ For Christians, through the sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist, has access to this fullness of the ages which is manifested in Jesus. Therefore, it is logical to assume that *mysterion* could be seen from the perspective of liturgical rite too.³²

St. Justin, the martyr, is one of the first Church Fathers to develop the typological key - mysteries inhabit the Old Testament in its reference to Jesus.³³ Hence, the term *mysterion* is used as an exegetical tool having a bearing on to the scriptural verses that prophecy future events. Addressing Trypho, a Jew, Justin teaches that Christians know all the “mysteries” as they are able to discover the whole law in the Old Testament in the mystery of Christ.³⁴ Furthermore, Justin, who is well versed in the Pagan mysteries, teaches that the mystery religions are the ones that copy Christian worship as they have not properly understood the Old Testament.³⁵ The term *mysterion* is therefore associated growingly with the liturgical rites especially that of the sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist. Since the Old Testament was puzzled with mysteries that pointed towards Christ, the liturgy and *mysterion* is interconnected and it protracts in history the great mystery of the incarnation, life death and resurrection of Jesus.³⁶

³⁰ Bornkamm, “Mysterion”, 804-820.

³¹ Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, vol.3. Trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 379-382. Also, see Musurillo, “Sacramental Symbolism and the Mysterion of the Early Church.”

³² Granados, *Sacramental Theology*, 77.

³³ Justin, *Dialogus cum Thryphone* 74,3 *Patristische Texte und Studien* 47: 197. Translated by Thomas B. Falls in FC 6. (Washington DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1948)

³⁴ Justin, *Dialogus cum Thryphone*, 44,1-2. PTS 47:142. Christians know “all the mysteries,” in other words, the interpretation of the law that points to the “mystery of Christ”.

³⁵ Justin, *I Apologiae* 54,6. PTS 38:109. Translated by Leslie William Barnard in ACW 56 (Westminster: Newman Press, 1963). Also, *Dialogus* 69,2. PTS 47:189; *I Apologiae* 66,4. PTS 38:128.

³⁶ Granados, *Sacramental Theology*, 78-79.

It was not until the 4th century, after the new religion had gained ground and no longer felt threatened by syncretism, that the language of the mystery religions was fully accepted. This is exemplified by Saint John Chrysostom, who claims that the "ineffable mystery" was fully realized in the lance that pierced Jesus' side and who talks about the "initiated" who are renewed by the water and fed by the flesh and blood.³⁷ The same author places the *mysterion* along the axis that connects the visible and unseen, not by only using human intelligence but rather by utilizing the gift of the Spirit, which enables us to accept the incomprehensible revelation of God.³⁸

When it came to western tradition, the term *mysterion* is rendered as *sacramentum* in the Latin-speaking Church. Given that the word *mysterium* existed in Latin and was employed by the Church Fathers, it is natural to wonder why this step was taken. Aside from the fact that it was typical to discover a Latin equivalent for any abstract phrase, such as *mysterion*, there was a significant cause for the transition. That is, to avoid misunderstanding with Pagan rites. Thus, the plural *mysteria* was not used, and other terminology associated with those cults, like as *initia*, *sacra*, and *arcana*, were avoided; *sacramentum*, for its part, was devoid of connections with the mystery religions.³⁹

In the ancient Roman world, the word *sacramentum* denoted a certain relationship with the sacred. Since *sacramentum* originates from *sacrare*, in the active sense, it related to an activity that consecrates. Furthermore, *sacramentum* denoted the public nature of such an activity, which was legally obligatory; for this reason, the mystery cults found it more difficult to utilize this

³⁷ John Chrysostom, *Homily 85 on John 19,31-37* (PG 59:463b-c); see also *Homily 7 on 1Cor 2,6-7* (PG 61:55-56; A detailed understanding on the mystery in Chrysostom is given in William A. Van Roo, *The Christian Sacrament*. (Rome: Editrice Pontificia Universita Gregoriana, 1992), 13-17.

³⁸ Granados, *Sacramental Theology*, 79.

³⁹ Lienhard, "Sacramentum and Eucharist in St. Augustine," 173-192.

name. According to Christine Mohrmann, the *sacramentum* can be described as a public *religious obligation* based on the characteristics of sacred power and juridical weight.⁴⁰

Regarding the use of the word *sacramentum*, its public and legal characteristics set it apart from mystic rites and allowed for Christian usage. In addition, connections may be drawn between the Pauline *mysterion*, which stood for union with Christ (Col 1:27), and the power of the sacred union expressed in the Latin *sacramentum*.⁴¹

Tertullian (155-220) had a significant role in establishing this analogy between *mysterion* and *sacramentum*, but he just clarified what the Christian communities and the early copies of the Bible already held to be true.⁴² He is credited with being the first theologian to use the term *sacramentum*, the Latin counterpart of the Greek *mysterion*, to refer to the Christian rites of Baptism and the Eucharist. He refers to Baptism as “the sacrament of water, the water that washed away sins accumulated during our previous blindness, the water that set us free into eternal life.”⁴³ The Eucharist is referred to as the “sacrament of the Eucharist” as well as the “sacrament of the bread and the cup.”⁴⁴

Tertullian does not define the term sacrament, but he refers to it as a sacred sign that is effective in carrying out its intended meaning: “For us also the anointing flows over the body, but it profits us spiritually: just as the Baptismal rite is a physical action since we are immersed into water, so

⁴⁰ Christine Mohrmann, “Sacramentum dans les plus anciens textes chrétiens,” *Harvard Theological Review* 47, no.3 (1954): 141-152. The translation is from Granados, *Sacramental Theology*, 79-80.

⁴¹ Granados, *Sacramental Theology*, 81.

⁴² Granados, 81.

⁴³ Tertullian, *De Baptismo 1*, In *Worship in the Early Church: An Anthology of Historical Sources*, Vol., ed. Lawrence J. Johnson (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2009), 119.

⁴⁴ Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem* 5.8.3, Vol.2 trans. Ernest Evans (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 557. Also see Tertullian, *De Baptismo 1*, in *Worship in the Early Church*, 123; Tertullian, *De resurrectione carnis* 8.3 (CCL 2.931), trans. Ernest Evans, *Tertullian's Treatise on the Resurrection* (London: SPCK, 1960), 25.

its effect is spiritual because it frees us from our sins. Then hands were laid upon us while a blessing invoked and invited the Holy Spirit to come.”⁴⁵

In the middle of the third century, St. Cyprian, who follows Tertullian in North Africa, uses the phrase in a very similar fashion. He speaks of the “sacrament of Baptism”,⁴⁶ which he also refers to as the “sacrament of redemption.”⁴⁷ Explaining the Eucharist, he says: “From the sacrament of the cross you receive both food and drink.”⁴⁸ It is often impossible to distinguish if Cyprian is talking to what we presently call the sacrament or the mystery it represents and makes apparent, such as when he speaks of the “*sacramentum* of the Lord's passion and our salvation” in a liturgical setting”.⁴⁹

Saint Augustine, among the Church Fathers, has had a significant impact on the sacramental theology of the modern West. He defines sacrament as “a sacred sign”. This becomes apparent when he explains sacrifice as “a sacrament or sacred sign of an invisible sacrifice.”⁵⁰ Here, “sacred sign” is synonymous with “sacrament.” In a letter to Marcellinus, he states that signs “are considered sacraments when applied to divine things.”⁵¹ In his letter to Januarius, he provides

⁴⁵ Tertullian, *De Baptismo* 7-8.

⁴⁶ Cyprian of Carthage, Letter 73.22.2 to Iubaianus, in *The Letters of St. Cyprian of Carthage, Letters 67-82*, trans. G. W. Clarke ACW.47 (New York: Newman Press, 1989), 67.

⁴⁷ Cyprian, Letter 69.12.2 to Magnus, in *The Letters of St. Cyprian of Carthage, Letters 67-82*. P.41. Cyprian emphasises the significance of the symbolic nature of Baptism. He teaches: For washing away the stains of our sins in the sacrament of redemption is entirely distinct from washing our body in an ordinary bath. In the latter scenario, we require washing soda cakes to remove the dirt from our skin and body, but the heart of the believer is washed, and the soul of man is cleansed by an entirely other means: the virtues of faith. In the case of individuals who receive the sacrament of salvation as a matter of urgency, due to God's indulgent mercy, His ritual, while not the most complete, yet bestow his entire blessings upon those who believe.

⁴⁸ Cyprian, *Jealousy and Envy* 17, in *Treatises*, Trans. Roy Deferrari (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1958), 307.

⁴⁹ Feingold, *Touched by Christ*, 43-44.

⁵⁰ Augustine, *City of God* 10.5, in *The City of God, Books VIII-XVI*, trans. G.G. Walsh and G. Monahan, FC 14 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1952), 123.

⁵¹ Augustine, Letter 138 to Marcellinus (AD 142), in *Letters: Vol III (131-164)*, trans. Wilfrid Parsons, FC 20 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1953), 40.

another definition: “There is a sacrament in any celebration when the memory of the event is made in such a way that it is recognized to signify something that must be reverently received.”⁵² This latter definition is more explicit since it specifies that a sacrament is a sacred sign of a heavenly gift to humankind. Moreover, the visible sign relates to the heavenly gift in the sense that it depicts what is invisibly received. For “if the sacraments bore no likeness to the things they signify, they would not be sacraments.”⁵³

Saint Augustine adds a further distinction between the external sacrament and the grace concealed within it, which requires the recipient to have the proper dispositions. After quoting 1Corinthians 10:5 “Nevertheless with most of them God was not pleased,” he says: “the sacramental mysteries were available to all alike, but grace, which is *the power hidden in the sacraments*, was not common to all the people.”⁵⁴ However, like most other Fathers and theologians up until the mediaeval age, Saint Augustine's comprehensive concept of sacrament also encompasses what we now refer to as sacramentals.⁵⁵

To conclude, the translation of *mysterion* as *sacramentum* left *mysterium*, which is a straight translation of the Greek term *mysterion*, unaffected. Others, such as Lactantius, began using *mysterium* as a synonym for *sacramentum* to refer to the entirety of the redemption accomplished by Christ and the rituals that convey it.⁵⁶ Gradually, the meanings of *sacramentum* and *mysterion* began to diverge in the Latin Church: *sacramentum* was increasingly kept for rituals in

⁵² Augustine, Letter 55 to Januarius (ca. AD 400), in *Letters: Vol I (1-82)*, trans. Wilfrid Parsons, FC 12 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1951), 261.

⁵³ Augustine, Sermon 272 (AD 405-411) trans. in Lawrence Johnson, *Worship in the Early Church: An Anthology of Historical Sources*. Vol. 3 (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2009), 76-77.

⁵⁴ Augustine, On the Psalms 77.2, in *Expositions of the Psalms 73-98*, trans. Maria Boulding, WSA III/18 (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2002), 91-92.

⁵⁵ Feingold, *Touched by Christ*, 46.

⁵⁶ A concise exposition on this found in Granados, *Sacramental Theology*, 81 where he exposes the argument of Vincenzo Loi, “Il termine *mysterium* nella letteratura Latina cristiana prenicena”, *Vigilae Christianae* 19(1965): 210-232.

accordance with Roman usage, while *mysterion* was employed to refer to the ultimate salvific truth that the rites signify.⁵⁷ This precise distinction, which would not be available in Greek theology, is useful for analysing the structure of the sacrament, provided that the distinct parts of the visible and invisible are integrated correctly. Thus, Before the Middle Ages, *mysterion* and *sacramentum* remained sufficiently broad to relate to the entire narrative of salvation and, more specifically, to typological interpretation.⁵⁸

2.1 Patristic Definition of the Sacrament till the Medieval Period

Saint Isidore of Seville (560–636) represents a further development in the concept of the term sacrament. He emphasizes the *concealed* sanctifying power that operates through physical signals, as opposed to the concept of sacred sign. He asserts that Baptism, Confirmation, and the Body and Blood are sacraments “because behind the veil of corporeal things, a divine power discreetly accomplishes the salvation inherent in these sacraments.”⁵⁹ He also emphasizes the function of the Holy Spirit in the sacraments, who “mystically instils life”⁶⁰ In this sense, more explicitly than in Saint Augustine's formulation, the sacrament's ability to bring forth grace and its underlying mystery are confirmed.⁶¹

In the 9th century Carolingian renaissance, Saint Paschasius Radbertus (785-865) defined sacrament as “what is offered to us in a divine celebration as a type of assurance of salvation, in which what is physically performed does something completely different within that is to be

⁵⁷ Joseph, Lienhard, “*Sacramentum* and the Eucharist in St. Augustine,” *The Thomist* 77 (2013):173-192.

⁵⁸ Granados, *Sacramental Theology*, 81.

⁵⁹ Isidore of Seville, *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, 6.19.40, (PL 82:255). Trans. Stephen A. Barney (Cambridge: University Press, 2006).

⁶⁰ Isidore, *Etymologies*, 6.19.42.

⁶¹ Feingold, *Touched by Christ*, 47.

regarded as holy.”⁶² By asserting that the apparent sign "works" an inward holiness, this notion emphasises the supernatural causation aspect. However, no explicit mention is made to the sacrament's sign value, which creates the spiritual results that it visibly represents.⁶³

Only in the 12th century, after the Berengarian heresy,⁶⁴ did theologians draw out a more complete and clear explanation of the sacraments of the New Testament as both a sign of grace and a cause of the grace represented. On the basis of this, they reached an agreement that exactly seven sacraments meet the criteria.⁶⁵

Hugh of St. Victor's (1096–1141) definition in his book *On the Sacraments of the Christian Faith* was a significant major boost towards a proper definition. Hugh starts by using Saint Augustine's description of a sacrament as a sign of a sacred object, but he concludes that this definition is too generic to be a valid one since statues, images, and texts may all be used as signs of sacred things but are not sacraments.⁶⁶

He then provides a definition that pertains solely to sacraments in their true sense: “A sacrament is a tangible element presented to the senses from without, indicating by similitude and signifying by institution, and containing by sanctification some invisible and spiritual grace.”⁶⁷

This definition adds three conditions to the broad Augustinian conception of sacred sign. First, a sacrament must exhibit some natural likeness to the gift it conveys; second, it must be instituted

⁶² Paschasius Radbertus, *De Corpore et Sanguine Domini* 3.1(ca. AD 833), in CCCM 16, pp 23-24. “The sacraments of Christ in the Church are baptism, chrism, and the body and blood of the Lord, which are called sacraments because under their visible appearance that is seen, the body is secretly consecrated by divine power.” Translation from Feingold, *Touched by Christ*, 47.

⁶³ Feingold, *Touched by Christ*, 47.

⁶⁴ A detailed description of the heresy is being dealt in the 4th chapter.

⁶⁵ Feingold, *Touched by Christ*, 47-48.

⁶⁶ Hugh of St. Victor, *On the Sacraments of Christian Faith*. Prologue 2, Trans. Roy J. Deferrari (Cambridge: Medieval Academy of America, 1951) 3.

⁶⁷ Hugh of St. Victor, *On the Sacraments of Christian Faith*. 1.9.2. 155.

by God, through which it receives a more exact meaning willed by Him and signified by the words; and third, it must contain and convey the grace that it symbolizes.⁶⁸

A significant flaw of his definition is that it takes just a portion of the sacrament as its whole and excludes from the number of sacraments, rites that of Ordination and Marriage, are not composed of corporal materials.⁶⁹ It was, then, essential to return to the concept of sign and identify, in the efficacy of sacramental sign, the unique and particular characteristic of the definition of a sacrament.⁷⁰

The unknown author of *Summa Sententiarum* (ca.1140)⁷¹ clarifies the notion of sacrament shortly after Hugh. Hugh's theological writings serve as a source of inspiration for this author. He uses Hugh's notion on the effectiveness of the sacraments of the old law, which could genuinely purify mankind, his thoughts on the reasons why God instituted the sacraments, and numerous other concepts. This author surpasses Hugh in most aspects of the theology, and he contributed much to clarifying the meaning of a sacrament more precise.⁷² He defines sacrament as an efficacious sign of the invisible grace that it bestows., He says: "A sacrament is a visible form of the invisible grace that is conferred by the sacrament. It is not only the sign of a sacred thing, but also efficacious."⁷³

⁶⁸ *On the Sacraments of Christian Faith*, 1.11.1-5.

⁶⁹ This flawed definition precluded Hugh from compiling an accurate list of the sacraments; he confused them with sacramentals. His theology is vastly dealt in P.Pourrat, *Theology of the Sacraments: A Study in Positive Theology* (St Louis: B. Herder, 1910) 37-42.

⁷⁰ Pourrat, *Theology of the Sacraments*, 40.

⁷¹ The background, context and dating of this work could be found in D.E. Luscombe, *The School of Peter Abelard: The Influence of Abelard's Thought in the Early Scholastic Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 199-213. Also in Marcia Colish, *Peter Lombard* (New York: E. J. Brill, 1994). 63.

⁷² Pourrat, *Theology of the Sacraments*, 41.

⁷³ *Summa Sententiarum*, PL 176: 117.

Peter Lombard's (d.1160) *Fourth Book* of the *Sentences* begins with a definition of a sacrament that is comparable to the one provided in the *Summa Sententiarum* and was derived using the same methodology. The effectiveness is the characteristic that differentiates the sacrament from all others.⁷⁴ He explains: "It is a manifestation of God's grace and a type of invisible grace in that it carries its image and its cause, therefore, the sacraments were created not only to signify, but also to sanctify."⁷⁵ From this moment on, the term sacrament was solely given to those rituals of the Church that sanctify in and of themselves, that is, the seven sacraments that Peter Lombard listed definitively.⁷⁶

The sacrament as envisioned by Lombard incorporates several novel facts that would eventually become standard. The first and most important one is the incorporation of the concept of cause into the concept of sacrament. A sacrament is a cause of grace, which sets it apart from all other signs. Lombard's use of the idea of cause to describe the effectiveness of the sacraments caused several debates that may still be seen today in the issue of physical or moral causality. It did, however, succeed. Additionally, Lombard's explanation of how the sacramental sign is conceptualized is more exact than that of his forebears. He claims that the sacrament is composed of both the physical element and the formula that goes along with the administering of the sacrament.⁷⁷

Therefore, a sacrament is both a symbol and a cause of grace. Sign is the definition's general phrase, whereas causality is its specific component. Thus, the Augustinian formula gained its required complement in the 12th century. During the 13th and 14th centuries, the Lombardian

⁷⁴ Pourrat, *Theology of the Sacraments*, 43.

⁷⁵ Peter Lombard, *The Sentences. Book 4: On the Doctrine of signs*. 1.4.2, Trans. Giulio Silano. Medieval Sources in Translation 48 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval studies, 2010), 4.

⁷⁶ Pourrat, *Theology of the Sacraments*, 43.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 43-44.

notion of the sacraments underwent a few changes. The theologians of this time largely follow Peter Lombard in defining sacrament by combining the sign and cause aspects.⁷⁸ St. Thomas and his school afterwards adopted it⁷⁹ as we will see in the 5th chapter.

3. The Institution of the Sacraments

The fundamental question of the origin of the sacraments or from a different dimension, the institution of the sacraments by Christ, is of prime importance in sacramental theology. In this world of science and technology, when everything in life has an objectivity, the sacraments, which form an essential part of the believer's spiritual life, must be objective as well. Did Christ really institute the sacrament himself? or did the Church, by its authority, presumed Christ's directives in imparting the graces from Him? is something to be understood properly.

It must be acknowledged that with the Reformation and the subsequent answer from the Council of Trent paved the way for a huge amount of discussions in the Catholic Church regarding the institution of sacraments. Consequently, these discussions shed light on the ambiguity whirled conditioning a specific answer to the query on the foundation of the sacraments.

3.1 Contemporary Approach

The institution of sacraments by Christ is indeed a dogma of faith defined and the Council of Trent asserts: "if anyone says that the sacraments of the new law were not all instituted by Jesus Christ our Lord... let him be anathema."⁸⁰ The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* also emphasizes this important aspect of the sacraments: "adhering to the teaching of the holy

⁷⁸ Pourrat, *Theology of the Sacraments*, 43-44.

⁷⁹ ST III.62.1

⁸⁰ DS, 1601. On the Council of Trent 1547, Decree on the Sacraments. Session 7, Can.1 on the sacraments in general. Also see DS, 3857, Pius XII, *Sacramentum Ordinis* 1,

scriptures, to the Apostolic traditions, and to the consensus..... of the Fathers’, we profess that the sacraments of the new law were....all instituted by Jesus Christ our Lord.”⁸¹

The Church has always had the power to determine or to change the administration of the sacraments, whatever it judges to be more useful to the recipients or to the honour of the sacraments, in keeping with changing circumstances, times or places, always keeping the substance of the sacraments the same.⁸² Michael G Lawler emphasizes the indispensable nature of this dogma in his theology of the sacraments. Christ established the essential core of the sacraments, and the Church has no power to tamper with this core. Lawler poses two crucial questions here which according to him remain unanswered yet and remains open for theological discussion.⁸³ What did Christ establish as the essential core of the sacraments and how exactly did he do that? Lawler summarizes a few theoretical answers to these questions that have been proposed over the years. He presents the argument that Christ determined the sacramental rituals in an implicit manner in two separate actions: First of all, by being the human embodiment of God, that is, the sacrament of God, Christ laid out a pattern for such an embodiment. Secondly, this pattern was recreated in the Church, identifying it as His body, His Sacrament in the world. Just as Jesus is the Sacrament of God, the Church is the Sacrament of Jesus. Thus, the solemn actions of the Church is the action of Jesus and God just because it is the sacrament of Jesus.⁸⁴

Granted that such institution is implicit, it is still a real institution. On this Karl Rahner says: “even if it were only later that reflection was directed to its sacramental character that flows from its connection with the nature of the Church. The institution of a sacrament can (it is not

⁸¹ CCC, 1114.

⁸² DS, 1728. The Council of Trent, Doctrine of Communion under Both Kinds.

⁸³ Lawler, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 48. See also, Feingold, *Touched by Christ*, 107.

⁸⁴ Lawlor, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 48-49.

necessarily implied that it must always) follow simply from the fact that Christ founded the Church with its sacramental nature.”⁸⁵

It is in the explicit institution of the Church that the implicit institution of the sacrament can be found. Such implicit institution of sacramental actions is also the implicit determination of their meaning. That is, the proclamation, realization, and celebration in representation of the presence of the Christ and of God. The Church was ultimately called into existence to embody this presence and action. For Lawlor, the solution to the question of the institution of the sacraments in accordance with the ecclesial dimension, therefore, points towards a third argument. To substantiate this argument, Lawler claims that the sacrament of Confirmation did not emerge until the 4th century until it was named Confirmation in the Council of Riez in France in 439 AD. “The fourth century split it off from that root and made it a separate ritual, not to be faithful to a command of Jesus to “confirm and do it this way” (there is no such command) but for a much more mundane reason, namely, that it wished to reserve that anointing to the local bishop and he could not be simultaneously at all the Easter rituals of initiation in his diocese.”⁸⁶

According to Christopher Kiesling, the purpose of the gospels is not to report every single word and actions of Jesus in a sequential manner or in precisely the form and circumstances in which they were spoken and done as we find in the modern biographies.⁸⁷ Following on this argument of Kiesling, Lawler puts forward a plausible assertion. The gospels, although carry historical facts, they were the interpretation of these facts by the early Christian community. An understanding of the New Testament in such ways would make it onerous for anyone to claim

⁸⁵ Rahner, *Church and Sacrament*, 41.

⁸⁶ Lawler, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 48-49. Lawler claims here that his third argument justifies the solution to the question of the institution of the sacraments by Jesus. Also, see Leeming, *Principles of Sacramental Theology*, 393-431.

⁸⁷ Christopher Kiesling, *Confirmation and Full Life in the holy* (Cincinnati: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1973), 46.

that it accounts the explicit commands of Jesus to celebrate sacraments not excluding the two important sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist.

3.2 A Brief Glance Through the New Testament

The New Testament contains examples of similar directives attributed to Jesus on many occasions. For instance, Mt 28,19; Mk 16,15-16; Lk 22,19; I Cor 11,24-25. On the institution of Baptism, Jesus explained the necessity of Baptism to Nicodemus in John 3:1-6; 3:22-4:3 and before His Ascension, as narrated in Matthew 28:19 “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” Regarding the institution of the Eucharist, the Bible provides the clearest and most definitive explanation. Following the miraculous multiplication of the loaves and fish in John's gospel chapter 6, Jesus elucidates the Eucharist in the synagogue of Capernaum. Subsequently, He formally inaugurated the sacrament during the Last Supper as manifested in the four parallel accounts of the institution, Matthew 26:20-29; Mark 14:17-25; Luke 22: 14-20; I Cor 11: 23-25. The Eucharist and Holy Orders are inextricably linked, as the act of presenting a sacrifice necessitates the presence of a priest. The Church therefore attributes the institution of the priesthood to Jesus' words during the Last Supper: "Do this in my remembrance." (Luke 22:19).⁸⁸ The Council of Trent also attests to this conviction.⁸⁹ On the institution of Penance, we see in the gospel of John 20:21-23, Jesus tells his disciples “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me even so I send you..... Receive the Holy Spirit. if you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven if you retain the sins of any they are retained.”

⁸⁸ Feingold, *Touched by Christ*, 99-100

⁸⁹ DS, 1764. The Council of Trent, Doctrine and Canons on the Sacrament of Orders (Session 23, July 15, 1563).

Teaching on marriage and its indissolubility (Matthew 19:3-9), Jesus restores the Matrimony to its original holiness and sanctified it by working his first miracle at the wedding of Cana in John 2. Confirmation was initially administered in an unprecedented manner on Pentecost, in accordance with the assurance that Jesus would grant the apostles the Holy Spirit during his discourse following the Last Supper, as recorded in Acts 1:4-18. Also, we see in John chapters 14 to 16 Jesus institutes this sacrament when He promised to send the Holy Spirit after his Ascension. We also see Confirmation spoken of as the giving of the Spirit through the laying on of hands administered by the apostles Peter and John in Acts 8:14-17 and by Saint Paul in Acts 19:6. It appears that Christ instituted the Anointing the Sick when He sent the Twelve. In Mark 6:13 we read that “they cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many that were sick and healed them.” Mark 6:13's connotation is elaborated upon in the *Catechism of the Council of Trent*.⁹⁰ It appears that Jesus must have prescribed this anointing of the sick, as it is impossible for the apostles to have developed it. Furthermore, considering that it used oil to treat bodies, its function might not have been only natural but supernatural in nature, attempting to cure souls.⁹¹

3.3 An Implicit Institution?

Lawler, nevertheless, poses the argument that it is difficult to claim such command in the New Testament deriving from Jesus or the early Christian community. He says: “Even *if* all the words put in Jesus’ mouth by the gospel writers are not verbatim reports of his speech, they do represent the early Church’s understanding of his meaning and of the meaning of his words and actions, and therefore represent the revelation of God in Christ as received by the Church.”⁹²

⁹⁰ DS, 1695. The Council of Trent, Doctrine on the Sacrament of Extreme Unction (Session 14, Nov 25, 1551).

⁹¹ Feingold, *Touched by Christ*, 100-105.

⁹² Lawler, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 50.

Christ's institution of the sacraments Baptism and Eucharist is also an implicit institution, for it contains in the establishment of a Church. Christ did not layout a ritual for these sacraments.⁹³ Instead, His own Baptism in the river Jordan gave an example of a model and understanding of this sacrament.⁹⁴ Christ, also provided a ritual way of celebrating the Eucharist by eating with disciples at the Last Supper and after his resurrection.

As regards the sacrament of Confirmation, it is quite different from that of Baptism and Eucharist and validates our argument of implicit institution. The emergence of this sacrament, as we know, to date, occurred for a very accidental, historical, and mundane reason. The rituals of the sacrament were not randomly chosen. Instead, it followed from traditional ritual practices of the Jewish system symbolizing the gift of God expressed in the laying on of hands which Jesus frequently used in his public ministry.⁹⁵ Lawler argues that if Confirmation cannot be proven to have come into existence through an explicit command of Jesus and yet be shown to have been instituted by Christ implicitly, this solution becomes a general solution to the problem of the institution of sacraments. He says: "there is nothing to exclude the same possibility for anointing of the sick, Orders and Marriage, all cases where an explicit, detailed institution cannot be demonstrated. One case confirms the possibility for all cases."⁹⁶

Sacramental theology along the line of Rahnerian thought would argue that the institution of the sacraments by Christ stems from the Church herself as she is the primordial sacrament of Christ. She is the outward visible sign of the continued presence of Christ here on earth and for that very reason the Church would express her definitive saving action in the rites called sacraments.

⁹³ Ibid., 50.

⁹⁴ Kiesling, *Confirmation*, 47.

⁹⁵ Schillebeeckx, *Christ the Sacrament*, 120. See also, Rahner, *Church and the Sacraments*, 51-58.

⁹⁶ Lawler, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 51.

Founded on Rahner's theory John P Schanz would maintain that Christ did not determine everything about the sacraments in a definite way and that it is highly possible to affirm the direct and immediate institution of the sacraments by Christ. Concurrently it has also to be maintained that Christ himself willed each sacraments and their unique efficacy. One cannot also forgo the role of the Church, especially its liberty to determine the actions as well as words that is expressed in the sacraments to proclaim the hidden reality contained in them to manifest the grace of God.⁹⁷

Feingold, from a different stance, maintains that the Church is formed and sanctified by all seven sacraments instituted by Christ, communicated either by Christ himself or by the apostles as we see in the scripture and in the Tradition. The certitude of the Church on the institution of the sacraments by Christ does not come from scripture alone but also from the Tradition. The Church, always mindful of this Tradition interprets the sacred scriptures leading to the development of its doctrines. Hence, one ought not to expect adequate historical evidence of this dogma in relation to the seven principal rites. Instead, we should be able to gain a proper understanding of the general principles that lead to the institution of the sacraments by Christ. That Christ instituted sacraments does not mean that he determined all the elements of its sacramental sign; instead, he structured the life of his Church by earmarking a specific function to each sacrament of granting the divine grace with the signs of the sacraments that represent the grace assigned to each rite.⁹⁸

⁹⁷ John P Schanz, *The Sacraments of Life and Worship* (Dublin: Geoffrey Chapman, 1967), 38-39.

⁹⁸ Feingold, *Touched by Christ*, 99-100.

4. The Influence of Trent on the Current Approach

The Council of Trent has objectively stated that the sacraments were instituted by Christ himself. However, it has left open the question for discussion⁹⁹ whether Christ instituted some of the sacraments in a generic way, that is, leaving with the Church the authority to determine the matter and form of the sacramental sign¹⁰⁰ or in a specific way with fully determined matter and form. The question was disputed by several Catholic theologians of the time and the Council did not seek to settle the relevant questions. Instead of settling the issue, its doctrinal pronouncements were highly emphasized on excluding Protestant errors. Regarding the institution of the seven sacraments, Feingold claims that despite being pronounced definitively by the Council of Trent, the Catholics do not have to hold the view that Jesus instituted them in such a way that He himself specifically determined each sacramental sign in its matter and form.¹⁰¹

The extent of the influence of the Council of Trent on the Institution of the sacraments cannot be underestimated. The Council's decree on Communion under both species sheds light in this regard. The Council stipulates the authority of the Church to modify the elements of the sacraments without manipulating the substance of the same sacrament.¹⁰² By the same token the Church, by its power, can also take away whatever has been added to the substance of the

⁹⁹ Ibid., 107. Also, P. Pourrat, *Theology of the Sacraments*, 296 and Lawler, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 49.

¹⁰⁰ The notion of matter and form in the Sacrament is dealt in the later part of this thesis. See pp 147-150.

¹⁰¹ Feingold, *Touched by Christ*, 107; Roger Nutt, *General Principles of Sacramental Theology* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2017), 180-83. Also in Clarence McAuliffe, S.J., *Sacramental Theology: A Textbook for Advanced Students* (Saint Louis: B. Herder, 1961), 43-47.

¹⁰² DS 1728. Session 21. July 16, 1562, deals with the Doctrine of Communion Under Both Kinds and the Communion of Little Children.

sacraments according to the needs of the times.¹⁰³ In short, the nucleus or the essence of the sacrament is of divine law and origin analogous to the institution by Christ our savior and cannot be changed by the Church. This essence or the core of the sacraments must be distinguished from the elements of the sacraments like matter, form and administration of the sacraments that would pertain to the ecclesiastical law and can be modified according to the needs of the time, place, culture and so on.¹⁰⁴

Nevertheless, we must take into account there is often a difficulty involved in differentiating the divine law in the sacraments from the ecclesiastical law. As an example, Feingold indicates, the requirement imposed by the Council of Trent regarding Marriage that it should be celebrated according to the canonical form with the priest present as witness. The whole purpose of this decree is to put an end to the abusive practice of clandestine Marriages by rendering them invalid.¹⁰⁵ Theologians like Van Roo's observation on the institution is noteworthy here. His argument is that the doctrine that Christ personally instituted the sacraments should be understood only according to their substance that concerns to divine law, and which does not rule out significant development in the way in which the sacraments are celebrated over the centuries.¹⁰⁶ However, Regarding the substance of a sacrament which is unchangeable by the Church is still a dilemma to many of the theologians. On this, Bernard Leeming speaks:

The Church has always been convinced that the sacraments are the gifts of God, and, consequently, are inviolable and beyond her power to change. Accessory ceremonies, as everyone agrees, fall within the Church's competence to introduce, vary, or abolish; but

¹⁰³ DS 3858. Pius XII, *Sacramentum Ordinis*, 3. Regarding the handing over of the Chalice and Paten to the ordinandi, the Pope teaches "But if, by the will and prescription of the Church, the same was at some time held as necessary even for validity, all know that the Church can also change and abrogate what she has established."

¹⁰⁴ Feingold, *Touched by Christ*, 108-109.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 109. Also, Cfr DS 1813-16. And CIC, can.1108 #1

¹⁰⁶ Van Roo, "Reflection on Karl Rahner's *Kirche und Sakramente*", *Gregorianum* 44(1963), 465-500.

the substance of the sacraments is part of the essential constitution of the Church. What, however, in the concrete makes up this ‘substance’ of a sacrament is a problem which perplexes the wisest of theologians, who can only speak tentatively.¹⁰⁷

5. Development of a Theological Approach Within Tradition

As opposed to what is defined at the Council of Trent, some of the medieval scholastics like a Hugh of St Victor and Saint Bonaventure hold the view that Confirmation and the Anointing of the Sick were instituted by the apostles or in a Church Council.¹⁰⁸ Feingold points out how some of the Church Fathers failed to make a clear distinction between the substantial nucleus that is from Christ and elements such as anointing with chrism in Confirmation that have been added by the Church and made necessary for validity of the sacraments. “what they are affirming is that the current form of the sacrament with the elements currently necessary for validity has its origin not in Christ but in an action of the Church, which is true. This ecclesiastical action, however, presupposes Christ’s prior institution of the sacrament and further specifies a particular mode of celebration.”¹⁰⁹

The fundamental question of the origin of the sacraments has always been an intriguing aspect in the field of sacramental theology. There were several older attempts as well as contemporary theologians in different directions tried to address this fundamental question on the sacraments. The doctrine of grace which became a broad movement within the older tradition in this regard aligned itself primarily around the idea of sacraments as signs and means of grace. It is God who maintains sovereign control over the means of the distribution of grace as over grace itself.

¹⁰⁷ Leeming, *Sacramental Theology*, xi. Also pp. 408-431.

¹⁰⁸ Hugh of St Victor, *On the Sacraments of Christian Faith*, 2.15.2, trans. Deferrari, 431. Also, Leeming, *Principles of Sacramental Theology*, 408-431, mentions of vast majority medieval theologians who spoke tentatively on the issue.

¹⁰⁹ Feingold, *Touched by Christ*, 113.

Hence, only God can be the source from where the sacraments derive.¹¹⁰ Church Fathers like Saint Augustine gave a mystical explanation, according to which all the sacraments emerge from the salvific act completed on the cross. He gave an allegorical interpretation of John 19:34 where the blood and water flowed from Jesus' side represented sacraments and through which the Church was created.¹¹¹ Thomas Aquinas takes a different stance towards Saint Augustine in this matter. By referring to the unwritten tradition of the apostles, Aquinas suggests that many aspects of the sacramental rites are not at all substantiated by the written word of God or from the sacred scripture and they cannot be proved that they were instituted by Christ.¹¹²

The history of the Church substantiates that the reformers displayed a critical approach in using biblical statements for dogmatic purposes. The unwritten *Tradition* was not appealing to them at all. The scriptures were the only means to decide, especially, the words of Jesus as recorded in the gospels. The rituals which failed to demonstrate in this way through the life and tradition of the Church were considered as false sacraments and were utterly rejected by them. Consequently, the reformers rejected Confirmation, Marriage and the Anointing of the Sick as sacraments. However, Alexander Ganoczy points out that, Luther was inclined to maintain the sacramentality of reconciliation and Calvin acknowledged that Holy Order for the service of the Church could be sacramental.¹¹³

With the development of the modern trends in theology, the query at present is not from the ritual or canonistic nature of the sacraments. The historical critical method in theology has its

¹¹⁰ Alexander Ganoczy, *An Introduction to Catholic Sacramental Theology*, translated by William Thomas and Anthony Sherman (New York: Paulist Press, 1984), 44.

¹¹¹ A concise history of the development of the question on the origin of the sacraments can be found in Ganoczy, *Catholic Sacramental Theology*, 43-50. See *Augustine*, PL 37,1672.

¹¹² *ST* III. 64.2.3

¹¹³ Ganoczy, *Catholic Sacramental Theology*, 43-50.

influence and become a widely acceptable approach in this regard. Consequently, even the words of institution for the sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist cannot be considered as the original words of the historic Jesus. As for the other five sacraments, the unique acts of institution by Jesus Christ in a juridical sense of the term are still less to be assumed.¹¹⁴

6. Modernist Approach

It is in this context of thinking, the approach of the so-called modernist in the early 1900s should be understood. Their thesis was that the sacraments were not instituted directly by Christ; they were instituted successively by the Church in the first centuries because of the development of some kernels quiescent in the teachings of Christ.¹¹⁵ This not only goes against the teachings of the Council of Trent but also gives an unnecessary and exaggerated emphasis on the authority of the Church in determining the sacraments. The modernist, taking after the liberal Protestant views in the late 19th century, held that this teachings of the Trent was irreconcilable with the findings of Church history and needed to be explicated radically.¹¹⁶ What matters in the modernist's view is the fact that it is not the Christological, juridical, mystical or biblical aspects of the sacraments but the historically tangible things. However, the modernist thesis was condemned by Pope Pius X in 1907¹¹⁷ as their teachings inclined towards the ecclesial development of sacramentality in an Apostolic and post Apostolic period.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁴ Ganoczy, *Catholic Sacramental Theology*, 46.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 46.

¹¹⁶ Leeming, *Sacramental Theology*, 385-391.

¹¹⁷ Decree of the Holy Office, *Lamentabili*, issued under Pius X in 1907, condemning sixty-five propositions drawn from the works of the RC modernists especially A.F. Loisy. The three propositions 39-41 in the decree that condemned the various errors of the modernist. 39 –The opinions on the origin of the sacraments with which the fathers of Trent were imbued and that no doubt influenced their dogmatic canons are far different from those that now rightly prevail among historians of Christianity. 40- The sacraments had their origin in the fact that the apostles and their successors, Swayed and moved by circumstances and events, interpreted some idea and intention of Christ.

One of the notable Catholic Modernist, Alfred Loisy, claimed that Jesus had no intention in founding an institutional Church as there was an expectation of an imminent coming of the eschatological Kingdom of God. Hence, He would not have intended to establish sacraments for a Church that he did not anticipate. However, Loisy confirms that the Church after Jesus' death needed some form of sacramental worship and it developed from the Last Supper and from the Jewish elements of worships such as Baptism, anointing with oil and laying on of hands and so on.¹¹⁹

7. The Manner of Institution

The history and the elucidation of the Council of Trent according to many theologians establish the fact that the sacraments were divinely instituted, but the Fathers of the Council defined nothing on the manner of this institution. The purpose of the Council was to condemn the Protestant errors that were prevalent at the time in the Church. The teachings did bear emphasis on the fact of the divine institution as the Protestants at the time rejected the whole idea of the divine institution of the sacraments apart from Baptism and Holy Eucharist. Ultimately it was the divine institution itself which the Protestants rejected and not the manner of this institution of the sacraments.¹²⁰

According to Bernard Leeming the Council of Trent made a general division among the theologians mainly in two ways: a) the theory of institution in a specific and unalterable manner, and b) institution in a general manner-*institutio in species et genre*.

41-The sacraments are intended merely to recall to man's mind they ever beneficent presence of the Creator. Also, in DS 3439-3441.

¹¹⁸ Ganoczy, *Catholic Sacramental Theology*, 47.

¹¹⁹ Alfred Loisy, *The Gospel and the Church*, trans. Christopher Home (New York:Charles Scribner's Sons,1909), 230-231.

¹²⁰ Pourrat, *Theology of the Sacraments*, 296.

7.1 Institution of the Sacraments in Specific Manner

According to this, Christ himself determined the elements that make up the sacraments and these have never altered and cannot alter. For instance, in Confirmation and the Anointing of the Sick, Christ himself fixed an anointing; In Holy Orders, he determined an imposition of hands; these have always been used in the Church and the Church cannot change them.

Leeming gives a few reasons why some theologians hold such a view of the specific institution of the sacraments. First, a sacrament is made-up of matter and form. since Christ instituted the sacraments, He instituted their matter and form too. Second, the Church cannot change the substance of the sacraments. This very substance is what some theologians identify with the requirement for its validity. Therefore, whatever is required for validity is beyond the authority of the Church and hence the sacraments are instituted by Christ. Third, there is no historical evidence of any change of matter or form. For instance, the matter of Holy Order was always the imposition of hands; Confirmation, always the anointing with the oil.¹²¹ Pope Benedict XV as a private theologian is often cited that there is no evidence that the Church ever used a power to change the material form of a sacrament. He says: “those who say so, ought to adduce the place, and date, ought to name the Council, or pontiff, who made such a change.”¹²²

7.2 Institution in a Generic Manner

Christ, while instituting the sacraments had already settled the meaning of it but left the authority with the apostles or the Church to determine the elements that constitute the sacraments. For instance, in Confirmation Christ determined the bestowal of the Holy Spirit, Church should they

¹²¹ Leeming, *Principles of Sacramental Theology*, 413.

¹²² *De Synodo, Louvain*, 1763, vol.8. ch.10. The translation here is from Leeming, *Principles of Sacramental Theology*, 413.

express it by anointing or by imposition of hands. the material rights in any sacrament are simply a kind of symbolic language that express the same meaning despite differing in their material form.¹²³

At the time of the Council, not only the matter of divine institution but also the *mediate* or *immediate* institution of the sacraments was under severe dispute. The Spanish theologian, Dominic Soto, well before the Council of Trent, clearly affirms this debate in his commentary of the sentences of Peter Lombard. Pourrat states that it was purely out of respect for Saint Bonaventure and his followers, who maintained the view of the *mediate* institution of several of the sacraments the Council did not settle the question by placing in its definition the word *immediate*. Pourrat maintains that, due to this ambiguity in the official definition of the Council, any teaching on the manner of the divine institution of the sacraments that respects the fact of institution, is not contrary to the teachings of the Church. The theologians of the time and later, without falling into any pitfall with the Church, thought out several hypothesis to elucidate how Jesus could have instituted the sacraments. They hypothesized that He could have instituted them *immediately* or *mediately*, in *specie* or in *genre*. These conclusions were based on the Council's definition which supposed that the question of the institution of the sacraments is left to the free investigation of Catholic theologians.¹²⁴

Pourrat proposes three hypothesis regarding the institution of the sacraments by Christ. The hypothesis of the *immediate* institution of some sacraments and *mediate* institution of others. It is *immediate* when the author of the sacraments establishes them himself in person. While on the other hand when he delegates to another the power of establishing the sacraments, it is *mediate*.

¹²³ Leeming, *Principles of Sacramental Theology*, 414-415.

¹²⁴ Pourrat, *Theology of the Sacraments*, 297.

According to this hypothesis Christ himself would have established many of the sacraments, especially Baptism and the Eucharist. He, then, would have delegated to his apostles, in founding the Church, through the Holy Spirit, the power of establishing the other sacramental rites. While proposing this hypothesis, Pourrat agrees himself that the *mediate* institution he used to be rejected as it fails to prove how the sacraments instituted by reason of this delegated authority, would differentiate from purely ecclesiastical institutions.¹²⁵

The second hypothesis is of the *immediate* institution of several of the sacraments in *specie*, and the *immediate* institution of the others in *genre*. This hypothesis could also be equally rejected if it were not properly understood. It can either be taken in the strict sense, in *specie*, or in the broad sense, in *genre*. According to this theory Christ himself could have determined the external or the visible part of the sacraments, i.e., sacramental signs and so on and the invisible part of the sacraments in which the spiritual effect is produced. Christ could have instituted them immediately in *specie* or He could have only determined the spiritual effects and left it to his apostles and to his Church the task of choosing an appropriate sacramental sign. He would then have instituted the sacraments immediately, but only in *genre*. Theologians by and large agree to the fact that the sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist were instituted in *specie*. As regards the other sacraments, the institution only in *genre* is highly possible. This hypothesis too has the probability of failure in explaining the considerable development which the history of the Church attests in the sacramental institution of the Christianity.¹²⁶

Pourrat proposes a third hypothesis, modifying the hypothesis of the immediate institution in *genre*, that Christ instituted all the sacraments immediately, but did not hand over to the Church

¹²⁵ Pourrat, *Theology of the Sacraments*, 298.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 300.

fully constituted. Regarding the sacraments of Baptism and Holy Eucharist, Christ had Himself explained completely so that the Church, from the very beginning had full and entire consciousness of the sacramental rites. As for the rest of the sacraments, Christ had laid down their essential fundamental principles leaving it to the apostles and the Church what He wanted to accomplish. The Gospels do not explain fully what Jesus possibly could have said to his apostles. Just the way He had left the Holy Spirit to the care of the Church, Jesus could have confided to the same Spirit of God the task of revealing all the riches contained in the sacramental institution according to the needs of the Christian society. Thus, according to the history, it is understood how the Church did not have a full and entire consciousness of some of the sacraments from the very beginning. To summarize this: Sacraments of Baptism and Holy Eucharist were instituted by Jesus immediately and *explicitly*. Whereas the institution of the other five sacraments took place immediately but *implicitly*. For Pourrat, this theory of the dogma does not contradict the definition of the Council of Trent. Even if it is an implicit institution, it is a real institution, and this theory has been sufficiently justified by history.¹²⁷

7.3 Edward Schillebeeckx on Institution

For Schillebeeckx, the sacraments are the acts of Christ and hence, the Church cannot have established the sacraments on her own initiative. Before His ascension, Christ must have entrusted to the Church, whether explicitly or implicitly but really, the task of bringing His heavenly salvific act into effectiveness. For Schillebeeckx, the fact that the Church is a primordial sacrament, and a community of worship already establishes the fundamental institution of the seven sacraments by Christ. The Church is the earthly body of the Lord and represents the primordial sacrament which is a glorified body of Christ. Therefore, even if Christ

¹²⁷ Ibid., 301-302.

indicated the structure of his Church before his death, the actual founding of the Church took place only upon Christ's resurrection and ascension. It is from that moment the Church is a sign of grace inculcated with the reality it signifies and thus a visible sign of salvation.¹²⁸ He writes:

But at the same time this fundamental institution of the Church has a primordial sacrament in which the seven ritual sacraments are implicitly instituted is not entirely sufficient. It does not suffice because in the seven sacraments the actual saving act of the *Kyrios* takes a hold on us in a direction indicated by the outward sign. So, Christ himself must have had some immediate part in directing the meaning, since this implies directing his own redemptive grace to a specific need of Christian life.¹²⁹

This means that Christ himself must have established the sevenfold administration of his grace through the medium of the Church which acts as a visible component of this. If it is not seen in this manner, one must conclude that the Church established the sevenfold direction of Christ's grace in virtue of its own establishment as the primordial sacrament. For Schillebeeckx, the scriptural data gives evidence for Christ's will in many of the sacraments. For instance, Baptism, confession, Eucharist, Priesthood and to a certain extent for Confirmation. As for Marriage and the Sacrament of the Sick, it is slightly difficult to specify data referring immediately to Christ's will. Hence, we must presuppose an implicit will of Christ in certain sacraments. This makes it clear that the fundamental institution of the Church, as the sacramental saving sign, remains the essential factor even in the more explicit institution of other sacraments by Christ. That is to say,

¹²⁸ Schillebeeckx, *Christ the Sacrament*, 112-116.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 116.

the fundamental institution of the mystery of the Church is an implicit institution of the seven sacraments.¹³⁰

7.4 Karl Rahner

There is almost a similar teaching to that of Schillebeeckx when Rahner maintains that Christ instituted the sacraments only in an *implicit* way by way of instituting the Church as the universal sacrament of God's victorious grace.¹³¹ He says: "one can speak of Christ's implicit institution of a sacrament in the explicit instituting of the Church as the historically visible form of eschatologically victorious grace."¹³² From a Catholic perspective it is important to hold that Christ himself instituted the sacraments, at least in a generic way and to a certain degree of stipulation left to the authority given to the Church.¹³³ Rahner's theology does not emerge directly from this dogma but reinterprets the manner by which one understands the generic institution by Christ. He teaches that the sacraments were implicitly instituted when Christ founded the Church as a primal and fundamental sacrament.¹³⁴

Before we understand Rahner's approach to the institution of the sacraments the differentiation between the ideas of implicit and generic institution must be learned. Feingold describes: "Generic institution involves both knowledge of what is being instituted and the deliberate will to do so, even though aspects of the sacramental sign are left to be determined by the Church.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 117.

¹³¹ Rahner, *The Church and the Sacraments*, 41.

¹³² Ibid., 50.

¹³³ Feingold comments that Rahner's position is closer to the modernist view which was condemned by St. Pius X in *Lamentabili*, but he seeks to provide a firmer foundation to it by using the principle that Christ instituted the Church as the proto sacrament. in *Touched by Christ*, 123.

¹³⁴ Rahner, *The Church and the Sacraments*, 19.

Implicit institution, on the other hand, does not necessarily employ either determinate knowledge of what is being instituted nor the deliberate will to do so.”¹³⁵

Van Roo, on Rahner’s hypothesis, comments that for at least some of the sacraments, Christ had no direct intention of instituting the essential elements, purpose, and its effects. In other words, the very essence of the sacraments finds its origin from a development in the life of the Church without contradicting Christ’s general intention but going beyond what he was directly willed to establish.¹³⁶

This interpretation has the potential to upturn the proper order between the Church and the sacraments. According to some of the Fathers of the Church, as we have seen earlier, the blood and water coming from the side of Christ is seen as the birth of the Church through the sacraments represented by Baptism and the Eucharist. He also emphasizes that the Church obtains her supernatural life from the sacraments and not the other way around. The Church does not sanctify the sacraments; she is born from them, sanctified by them and cannot exist without all of them even though they are not equal in importance.¹³⁷ Aquinas, affirming this truth says that “just as they may not institute another Church, so neither may they deliver another faith, no reinstitute other sacraments: On the contrary, the Church is said to be built up with the sacraments.”¹³⁸

Rahner also claims the ontological priority of the Church regarding the sacraments. He writes: “the Church’s own nature is ontologically prior to the seven sacraments; they are partial

¹³⁵ Feingold, *Touched by Christ*, 123.

¹³⁶ Van Roo, “Reflection on Karl Rahner’s *Kirche und Sakramente*.” *Gregorianum* 44 (1963): 465-500.

¹³⁷ Feingold, *Touched by Christ*, 124.

¹³⁸ *ST* III, 64.1.3

realization of the Church itself.”¹³⁹ It is a fact that the Church, in terms of finality, is ontologically prior to the sacraments, due to the role of sacraments in making the Church. Nevertheless, the sacraments too have an ontological priority, especially in terms of generation of grace, as the Church is born and built through the sacraments.¹⁴⁰

Besides, to assume that the Church could institute sacraments is to assume that the Church has supremacy over grace and the bestowing of the Holy Spirit. To institute a sacrament means to institute a solid manner by which the grace is communicated through the acts of the Church. It is only Christ who has the paramountcy over the giving of grace and of the Holy Spirit. This is fitting to Christ, as the one who is both the efficient and meritorious cause of grace and the person from whom the Spirit proceeds. The fact is it is the humanity of Christ that acts in all the sacraments and functions as instruments and continuations of his humanity to encounter us. For this very reason, Christ himself had to institute them and give them the power to be his instruments that he could work through.¹⁴¹

Having examined the different approaches we should be able to conclude that the origin of the sacraments from Christ or the institution by Christ is not something that is approached subjectively, rather it has a clear objective in the world of the sacraments that leads one to the experience of God's salvific act through the Church. As we understand the sign aspect of a sacrament, especially its metaphysical essence or the substance consist in its meanings and materially in the sensible actions in which these meanings are proclaimed and celebrated. And the physical essence of the sign aspect of the sacraments consists formally in the words spoken and materially in the actions performed. Van Roo maintains that it is in their metaphysical sense

¹³⁹ Rahner, *Theology of Pastoral Action*, trans. W.J. O'Hara (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968), 45.

¹⁴⁰ Feingold, *Touched by Christ*, 125.

¹⁴¹ Feingold, *Touched by Christ*, 126.

that Christ instituted the sacraments. As regards the physical essence, the words and actions employed in the sacraments are left to the discretion of the Church. As the Church has the authority of the physical essence, the sacramental words and actions is left to her discretion.¹⁴²

¹⁴² William Van Roo, *De Sacramentis in genere* (Rome: Gregorian University Press, 1957), 11.

Chapter FOUR

Sacrament and Sign, The Key Instruments in the Dialogue.

Fundamental to any Christian understanding of sacraments is the idea that they are signs. As seen in the preceding chapter, this claim originated with Saint Augustine. Despite a few differing viewpoints, it has remained in sacramental theology up to the present.

Thomas Aquinas went into great detail in his explanation of the idea of the sacrament as a sign. "We refer to sacraments inasmuch as they signify a relationship of sign. A sacrament fits into the sign category in this way."¹

However, "not every sacred sign is a sacrament; only that sign is a sign of the sacred insofar as it (that is, the sacred) sanctifies man."² "A sacrament is an announcement of future glory and a commemorative sign of what has already occurred, particularly the suffering of Christ and the grace that resulted from it."³ Based on these principles, we endeavor in this chapter to explore the nature of the *sign* particularly based on the concepts of two giant figures in the history of Sacramental Theology, Saints Augustine and Thomas Aquinas.

1. Sign or Symbol or Both?

Sign and symbol are frequently used in the same statement and spoken simultaneously. In liturgical and sacramental terminology, the terms are essentially equivalent.⁴ Also in the natural sciences, they have the same meaning. And in our everyday language, the concept of symbol may communicate two utterly conflicting ideas: on the one hand, something

¹ ST III.60, 1

² Ibid., III.60, 2

³ Ibid., III.60,3

⁴ Martinez, *Signs of Freedom*, 13.

exceedingly significant action is referred to as a "really symbolic gesture," while something meaningless is referred to as "merely symbolic."⁵

The origin of the word "symbol" helps to clarify its meaning. It comes from the Greek word *συνβαλλειν*, which means to bring together.⁶ The term symbol referred to the two portions of a split thing, or "the fractured halves of a whole." When the two parts were joined, the symbol served as a method of identification: the person who had one half demonstrated that he or she was a messenger, appointed host, or partner in a contract. The seal was a later outgrowth of this tradition, since a seal and its imprint constituted a totality. For this reason, Confirmation, for instance, may be defined as a seal. Thus, a symbol is a two-part sign whose whole is only visible when the two pieces are joined.⁷

For ancient people, a sign was more than just a visible portion of a whole. The visual reality of the whole was there in the sign, yet it remained unseen in its whole. Therefore, a symbol represents a whole reality inasmuch as it manifests itself through the sign. As a result, when speaking of the liturgy as a sign, we may argue that it not only refers to something else, as all signs do, but also brings a reality into being. Thus, the idea of symbol has a deeper, more inclusive meaning, as it attempts to portray and define a true way of communication between God and mankind behind the sign's guise. In this sense, it represents the inseparable union of a human, this earthly element, and a celestial component. This is most evident in Jesus Christ, who, according to the constant witness of holy scripture, is the word of God in his humanity. (John 1:1, 14; 1 John 5:7; Revelation 19:13) and the image of God (2 Corinthians 4:4; Colossians 1:15; Wisdom 7:26), the manifestation of God's presence in the universe.⁸

⁵ Klemens Richter, *The Meaning of Sacramental Symbols: Answers to Today's Questions*. Trans. Linda M. Maloney (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1990), 13.

⁶ *συνβαλλειν* in *A Greek- English Lexicon of the New Testament*, Translated, Revised and Enlarged by Joseph H Thayer (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977), 595.

⁷ Richter, *The Meaning of Sacramental Symbols*, 13.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 14-15.

A major reason why liturgy is only feasible in signals -verbal as well as nonverbal, since words are also signs, making it inaccurate to speak of "word and sign" - is rooted in human nature: communication between individuals is likewise only possible in and through signs. Therefore, we have to conclude that the distinction between "sign" and "symbol" is not of essential relevance. It is essential that the meaning of these phrases in the context of liturgy be made crystal clear.⁹

1.2 Signs and symbols: A Comparison

Unlike signs, symbols point to and communicate a reality that exists outside of themselves. Signs, including hospital and traffic signs, have a set, outward, customary, and unchanging meaning. As indicated earlier, in liturgical and sacramental vocabulary, however, the word "sign" is sometimes employed as a synonym for "symbol." Theologians may discuss sacraments as indicators of Christ's mystery.¹⁰

Regarding the meaning and purpose of symbols, there is no perfect consensus among the vast literature and several disciplines of research that handle them. The social and cultural significance of ritual symbolism is supported by contemporary anthropology. The behavioural sciences and theology often agree on one key issue: the revelatory and universal importance of symbols. This is because both disciplines emphasize how deeply ingrained the symbolic and sacramental are in the fundamental structures of human life.¹¹

We are "symbolic creatures," or *animal symbolicum*,¹² in Ernst Cassirer's concept, which explains the revelatory and universal worth of symbols as well as their creative and transformative potential. Being human entails living in harmony with others and taking part

⁹ Ibid., 15.

¹⁰ Martinez, *Signs of Freedom*, 13.

¹¹ Ibid., 13.

¹² Ernst Cassirer, *An Essay on Man: An Introduction to a Philosophy of Human Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1944), 23-62.

in interpersonal relationships and communication. The general framework in which sacraments serve as meaning-transmitters is these, the interpersonal dynamics of human life.¹³

Symbols convey meaning and motivate action and engagement not just to the degree that they are logically recognized and comprehended, but much more so to the extent that a person is associated with them. A human reaction from the interpretation is necessary for symbols to come to life. No symbol's meaning can be comprehended with complete scientific accuracy. The significance is obscure yet insistent.¹⁴ It is the persistence of symbolic information, not its conceptual correctness, that motivates a person to behave in accordance with a symbol.¹⁵

According to Cassirer, signs and symbols belong to two separate domains of discourse. A simple sign, according to him, "it's a part of the physical world of being: a symbol is a part of the human world of meaning."¹⁶ There is also a substantial difference between the two. A simple sign "is related to the thing to which it refers in a fixed and unique way. Any one concrete and individual sign refers to a certain individual thing..... a genuine human symbol is characterized not by its uniformity, but by its versatility. It is not rigid or inflexible but mobile."¹⁷

Although using different language, Paul Ricoeur makes the same case for the flexibility and multivocality of symbols as contrasted to the rigidity of fundamental signals. He talks about the symbol's dual use and charitable nature.¹⁸

The reality that makes up the symbol has two distinct meanings. A literal, natural meaning is what the sensible world explicitly intended to signify on one level, while symbolic meanings

¹³ Marinez, *Signs of Freedom*, 13.

¹⁴ Alfred North Whitehead, *Symbolism: Its Meaning and Effect* (New York: Putnam's, 1959), 73-74.

¹⁵ Lawler, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 12-13.

¹⁶ Cassirer, *Essay on Man*, 32.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 36.

¹⁸ Paul Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, Trans. Emerson Buchanan (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), 14-18.

are "donated" to and through the initial literal meaning on a deeper level. When utilized in the symbolic act of Baptism, water lends implications of rebirth and forgiveness of sins because, on a literal natural level, it is both life-giving and cleaning. A simple supper of bread and wine symbolizes human sharing and fellowship as well as material food on a natural level; as a result, it contributes these connotations to symbolize spiritual nourishment and the fellowship of the body of Christ (Church) in the Eucharist. One aspect of the power and mystique of symbols is the literality with which their symbolic meanings are communicated.¹⁹ On the same note Ricoeur, explains that symbols are opaque, while simple signs are perfectly transparent. "This opacity constitutes the depth of the symbol, which, it will be said, is inexhaustible."²⁰

Lawler contends that both men and women exist in a human world, which is a world of meaning, in addition to a physical one. In the human world, people inquire not just about the nature of an entity—a person, an action, or an object—but also about its significance. The specifics of the human world are the solution to the issue of meaning. Humanity has become so enmeshed in language forms, artistic representations, legendary symbols, and religious rituals that they are unable to directly experience reality; instead, they only have indirect access to it through one or more of these symbol systems. One of such symbol systems is the name of the religious ceremony, which is referred to as a sacrament in theological terminology and as a prophetic symbol in biblical terminology.²¹

According to Victor Turner, such ritual is "prescribed formal behaviour for occasions not given over to technological routine, having reference to beliefs in the mystical beings or

¹⁹ Lawler, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 15.

²⁰ Ricoeur, *The Symbolism*, 15.

²¹ Lawler, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 16.

powers.”²² Based on this Lawler claims that the Symbol is the smallest unit of such ritual and therefore, is complex symbolic action.²³

2. Symbol: A Definition

Having explored the nature of Symbol, it is much easier now to confine it to a definition. Among the many authors on symbol, Lalwer seems to have one closer to the context of our discussion. Symbolizing is a uniquely human process in which meanings and realities, intellectual, emotional, and personal, are declared, realised, and celebrated in representation within a sensible world from a particular viewpoint. In this manner, the perceptible world in which meanings and truths are presented is converted into a symbol.²⁴ In the religious activity referred to as a prophetic symbol or sacrament, the action that declares, realizes in representation, and celebrates is turned into symbolic action. Ritual is the technical term for such symbolic activity. Therefore, the word ritual shall be used interchangeably with the term symbol. The only difference that will be noted is that ritual is explicitly symbolic activity.²⁵

It is also noteworthy that a symbol's meanings are polar opposites of one another. An analogy to the polar connection between the body and the soul may be made between a symbol and its meanings. The body is the manifestation of the soul, and the symbol is the manifestation of meaning, just as the soul is inherent in the body and meaning is inherent in the sensible symbol. There are no symbols without meaning just as there are no bodies without souls.²⁶

²² Victor Turner, “Symbolic Studies” in *Annual Review of Anthropology* (1975), 151. An elaborate study on Symbolic Theory is given in Turner’s other works. See also *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967) and *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Chicago: Adline Publishing, 1969).

²³ Lawler, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 16.

²⁴ Ibid., 16.

²⁵ J.S. La Fontaine, ed., *The Interpretation of Ritual: Essays in Honour of A.I. Richards* (London: Tavistock, 1972), 160-161.

²⁶ Lawler, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 17.

Symbols, meanings, bodies, and souls should not be considered objects. This is articulated well by Karl Rahner in his exposition of the ancient mediaeval theory of body and spirit. “Body and soul, if the doctrine of *anima forma corporis* is really understood and taken seriously, are two metaphysical principles of one single being, and not two beings, each of which could be met with experimentally.”²⁷ The connections between the physical objects that stand next to one another in the physical universe and the historical events that take place in a chronological order are not comparable to the connections between the body and the soul or between symbols and meanings.²⁸

Consequently, it is insufficient to just assert that a symbol represents the reality it does. A mother's love for her child is not only stated but also manifested in the customary and required behaviours, such as the letter, holding hands, kissing, and spoken words. The deeds go beyond just expressing affection. They also contribute to the presence of love in the context of human activity and connection. They are, in other words, acts of love. The resultant love that is experienced by both men and women is entirely the result of the initial love as well as the ritual acts that reflect it.²⁹

3. Signs and Symbols in Sacramental Context

Sign and symbol both convey meaning, but in entirely distinct ways. A sign indicates a recognised thing, such as smoke to fire, a barber pole to a barbershop, or €25 to the proven monetary worth of a steak. A symbol, on the other hand, alludes to something that is unknown and so enigmatic, yet is assumed to exist.³⁰ “A sign communicates abstract, objective meaning, whereas a symbol communicates living, subjective meaning. A symbol

²⁷ Rahner, “The Hermeneutics of Eschatological Assertions,” in *Theological Investigations*, Vol 4 (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1966) 340.

²⁸ Lawler, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 17.

²⁹ Ibid. 17-18.

³⁰ Carl Jung, *Psychological Types* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1949), 601.

has a subjective dynamism which exerts a powerful attraction and fascination on the individual.”³¹ Given that sacraments are symbolic, the grammar of symbol is fundamental to comprehending sacramental language. Symbols are the building blocks, the sacramental rites, through which we recreate the narrative of our redemption and express our individual and collective spirituality.³²

At this juncture of our discussion, Leonardo Boff’s symbolic approach to sacramentality is noteworthy. Personal anecdotes are used to introduce in his writings on the sacraments. He used them to suggest the sacramental significance of some of the most ordinary parts of common experience, such as baked bread, a Christmas candle, and a local schoolteacher. He says, based on the considerations: “in the ephemeral (human beings) can read the permanent; in the temporal, the eternal; In the world, God. Then the ephemeral is transfigured into a sign of the presence of the permanent, the temporal into a symbol of the reality of the Eternal, the world into a great and grand sacrament of God.”³³ Martinez elaborates on this point. Within the greater context of liturgy, he says, a thing (bread) might become a symbol of a person (body). This is then changed into a social ritual (banquet), and the communal ritual is fashioned into an elegant sacrament (Eucharist). In this faith-based worldview, men and women recognize the creative force of God and his redemptive purpose not just for the whole of what constitutes man or woman - body and soul - but also for the entire universe and its history. By broadening our religious awareness and enhancing our everyday lives, sacramental rites constitute the dynamic centre of the religious experience.³⁴

Expressions that are symbolic or sacramental have more meaning than just a practical purpose. Since reality itself is symbolic and imbued with divine presence, they effectively

³¹ Edward F. Edinger, *Ego and Archetype* (New York: Putnam’s, 1972), 109.

³² Martinez, *Signs of Freedom*, 14.

³³ Leonardo Boff, *Sacraments of Life, Life of the Sacraments* (Washington DC: Pastoral Press, 1987), 1-2.

³⁴ Martinez, *Signs of Freedom*, 14-15.

materialize and participate in the reality represented. Sacraments react to the deep symbolic character of human experience and the capacity for transcendence within each individual.³⁵

It is important to comprehend and understand the intricacy and multiple significance of the symbols used in sacramental rituals. Symbols allow for the expansion of reality. Humans are symbol-creating and symbol-perceiving creatures. In actuality, symbols' role as a medium for communication and comprehension is the only way to fully convey and grasp reality. Things, people, and events become symbols of human and transcendent truth rather than of other things. A magnificent dawn, the birth of a child, or the loss of a loved one are examples of intense experiences that take on a symbolic meaning. They have a powerful effect on humans and trigger heavenly experiences. Such instances appropriately can be referred to be sacramental.³⁶

Sacramental symbols, from a phenomenological standpoint, are activities that reveal the presence of the holy in all of life. According to Karl Rahner's theology, the origin of the universe of meaning is the human body. The body is a primordial symbol, and for the person - "spirit in the world" - the world itself becomes a symbol. In this manner, Rahner emphasises the truth of our openness to the utter mystery of God. Symbolic reality or actual symbol is a representation of the present, the self-realization of one entity in another. ³⁷Frederick Dillistone, summarizes Rahner's thought on the Christian mystery as it expands further: "The logos, the Father's real symbol, expresses himself in the incarnation through the real symbol of his human nature....the Church....is the real symbol through which the Incarnate word expresses himself in human history. The concrete individual sacramental signs are the real

³⁵ Ibid., 16.

³⁶ Ibid., 17-19.

³⁷ Ibid., 18.

symbols through which the Church expresses herself as the fundamental sacrament of God's grace.³⁸

There is also another aspect of the symbols; they are invites to partake in the mystery. Through their capacity as mediators, communicators, and illuminators, symbols successfully convey and communicate the inexplicable mystery of religion. *Mystagogy* is the role of introducing someone to mystery. In actuality, Christian initiation is a symbolic procedure that leads us into the mysteries. Symbols provide several degrees of participation and progressive admission into the mystery. They indicate the mystery that they conceal and reveal, carry, and inspire. In doing so, they encourage the observer to transcend the tangible picture and delve into contemplation.³⁹ The strength and mystery of the symbol manifest a divine reality. Incorporating biblical terminology, Michael Lawler envisioned the sacraments as prophetic symbols: "To say symbol is not to say *not real*, but rather *fully real*, that is, representatively and concretely and effectively and personally real."⁴⁰

Symbols must be embodied. Symbols, like the meeting of the worshipping community, exist not only to conjure a religious requirement in the process of being fulfilled, but also to express the joyous celebration of every part of life in its deeper values and blessed dimensions. A worshipping group that is inspired by a spirit of everyday life celebration and not by mere social convention exhibits to others signals of love and togetherness. These are the authentic and pertinent indicators of a genuine sacramental Church. The same may be said for other religious symbols like the Eucharistic bread and the water used during Baptism. They should therefore be seen as dynamic manifestations of life and the divine gift inside them rather than as static objects. Speaking about people's estrangement from religious symbols and their growing irrelevance for many in today's secular world is widespread. The

³⁸ Frederick H. Dillistone, *The Power of Symbols in Religion and Culture* (New York: Crossroad, 1986), 136.

³⁹ Martinez, *Signs of Freedom*, 20.

⁴⁰ Lawler, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 28.

solution to this problem rests not in the ineffectiveness of the symbols but rather in the absence of dedication to them for a conversation among three meaningful religion engagement in local communities.⁴¹

3.1 Signs and Symbols in Liturgical Celebration

I believe a cursory review of signs and symbols in the preceding sections has provided us with a picture of these liturgical characteristics. In this scenario, it would be extremely irresponsible to disregard what the official reference of the Catholic Church says about them in the celebration of the liturgy.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states that sacramental celebration is made up of signs and symbols. In other words, sacraments are experienced in a form with matter (material) that can be conveyed, experienced, and enjoyed while being deep manifestations of the mystery of the connection between God and humankind. Through words, gestures, and movements, humans employ a wide variety of signs and symbols to communicate with one another. God has continually spoken to his people through creation; therefore, the sacraments do not diverge from normal human experience (Prov 13:1; Romans 1:19; Acts 14:17).⁴²

In the scriptures, for example, numerous examples can be found where the people of God have encountered God in light and darkness (Gen1:4; Mat 4:16; Luk12:3). In wind and fire (1 Kings 19:11; Zach 2:5), in water and earth (Job 5:10; Gen1; 1) these exist, along with other examples of common experiences familiar to the daily lives of human beings, as illustrations used by God as a symbol of an encounter with mystery, such as washing (Acts 9:37) anointing (Ex 40:9; I Jn 2:20), and the sharing of food and a meal (Isa 29:8; MK 14:22). The Church, consistently open to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, uses, integrates, and sanctifies

⁴¹ Martinez, *Signs of Freedom*, 20-21.

⁴² CCC, 1145-1152.

elements from creation and from human culture in the sacramental encounters that it celebrates. These include signs of the covenant and signs taken up by Christ.⁴³

4. Signs, Sacrament in Saint Augustine

It must be admitted unreservedly of the theological giant's deep insight into the sacramental mysteries. However, given our limitation in this elaboration of the current topic, I believe it is wise to confine our discussion to a few works of Augustine rather than examining the whole reach of his Sacramental theology. Besides, there is a significant portion dealing with Augustine in the following chapter.

The contributions of the earlier Church Fathers serve as the foundation for Saint Augustine's work. His interpretation of the sacrament went on to have a significant impact, as we have already seen in the previous chapter. Throughout his book, he refers to sacraments as "sacred signs."⁴⁴ This wide description encompasses both the Mosaic sacrifices and other liturgical gestures and may be used to everything that leads us from what is earthly and visible to what is unseen and heavenly. The full moon or the period of the Triduum during Easter celebrations are two further instances of sacraments.⁴⁵

The concept of sign assists to expose us to the charity movement.⁴⁶ The idea of a sign helps to introduce us to the charitable process, which, after beginning with God, proceeds through the path of redemption with its focal point being Christ and its ultimate destination being the Father. This indicates that the sacrament is a sacred sign in that it engages us in a personal

⁴³ CCC, 1145-1152.

⁴⁴ *De Civitate Dei* X, 5. CCL 47:277; NPNF-1, 2:183. Also, in *Epistolae* 138,7 (CSEL 44:131); *Quaestiones in Heptateuchum* III,84(CCL 33:1882)

⁴⁵ *Epistolae* LV, 5,8-9. CSEL 34.2:177-180; NPNF-1, 1: 304-306.

⁴⁶ *De Doctrina Christina* II,1,2. CCL 32:32; NPNF -1, 2:535. While considering the distinction between *natural* signs and *given* signs, in the teachings of Augustine, there is a reinforcement of the connection between the sign and the path of charity. *Natural* signs are, for instance, fire which is announced by smoke. Regarding *given* signs, unlike the arbitrary or conventional signs, Augustine's definition evokes a different aspect. They are *donated* or *given*, because through them one communicates something to another.

conversation with the sign's provider until we reach complete communion, in addition to the fact that it refers to knowledge of God. In this sense, the sacrament aids in our journey through the covenant's history. There is a *sacramentum memoriae* (sacrament of memory) and a *sacramentum spei*, according to Augustine (sacrament of hope).⁴⁷ All biblical signs "help to inflame the love through which we tend to that final rest."⁴⁸ This is confirmed in *Letter 55 to Januarius*, a short treatise on the sacraments.⁴⁹

This approach is discussed in further detail in a well-known passage from *The City of God*, which concludes a lengthy debate on the proper worship of God that spans the first 10 volumes of the work. Augustine attempts to clarify what the ultimate sacrifice is by reading Psalm 51.⁵⁰ God is not pleased with sacrifices; nevertheless, one sacrifice does delight him: the sacrifice of a contrite heart (Ps 51:16-17).

To the query, does God need Sacrifice? Augustine responds using the notion of "sacrament." Animal sacrifices were sacraments (sacred signs) of the actual sacrifice, which consisted of submitting everything to the creator. The foundation of mercy, the highest sacrifice (Hos 6:6-7), is exactly this: loving one's neighbour (and oneself) in order to bring everyone to God. Here again, the cognitive dynamic of the sign (*sacramentum*) and the dynamic of love are intertwined (*sacrificium*). The symbol of the sacrificial animal reveals to us the sacrifice of a

⁴⁷ *Contra Faustum Manichaeum* XX,21. CSEL 25:564; NPNF-1, 4:261-263. Also, XII,20. CSEL 25: 349.

⁴⁸ *Epistolae* LV,12, 22. NPNF-1, 1: 307, 310.

⁴⁹ Granados, *Sacramental Theology*, 181. Granados gives a detailed commentary on the *Letter to Januarius* based on the French Theologian Pierre Thomas Camelot. Januarius had inquired about the Paschal rites: spring, the full moon, the meaning of each day of the Triduum, etc. Augustine responds: Unlike the nativity, which just celebrates the date of a momentous event, Easter is full of "sacraments," or signs that teach us the way to the Father through this world. Everything revolves on Jesus' passage from death to life and from body to spirit. The disciples are affected by the master's passing or Passover. Augustine adds, along two coordinates: it has already happened in us through faith, and it will be completed in hope, when our body emerges as spiritual flesh. Herein is the key to understanding the celebration: the month of first fruits represents the new Paschal life and the new era inaugurated by Jesus. The full moon signifies the moment when our satellite begins to move closer to the sun, the symbol of God, thereby losing its brilliance in the eyes of this world; and the Sunday of the resurrection, the eighth day that follows the seven days of this age, indicates that Jesus himself will be our solace.

⁵⁰ *De Civitate Dei* X, 5-6. CCL 47:276-279; NPNF-1, 2:183-184.

contrite heart, which directs our affections toward the divine love. The sacrament, which is a portion of the signs pointing to the truth, is linked to the sacrifice, which is a shift of charity toward God.⁵¹

Saint Augustine connects the rituals of Israel with the Church. Jews and manna and Christians partaking in the Eucharist both acquire the same spiritual fruit, since they both expend the word of God through trust in Jesus.⁵² “*The Old Testament drank of Christ in sign; the New Testament receives the true Christ in Word and flesh.*”⁵³ This mention of the word and the flesh touches on the central tenet of Augustine's incarnation-centered approach. If the ancient sacrifices were indicators of what was to come in Christ, the pinnacle of kindness, then the Eucharist is also a sign of Christ. It also draws our attention to Jesus himself as the sacrifice. For this reason, it too is a sacrament. The Eucharist differs in that it not only alludes to the incarnation but also flows from it, allowing us to receive the indicated reality: Christ in Word and flesh, the supreme mystery of God.⁵⁴

All of this leads to the conclusion that, as a sacrament, the Eucharist already embodies the unity of the body of the Church, which, in presenting it on the altar, gives herself.⁵⁵ For this reason, Augustine may admonish the Christians who partake in Communion: reflect on who you are and transform into what you receive. Likewise, ecclesial communion is established by Baptism, since "sacrament" refers not only to the ceremony but also to the permanent integration of the baptized individual into the body of Jesus.⁵⁶ Through Baptism, we are soaked in order to create a single mass of dough; we then received the fire of the Holy Spirit, which bakes the bread source in order to reinforce our bonds. In light of this, Granados

⁵¹ Granados, *Sacramental Theology*, 182.

⁵² *De Doctrina Christina* III, 8,12. CCL 36:42; NPNF -1, 2:560.

⁵³ *In Iohannis* XXVI,12. CCL 36:366; NPNF-1, 7: 171-172.

⁵⁴ *Sermo* X,2. CCL 41:2; NPNF-1, 6:290; Epistolae 187,11. CSEL 57:112.

⁵⁵ *De Civitate Dei* X, 6. CCL 47:279; NPNF-1, 2:183-184.

⁵⁶ Nicholas M. Haring, “Berengar’s Definitions of Sacramentum and Their Influence on Mediaeval Sacramentology,” *Medieval Studies* 10 (1948):110-144.

comments that the extent of the sacraments of the new covenant is equivalent to the scope of Christ's body and the Church.⁵⁷

This demonstrates that a generic notion of signifying is insufficient to include Augustinian synthesis. For the Eucharist and Baptism are not only symbols of something outside them, but rather a true participation in what occurred in the flesh of Christ and will be given to us in full when we are resurrected. In light of this, equating sacrament and sign is inadequate, since the sacrament, rather than transporting us to a remote salvific reality, brings us into the place where this live reality is met. Considering Saint Paul's teaching, Augustine himself underlined the inadequacy of equating sacrament with sign. In fact, the apostle not only said that by Baptism we represent Christ's burial, but also that through Baptism we are buried with him. Therefore, we may assert that the sacrament of the body of Christ is not only a sign of this flesh but is in fact Christ's real body.⁵⁸

4.1 Structure of the Sign: Word and Element in Augustine

Augustine finds a visual element and a word in the flesh but that are true to the Bible. "What is the Baptism of Christ? The washing of water by the Word. Take away the water, it is no Baptism; take away the Word, it is no Baptism."⁵⁹ Augustine was able to refer to the sacrament as a "visible word" because of the oneness of matter (water) and word.⁶⁰

The Commentary on Saint John would have a major impact on how Augustine saw the connection between the verbal and physical actions in a sacrament. He claims that when water touches flesh, it purifies the heart. It cannot do this on its own, of course, but rather because the word is there beside it. The sacrament, which resembles a visible word, is created

⁵⁷ Granados, *Sacramental Theology*, 186.

⁵⁸ *Epistolae* 98, 9. CSEL 34.2:531; NPNF-1, 1: 409. Cites from Romans 6:4

⁵⁹ *In Iohannis* XV,4. CCL 36:152; NPNF-1, 7:100.

⁶⁰ *Contra Faustum Manichaeum* XIX,16. CSEL 25:513; NPNF-1, 4: 244-245.

when the word is combined with the element.⁶¹ Granados, on the Commentary on St John, argues that Augustine draws a comparison between the sacrament's effect to the speaking of a word, whose light and power, nevertheless, stay in the listener. It is important to keep in mind that in this instance, the word is made up of both matter and communicative force. This word is a saving word, a word of promise or vocation, and it is the word of faith, capable of altering the one who hears it.⁶²

Granados furthers his argument saying that it would be a reductive interpretation to conclude that Augustine reduces sacrament to the word alone, undermining the significance of the material element. Without water, there is no Baptism, according to Augustine. Furthermore, Augustine had in mind the incarnation, in which the body and the word are joined in Christ took on flesh so that he might unite us to himself. Therefore, we find ourselves in a situation that is completely opposite to a certain spiritualism that reduces the sign to a mere message and forgets the actual substance of the sacrament.⁶³

There are two more components to the sacrament's structure as it is understood by Augustine. First and foremost, the symbolism of the material components chosen has considerable significance since the sacrament is a sign. Thus, the bread and wine, for instance, serve as a reminder of the oneness of all Christians in one body, much as how grains of wheat form one loaf or clusters of grapes form one and the same cup.⁶⁴ To Granados, the ritual imparts its own power given that the sacrament places us in the flow of God's love, as is shown in the phrase *virtus sacramenti* (virtue or force of the sacrament). The *virtus sacramenti* is the divine urge that leads us in the path indicated by the sign until we attain our ultimate

⁶¹ *In Iohannis* LXXX, 3. CCL 36: 529; NPNF-1, 7:344. Also, in *Sermo* 234,2 (PL 38: 1116).

⁶² Granados, *Sacramental Theology*, 187

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 187.

⁶⁴ *In Iohannis* XXVI,17. CCL 36:268.

objective, whilst the sign refers to a signified reality (*res sacramenti*) which is ultimately God himself.⁶⁵

Thus, Augustine views the sign from the perspective of God personally communicating with man, where the speaker and recipient are just as significant as what is spoken and comprehended. Theologians like Granados, from this point, would contend that the Word appears as a useful frame of reference for comprehending the other signs.⁶⁶

5. The Components of Sacramental Sign

The sacramental sign consists of perceptible components or gestures and a prescription of words that clarifies the significance of the sensible elements. By similarity with the hylomorphic composition of bodies, theologians refer to these two components of the outward sign as the matter and form of the sacrament. As a form specifies the indefinite substance of physical bodies and makes the setting what it is, so, too, in the sacraments, the formula of words imparts a specific meaning to the material components or gesture. In addition to matter and form, theologians like Feingold contend that there are two further observable components with significant sign value. Christ is represented by the minister who employs the sign and pronounces the sacramental form, and the individual who receives the sacrament. In this wide view, the sacramental sign comprises four basic sensible components: matter, form, minister, and the subject. Nevertheless, for pragmatic reasons, we focus on matter and form, which comprise the core of a sacramental sign.⁶⁷

6. Matter and Form of Sacraments

The tangible components of the sacraments are bread, wine, water, and oil. The sensible gestures include pouring or immersing in water, anointing with oil, and the imposition of

⁶⁵ Granados, *Sacramental Theology*, 188.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 186-189.

⁶⁷ Feingold, *Touched by Christ*, 134-136.

hands. The form is determined by words that explicate the significance of the sensible components and gestures in accordance with Church doctrine.⁶⁸

Saint Augustine provided the classical articulation of this idea of matter and form as potency and act in the sacraments, as we saw in the preceding section. Saint Paul implies this divide between matter and form in Ephesians 5:26 when he writes that Christ sacrificed himself for the Church, his bride., “that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word.” The washing with water is an aspect of the sacrament, and its form is the word. This word is the baptismal formula in the name of the Trinity given by Jesus in Matthew 28:19. This concept is also found in the writings of Saint Irenaeus, who describes the Eucharist as occurring when “the mixed cup and the baked bread receive the word of God.”⁶⁹ The content of the Eucharist is bread and wine, while the form is the prayer of consecration or narrative of institution.

In five sacraments, the distinction between matter and form is explicit, however in the sacraments of matrimony and penance, there is no outward physical element or gesture that works as the matter.⁷⁰ In lieu of tangible materiality in these two sacraments are human spiritual actions—marriage consent and repentance—and their tangible verbal representation. Saint Thomas illustrates this by comparing it to two types of medications a physician could administer. Some treatments consist of substances administered to the patient by a physician, such as a pill, ointment, surgery, or a particular diet. Other treatments consist on the patient's own actions, such as various forms of exercise. Five of the seven sacraments include the application or reception of an external matter, such as water in Baptism, oil in Confirmation, and anointing of the sick, etc. But matrimony and penance are sacraments of the second kind, which employ the human deeds of the receiver as their subject, because in these two

⁶⁸ Ibid., 135.

⁶⁹ St Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 5.2.3, in *ANF* 1.528.

⁷⁰ Pourrat, *Theology of the Sacraments*, 51-92.

situations Christ has elevated a pre-existing human reality, marriage and the virtue of penance, to the status of a sacrament.⁷¹

In 1439, this distinction between matter and form was explained by the Council of Florence in the Bull *Exsultate Deo*.⁷² The Catechism of the Council of Trent explains the nature and structure of the sacraments in detail.: “Actually, there are two things which, in combination, make up every sacrament. The first has the nature of matter and is called the element the second has a nature of form and is called the word.”⁷³ The Catechism of Trent further argues that the words of the form are required for correctly determining the sign's meaning, which would be unclear if sacraments were just of elements without a specific form of words.

of all signs, words are evidently the most significant. Without them it would be very difficult to know just what the matter of the sacrament was supposed to designate. For instance, water can be used to cool as well as to cleanse; it can therefore signify either of these things. If in Baptism no words were added, one could only guess..... as to what was signified. But when the words are added, we immediately recognize that Baptism possesses and signifies the power of cleansing..... The verbal form is so important that it's omission-even if accidental-renders the sacrament null.⁷⁴

In addition, theologians divided between proximal and remote sacramental matter. The remote matter is a tangible element in and of itself, such as the water of Baptism, while the proximate matter is the use made of it, such as the washing or immersion of the subject by the

⁷¹ Thomas Aquinas, *In IV Sentences*, d.14,q.1,a.1,qla.1,ad 1, Trans. Beth Mortensen. Vol.8 of Latin/English Edition of the Works of St. Thomas Aquinas (Green Bay: Aquinas Institute, 2017).

⁷² DS,1312.

⁷³ *Catechism of the Council of Trent*, 2.15. 153-154.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 2.16.154.

minister, the confession of sins by the penitent, or the laying on of hands. The form is the formula of prayer applied to the proximate matter.⁷⁵

7. Sign that Communicates Grace

In the previous chapter, when reviewing the definition of the sacrament that evolved over the ages through the teachings of the Fathers of the Church, we discovered that a sacrament is an efficacious sign/symbol and cause of grace. A sacrament consists of two separate components: the symbol/sign or the material elements (the sacramental ritual), or the exterior, and the internal, which is the effect generated by the rite.⁷⁶ The effects and efficacy of the sacraments will be examined in depth in the last chapter. Here, we shall attempt to explain how the material elements of a sacrament may function as effective sources of grace.

To this challenging issue, according to Feingold, Saint Thomas presents a simple and ingenious answer to a problem that many Church Fathers had not satisfactorily handled by proposing the concept of instrumental causation. Even though Tertullian and Peter Lombard made reference to this concept by analogy, Saint Thomas emerges to be the first theologian to apply this category in an explicit and well-developed manner to explain sacramental causality, and this should be considered one of his most significant contributions to sacramental theology.⁷⁷

8. A Concise View of Instrumental Causality According to Saint Thomas.

When a cause generates an effect by relying on the mediation of a supporting entity, this is known as instrumental causality.⁷⁸ This supporting entity is referred to as an instrument or instrumental cause since it is an effective cause that results in a higher-order consequence.

⁷⁵ Feingold, *Touched by Christ*, 138.

⁷⁶ Pourrat, *Theology of the Sacraments*, 51.

⁷⁷ Feingold, *Touched by Christ*, 422.

⁷⁸ Feingold, *The Eucharist: Mystery of Presence, Sacrifice, and Communion* (Steubenville: Emmaus Academic, 2018), 184-190.

This is conceivable because the instrument is being utilized and moved by a more powerful cause, known as the principal cause. The principal cause either directly or indirectly moves the instrument to carry out a plan that is appropriate to or desired by the principal cause. In all biological things, as well as in all human arts and technologies, there are instrumental causes everywhere. Every living thing has organs, which serve as the organism's tools for carrying out its many duties. For instance, the eye is a natural instrument for seeing, but other man-made tools like a telescope or microscope may increase its power.⁷⁹

While being driven by the primary cause in accordance with its higher plan, an instrument acts in accordance with its own nature. Thus, by devoting its own activity to a greater purpose, the instrument advances the main objective. The major cause accomplishes its goal through the activity of the instrument, and the effect is created as a result of the instrumental cause's collaboration with the principal cause that is guiding it. For instance, the correct use of a paintbrush is to apply paint, and the proper use of a chisel is to cut, but both actions are controlled by the hand, whose power they expand. The artist's vision, intellect, and volition all exert influence over the hand. In this sense, while the paintbrush or chisel performs its natural function of applying paint or making cuts, they create a result that much exceeds their own inherent ability.⁸⁰

According to Feingold, the instrument appears to go against the first rule of reason, which states that nothing can provide what it does not have. It lacks an understandable and appealing design by nature, but the paintbrush or chisel creates one. However, this fundamental principle is not truly broken because the combination of the primary cause and the instrumental cause is what actually causes the problem. The result exceeds the piece of equipment used alone, which lacks logic and the essence of beauty, but it does not transcend

⁷⁹ Ibid., 184-190.

⁸⁰ Feingold, *Touched by Christ*, 423.

the primary cause, which is the artist's trained mind and imagination. As a result, although if both the primary cause and the instrument are legitimate sources of the effect, the consequence displays the superior design that the principal cause intended, leading to a greater emphasis being placed on the principal cause than the instrument.⁸¹

Thus, instrumental causality explains how a lower level of being, such as a sensory sign, may be the instrumental agent of a spiritual and supernatural order effect, where the result will be on the level of the principal cause. Saint Thomas writes:

An efficient cause is twofold: principal and instrumental. The principal cause works by the power of its form, to which form the effect is likened; just as fire by its own heat makes something hot. In this way none but God can cause grace.... But the instrumental cause works not by the power of its form, but only by the motion whereby it's moved by the principal agent: so that the effect is not likened to the instrument but to the principal agent: for instance, the couch is not like the axe, but like the art which is in the craftsman's mind.⁸²

The concept of instrumental causality describes how anything might really create an effect that is greater than itself. For instance, in articulating what had been shown to them by divine light through human language, the prophets served as vehicles of divine revelation. Similar to this, those who produced the sacred scriptures did so as God's instruments under the guidance of His inspiration, producing works that are both their own and God's message.⁸³ The sacred authors researched the past, gathered witness testimony, organised and synthesised the information, and then eventually wrote it down using the appropriate metaphors and figures of speech. However, while they labored at their own level, a superior agent—the Holy

⁸¹ *ST* I-II.16.1; also, in *In IV Sent.*, 47.2.1.3

⁸² *ST* III 62.1

⁸³ Feingold, *Faith Comes from What is Heard: An Introduction to Fundamental Theology* (Stubenville: Emmaus Academic, 2016), 289-294.

Spirit—directed their efforts toward a greater objective: God's revelation to humanity, which participates in God's absolute truth.⁸⁴

To conclude, the use of this category of instrumental causality explains how reality at a lower level of being, such as reasonable signs and words, may serve as tools for a divine purpose of sanctification and as agents for the injection of supernatural grace. The simplest argument against the Catholic teaching that the sacraments are the actual sources of supernatural gifts is answered by this. Insofar as they are moved by a higher agent, which is ultimately the divine omnipotence acting through the humanity of Christ, who founded them and deserved their effectiveness, the sacrament may supply something that they do not contain in themselves and which exceeds their nature as perceptible signs.⁸⁵ Just as the sacred authors could not be the primary source of divine Revelation, the sacraments cannot be the primary cause of grace. In contrast, the sacraments may sanctify because the Holy Spirit, the Sanctifier, and Christ's humanity, who works through them, move them, just as the sacred authors who wrote the Bible were inspired by the Divine Spirit while they did so.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ *Dei Verbum* 11

⁸⁵ *Summa Contra Gentiles* IV, 56.7, 4:247-248. Trans. Anton Pegis, James Anderson, Vernon Bourke, and Charles O'Neil. (Notre Dame: University Press, 1975).

⁸⁶ Feingold, *Touched by Christ*, 425.

Chapter FIVE

Sign and Reality, *Res et Sacramentum*.

As explained in previous chapters, the sacraments act as visible signs of our sanctification and confer the attributes that they signify. This implies that each sacrament must have at least two aspects. They deliver an inner grace in addition to an outward visual sign; this is their principal effect. Thus, as will be seen below, Saint Augustine distinguished between the sacrament and the reality of grace that it imparted.

1. Development of the Theology of *Res et Sacramentum*

As Augustine provides an explanation for why some persons may not seem to derive any benefit from receiving the sacraments, he emphasizes that the recipient's disposition, which could potentially hinder the efficacy of the sacrament, is vital.: "The sacrament itself is one thing; its efficacy is another."¹ Concerning the Eucharist, he proposed that the rationale for the species of bread and wine "are called sacraments is that in them one thing is seen, another is to be understood. What can be seen has a bodily appearance, what is to be understood provides spiritual fruit."² Augustine frequently defines this differentiation as pertaining to the *sacramentum* and the *res sacramenti*.³ The latter designation, denoting "the thing or reality of the sacrament," pertains to the supernatural effect bestowed by the sacrament—namely, the bestowal of grace and charity. The two levels distinguished by Augustine can thus be called *sacramentum* and *res*: sign and reality.⁴

¹ Augustine, Tractate 26.11.2 on John 6:41-59, in *Tractates on the Gospel of John 11-27*, 268. Trans. J.W. Rettig. FC 79. (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1988).

² Augustine, Sermon 272 in *sermons (230-272B) on the Liturgical Reasons*, Trans. Edmund Hill, WSA III/7 (New Rochelle: New City Press, 1993), 300.

³ *ST* III, 80, 1.1

⁴ Feingold, *Touched by Christ*, 226.

As it turned out, the sacraments are more complex than this twofold separation allows, therefore this two - dimensional difference proved inadequate as a foundation for reasoning about them. Among the first to reflect deeply on a lasting sacramental reality, Augustine believed that the character that the sacrament left behind was more important than its fruitfulness in dispensing grace or its outward sign. In conflict with the Donatists, he constructed a theology of sacramental character that emphasized this awareness.⁵

1.1 Biblical Foundation of Sacramental Character

The etymology of the word "character" may be traced back to the Greek word *χαρακτηρ*⁶ which denotes a seal in two senses: actively, as a tool utilized in the production or imprinting of a seal, and passively, as a distinctive mark that is impressed or stamped. In theology of sacraments, the phrase "character" is virtually equivalent to the word "seal" *σφραγίς* (*sphragis*).⁷

The term *σφραγίζω sphragizo* (verb) in the Jewish scripture was predominantly defined in a literal sense.⁸ The Septuagint translators employed *sphragizo* to denote the protection of valuables (Deuteronomy 32:34; LXX 4 Kings 22:4, Septuagint only). During the ancient Near East period, the seal functioned as an indication of authority (Genesis 41:42; 1 Kings 21:28 or LXX 3 Kings 20:8), Personal seals were a sign of endorsement of an agreement (Nehemiah 10:1; 9:38ff). Daniel was instructed to close and “seal” the words of the scroll. It implied that its contents would remain hidden (Daniel 12:4,9; Isaiah 29:11).⁹

⁵ Nicholas Haring, “St. Augustine’s Use of the Word *Character*,” *Mediaeval Studies* 14 (1952): 85-86.

⁶ *χαρακτηρ* in *Greek-English Dictionary: Sigma–Omega*. Eds., Thoralf Gilbrant and Tor Inge Gilbrant (Missouri, Springfield: The Complete Biblical Library, 1991), 485.

⁷ J.Ysebaert, *Greek Baptismal Terminology: Its Origins and Early Development* (Nijmegen: Dekker and Van de Vegt, 1962), 390-426.

⁸ *σφραγίζω* in *Greek-English Dictionary: Sigma–Omega*, 222-224.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 223.

In the New Testament, σφραγίς is also mentioned on several occasions in relation to Baptism and Confirmation that follows. It may also allude to the gift of the Holy Spirit imparted in the sacrament; nevertheless, this New Testament application of the word “seal” lacks the specific connotation that would subsequently be ascribed to the concept of sacramental character.¹⁰

Jesus uses the term “to seal” in a transferred sense¹¹ in the discourse on the bread of life to refer to himself in a Christological setting that has sacramental implications. Jesus instructs in John 6:27, “Do not seek the food that perishes; rather, seek the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will impart to you; for God the Father has placed his seal on him.” The inference is that Christ can provide us with the food of eternal life due to the fact that, by means of the incarnation mystery, the Father has sealed him with the very eternal life that the Father has.¹²

This word is employed by Saint Paul (2 Corinthians 1:22) while discussing the Apostolic calling that he, together with Sylvanus and Timothy, was stamped by God as with a seal. Additionally, it is most plausible that Saint Paul designates the work of the Holy Spirit in the baptized Christian under the figure of a seal (Eph 1:13). Also, St Paul reminds the Ephesians that their call to faith and participation in the benefits of Christ's redemption was completely voluntary. He further informs them that they had obtained a guarantee of their future heavenly inheritance through the bestowal of the Holy Spirit, which affixed its seal to them upon accepting the proclamation of the gospel.¹³

All people who believed in and received the word of God during the Apostolic age were baptized instantly and received the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands. Consequently,

¹⁰ Feingold, *Touched by Christ*, 227.

¹¹ For a detailed analysis on the New Testament Foundation of “seal” see σφραγίς in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. G. Kittel and G. Friedrich, Vol. 7 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 948-950.

¹² Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentary on John*, Trans. David R Maxwell. In *Ancient Christian Texts* Vol.1. Ed. Joel C. Elowsky. (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2013), 1:197-198.

¹³ Pourrat, *Theology of the Sacraments*, 215-216.

they retained the heavenly Spirit's seal until the day of redemption (Eph 4:30). Those who obtain this spiritual seal are therefore entitled to salvation; and since St. Paul frequently asserts that Baptism is the means by which salvation is bestowed, Pourrat suggests that, in the apostle's mind, this seal is closely associated with Baptism and the right that bestowed the Holy Spirit.¹⁴

Feingold posits that the Old Testament analogy that underpins this concept is circumcision, a ritual that permanently impresses the recipient's body with the physical mark that signifies covenant participation. While the external manifestations of Baptism and Confirmation transient in nature similar to the act of circumcising, the imprint endures in a spiritual form rather than a physical one.¹⁵

St. Paul establishes a connection between the symbolic practices of circumcision and Baptism. Circumcision "sealed" Abraham's Covenant relationship with God based upon faith (*sphragis*, Rom 4:11). He asserts that our participation in the spiritual circumcision of Christ is made possible by Baptism.¹⁶ St. Paul writes, "By putting off the body of flesh in Christ's circumcision, you too were circumcised with a hand-free circumcision; and you were buried with him in Baptism; and you were raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead." (Col 2:11–12). Circumcision, as a sign of Christian initiation, serves as a conspicuous manifestation of the enduring impact of the sacrament. The baptized remain marked by the sacrament even when their lives no longer adhere to the covenantal demands into which they were bound.¹⁷

¹⁴ Ibid., 216.

¹⁵ Feingold, *Touched by Christ*, 228.

¹⁶ *Greek-English Dictionary*, 223.

¹⁷ Feingold, *Touched by Christ*, 228-230.

2. The Sacramental Seal in the Patristic Teachings

In response to issues regarding sacramental practices during the patristic period, the theory of the sacramental seal or sacramental character was formulated; it has persisted in Catholic sacramental doctrine to the twenty-first century. It attempted to provide answers to inquiries such as the following: What does it imply in the Bible that Christians are “sealed with the Spirit”? Why are certain sacramental procedures never repeated, like as Confirmation and Baptism? Is there meaning to a sacramental ritual if no tangible results are perceived? Does the efficacy of a rite rely on the minister's holiness or personal convictions?

In order to illustrate the notion that the sacraments have a lasting impact, St. Irenaeus used the head of the ruler and an inscription-engraved coin. Within the framework of his allegorical exegesis of the parable of the Good Samaritan, he asserts that Christ bandaged the wounds of humanity with sacramental medicines, so that we might receive "the image and superscription of the Father and the Son through the Spirit" after entrusting ourselves to his Spirit.¹⁸ The two pennies presented to the victim by the Good Samaritan imply the analogy. The inference is that the Holy Spirit is responsible for the act of sealing the Christian faithful with the image and inscription of the Trinity through Baptism and Confirmation.¹⁹

Similarly, Clement of Alexandria employs the example of the image and writing on the coin: “for he the Christian has through Christ the name of God written on him and the Spirit as an image. Even brute beasts through their branding show who sees the flock and the branding

¹⁸ Irenaeus. *Against Heresies*. Trans. Alexander Roberts and William Rambaut. ANF1. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 445.

¹⁹ Feingold, *Touched by Christ*, 230.

mark establishes a claim to them. Thus, the soul of the believer, which has received the seal of truth, there's the marks of Christ upon it.”²⁰

The phrase “seal of truth” pertains to Baptism and Confirmation, representing the enduring imprint of the Holy Spirit's name on the seal of God, which is compared to a coin in this context. Thus, according to Clement, Baptism functions as a configuration to the Trinity. Based on the parallel, this mark serves two purposes: a) it imparts a sacramental identity to Christians in the form of the “name of God”; and b) it bestows the Spirit as a living image, which also signifies the effect of grace. While Clement doesn't really clarify, unlike the former, the latter can be lost.²¹

The seal that the faithful receive at Christian initiation possesses the “form of Christ who seals; those who are sealed partake of it, being conformed to it,” according to Saint Athanasius.²² Thus, the seal confers Christ's identity and configuration. Saint Athanasius, on the other hand, identifies the seal with the Holy Spirit, who transforms the faithful to Christ, rather than differentiating between the seal and its effect of grace. Consequently, this interpretation of the seal is less precise than the subsequent concept of sacramental character. Athanasius, accordingly, does not explain how the seal can remain after one loses the Holy Spirit due to grave sin.²³

²⁰ Leeming, *Principles of Sacramental Theology*, 165. Leeming discusses the early Church Fathers' beliefs on the concept of sacramental character in greater detail. The quotation is translated from Clement of Alexandria, *Ecolga* 86.

²¹ Feingold, *Touched by Christ*, 230.

²² St. Athanasius, Epistle 1.23 to Serapion, in *The Letters of Saint Athanasius Concerning the Holy Spirit*, trans. C.R.B. Shapland (London: The Epworth Press, 1951), 124.

²³ St. Athanasius, Epistle 1.23 to Serapion, 124.

Saint Augustine articulated the military dimension of Baptismal character in particular within the framework of the Donatist debate.²⁴ He authored the following concerning individuals whom he urged to rejoin Catholic unity following the Donatist schism:

Similarly, with those who possess the Baptism of Christ; if they return to unity, we do not change or destroy their title, but we acknowledge the title of our king, the title of our commander. What are we to say? O wretched patrimony, let him whose title you bear own you; you bear the title of Christ, do not be the property of Donatus.²⁵

In a sermon on Baptism, Augustine further exposes this military parallel in an additional didactic work that critiques the Donatists.:

from the fact that the sacrament is not readministered to a deserter when he returns, it is clear that he could not have lost it when he withdrew. A military deserter is deprived of membership in the army, but he is still marked as a soldier of the King. And, if he signs another man with the same seal as his own, he does not give him participation in the life of the army; rather, he makes him - like the deserter himself - a soldier deprived of that membership. However, if the one would return to the army and if the other would join it,... to each of them peace would be restored, but in neither of them would the character be repeated which had once been sealed.²⁶

The early Fathers of the Church address three offices of Christ by drawing inspiration from the Old Testament ceremony of anointing kings, prophets, and priests with olive oil, symbolizing the Holy Spirit's spiritual anointing. In his capacity as the Anointed One, Christ

²⁴ Haring, "St. Augustine's Use of the Word *Character*," 81-83.

²⁵ Augustine, *St. Augustine on the Psalms*. Vol.1. *Psalms 1-29*. Trans. Scholastica Hebgin and Felicitas Corrigan. ACW 29 (New York: Paulist Press, 1960), 228.

²⁶ Augustine, *Answer to the Letter of Parmenian* 2.13.29, in *The Donatist Controversy I*, trans. Maureen Tilley and Boniface Ramsey (New York: New City Press, 2019), 325-326.

assumes all three duties. By being anointed and sealed in Confirmation, the Christian faithful are granted the ability to partake in Christ's priestly, prophetic, and kingly mission.²⁷

With great eloquence St. John Chrysostom articulates these three facets of the mission bestowed upon the faithful by means of Christian initiation seals. He writes as much in his commentary on 2 Corinthians 1:22. “And what is, “anointed,” and “sealed?” Gave the Spirit by Whom He did both these things, making at once prophets and priests and kings, for in old times these three sorts were anointed. What we have now not one of these dignities, but all three preeminently.”²⁸

Following an elaboration on the concept of kingship over oneself, Saint John Chrysostom provides the following summary:

So also art thou thyself made king and priest and prophet in the Laver; a king, having dashed to earth all the deeds of wickedness and slain thy sins; a priest, in that thou offerest thyself to God, having sacrificed thy body and being thyself slain also, “for if we died with Him,” saith he, “we shall also live with Him;” (2 Tim 2:11) a prophet, knowing what shall be, and being inspired of God, and sealed. For as upon soldiers a seal, so is also the Spirit put upon the faithful. And if thou desert, thou art manifest [by it] to all. For the Jews had circumcision for a seal, but we, the earnest of the Spirit.²⁹

²⁷ Cyril of Jerusalem, *Mystagogic Catecheses*, Sermon 3.6, in Edward Yarnold, *The Awe-Inspiring Rites of Initiation: The Origins of the R.C.I.A.*, 84. 2nd ed. (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1994).

²⁸ John Chrysostom, commentary on 2 Cor 1:22 in Homily 3.4-5 in *Homilies on the Epistles of Paul to the Corinthians*. NPNF 1:12.290.

²⁹ Chrysostom, commentary on 2 Cor 1:22 in Homily 3.7. NPNF 1:12.293.

While the theological doctrine of sacramental character is founded upon the patristic concept of the sacramental seal, the term itself is sometimes employed in a manner that obscures whether it pertains to grace per se or to something separate and distinct from grace.³⁰

Thomas Marsh, in summarising the patristic teaching pertinent to the character's theology, explains that this teaching is founded on the biblical metaphor of the seal. This concept encompasses a broader scope in patristic writing than the actuality that became recognized as the sacramental aspect. However, in the context of the sacraments, when the Fathers of the Church discuss the seal, which is customary, they typically allude to what we call the sacramental character. The sacraments commonly linked to the seal are initially Baptism then, starting about the middle of the third century, Confirmation and Baptism. Occasionally, the term pertains to the outward ceremony, but more frequently, it denotes the spiritual impact that the ceremony produces.³¹

As an explanation for the significance of this impact, the Fathers of the Church describe it as an indication of one's participation in the Church and God. Furthermore, they consider it a sign of transformation because it configures and consecrates the Christian to Christ and the Trinity. However, they refrain from openly discussing the connection between grace and the seal. Instead, they tend to perceive the seal in its ordinary sense as being intertwined with and associated with the presence of grace.³² During the Donatist controversy, Saint Augustine provides further elucidation on this matter.

³⁰ Feingold, *Touched by Christ*, 235.

³¹ Thomas Marsh, "The Sacramental Character." In *Sacraments: The Gestures of Christ*, ed. Denis O'Callaghan (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1964), 117.

³² Marsh, "The Sacramental Character." 117.

3. Augustine on *Sign* and *Reality*: The Donatist Controversy

A contentious debate emerged in North Africa during the third and fourth centuries regarding the validity of Baptisms administered by heretics or schismatics. Specifically, it centered on whether individuals who had been baptized by such individuals should be re-baptized upon rejoining the unity of the Church. St. Cyprian, who served as the Bishop of Carthage from 249 to 257 AD, ardently advocated against erroneous and schismatic sacraments.³³ Those who had been baptized inside a heretical or schismatic sect and subsequently reestablished Catholic unity were required to undergo Baptism.

The controversy was provoked by the persecution of Christians that commenced under the reign of Emperor Diocletian in 303 AD. Certain members of the clergy deserted their faith in regions when the situation was dire, and those who maintained their religious steadfastness typically agreed that these apostates had forfeited any semblance of clerical authority. However, some of them persisted in the practice of Baptism. Following the cessation of persecution, it came into consideration whether the individuals they had baptized should undergo a second Baptism, this time by clerics who were in good standing. In 314, a council of bishops convened in Arles and reached the resolution that they would not. It was also agreed that reordination would not be necessary for those who had been ordained by bishops who had switched sides. But there were individuals who did not accept their judgements, and among them was Donatus, the Bishop of Carthage. Northern Africans had endured a

³³ Cyprian of Carthage. *The Letters of St. Cyprian of Carthage*, vol.4, *Letters 67-82.*, 46. The stance of Cyprian is detailed in letters 69 through 75, particularly in 70.1.2-3. "How, we ask, can a man possibly cleanse and sanctify water when he is himself unclean and when the Holy Spirit is not within him? Whereas the Lord says in the book of Numbers: 'And everything which the unclean touches shall be unclean.' And how can a man who administers Baptism possibly grant forgiveness of sins to another when he is himself unable to put aside his own sins, being outside the Church?"

particularly brutal period of persecution, and as a result, they held apostates in particularly low regard.³⁴

Due to the complicated circumstances surrounding another Bishop of Carthage who had received his ordination from a Bishop who had allegedly defected during the persecution Donatus chose to be ordained by few other bishops. A considerable number of African bishops took Donatus' cause, and competing bishops emerged in a number of places within a short period of time: one who supported the council of Arles and the prevailing Church stance, and another who backed with Donatus and his minority.³⁵

Donatus' adherents maintained that the means of salvation were exclusive to the singular, sanctified Catholic Church, on the grounds that the Holy Spirit did not operate beyond the authentic Church of Christ. However, those who deserted their faith as apostates and heretics who denied its teachings severed their connection to the Church and, consequently, the Holy Spirit's work. As a result, any sacramental rites that they attempted to execute were futile and fruitless. Fundamentally, their inability to contribute what they themselves lacked rendered their rituals devoid of any spiritual advantages. Those whom they ordained were not, in fact, priests; therefore, they were required to be reordained. Furthermore, even if they performed Baptisms, the individuals they baptized failed to obtain the spiritual seal, had their sins not been expiated, and were not considered true members of the Church. spiritually speaking, their Baptism was invalid; therefore, rebaptization was necessary for salvation for those whom they baptized.³⁶

In contrast, Saint Augustine and Pope Stephen I advocated for the traditional view that Baptism remains valid notwithstanding the heretic, schismatic, or persecutor status of the

³⁴ A.H.M. Jones, *Constantine and the Conversion of Europe*. Revised ed. (New York: Collier Books, 1962), 91-107.

³⁵ Jones, *Constantine and the Conversion of Europe*, 91-107.

³⁶ Norbert Brox, *A History of the Early Church* (London: SCM Press, 1994), 42-46.

minister, so long as the fundamental components of the sacramental symbol remain intact. Pope Stephen drew inspiration from the old Roman practice,³⁷ and due to its universal applicability, Saint Augustine considered this practice to be part of the Apostolic Tradition.³⁸

Although it was considerably more recent, St. Cyprian too built his life on a tradition. Saint Augustine demonstrates how Cyprian derived his incorrect position from the authority of Agrippinus, a previous Carthaginian bishop, who was the source of this custom for Cyprian. He lacked awareness that Agrippinus' method of rebaptizing individuals who had been baptized in a schismatic or heretical sect was in fact a novel concept that had been implemented during the first council of Carthage, a regional synod Agrippinus presided over in 217 AD, approximately forty years earlier.³⁹

"There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that is inherent in your call, one Lord, one faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of us all," Saint Paul underlines clearly the unity of Baptism, which is connected to the unity of the Church, her faith, and her Lord (Eph 4:4-6). This indicates that Christ and our incorporation into Him by means of faith and Baptism constitute the Church is built on one foundation.⁴⁰ Saint Paul further discusses the one name of Jesus and the unity of Baptism: "Was Paul crucified for you? Did you receive your Baptism in the name of Paul? "I am relieved that, with the exception of Crispus and Gaius, I baptized none of you, should anybody assert that your Baptisms are in my name." (I Cor 1:13-15) This means that the effectiveness and unity of

³⁷ DS, 111. Bishop Firmilian of Caesarea, in a letter to St Cyprian, demonstrates the stance of Pope Stephen I.

³⁸ Augustine, *Baptism* 2.7.12, Trans. Boniface Ramsey, in *The Donatist Controversy I* (New York: New City Press, 2019), 431.

³⁹ Augustine, *Baptism* 2.7.12.

⁴⁰ John Damascene, *An Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*. In *Writings*. Trans. F.H. Chase Jr. FC 37 (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1958), 343. John Damascene elucidates the singularity of baptism by drawing a parallel between it and the atonement of Christ, as stated in Romans 6:2-11.

Baptism are derived from integration into the one Christ who died for all, and not from the holiness of any minister.⁴¹

It is important to highlight that during a period when theology was not as developed as it is today, there was a genuine necessity for a more profound comprehension of the theological dimensions of the sacraments than what is explicitly stated in the scriptures regarding their practice.

Cyprian contended that since grace and charity are indivisible and cannot exist outside of communion with the Church, Baptism outside of the unity of the Church is illegal and could not bestow grace. This implied that schismatic or heretical Baptism would be illegal as well as fruitless, a view that was shared by Pope Stephen and Cyprian. Cyprian's interpretation differed from Pope Stephen's and the Church's universal tradition in that it implied it could not be legitimate. According to his perspective, nothing occurs if the grace effect is absent. He failed to take into account the possibility that a Baptism may be legitimate, leaving an enduring and irrevocable effect, but nevertheless be ineffective in terms of salvation and grace as long as the person receiving the Baptism is still morally repudiated outside of the Church.⁴² Conversely, the argument of Pope Stephen, grounded in tradition, is logical solely if there exists an enduring impact apart from the disposition of the recipient that is dependent upon the efficacy of grace, and that is not dependent upon the recipient's faith or charity.⁴³

This additional lasting effect eliminates the possibility of re-Baptism and paves the way for the Baptismal grace to reestablish itself in a productive manner after penance eliminates the impediment to the unity of the Church. This enduring influence was thereafter referred to be the sacrament's character or its seal.⁴⁴ Persecution and the martyrdom of the frontrunners put

⁴¹ Feingold, *Touched by Christ*, 471.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 238.

⁴³ Leeming, *Principles of Sacramental Theology*, 130-131.

⁴⁴ Feingold, *Touched by Christ*, 238.

an end to the dispute, but it reappeared in the Donatist controversy. In this controversy, the Donatists upheld some of St. Cyprian's beliefs, holding that Baptism is invalid when administered by someone they deemed to be unworthy ministers (that is, those they ordained and baptized and those who were said to have drifted away during the persecution)⁴⁵

Augustine developed certain theological ideas of sacramental nature in his work *On Baptism*, which he wrote in opposition to the Donatists in 400–401. These ideas applied to both Baptism and holy orders. Augustine shows in this work, based on Church practice, that observing the sacraments apart from Catholic unity is not only forbidden but also futile. Nonetheless, it is not invalid, since its seal remains permanently affixed, even if it is not for the benefit of one who is not in Catholic unity. Augustine contends that this is evident from the lack of rebaptization by the Catholic Church and the Donatists for those who entered the apostasy but subsequently reentered the Church through penance. Even though apostasy would have resulted in the loss of grace, it is evident that Baptism remained intact, as it was not reapplied. Augustine extended to holy orders the same rationale. A cleric is not reordained upon his restoration to Catholic unity after apostatizing.⁴⁶

From this Church practice, Saint Augustine infers that the sacrament must endure to some extent, even in cases where it is futile, in order for it to be revived through repentance. In both cases—(a) Baptism or holy orders are received unfruitfully outside of the Church in a heretical or schismatic sect or in a state of mortal sin; and (b) when they are received fruitfully within the Church, but the individual subsequently and culpably enters a heretical, schismatic, or apostatic group, losing the fruit of grace, and then returns to the Church.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Jones, *Constantine and the Conversion of Europe*, 91-107.

⁴⁶ Augustine, *Baptism* 1.1.2, trans. Ramsey, 392.

⁴⁷ John F. Gallagher, *Significando Causant: A study of Sacramental efficiency* (Fribourg, CH: University Press, 1965), 35.

For example, those who undergo Baptism without contrition are really baptized; yet, due to the absence of repentance, their sins remain unforgiven, and they fail to obtain sanctifying grace.⁴⁸ However, a second act of repentance facilitates the absolution of sins and the infusion of grace, so establishing the effectiveness of Baptism. Augustine asserts the sacrament lasts despite its unfruitfulness. He says: “hence it is clear that Baptism is in the baptized person even when the baptized person is separated from the Church; the Baptism that is in him is, to be sure, separated along with him.”⁴⁹

Baptism lasts by virtue of an effect of the external sign that permanently imprints the receiver even when the visible sign ceases. This effect of the external sign serves as a permanent, imperceptible indication of Baptism. Therefore, Saint Augustine describes it as a lasting effect of the external sign and an abiding cause for the impact of grace that can be bestowed by it after the obstacle is eliminated. This enduring effect serves as an intermediary between the external sign and the sacrament's grace; it was termed “sacramental character.”⁵⁰

This is an intriguing instance of a theological idea developed prior to the development of a specific theological language to describe it. Baptism, or the “sacrament,” is how Saint Augustine usually refers to this enduring effect of Baptism.⁵¹ that cannot be effaced. Naturally, there is ambiguity in this description of the lasting effect of ordination and Baptism since there is no terminological differentiation established between the apparent sacramental sign and the invisible permanent effect of sacramental character. However, the context makes it easy to understand what he means. The sacrament itself has not ceased, even though the external celebration of it has, since it is still the work of Christ, which is impervious to human destruction. Therefore, it is illegal to rebaptize, as the Donatists did, and to violate both

⁴⁸ Augustine, *Baptism* 1.12.18, trans. Ramsey, 408.

⁴⁹ Augustine, *Baptism* 5.16.20, trans. Ramsey, 514.

⁵⁰ Feingold, *Touched by Christ*, 240.

⁵¹ Reginald M. Lynch, “The Sacraments as Causes of Sanctification.” *Nova et Vetera* (English edition) 12, no.3 (2014): 795.

Baptism and Christ's lasting work inside it. This lasting effect of holy orders, Baptism, and Confirmation dates back to the 12th century and is known as "sacramental character." Though Saint Augustine did not often use the phrase in the technical sense, this latter usage of the term was likely inspired by the fact that he used the military *character* comparison to describe this lasting effect.⁵²

This is yet another classic example of how the Church's liturgical and sacramental practices influence and shape sacramental theology. According to Saint Augustine, the Catholic Church's practices and the validity of Baptism being acknowledged by schismatic and heretical clergy were in line with an Apostolic tradition. Then, giving this practice a theological foundation that he already considered authoritative, he explained. In doing so, he laid the theoretical groundwork for the concept of sacramental character, which would later be identified with the sacraments and recognised as their "reality and sign" (*res et sacramentum*).⁵³

However, neither Saint Augustine nor other Church Fathers devised a three-tiered general view of the sacraments in which the intermediate level was a synthesis of the preceding two. The prevailing conceptual framework for considering the sacraments persisted until the 12th century, consisting of this dual differentiation between the sacrament and the *reality (res) of grace*.⁵⁴

4. The origin of *Res et Sacramentum*: The Berengarian Controversy

Catholic sacramental theology excelled during the 12th and 13th century. Scholars of the Middle Ages effectively integrated the patristic contributions, biblical facts, and sacramental practices of their time into a logically consistent framework that remained for centuries.

⁵² Haring, "St. Augustine's Use of the Word *Character*," 95-96.

⁵³ Feingold, *Touched by Christ*, 241.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 241.

However, the medieval were dissatisfied with Augustine's broader conception of sacrament as a sign of a hidden reality. The pursuit of a definitive definition of the term "sacrament" ultimately arose in response to a significant theological dilemma that arose in the Middle Ages.⁵⁵

Around the middle of the eleventh century Berengar of Tours (ca. 999–1088) criticized the notion that the consecrated bread and wine at Mass were indeed the body and blood of Christ. He acknowledged that Christ was present in the Eucharist, but he understood it to be a spiritual presence. Based on Saint Augustine's definition of sacrament as the sign of a sacred reality Berengar reasoned that everything could either be a sign or a reality; it could not be both. A crown is not a king; the man wearing it is the sole indication that he is one. Smoke is an indication of fire, but it is not fire. By extending this reasoning to the Eucharist, he maintained that the consecrated bread and wine had to be the actual flesh and blood of Christ or they had to be signs of that body and blood. Furthermore, Berengar could not have been more certain that the consecrated bread and wine had nothing at all in common with human flesh and blood. The consecration merely confers a new spiritual meaning on the components of the Eucharist. The heavenly Christ, or Jesus, who ascended into heaven with a glorified body, is perceived by the faithful as appearing in the form of the elements. In the end, Berengar concluded that the bread and wine were not the genuine thing—rather, they were signs. He also quoted Augustine, who had said "a sacrament is a sign of a sacred reality," to substantiate this claim (Letters 138,1.) He maintained that in order for the Eucharist to qualify as a sacrament, it had to signify Christ's flesh and blood, not his actual body and blood.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Leeming, *Principles of Sacramental Theology*, 254.

⁵⁶ Darwell Stone, *A History of the Doctrine of the Holy Eucharist*. Vol.1 (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1909), 244-258. A detailed and yet succinct record on the Berengarian Controversy can be found in this work.

Berengar's position was officially condemned at a few synods and was opposed by many of his contemporaries including Lanfranc (d.1089), the Archbishop of Canterbury. In 1059 Berengar was summoned by the Pope to explain his views on the issue at a council at Rome. At a plenary session of the council, he was presented with the demand to swear to a confession of faith in which he admitted the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist.⁵⁷

Berengar, like to the majority of his contemporaries in theology, held the belief that a sacramental rite included solely of two components: the ritual itself and the reality to which it referred; the *sacramentum*, or visible sign, and the *res*, or actual thing, to which it directed. It was quite evident the visible sign in the Eucharist consisted of the consecrated bread and wine, as well as the words of consecration that were spoken over them during the mass.⁵⁸ However, the issue persisted: to which reality does the Eucharist allude?

With time, mediaeval theologians came to understand that receiving Christ in communion rather than making him present on the altar was the ultimate goal of the consecration of the bread and wine, signifying a spiritual reality rather than a physical one. spiritual unity with Christ was therefore the ultimate reality, or the *res* of the Eucharist. However, the consecrated bread and wine did not change its state before being received. Theologians wondered if they were still a reality or just a sacrament. It was eventually determined that the answer was yes to both of them. Alternatively said, it was acknowledged that the bread and wine actually represented the flesh and blood of Christ.⁵⁹

Theologians of that era reasoned that the real presence of Christ's body and blood in the Eucharist cannot be explained by outward signs, as they are visible only to those who have

⁵⁷ Stone, *A History of the Doctrine of the Holy Eucharist*, 246-247.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 247-249.

⁵⁹ Boyd Taylor Coolman, "The Christo-Pneumatic-Ecclesial Character of Twelfth-Century Sacramental Theology." In *The Oxford Handbook of Sacramental Theology*, ed. Hans Boersma and Matthew Levering (Oxford: University Press, 2015), 201-217. Also see, R. F. King, "The Origin and Evolution of a Sacramental Formula: *Sacramentum Tantum, Res et Sacramentum, Res Tantum*." *The Thomist* 31 (1967): 21-82.

faith. Furthermore, despite the mysterious manner in which Christ's flesh and blood appear, they are corporeal realities and are not a spiritual grace conveyed by the sacrament. They act as an intermediary between the grace that is communicated by bread and wine and the external sacramental sign of their appearances. In addition to being the tangible, external signs of Christ's body and blood, they also serve as mysterious signs and sources of the grace bestowed by the sacrament and the charity and grace that unite the Church.⁶⁰

Indeed, the body and blood are distinct from both the reality of grace received and the visible sacramental manifestations. Instead, they constitute an intermediate entity composed of sacred sign and sacred reality elements. As a result, Middle Ages theologians began to refer to this intermediary level as both reality (*res*) and sign (*sacramentum*) - *res et sacramentum*. By virtue of the grace bestowed it is both a sacred although now imperceptible sign and an intrinsically supernaturally invisible reality.⁶¹

Moreover, the dogma of faith regarding the actual presence of Christ in the Eucharist persuaded the theologians that there is an invisible reality represented by the external sign that acts as a mediating cause between the sacramental sign and the grace communicated, functioning as the ultimate fruit of the sacrament. The presence of the Body and Blood of Christ, even though they are invisible, is the direct instrumental cause of the grace that was bestowed.⁶²

By the time the controversy had ended the doctrine of the Eucharist had decisively affected the definition of sacrament itself. Even his critics acknowledge the fact that the Berengar affair had brought about a clarification of sacramental theology by raising questions that had been neglected by the Fathers of the Church. They concluded that celebrating the sacraments

⁶⁰ King, "The Origin and Evolution of a Sacramental Formula, 21-82.

⁶¹ Ibid., 21-82.

⁶² Ibid., 21-82.

without understanding them is like speaking a language without knowing what it means⁶³. It became a requisite for the theologians of the time to find a new language, a third element, in the sacrament of the Eucharist which would safeguard the symbolic meaning of the sacrament and still preserve the reality of Christ's presence in the Eucharist. Due to the influence of Augustine's theology and his supremacy in the field of sacraments, it took nearly a century for the medieval theologians to bring about a satisfactory explanation of this issue. Although provisional replies were given by Lanfranc, and his companions, it took another while for the categorical response to be unfolded by Hugh of St. Victor in the first half of the twelfth century:

For although the sacrament is one, three distinct things are set forth there, namely, visible appearance, truth of body, and virtue of spiritual grace. For the visible species which is perceived visibly is one thing, the truth of body and blood which under visible appearance is believed invisibly another thing, and the spiritual grace which with body and blood is received invisibly and spiritually another.⁶⁴

5. The Three Levels

As a result, we have three different levels: (a) the external sacramental sign that enables (b) the hidden reality denoted by the outward sign, which is likewise a sign and cause of grace; and (c) the internal grace denoted and instrumentally caused by the two dimensions of signs.

The technical terminology used in Latin to denote these three levels are as follows:

sacramentum tantum, res et sacramentum, and res tantum.

⁶³ Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine*, vol.3, *The Growth of Medieval Theology 600-1300* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1978) 204.

⁶⁴ Hugh of St. Victor. *On the Sacraments of the Christian Faith* 2.8.7, Trans. Roy. J. Deferrari (Cambridge, MA: Mediaeval Academy of America, 1951), 308-309.

The first level, *sacramentum tantum*, is only a sign. The second level, *res et sacramentum*, is both a sign and a reality. And the third level, *res tantum* is not a sign but only a reality.⁶⁵

These technical terms gained widespread recognition through their inclusion in the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard, an influential scholarly work that served as the benchmark for subsequent generations. Peter Lombard writes:

And so there are three things to distinguish here: one, which is the sacrament alone [*sacramentum tantum*]; another, which is a sacrament and thing [*res at sacramentum*]; a third, which is thing and not sacrament [*res et non sacramentum*]. The sacrament and not thing [*sacramentum et non res*] is the visible species of bread and wine; the sacrament and thing [*res et sacramentum*] is Christ's own flesh and blood; the thing and not sacrament [*res et non sacramentum*] is his mystical flesh.⁶⁶

Through the phrase "mystical flesh," Lombard alludes to the supreme effect of the Eucharist, namely the grace of the unity of Christ's mystical body. It can be said that the primary breakthrough in sacramental theology in the twelfth century was the introduction of *res et sacramentum* as a practical answer to the challenge raised over a century earlier by Berengar. Although Peter Lombard and Hugh of St. Victor had both used that term in relation to the Eucharist, it was primarily due to Lombard's *Sentences* that it won acceptance by other theologians like St. Bonaventure, St. Albert, St. Thomas Aquinas, Bl. Duns Scotus, and their peers and finally approved by Pope Innocent III:

In his letter to a John, Archbishop of Lyon on the 29th of November 1202, Pope Innocent III writes on the *sacramentum tantum* of the Eucharist:

⁶⁵ King, "The Origin and Evolution of a Sacramental Formula, 21-82.

⁶⁶ Peter Lombard, *The Sentences. Book 4: On the Doctrine of Signs*. Trans. Giulio Silano. Mediaeval Sources in Translation 48 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2010), 44-45.

A careful distinction must be made between three different elements in this sacrament, namely the visible form, the truth of the body, and the spiritual power. The form is of bread and wine, the truth is of the body and blood, the power is of unity and charity. The first is a sacrament and not a reality. The second is both a sacrament and a reality. The third is a reality and not a sacrament. But the first is a sacrament or sign of a double thing. The second is the sacrament of one thing and the reality of another. The third is the reality of a double sacrament.⁶⁷

While speaking of the *sacramentum tantum* of the Eucharist, Pope Innocent had in mind, what the scholastics would term, the “matter” of the sacrament namely, the bread and wine and not the “form” or the words of consecration. In the course of time, the application of the *sacramentum tantum* was applied to the sacramental rite which has for its immediate effect the *res et sacramentum*.

Thus, the identification of the second element in the sacrament, as a spiritual *res* or reality caused by the external rite, which is a sign or *sacramentum* of the final effect, was a stepping-stone in the history of medieval sacramental theology. Feingold points to the account of John as evidence to support the concept of *res et sacramentum* as described in the gospel. Jesus, in His bread of life discourse, provides a concise elucidation of the following three levels: “The bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh” (John 6:51). The bread is the outward sacramental sign; Christ’s flesh truly present under the form of bread is the grace giving mystery (reality and sign); and the “life of the world” is the grace communicated (reality of grace).⁶⁸

⁶⁷ DS, 783. Letter to John, Archbishop of Lyons *Cum Martha circa*, (Nov 29,1202)

⁶⁸ Feingold, *Touched by Christ*, 277.

In conclusion, the *res et sacramentum*, which signifies the reality and sign, is the physical manifestation of Christ's Blood and Body in the form of bread and wine. It is a concealed reality established by the external sign, yet it also serves as a sign of spiritual realities—charity and grace within the soul—that it effectively generates.

The *res tantum*, or reality alone, is how one would be inclined to conceptualize the Real Presence. The fundamental essence of Christ's invisible humanity is a fact that cannot be overstated. The Eucharist is a sacrament of spiritual sustenance and charity, not the ultimate goal of presenting Christ's Body and Blood, incredible as such accomplishment may be.

Therefore, Christ's Body and Blood are made invisible so that we can benefit from a greater share in His divine existence and the compassion of His Sacred Heart, which furthers the recipient's integration into the Mystical Body. The reality of the Eucharistic gift *res tantum* is that greater participation in Christ and the supernatural life and unity of His Church.⁶⁹

⁶⁹ Feingold, *The Eucharist*, 516-522.

Chapter SIX

The Theology of *Res et Sacramentum*

The designation "mere sacrament," which denoted a symbolic reality and the reality only was subsequently extended to encompass all seven sacraments, including Baptism, by the end of the 12th century. These sacraments had received recognition as the primary means of sanctifying individuals at that juncture. Saint Augustine's research brought to light the notion of a sacrament being an enduring consecration distinct from grace, which could have potentially led to the distinction even in the absence of the Eucharist. Thus, while the influence of the doctrine of the Eucharist, to which the triple distinction so aptly applies, was significant, it was not decisive.¹

1. Eucharist, *Res et Sacramentum* and the other Sacraments

The Church Fathers initially interpreted the sacraments in relation to the bodily form of Christ. However, with the reduction of the sacrament to a sign introduced by Berengar, theologians were compelled to adopt the species of bread and wine as the current point of reference, rather than the real body present on the altar. Insofar as his notion gained widespread acceptance, there was a concurrent trend to see that tangible and observable sign inside the rite as a sacrament in the truest sense. By continuing to refer to the Body of Christ as a sacrament, the authors of the period maintained the key relationship between sacrament and body that is found in the New Testament and the Fathers of the Church. As previously said, the extended language begins with the Eucharist and separates three distinct aspects of each sacrament for this purpose. *Sacramentum tantum*, the initial dimension of a sacrament, most closely aligns with Berengar's definition: bread and wine are symbolic representations that indicate the existence of an additional unseen reality. The novel characteristic that

¹ Leeming, *Principles of Sacramental Theology*, 257.

rectifies the Berengarian lenses pertains to the second dimension, specifically the *res et sacramentum* (the body of Christ), which both signifies and represents reality and is the subject of our investigation here. In this case, the sign does not serve as an indication of a grace that is further away; instead, it signifies the grace itself and its perpetual presence. Therefore, Berengar's sign arrow is insufficient to convey this significance.²

According to mediaeval writers, Christ's physical form signifies something transcendent. It is *sacramentum* not in the sense that it transcends the corporeal, but in the sense that it assists us in comprehending the historical context of the flesh, specifically the *relational dimension* of the sign. This history is one in which Christ unifies us with himself, with one another, and with the Father. Thus, the development inside this "sign-body" becomes a realm of interconnections. Put simply, the connection between Jesus and his Church, which develops gradually over time, beginning with his incarnation and culminating in his ultimate resurrection. Aquinas encapsulated this mediaeval notion when he ascribed tripartite signs to each sacrament: that of commemorating the agony of Jesus, that of symbolizing love within the Church, and that of foreshadowing the ultimate resurrection.³

The body of Christ came to be known as *sacramentum et res*, a distinction that helped to restore deeper perspective given Berengar's insufficient understanding of sacrament as only sign.⁴ The Eucharistic body of Jesus maintains its status as the *sacramentum par excellence* and the foundational element in comprehending the nature of a sacrament. This is due to the fact that the relationships that develop and emerge from this body throughout time foreshadow the ultimate grace of communication between God and humanity, which shall be referred to as the "*res tantum*." On the other hand, *sacramentum tantum* consists of the species of bread and wine, which serve to illuminate the primary sacramentality of Christ's

² Granados, *Sacramental Theology*, 198-199.

³ *ST III*, 60.3

⁴ Haring, "Berengar's Definitions of Sacramentum," 145-146.

body, but always in accordance with the body's community characteristics and salvation history.⁵ After the introduction of this differentiation for the Eucharist, it was subsequently extended to the remaining sacraments, placing particular emphasis on Baptism.⁶

As opposed to the grace of communication with God and fellow Christians, which is denoted by *res tantum*, *res et sacramentum* in the Eucharist signifies the tangible presence of the body of Jesus. In Baptism, the terminology helps to differentiate between two effects of the sacrament: the Baptismal character, which unifies us with Jesus, and the grace received, which imparts the life of God. The water that is ceremoniously poured represents a sacrament (*sacramentum tantum*). However, within the Baptismal character, there exists an element that is both a *sacramentum* and a reality of grace—*res et sacramentum*—because it signifies more than just the believers' communion with Christ and the Church (*res tantum*).⁷

As an abiding concealed sign and reality, Christ's humanity, which is shown in its whole and entirety in the Blessed Sacrament, serves as the cornerstone and basis of the Church. The essence of the Church's existence is Christ's invisible presence with it through the sacramental species. The *res et sacramentum* of the Eucharist is the physical body, as Pope Innocent III has unequivocally declared.⁸

Since the Eucharist is Christ, the Head and Bridegroom of the Church, present in all His human and personal reality to sanctify and join His Bride to Himself, it strengthens the Church. According to the traditional perspective held by Aquinas, the Body and Blood of Christ serve as an efficacious sign of the sacrament's ultimate fruit—a more profound ecclesial unity—and a divinizing impact for the receiver. As opposed to the *res et sacramentum*, the deeper unity of the Mystical body is the *res tantum*, the ultimate result of

⁵ Granados, *Sacramental Theology*, 199.

⁶ Haring, "Berengar's Definitions," 145.

⁷ Granados, *Sacramental Theology*, 199.

⁸ DS, 783. *Cum Martha circa*, quoted in the previous chapter. See p.175.

the sacrament. The Eucharist's intrinsic order extends from the sacramental body of Christ to His Mystical Body.⁹

2 Baptismal Character: A point of Departure

The sacramental character is linked to what writers in the Middle Ages called "*res et sacramentum*." We now know that this phrase was comprised to refer to the dogma of the Eucharist. It is meant to complete the narrow view of sacrament as a mere sign (*sacramentum tantum*) of a faraway reality (*res tantum*), which would make people doubt that Christ is really present: on the altar would be the sacrament, not the reality it represents. Consequently, the phrase "*res et sacramentum*" serves to remind us that the sacrament principally consists of the body of Jesus and not of the bread and wine. This physical form, similar to all others, simultaneously functions as a signified reality and a sign (*sacramentum et res*). Specifically, it represents the individual's actual existence and the dynamic interactions that define him in his whole.¹⁰

The expression *res et sacramentum* would eventually be used to describe the Baptismal character. The allusion is to the body once more, this time to the Christian body insofar as it is conformed to the body of Jesus, which is the principal impact of Baptism. It is worth noting that Baptism, beginning with Peter Lombard and following the authority of Saint John Damascene, is precisely associated with the character that it imprints. The sacrament in this context is not *sacramentum tantum*, but rather *res et sacramentum*, or the Christian who celebrates the ritual, insofar as he is incorporated into Jesus. This is consistent with the patristic terminology that is mentioned before, which saw character as a lasting impact or seal of Baptism on the believers. Saint Thomas' insight follows the same lines: the character

⁹ Joseph Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, trans. John Saward (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2000), 86-87. See also Ratzinger, *Behold the Pierced One: An Approach to a Spiritual Christology*, trans. Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986), 89.

¹⁰ Granados, *Sacramental Theology*, 275.

conforms the baptized person to the body of Jesus, and Baptism becomes an instrumental cause of grace, transformed into a sacrament.¹¹

2.1 Sacraments of Character and *res et sacramentum*

The three dimensions determined for the Eucharist were likewise applied to the other sacraments. The most straightforward application is to the three sacraments that imprint character, because the sacramental character is the *res et sacramentum*. Saint Thomas' teaching on this threefold distinction to Baptism is relevant:

In the sacrament of Baptism, three things may be considered: namely, that which is “sacrament only” [*sacramentum tantum*]; that which is “reality and sacrament” [*res et sacramentum*]; and that which is “reality only” [*res tantum*]. That which is *sacrament only*, is something visible and outward; the sign, namely, of the inward effect: for such is the very nature of a sacrament..... the Baptismal character is *both reality and sacrament*: because it is something real signified by the outward washing; and a sacramental sign of the inward justification: and this last is the *reality only*, in this sacrament - namely, the reality signified and not signifying.¹²

Seeing the sacramental character of the three sacraments—a reality that exists before grace and, in a way, dispositive for grace—was not too difficult. It was difficult, nonetheless, to apply the *res et sacramentum* to the other sacraments. However, mediaeval theologians questioned how this unseen reality could be referred to be a sacrament or sign.

William of Auxerre (d.123) showcased the complexity of describing the sacrament of Baptism: “a sacrament is a visible form of invisible grace; but the character is not visible,

¹¹ Ibid., 275.

¹² *ST* III, 66.1

since it is only in the soul, and hence it is not a sacrament, and so it is not Baptism.”¹³ However, it was necessary to discover a solution, given that Augustine repeatedly compared the character to a sign or sacrament that differentiates Christians from unbelievers, identifies sheep as members of Christ's flock, and soldiers as individuals enrolled in His service despite their desertions.¹⁴

Peter of Potier (d.1205) responded with a fairly pessimistic assertion that even angels and God can perceive the character. A much superior resolution was proposed by William of Auxerre. The character is an intelligible sign and not a sensible sign - *signum non sensibile sed intelligibile*.¹⁵ Saint Thomas affirms and expounded upon this distinction when he states: “the character imprinted on the soul is a kind of sign insofar as it is imprinted by a visible sacrament: since we know that is certain one has received the Baptismal character through his being cleansed by the sensible water.”¹⁶ Put simply, the character's existence can be substantiated by the verification of a valid Baptism. Therefore, while not being a sensible sign in the sense that it cannot be seen, the character is an intelligible sign in the sense that it is knowable.¹⁷

After theologians had established the convention of designating the character as a *res et sacramentum*, they started deliberating on the characteristics of this third element inside the sacraments, which possesses both reality and sign. Initially, their discourse revolved around the sacraments of character imprinting, namely Baptism, Confirmation, and Orders. Thus,

¹³ Translation found in Leeming, *Principles of Sacramental Theology*, 245.

¹⁴ Augustine, *De Baptismo Contra Donat.*, NPNF-1, 4:414.

¹⁵ Translation in Leeming, *Principles of Sacramental Theology*, 245-246.

¹⁶ *ST* III, 63.1.2

¹⁷ Paul F. Palmer, “Theology of *Res et Sacramentum*” in *Readings in Sacramental Theology*, ed. C. Stephen Sullivan (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1964), 108.

a theology of *res et sacramentum* emerges primarily from their discourse on the sacramental character, which is materially related with the *res et sacramentum*.¹⁸

Given Augustine's analogy between the lasting impact of Baptism and a brand or mark inscribed on soldiers or burned on animals, it is rational to comprehend why William of Auvergne (d.1245) perceived the character as a sign of ownership, a sign of consecration akin to the consecration bestowed upon sacred vessels and Churches, and one which signifies an objective holiness distinct from charity or grace. By virtue of their character, the baptized receive God's ownership in a unique way. Due to their character, the baptized are regarded as God's own and are endowed with His favour. Consequently, the character simultaneously renders as a reality, as it forges an objective connection between the soul and God, and functions as a sign or anticipation of God's grace, as it embodies the ultimate disposition for grace. Although it is quite clear in Augustine's teachings, what William of Auvergne did not see—or at least did not articulate—is that the character unites the baptized more directly with Christ because it is the character of Christ, the image of Christ, designating the baptized as a follower of Christ, a soldier in His army.¹⁹

All of the great scholastic doctors, including Saint Thomas, agreed with William of Auvergne's teachings about character as a disposition or precursor to grace. The reason behind the widespread acceptance of the idea of the sacraments' dispositive causality is really this element of *res et sacramentum* as a disposition for grace. But in elucidating the essence of the character, Saint Thomas went further than William of Auvergne and his contemporaries. Thomas brought a whole new dimension to the character by viewing all three of the characters as being focused on Christian worship, without denying that the character exists before grace and the disposition for grace. Although the magistral definition of the day

¹⁸ Ibid., 108.

¹⁹ Ibid., 108-109.

emphasized that the character configures or likens the soul to the whole Trinity, Thomas regarded the character conformed the soul more closely to Christ, and especially to Christ in his role as priest.²⁰

In conclusion, this resemblance is not static but rather dynamic, since the Christian is assigned to engage in Christian worship through their character, and by participating in the priesthood of Christ, they are endowed with the ability to partake in Christian worship, which is active during Confirmation and Orders but passive in Baptism.²¹

3. The Nature of Sacramental Character According to Saint Thomas Aquinas

Thomas' reflection on sacramental character centers on the three aspects, namely Christian identity, priestly mission, and spiritual power.

3.1 A Unique Sign of Christian identity

Saint Thomas talks about the patristic ideas about the seal and what it means. He does this by using the example of the legionary, who wears a sign of his service to the emperor on his body. Soldiers and slaves had a mark on their bodies to show that they were sent to do physical work. Similarly, the Christians have a spiritual mark on their bodies to show that they are sent to do spiritual work, which is worshipping God through Christ in His Church. Thomas explains that the mark is of Christ.²²

Now whenever anyone is deputed to some definite purpose, he is wont to receive some outward sign thereof; thus in olden times soldiers who enlisted in the ranks used to be marked with certain characters on the body, through being deputed to a bodily service. Since, therefore, by the sacraments men are deputed to a spiritual service

²⁰ Ibid., 109.

²¹ *ST III*, 63.3

²² *ST III*, 63.3.2

pertaining to the worship of God, it follows that by their means the faithful receive a certain spiritual character.²³

In this passage, Saint Thomas presents a proper case for the existence of sacramental character. The principal objective of this practice is to provide a lasting identifying sign that sets apart the members of the Church from the rest of the society, much to how circumcision did to permanently separated the Israelites as a "kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Ex 19:6). By virtue of their Baptismal character, the baptized constitute a visible body that constitutes the Church. Should sacramental character not be an enduring reality instilled in the baptised, no permanent distinction would exist between Christians and non-Christians; the Church would resemble a club or voluntary association that individuals might choose to join or withdraw from at their discretion, rather than a truly visible society. Furthermore, by virtue of the sacramental character of Holy Orders, ecclesiastical states are distinguished within the Church, and the hierarchy is specifically distinguished from the laity. The Church, as an organic entity with a visible and enduring hierarchy, is once more concerned with its visibility.²⁴

Saint Thomas responds to a clear objection regarding the invisibility of the distinguishing sign between Christians and non-Christians by stating that while sacramental character is invisible, it is imprinted via a visible rite—the outward sacramental sign—through which we are aware of the existence of this enduring invisible sign.

The character imprinted on the soul is a kind of sign insofar as it is imprinted by your sensible sacrament: since we know that a certain one has received the Baptismal character, through his being cleansed by the sensible water. Nevertheless, from a kind of likeness, anything that assimilates one thing to another, or discriminates one thing

²³ *ST* III, 63.1

²⁴ Feingold, *Touched by Christ*, 243.

from another, though it be not sensible, can be called a character or a seal; thus, the apostle calls Christ the figure or *character* “of the substance of the Father” (Heb 1:3).²⁵

Character, albeit lacking sensibility, may be comprehended as an understandable sign due to the intellect's ability to deduce its existence from the external apparent sign. It has been observed that William of Auxerre provided the initial response to the objection, which subsequently gained widespread acceptance and was embraced by Saint Thomas.²⁶

3.2 Priestly Mission

If character is indeed a distinguishing mark that links man with Christ, then for what purpose are those who are faithful imprinted? Saint Thomas posits that the sacramental character is bestowed in the manner of a seal, designating an object as having been appointed for a certain purpose. A coin, which is designated for trade for products, has this symbolism, whereas soldiers who have been deputed to military service are denoted with a character. The faithful are obligated to accomplish dual objectives. Primarily for the joy of glory. Furthermore, it is the responsibility of every faithful individual to bestow upon others things that are relevant to the worship of God. Indeed, this is the intended function of the sacramental character, to put it precisely. Now Christ's priesthood serves as the model for the entire Christian religious ritual. As a result, it is evident that the sacramental character is specifically Christ's character, to whom the faithful are drawn since the sacramental characters are nothing more than specific priesthood-related activities that emanate from Christ.²⁷

²⁵ *ST III*, 63.1.2

²⁶ Palmer, “Theology of the *Res et Sacramentum*,” 107-108.

²⁷ *ST III*, 63.3

Thus, in various ways, the baptized, confirmed, and ordained faithful are initiated into the priesthood of Christ. By serving as an intermediary between mankind and God, this priesthood procures gifts of grace for humanity in offering sacrifices to God.²⁸

Sacramental character endows one with enduring spiritual strength to partake in Christ's priestly work. Through receiving and bestowing divine gifts, it is a supernatural participative power that enables members of the Church to serve as instruments of Jesus Christ in his mission to glorify the Father and sanctify humanity. Saint Thomas writes:

Now the worship of God consists either in receiving Divine gifts, or in bestowing them on others. And for both these purposes some power is needed; for to bestow something on others, active power is necessary; and in order to receive, we need a passive power. Consequently, a character signifies a certain spiritual power ordained unto things pertaining to the divine worship. But it must be observed that this spiritual power is instrumental: as we have stated above of the virtue which is in the sacraments. For to have a sacramental character belongs to God's ministers: and a minister is a kind of instrument.²⁹

4. Character as An Ontological Reality

In light of the fact that sacramental character is concealed by the outward sign (*res et sacramentum*) and is thus both an invisible sign and a hidden reality, the theologians of the thirteenth century pondered what type of reality it has in the soul. Given that it is not just a sign but also a lasting reality effected by the external sign³⁰ it follows that it must also be an ontological quality inside us that unifies and reorients us toward Christ in a novel and indelible manner.

²⁸ Yves Congar, *Lay People in the Church: A Study for a Theology of Laity* (Westminster: Newman Press, 1965), 141-144.

²⁹ *ST* III, 63.2

³⁰ *ST* III, 63.3.2

Each sign representing an alternative reality must possess its own reality, which serves as the fundamental basis for its capacity to symbolize that particular object.³¹ Furthermore, what does this reality about sacramental character entail? This was a challenging theological dilemma that occupied the thoughts of the preeminent scholars of the thirteenth century.³²

Speaking of it as an everlasting instrumental spiritual power that Christ can use to bring about sanctification seems to hold the key to the solution. Because sacramental character is a spiritual power that allows Christ's priesthood to function, it symbolizes Christ's priesthood. This is the answer of Saint Thomas:³³

In contrast, scholarly theologians of the thirteenth century provided several responses to this perplexing inquiry. Most theologians of the time, according to Pourrat, did not consider the sacramental character to be a power. Although this methodical explanation may sound appealing, it cannot help but appear arbitrary, as genuine Baptism can be performed by anybody. Therefore, the minister does not need to possess the priestly character in order to administer Baptism. Furthermore, the nature of Confirmation remains unconsidered, as it confers neither active nor passive power with respect to the other sacraments.

As we shall see in the following section, its definition varies among the theologians of the 13th century. Some consider it a mere supernatural quality that imbues the soul with unique connections to Christ, the functions of Christian worship, and grace. Conversely, others consider it a *habitus*.³⁴ Character is officially designated to take up the role of worship and is

³¹ ST III, 63.2.3 The relationship denoted by the term "sign," according to St. Thomas, must necessarily have a basis. At now, the correlation denoted by this character sign cannot be instantly established upon the essence of the soul; doing so would imply that it were intrinsically found inside each soul. That being the case, such a connection must be grounded in some aspect of the soul. Moreover, a character is fundamentally composed of this. Consequently, contrary to what some have asserted, it is not necessary that it be in the genus *relation*.

³² Feingold, *Touched by Christ*, 246.

³³ ST III, 63.2

³⁴ Pourrat, *Theology of the Sacraments*, 246. According to Pourrat, it was Alexander of Hales who taught that the character was an ontological reality, designated as a *habitus*. That is, a quality which perfects the soul intrinsically and fits it to receive grace. Later, Saint Thomas refuses to admit that it belongs to that kind of

granted a unique entitlement to receive grace through the imprint of Christ's likeness on the soul.³⁵ Saint Albert suggested that it was a consecration in relationship to God.³⁶ As the invocation of the Trinity in Baptism and the sealing with the spirit in Confirmation suggest, it is plausible to assume that character bestows upon the receiver a new relationship with the Trinity. But a true relationship needs a basis.³⁷

What does sacramental character suggest about the reality in the soul that makes a new relationship with God possible? Consequently, a few theologians maintained that the basis of this new relationship is the idea that character is a supernatural attribute of the soul that distinguishes the soul from people who have not received the sacrament. This is understandable as sacramental characteristics inherently identify individuals who have received it as members of the Church and set them apart from those who have not. It appears that this differentiation is a type of quality that gives them a particular characteristic, as Aristotle describes qualities.³⁸ It is reasonable, therefore, to hold that sacramental character is a kind of spiritual quality.

St. Bonaventure was among the great theologians who considered it to be a permanent disposition or habit that predisposes the receiver to the exercise of faith in a steady manner. The notion that character is a power was rejected on the grounds that a power could only be inherent to an entity or be a purely natural quality shared by all living things.³⁹

Saint Bonaventure posits that while character does not completely perfect the soul, it does predispose it to attain grace, which is a further form of perfection. Consequently, character

quality, which is called *habitus*. To Thomas, the kind of quality to which the character is to be assigned, is *potentia*.

³⁵ Pourrat, *Theology of the Sacraments*, 246-251.

³⁶ Feingold, *Touched by Christ*, 247.

³⁷ *ST III*, 63.2.3

³⁸ Aristotle, *Categories* 8, 8b25. in *Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation*. Ed. Jonathan Barnes, Vol. I. Bollingen Series LXXI-2 (Princeton: University Press, 1995).

³⁹ Bonaventure, *In IV Sent.*, d.6,a.1,q.1, in *Commentary on the Sentences: Sacraments*. Trans. Wayne Hellmann, Timothy Lecroy, and Luke Davis Townsend (St. Bonaventure, New York: The Franciscan Institute, 2016).

may consist of a certain unfinished spiritual light and a particular warmth that is benevolently bestowed. Moreover, the fourth Psalm describes this light as the seal of the soul or as that which is to be sealed within the soul. “The light of thy countenance, O Lord is sealed upon us.” (Ps 4:6)⁴⁰

Feingold argues that this answer is inadequate in that it fails to differentiate between the sacramental's ultimate effect and its sacramental character. Sanctifying grace is an supernatural habit by which the soul is disposed to glory and partakes in the divine nature. Theological and supernatural virtues are similarly habitual. However, those who remain without repentance for grave sin and thus lack grace and inner light also retain sacramental character.

Sacramental character hence cannot be equated with a virtuous soul characteristic, sanctifying grace, or its consequences. A power is open both to good or evil use, in contrast to habits which are either good or evil at a time. By virtue of their sacramental character, the baptized and those who have obtained Holy Orders, for instance, might employ their ecclesial identity and priestly authority for either immense good or evil, as when they commit sacrilege or scandal during the sacrament celebrations.⁴¹

Therefore, it appears that Saint Thomas Aquinas was the first to defend the view that character is a spiritual power⁴² ordered to Christian worship and to the receiving and administration of the sacraments.⁴³ He rejected the notion that character is a habitus. This ability is not inherent in human nature since it is supernatural; rather, it must be gained from above. It is an instrumental⁴⁴ power subject to Christ and His priesthood since it makes it possible to be actuated by Christ and His Spirit. Thus, character is a supernatural instrumental

⁴⁰ Bonaventure, *In IV Sent.*, d.6,a.1,q.1, in Hellmann

⁴¹ Feingold, *Touched by Christ*, 248.

⁴² Pourrat, *Theology of the Sacraments*, 247.

⁴³ *ST III*, 63.2

⁴⁴ *ST III*, 62.1

force of the soul that allows the soul to be raised and conformed to Christ in order to engage in Christian worship and devote the world to Him.⁴⁵

Hence, one could argue that sacramental character is an efficacious sign permanently imprinted on the soul that shapes and dedicates it to Christ, bestowing Christian identity in accordance with a particular state in the Church, and a matching ecclesial mission to partake in Christ's priesthood in that state. Additionally, it is a fundamental spiritual power to involve in Christ's priestly ministry by administering the sacraments through the reception of Holy Orders, actively fostering the growth of the Church and bearing witness to the faith in public through Confirmation.⁴⁶

5. The Indelible Nature of the Sacramental Character

When it comes to sacramental character, it's like a seal in that it leaves both a passive and an active impression. In a passive way, the outward sacramental sign leaves its mark on the soul. But once the seal is set, it can't be erased and will always be a sacramental cause.

We have seen that character is a sign that lasts, while the outward sacramental sign does not. It is not the same as grace, but it is always there as an invisible sacramental "word" to sanctify the persons throughout their lives sealed by Christ.⁴⁷

Dealing with Saint Augustine, Feingold points out that the three sacraments that imprint character may only be received once because of the indelible quality of character. It would be unnecessary and disrespectful to receive it again because the sacramental character remains even after the external words and actions have faded.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Roger Nutt, "Configuration to Christ the Priest: Aquinas on Sacramental Character," *Angelicum* 85 (2008): 698-711.

⁴⁶ *ST III*, 72.5

⁴⁷ *ST III*, 63.3.2

⁴⁸ Feingold, *Touched by Christ*, 251.

The phrase "sacramental character" was initially documented in the papal magisterium during the early 13th century in a letter authored by Innocent III. In this letter, Innocent III asserts that adults who are compelled to undergo Baptism do not acquire the sacrament itself or its intrinsic qualities. Conversely, those who willingly consent to Baptism, even if it is out of bad intent or fear, acquire the imprint of the Christian character. The character is clearly imprinted by the sacrament when it proceeds without being hindered by the resistance of an opposing will.⁴⁹

The Council of Florence teaches that Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Orders imprint character: "Among these sacraments, there are three, namely, Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Orders, that imprint an indelible character on the soul, which is the type of spiritual sign distinguishing from others. As a consequence, they may not be repeated in the same person. The other four, however, do not imprint a character and allow for repetition."⁵⁰

During the Reformation period, Martin Luther denied the existence of sacramental character, particularly in reference to Holy Orders, in his 1520 work *Babylonian Captivity of the Church*.⁵¹ Additionally, Zwingly⁵² and Calvin⁵³ disapproved of the character that Holy Orders evoked. Feingold, however, makes a significant point on Protestant theologians, noting that they generally rejected the notion of sacramental character on the grounds that it was not founded in biblical teachings. However, although rejecting the name, they kept the practise of baptising just once, which suggests they acknowledged the enduring nature of Baptism, which they referred to as "Baptismal character."⁵⁴

⁴⁹ DS 781. Innocent III, Letter to Archbishop Humbert of Arles *Maiores Ecclesiae causas*, 1201

⁵⁰ DS,1313. Council of Florence, *Exsultate Deo*

⁵¹ Martin Luther, *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*. In *Luther's Works*, Vol. 36. *Word and Sacrament II*, 3-126. Trans. A.T.W. Steinhauser (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1959).

⁵² Leeming, *Principles of Sacramental Theology*, 138.

⁵³ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Bk,4, ch.19.28-31. Trans. Henry Beveridge (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers 2008)

⁵⁴ Feingold, *Touched by Christ*, 253.

In response to Martin Luther and his followers' rejection, the Council of Trent unequivocally stressed the presence of sacramental character in the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Orders: "If anyone says that in the three sacraments, namely, Baptism Confirmation and Orders, a character is not imprinted on the soul, that is, a kind of indelible spiritual sign by reason of which these sacraments cannot be repeated, let him be anathema."⁵⁵

Additionally, in instructing on Holy Orders, the same Council establishes the subsequent definition:

But since in the sacrament of Orders, as also in Baptism and Confirmation, a character is imprinted that can be neither erased nor taken away, the holy council justly condemns the opinion of those who say that priests of the New Testament have only a temporary power and that those who have once been rightly ordained can again become lay persons if they do not exercise the ministry of the word of God.⁵⁶

Other facets of character are elucidated in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, in addition to the indelible aspect of character that was established at Trent. It declares that one is made a member of the Church in accordance with various states and functions by virtue of their nature. Character is the foundation of the visible Church.⁵⁷

Second, it accepts Saint Thomas's concept that the Christian partakes in the priesthood of Christ through character. Therefore, it constitutes a vocation to the service of the Church and to divine worship. Furthermore, it emphasizes that the character has a lasting "positive disposition towards grace." Thereby, the sacrament, which is administered at a certain

⁵⁵ DS, 1609. Council of Trent, Decree on the Sacraments session 7, Canon 9 on the Sacraments in General.

⁵⁶ DS, 1767. Council of Trent, Doctrine and Canons on the Sacrament of Orders.

⁵⁷ CCC 1121.

moment in time, maintains its efficacy in bestowing sacramental graces throughout time, thus becoming a promise and assurance of divine protection.⁵⁸

6. Character in Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Orders

Regarding the sacraments that imprint character it is natural for one to pose the question why is it necessary to receive Holy Orders for certain people and Baptism and Confirmation for others if the characteristics of the three sacraments are the same? Is one sacrament enough?

The three characters are distinguished by the *Catechism of the Council of Trent*, which defines sacramental character as a sacred power and a distinguishing trait of those who have received it in the Church. In addition to enabling the reception or performance of anything sacred, the character serves to differentiate those who have obtained it from those who have not. Both consequences are apparent by virtue of the nature of Baptism: it qualifies our eligibility to receive the following sacraments, and it differentiates the Christian from those who do not conform to the Christian faith. The preceding principles also apply to the other two sacraments. By virtue of the nature of Confirmation, we are equipped and instructed as Christ's soldiers, publicly to declare and defend his name against our adversaries—be they the internal enemy or the spiritual forces of evilness in places of power thus, in essence, differentiated from those who have only been baptized, who in essence are like the newborns. The authority to administer and consecrate the sacraments is bestowed by the character of Holy Orders, which also distinguishes its bearers from the remaining faithful.⁵⁹

6.1 Baptismal Character

A person's baptismal character bestows upon them the first spiritual power to partake in the subsequent sacraments, worship the Eternal High Priest within His Mystical Body, and

⁵⁸ CCC 1121.

⁵⁹ *Catechism of The Council of Trent*, part ii.xxv. Trans. J. Donovan (Dublin: James Duffy, 1867), 142.

therefore experience the supernatural life of that Body both in faith and as a witness to faith. *Lumen Gentium*,⁶⁰ states: The faithful are destined for Christian worship because they are incorporated into the Church through Baptism; having been reborn as God's children, they must profess their faith to others, which they have received from God through the Church. Pius XII speaks of Baptismal character in *Mediator Dei*: “By the waters of Baptism, as by common right, Christians are made members of the Mystical Body of Christ the Priest, and by the “character” which is imprinted on their souls, they are appointed to give worship to God. Thus, they participate, according to their condition, in the priesthood of Christ.”⁶¹

6.2 Confirmation and its Character

What distinguishing character traits does Confirmation have in comparison to Baptism? *Lumen Gentium* signifies a deeper connection with the Church and an ecclesiastical duty to bear testimony.: “They are more perfectly bound to the Church by the sacrament of Confirmation, and the Holy Spirit endows them with special strength so that they are more strictly obliged to spread and defend the faith, both by word and by deed, as true witnesses of Christ.” The “special strength” of the Holy Spirit is the effect of grace, for being more “perfectly bound to the Church” pertains also to sacramental character, by which the confirmed receive an ecclesial mission of giving witness to Christ “by word and deed.”⁶²

Having been anointed by the Holy Spirit, the apostles' post-Pentecostal transformation demonstrates the new spiritual identity, mission, and power that they had obtained. Thus, Confirmation bestows upon an individual the identity of a Christian who is commissioned by the Holy Spirit to actively strengthen the Church and provide public testimony to her

⁶⁰ *Lumen Gentium* 11.

⁶¹ Pius XII, Encyclical on the Sacred Liturgy *Mediator Dei* 88. November 20, 1947.

⁶² *Lumen Gentium* 11.

beliefs.⁶³ Saint Thomas elucidates the distinction by accentuating the facets of ecclesiastical testimony and spiritual battle within the character of Confirmation:

By the sacrament of confirmation man is given a spiritual power in respect of sacred actions other than those in respect of which he receives power in Baptism. For in baptism he receives power to do those things which pertain to his own salvation, forasmuch as he lives to himself: whereas in Confirmation he receives power to do those things which pertain to the spiritual combat with the enemies of Faith. This is evident from the example of the apostles, who, before they received the fullness of the Holy Ghost, were in the “upper room.....whereas afterwards they went out and feared not to confess their faith in public, even in the face of the enemies of the Christian Faith. And therefore it is evident that a character is imprinted in the sacrament of Confirmation.⁶⁴

Placing it out as one of the fundamental truths of the Second Vatican Council, the Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici* develops this issue of lay faithful participation in three offices of Christ with great eloquence. Baptized individuals participate in the priestly ministry by uniting themselves to Christ and His sacrifice through the self-offering and their everyday acts. (Rom 12:1-2). The threefold participation of the laity in the mission of Christ “finds its source in the anointing and Baptism, its further development in Confirmation and its realization and dynamic sustenance in the Holy Eucharist.”⁶⁵

6.3 Sacramental Character in the Ministerial and Common Priesthood of Christ

While all members of the Christian community partake in the priesthood of Christ by embracing the character of Baptism and Confirmation, their involvement in this priesthood is

⁶³ Congar, *I Believe in The Holy Spirit*, trans. David Smith (New York: Crossroad, 1997), 219-222.

⁶⁴ *ST III*, 72.5

⁶⁵ John Paul II, Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici*, 14. December 30, 1988.

fundamentally different from the more elevated level of participation that is bestowed by Holy Orders in the form of priestly character. This contrast, as stated in *Lumen Gentium* is not only one of degree, but of essence:

Though they differ from one another in essence and not only in degree, the common priesthood of the faithful and the ministerial or hierarchical priesthood are nonetheless interrelated: each of them in its own special way is a participation in the one priesthood of Christ. The ministerial priest, by the sacred power he enjoys, teaches and rules the priestly people; acting in the person of Christ, he makes present the Eucharistic sacrifice, and offers it to God in the name of all the people. But the faithful, in virtue of their royal priesthood, join in the offering of the Eucharist. They likewise exercise that priesthood in receiving the sacraments, in prayer and thanksgiving, in the witness of a holy life, and by self-denial and active charity.⁶⁶

Particularly by offering the Eucharistic Sacrifice, priestly character empowers him to assume the role of Christ, the Head of the Church. The baptized, conversely, become faithful members of Christ's body through the characters of Baptism and Confirmation; this membership empowers them to participate in the sacrificial offering of Christ the Head. By way of the character of Confirmation, members are also endowed with the Holy Spirit of Christ's power and are invited to actively offer the Sacrifice, including within it their own Christian lives of service and testimony. It follows that the Eucharistic focus, the essence of Christ's priesthood, is the centerpiece of all three sacramental characters.⁶⁷

Feingold observes that while the common priesthood of the faithful and the ministerial priesthood are fundamentally different, each successive character and associated sacred

⁶⁶ *Lumen Gentium* 10

⁶⁷ Matthew Levering, *Christ and the Catholic Priesthood: Ecclesial Hierarchy and the Pattern of the Trinity* (Chicago: Hillenbrand Books, 2010), 56

power builds upon the previous one, giving it a more comprehensive purpose. Thus, Baptism, which creates a newborn member of Christ able to qualify to receive the other sacraments, is necessary to fulfil the role of Confirmation, which assigns one to mature service and witnessing. In the same vein, Confirmation is necessary for the character of Holy Orders. Before being properly assigned to act in the person of Christ, one must first be equipped to be a mature witness for Him.⁶⁸

6.4 Holy Orders

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* places significant emphasis on its teaching about the sacrament of Holy Orders, characterizing it as a means of communicating sacred power that is in fact Christ's.⁶⁹ Furthermore, *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, of the Second Vatican Council, provides a definition of priestly character as the capacity to act in the person of Christ, the Head of the Church. "The priesthood, while indeed it presupposes the sacraments of Christian initiation, is conferred by that special sacrament; through it priests, by the anointing of the Holy Spirit, are signed with a special character and are conformed to Christ the Priest in such a way that they act in the person of Christ the Head."⁷⁰

Again, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* emphasizes: a priest, by virtue of his priestly character and sacramental function of partaking in Christ's headship, "is entrusted with the responsibility of not only representing Christ as the Head of the Church before the congregation of faithful, but also acting in the collective name of the Church when presenting the Church's prayer to God and, most significantly, when presenting the Eucharistic Sacrifice."⁷¹

⁶⁸ Feingold, *Touched by Christ*, 262.

⁶⁹ CCC 1551

⁷⁰ Second Vatican Council, Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests *Presbyterorum Ordinis* 2, December 7, 1965.

⁷¹ CCC, 1552.

Regarding priestly character, Pius XII teaches:

In the same way, actually that Baptism is the distinctive mark of all Christians and serves to differentiate them from those who have not been cleansed in this purifying stream and consequently are not members of Christ, the sacrament of Holy Orders sets the priest apart from the rest of the faithful who have not received this consecration. For day alone, in answer to an inward supernatural call, have entered the august ministry, where they are assigned to service in the sanctuary and become, as it were, the instruments God uses to communicate supernatural life from on high to the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ.....the fact that they alone have been marked with the indelible sign “conforming” them to Christ the Priest, and that their hands alone have been consecrated “in order that whatever their bless may be blessed, whatever they consecrate may become sacred and holy, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”⁷²

6.4.1 The Three Hierarchical Grades of Holy Orders

In contrast to Baptism and Confirmation, the Sacrament of Holy Orders imprints character in the following three hierarchical degrees: diaconate, priesthood, and episcopate.⁷³ The episcopate represents the pinnacle of Holy Orders among these three grades,⁷⁴ with the remaining two grades participating in an unequal manner. Priests share the sacerdotal dignity of bishops,⁷⁵ but deacons, occupying a subordinate position in the hierarchy,⁷⁶ assist in charitable work and altar service and collaborate with the bishops and priests in their ministry.

⁷² Pius XII, *Mediator Dei* 43.

⁷³ *Lumen Gentium*, 28.

⁷⁴ *Lumen Gentium*, 21.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 28

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 29.

It is evident that the priesthood is distinguished from the diaconate in character, as the priest obtains a sacred power to act in the person of Christ that the deacon lacks.⁷⁷

According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the sacramental powers of consecration of the Eucharist, sacramental absolution, Anointing of the Sick, and receiving by delegation the authority to administer Confirmation are not bestowed by the order of diaconate. A character is instilled in deacons by ordination that is unique in comparison to Baptism, Confirmation, and the two Orders' degrees that precede it.⁷⁸

Paul VI discusses the diaconate in the Apostolic Letter in which he provided guidelines for reinstating the permanent diaconate as “adorned with its own indelible character and its own special grace.”⁷⁹ *Lumen Gentium* speaks about the diaconate as follows:

At a lower level of the hierarchy are deacons, upon whom hands are imposed “not unto the priesthood, but unto a ministry of service.” For strengthened by sacramental grace, in communion with the bishop and his group of priests they serve in the diaconate of the liturgy, of the word, and of charity to the people of God.⁸⁰

Decades of dispute have surrounded the question of whether episcopal consecration imparts a sacramental character different from that of the priest. According to Feingold, Saint Thomas, Saint Jerome, Saint Peter Lombard, and Saint Bonaventure were among the eminent theologians who disputed this. However, in the years following the Council of Trent, the stance emphasizing a unique episcopal character grew in prominence and was supported by Saint Robert Bellarmine and several others.⁸¹

⁷⁷ *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 2.

⁷⁸ CCC, 1570.

⁷⁹ Paul VI, Apostolic Letter *motu proprio Sacrum Diaconatus Ordinem*, June 18, 1967.

⁸⁰ *Lumen Gentium*, 29. Also 41.

⁸¹ Feingold, *Touched by Christ*, 266-267.

In *Lumen Gentium*, the Second Vatican Council instructs that episcopal consecration bestows the fullness of the sacrament of Orders, namely the highest authority of the sacred ministry, which is referred to as the high priesthood, without explicitly referencing the issue. Furthermore, *Lumen Gentium* indicates that the bishops have an imprinted character that is distinct to the others.⁸²

The singular ordination to the episcopate serves as further evidence of the episcopal character, similar to the diaconate and the priesthood. Such language suggests an indelible mark. In his correspondence with John the Bishop of Ravenna, Gregory the Great teaches that an individual who has already consecrated or undergone ordination should not undergo a second ordination in the same manner as an individual who has been baptized.⁸³

As previously demonstrated, the theology of sacramental character emerged from the contemplation of the New Testament concept of "seal" and the liturgical praxis of one Baptism, Confirmation, and Ordination. Its profound ramifications for the Christian way of life must now be acknowledged. Our understanding has been developed to underscore the importance of ownership by Christ as it pertains to the imprinted seal that cannot be undone. Nevertheless, this seal is unique in that it is dynamic in one's religious life.

A solemn and comforting facet of sacramental nature is emphasized in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. This doctrine posits that the configuration formed by the Holy Spirit in relation to Christ and the Church is eternal; it persists perpetually within the Christian as a positive disposition toward grace, a pledge and assurance of divine protection, and a calling to divine worship and to the service of the Church.⁸⁴

⁸² *Lumen Gentium*, 21

⁸³ Gregory the Great, Letter to John, Bishop of Ravenna, in NPNF-2.12b:114.

⁸⁴ CCC, 1121.

The sacramental character is akin to a blueprint of our calling to be in Christ; it is endowed with the authority to gradually give the graces necessary to realize the image of Christ over time, in proportion to the extent of our cooperation and desire. It is a stamp of identity and purpose. This implies that the faithful can consistently "draw upon" sacramental character in all circumstances and needs that arise throughout their Christian lives. Therefore, sacramental character serves as a symbol of the faithfulness that the Triune God Himself imparts to us. The fact that Christ has imprinted His Spirit on our hearts attests to our closeness to Him.⁸⁵

6.5 Sacrament of Matrimony

The sacrament of marriage has an intermediate effect that is separate from the transitory outward sign and the grace effect that mortal sin might impede. This lasting effect is the sacramental commitment or bond that remains till the death of one partner, and it is what makes the *res et sacramentum* of matrimony. This union is created by the external sacramental sign, which is the couples' joint assent in the presence of witnesses.⁸⁶ In each couple, the sacramental bond serves as a sacred sign and unseen reality, connecting them in communion that represents the inseparable relationship between the Church and Christ.⁸⁷

Just as a sacramental character⁸⁸ brings a new relationship between spouses and Christ the Bridegroom of His Church, a sacramental bond establishes a stable foundation. This would signify and instrumentally cause the graces that spouses need to accomplish their spousal and parental mission, and a new classical mission to sanctify marriage and the family and form a domestic Church.⁸⁹

⁸⁵ Feingold, *Touched by Christ*, 270.

⁸⁶ DS, 1327. *Exsultate Deo* from The Council of Florence

⁸⁷ John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 13. Apostolic Exhortation on the Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World. November 22, 1981.

⁸⁸ Mark A. Pilon, *Magnum Mysterium: The Sacrament of Matrimony* (New York: St. Paul's, 2010), 74.

⁸⁹ CCC, 1631

Married love is described by the Second Vatican Council as genuine, entwined with divine love, and guided and strengthened by Christ's redemptive power and the Church's salvation work. The council describes the sacrament of matrimony as a sanctification and elevation of the natural marriage bond. Because of this, Christians have a unique sacrament that strengthens couples and gives them a sense of dedication to the responsibilities and dignity of their state.⁹⁰

The sacrament of matrimony, according to Paul VI's encyclical *Humanae Vitae*, is a vocation or mission that couples undertake in order to testify to the world about Christ and the joy and holiness of His design for married love. The Pope urges the married Christians saying, "For by this sacrament, they are strengthened, and one might almost say, consecrated to the faithful fulfillment of their duties."⁹¹

In his Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio*, John Paul II delves more into the reality and sign of matrimony: "The spouses participate in it as spouses, together, as a couple, so that the first and immediate effect of marriage is not supernatural grace itself, but the Christian conjugal bond, a typically Christian communion of two persons because it represents the mystery of Christ's incarnation and the mystery of His covenant." The Christian communion of two people, as expressed in the conjugal connection that also reflects the mystery of Christ's incarnation and the covenant, is what John Paul II means when he talks of the *res et sacramentum* in matrimony.⁹²

6.6 Anointing of the Sick

According to Saint Thomas, the Anointing of Sick does not leave an enduring character since it does not grant a stable status within the Church. He does, however, maintain that the inner

⁹⁰ *Gaudium et Spes*, 48.

⁹¹ Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae*, 25. Encyclical on the Regulation of Human Births. July 25, 1968.

⁹² John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 13.

anointing—that is, the penitent's internal devotion brought about by the sacrament that accomplishes the healing of the sin's remnants—is the *res et sacramentum* in this instance.

Mortal sin in so far as it turns inordinately to a mutable good, produces in the soul a certain disposition, or even a habit, the acts be repeated frequently..... The guilt of mortal sin is pardoned through grace removing the aversion of the mind from God..... Consequently, there is no reason why, after the guilt has been forgiven, the dispositions caused by preceding acts should not remain, which are called the remnants of sin.⁹³

According to theologians like Feingold, the *res et sacramentum* ought to be an enduring interior reality that is a cause and a clear sign of this inner fortification and healing. This reality should endure throughout the illness, even in cases where the recipient is not appropriately disposed of due to a lack of faith or repentance after receiving its effects of grace.⁹⁴

A few modern theologians consider the *res et sacramentum* of Anointing of the Sick to be a condition of consecration that unifies the gravely ill individual with Christ, who endured suffering on behalf of His Body throughout His Passion. In order to manifest his redeeming value on behalf of the sick and the entire Church, this consecration sacramentally unites the illness of a member of Christ with the suffering of his Head throughout the period of the illness.⁹⁵

Feingold argues that the external sacramental sign of anointing lends support to this view since anointing with olive oil is a normal practice in the liturgy to consecrate people and things, such as an altar or the hands of a priest during priestly ordination. Moreover, the *res et*

⁹³ *ST III*, 86.5

⁹⁴ Feingold, *Touched by Christ*, 283-284.

⁹⁵ Augustine DiNoia and Joseph Fox, "Priestly Dimensions of the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick," *The Priest* 62 (Aug 2006): 12. Also see Palmer, "The Theology of the *Res et Sacramentum*," 113.

sacramentum of every sacrament typically possesses a consecrational quality. As the result of the consecration of the matter, this is most evident in the Eucharist, where the *res et sacramentum* is the infinitely holy Body and Blood of Christ. Consequently, the individual afflicted with a sickness is consecrated by means of this sacrament in order to serve as a potent emblem of the redemptive suffering of Christ.

It is reasonable to assume that anointing serves a similar configuration to Christ bestowing a Christian identity, ecclesial mission, and spiritual power in a medical condition, even though it does not imprint character because it can be received more than once and does not confer a stable ecclesial mission. By means of this configuration with Christ, the Church's solidarity in this affliction is effectively demonstrated. This explains why the Anointing of the Sick sacrament may only be received once during a particular disease or stage of an illness: by understanding the *res et sacramentum* of Anointing as a consecration of the sick person configured to the suffering of Christ. Hence, the duration of a consecration is proportional to the object's identity. Accordingly, the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick confers a consecration that endures for the duration that the individual continues to be terribly afflicted with this sickness.⁹⁶

A small number of contemporary theologians like C. Howell have developed a unique view of the Anointing of the Sick sacrament. Aside from being anointed for death, the anointing is also for glory. It shapes a Christian's spirit to share in Christ's anguish, death, resurrection, and glory.⁹⁷

According to Palmer, the Anointing of the Sick is more of a means of consolation, strengthening, and restoration to the Church than it is of preparing the Christian for death. Consequently, a Christian would have a unique connection with the Church in the role of

⁹⁶ Feingold, *Touched by Christ*, 284-285.

⁹⁷ C. Howell, S.J., *Of Sacraments and Sacrifice* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1952), 75.

healer and comforter, as the Church carries on Christ's ministry of restoring health to the ill. Additionally, he implies that Christians are more compared to Christ during His crucifixion and suffering, when an angel visited Him and brought comfort, than to Christ during His resurrection. Palmer, rather of relating the Anointing of the Sick to Baptism, which represents Christ's death and resurrection, he draws parallels between the Anointing of the Sick and the Sacrament of Confirmation, which means strengthening.⁹⁸

According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the sacrament of Anointing of the Sick brings us conformity to Christ's death and resurrection. Through the sacrament, we are united with Christ's crucifixion and resurrection, which unite us with the eschatological configuration and the strength to triumph over sin and its consequences.⁹⁹

It follows that the *res et sacramentum* of the sacrament might be seen as this configuration of the suffering member of Christ's Body to the suffering of his or her Head. Anointing of the Sick is a temporary sacramental sign, but there must be a concealed, permanent sign for the sacrament to be valid for the duration of the disease. While sick, the *res et sacramentum*, like a character, provides identity (configuration), mission, and power; it is also an everlasting instrumental cause of the sacramental graces to help us spiritually benefit from our suffering for our own and others' sakes, and to fight against the remnants of sin. Through the sacramental sign of the anointing, the sick members of the faithful are marked with an everlasting word of Christ, requesting the graces necessary to sanctify their illness. Saint Thomas concurs with the view of the *res et sacramentum* as a consecration of the disease and, by extension, a configuration to Christ in order to manifest its redeeming power.¹⁰⁰ Therefore, considering the *res et sacramentum* of Anointing of the Sick as a consecration (the anointing) that bestows the sacramental authority (redemptive power) to be exercised on behalf of the

⁹⁸ Palmer, "The Theology of the *Res et Sacramentum*," 113.

⁹⁹ CCC, 1523.

¹⁰⁰ ST III, 63.2

Church, this perspective establishes the gravely ill individual in an objective manner similar to how Christ was configured in His redemptive suffering.

6.7 Sacrament of Reconciliation

The sacrament of reconciliation, also known as Penance, has been extensively explored in early Church history and sacred scripture, allowing for a more accurate determination of its *res et sacramentum*.¹⁰¹ Peter Lombard, among the 12th century's mediaeval thinkers, relates this sacrament to the Eucharist and associates its *res et sacramentum* with interior penance.

And as in the sacrament of the body, so also in this sacrament they say that sacrament alone is one thing, namely outward penance; another is sacrament and thing, namely inward penance; another is thing and not sacrament, namely the remission of sins. For inward penance is both the thing of the sacrament, that is, of outward penance, and the sacrament of the remission of sin, which it both signifies and brings about. Outward penance is also a sign of both inward penance and the remission of sins.¹⁰²

The three acts of the penitent—confession, satisfaction, and contrition—along with the form of absolution given by the priest constitute the outward sacramental sign, according to Saint Thomas, who bases his view on Lombard's idea. Accordingly, the *res et sacramentum*, or inner contrition, is brought about by the outward sign. Grace, in the form of forgiveness for sins and infusion of sanctifying grace, is brought about by this internal repentance in conjunction with the outward sign.¹⁰³ This stance is rational due to the fact that justification and the remission of sins require an inward contrition that arises from participation with actual grace.¹⁰⁴ This view highlights the significance of the penitent's internal repentance,

¹⁰¹ Palmer, "The Theology of the *Res et Sacramentum*," 114.

¹⁰² Peter Lombard, *The Sentences. Book 4: On the Doctrine of Signs*, 135.

¹⁰³ *ST*, III, 84.1.3.

¹⁰⁴ DS, 1526. The Council of Trent, Decree on Justification, Ch.6

which is a crucial aspect. As a result of the sacramental sign, this inward penance also serves as an instrumental cause to its final effect of absolution.¹⁰⁵

Since contrition is one of the three parts of the sacrament's matter, which is demonstrated through the act of repentance prior to obtaining sacramental absolution, the penitent ought to have previously developed an inward disposition of penance before to offering his or her confession. Undoubtedly, interior repentance is an essential condition for receiving the sacrament. It is caused inside the penitent by the inspiration of God, which compels one to repent and yearn for the sacrament.¹⁰⁶ The effectiveness of the sacramental absolution, however, transforms and strengthens this internal penance, which is an integral component of the subject matter of penance, in a supernatural and effective manner.

Peter Lombard writes: "God himself absolves the penitent from the debt of punishment; and he so absolves him when he enlightens him within, inspiring true contrition of heart."¹⁰⁷ Feingold notes that this can be understood in the following way: even though the penitent is not always aware of this effect, imperfect interior contrition that was solely motivated by fear of divine punishment will be transformed into perfect contrition that is motivated by love for God through the grace of the sacrament that restores charity. This transformation of contrition, on the other hand, appears to be associated with the influence of grace or *res tantum* as opposed to the *res et sacramentum*. In the same fashion, the grace acquired by priestly absolution would deepen the penitent's already perfect repentance. However, this is also an aspect of the effect of grace, or *res tantum*. The Thomistic view of interior penance doesn't fully explain how interior penance turns into a *res et sacramentum*, which is something in between that is an effect of the outward sign and naturally comes before the

¹⁰⁵ Gilles Emery, "Reconciliation with the Church and Interior Penance: The Contribution of Thomas Aquinas on the Question of the *Res et Sacramentum* of Penance." Trans. Robert E. Williams. *Nova et Vetera* 1, (English edn.) no.2 (2003): 284-300.

¹⁰⁶ *ST*, III, 90.2.1

¹⁰⁷ Peter Lombard, *The Sentences. Book 4*, 108.

effect of grace, even if they happen at the same time.¹⁰⁸ Conversely, interior penance appears to be either a reality enhanced by the sacrament's grace, in which case it is part of the *res tantum* and therefore posterior to the *res et sacramentum*, or something expressed by the outward sign, thus logically preceding the *res et sacramentum*.¹⁰⁹

Regarding this sacrament, some of the theologians of the 20th century have proposed an alternative understanding of the *res et sacramentum*, which equates it with reconciliation with the Church. Reconciliation with the Church is represented and enabled by the words of absolution; conversely, reconciliation with the Church represents and facilitates reconciliation with God.¹¹⁰

Bartholomew Xiberta argued this hypothesis in a PhD dissertation dated 1921; it has subsequently gained widespread recognition.¹¹¹ From a theological and historical standpoint, it has been supported by several theologians, including Karl Rahner.¹¹²

Important strengths of the thesis were highlighted. It rested on re-discovering the sacrament in accordance with the patristic tradition. According to the Church Fathers, receiving Holy Communion was made possible by the solemn ending of public penance, which was accomplished by the bishop imposing his hands on the penitent. This dramatically readmitted the penitent to full ecclesial communion.¹¹³ Additionally, it aligns with the teachings of Christ

¹⁰⁸ Feingold, *Touched by Christ*, 290

¹⁰⁹ Gilles, "Reconciliation with the Church and Interior Penance," 294.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 286-301.

¹¹¹ See Palmer, "The Theology of the *Res et Sacramentum*," 114. He gives a detailed description on Xiberta's Thesis.

¹¹² Rahner, "Forgotten Truths Concerning the Sacrament of Penance," in *Theological Investigations*, vol.2, trans. Karl-H. Kruger (Baltimore: Helicon, 1963), 135-172; Rahner, *The Church and the Sacraments*, 93.

Other theologians who support the idea that the reconciliation with the Church as *res et sacramentum* of Penance are Palmer, "The Theology of the *Res et Sacramentum* in *Readings in Sacramental Theology*, 114-121; Cyril Vollert, "The Church and the Sacraments," in *Readings in Sacramental Theology*, 99; Leeming, *Principles of Sacramental Theology*, 363-366; Schillebeeckx, *Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God*, 175.

¹¹³ Bernhard Poschmann, *Penance and the Anointing of the Sick*. Trans. Francis Courtney (New York: Herder and Herder, 1964), 25.

as stated in Matthew 16:19: The Holy Spirit, through the words of the priest, accomplishes what the minister of the Church announces on earth, namely the forgiveness of sins.¹¹⁴

An aspect of the sacrament of penance that is all too readily reduced to an individualized perspective is its ecclesiastical character, which was also highlighted in this thesis. This ecclesiastical aspect of penance, as well as the entire sacramental system, was emphasized by mid-20th-century theologians like as Henry De Lubac.¹¹⁵

Conversely, the thesis itself was provocative since it appeared to support non-Catholic historians of penance who had maintained that the early Church penitential discipline was instituted to make the sinner more acceptable to the Church as an outside society while ignoring the sinner's relationship with God. They contended that reconciliation with the Church does not equate to reconciliation with God. The majority of theologians at the time believed that the bishop's reconciliation after fulfilling the canonical penance was not the sacrament of penance but rather the lifting of an excommunication in the external forum or the granting of an indulgence. This made Xiberta's thesis particularly novel. Palmer asserts that the consensus among contemporary Catholic historians is that the bishop's ultimate reconciliation of penitence was genuinely sacramental. In actuality, there is no concrete proof that sacramental absolution occurred right away after confession in the Church throughout the first nine centuries, with the exception of emergency situations.¹¹⁶

Palmer expands on Xiberta's theory by noting that Xiberta affirms that reconciliation with the Church is the *res et sacramentum* of the sacrament of penance at the conclusion of his thesis.

¹¹⁴ Clarence McAuliffe, "Penance and Reconciliation with the Church," *Theological Studies* 26. no.1 (1965): 4.

¹¹⁵ Henry de Lubac, *Catholicism: Christ and the Common destiny of Man*. trans. Lancelot Sheppard and Sr. Elizabeth Englund (San Francisco: Ignatius press, 1988), 88. "In St Cyprian's view, for instance, the priest's intervention has for its immediate effect this "return" of the sinner, this return of one who has been "cut off" to the assembly of the faithful; the cleansing of the soul is a natural consequence of this reimmersion in the stream of grace, and it should be defined as a return to the "communion" of Saints. It is precisely because there can be no return to the grace of God without a return to the communion of the Church that intervention of a minister of that Church is normally required."

¹¹⁶ Palmer, "The Theology of the *Res et Sacramentum*," 114-115.

Palmer contends that Xiberta's arguments are supported by the formulae Christ used when he promised and bestowed the Apostolic ministry of forgiveness. “Whatsoever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Matthew 18:18) and “Whosoever sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them” (John 20:23). God's act of pardoning the sinner precedes the Church's actions of remission and pardoning in both situations. Simply said, God reconciles to Himself those individuals whom the Church reconciles with herself. The penitence of the offender will undoubtedly influence God's approval of this action by the Church. It is evident, however, that the action of His ministers—who act in the name of the Church—is necessary for God to reconcile the sinner, if this condition is met.¹¹⁷

Given the inherent flaws in both prevailing interpretations of the *res et sacramentum* of Penance, it is my conviction that it is most advisable to return to the teachings of the Church, particularly the Council of Trent, regarding this sacrament.

The Council states that through the sacrament of penance, “we conform ourselves to Christ Jesus, who made satisfaction for our sins.”¹¹⁸ By expressing regret for his sins and a readiness to perform the assigned work of penance in the sacrament, this configuration is visible. Maintaining a condition of grace ensures that the ongoing internal penance sustains the conformity with Christ, just as the external actions of penitence establish it.

Christ is without sin, yet during His whole life, especially in His suffering in Gethsemane and throughout His Passion, He carried out the ultimate act of grief and atonement for all of humanity's sins. Christ is the vicarious penitent who wins forgiveness for the sins of the entire world because He is the new Adam, the new Head of Humanity.¹¹⁹ Engaging in the sacrament of penance signifies a renewed sense of identification with this essential aspect of Christ's

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 115.

¹¹⁸ DS, 1690. Council of Trent, Doctrine on the Sacrament of Penance, Ch.8

¹¹⁹ ST III, 8.3

identity. Sacramental conformity is achieved between the penitent and the Penance of Christ.¹²⁰

Therefore, the *res et sacramentum* of Penance might be conceived as the sacramental configuration that connects the penitent to the Penance of Christ. Following the Council of Trent, this argument, in fact, seeks to clarify how inner penance might be seen as an invisible reality and sign, which is not a big deviation from Saint Thomas' thesis about interior penance as the *res et sacramentum*. Anew and to Christ's satisfaction, the sacrament bestows a sacramental configuration onto the penitent's internal penance, which is shown in the visible sign during the celebration. When one turns to Christ in repentance and submits to His mercy and forgiveness, it becomes an efficacious sign of that compassion that they can use as an instrument for Christ to bring down the graces they need to make up for their sins. Because of this, it is a lasting internal sign and instrument of the grace that the sacrament's external celebration brings.¹²¹

¹²⁰ Palmer, "The Theology of the *Res et Sacramentum*," 120.

¹²¹ Feingold, *Touched by Christ*, 297.

Chapter SEVEN

***Res et Sacramentum*, Its Relevance in the Sacramental World**

Thus far, we have observed that the identification of a *sign* and an intermediary level of *reality* in the seven sacraments constitutes a theological development. It was the result of an extended contemplation of the sacramental practice of the Church, which commenced with Baptism and progressed to the Eucharist. As we have seen, the *res et sacramentum*, or intermediary level of non-sensible reality and signs, has a permanent character, but the length of the duration differs across the sacraments. In addition to the valid outward sign, the *res et sacramentum*, the reality and sign, are objective and not contingent on the degree of the recipient's subjective dispositions. In contrast, the reality of grace is conditional on the recipient's dispositions. Its function is objective and undeniably influences the effectiveness of the sacraments that we shall examine in this exposition.

1. Validity, Licitness, Fruitfulness and Reviviscence

The validity of a sacrament is essential for its efficacy. *Res et sacramentum* is transmitted by a valid sacrament as an essential component of the sacramental action of grace. Validity is attributed to a sacrament when its sign possesses all the necessary components, including matter, form, subject and minister with proper intention. One example of how their indelible characters remain imprinted is when Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Orders are celebrated in a valid manner. In the same manner, the real presence is invariably produced when the Eucharist is validly celebrated. By doing so, the sacrament is endowed with objective efficacy.¹

¹ The symbolic reality and the validity of the sacraments is extensively dealt in Leeming, *Principles of Sacramental Theology*, 251- 279.

A sacrament was judged licit if it was administered in compliance with all the restrictions prescribed by canon law. It was considered unlawful if one or more of those regulations was broken. Consequently, altering or omitting certain components of the mass would be unlawful, and the same applies to any other sacramental ceremonies. Similarly, a priest would be canonically prohibited from celebrating Mass or administering other sacraments in a diocese without the consent of the local bishop. In neither instance would the administered sacraments be deemed invalid, unless the criteria for validity were also neglected. The distinction between validity and liceity was significant as it indicated that sacraments administered illicitly were often canonically legitimate. Therefore, if a priest from a different diocese unlawfully heard a dying individual's confession or gave extreme unction, those who participated in the sacramental rite, oblivious to his legal impediment, could still be confident that they had genuinely received a sacrament. Moreover, if a deposed or heretical bishop ordains individuals to the priesthood, such ordination is illicit, yet the priests are validly ordained; consequently, the sacraments they subsequently administer are also valid, albeit illicit. It should be noted that this perspective on sacramental administration was articulated explicitly only during the evolution of Canon Law within the Church.²

Fruitfulness is related to the grace effect, *res tantum*. When the effect of grace is experienced, a sacrament is said to be fruitful. Sacraments may be valid but fruitless at the same time. This happens when sacramental grace cannot be received by the recipient due to improper dispositions, even when the *res et sacramentum* is validly produced.³

The sacrament is said to "revive" due to the enduring nature of *res et sacramentum*, since only the sacramental reality remains of the sacrament. The revival of Marriage, Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Orders can occur with the removal of an obstacle to grace; that is,

² Martos, *Doors to the Sacred*, 89-90. Also, cfr Leeming, *Principles of Sacramental Theology*, 266.

³ Leeming, *Principles of Sacramental Theology*, 275-278

their reviviscence can even occur more than once when the obstacle to grace is set and then removed. The reviviscence of the Eucharist is constrained to the extent that the sacramental species, which represents the symbolic reality, continues to exist. The reviviscence of Marriage and the Anointing of the Sick are both possible only during the lifetime of the husband and wife, and during the same illness, respectively. This is due to the fact that the *res et sacramentum* remains valid only as long as the marital bond endures, and the sick person's commitment to God remains valid only for the duration of his perilous illness. Hence, the theory of reviviscence gives substance to assertions that sacraments are not merely transitory but are also permanent causes of grace.⁴

2. Sacraments and their Efficacy

The notion of sacramental efficacy was an important issue concerning the Church during the Reformation period. The Council of Trent's decision on the sacraments in general, session 7, adopted in 1547, is considered the most significant authoritative statement on sacramental efficacy.⁵ The Council aimed to preserve the effectiveness of sacraments by avoiding Protestant mistakes and steering clear of intricate debates inside Catholic theology institutions.⁶ The key notion that Trent defines is that the sacraments are efficacious *ex opere operato*.

The sacraments are inherently effective because they are instruments used by the humanity of Christ. If the priest validly celebrates the sacramental ritual with the goal of carrying out the Church's actions, and if the receiver does not hinder it, the sacrament will bestow grace.⁷

Catholic theology expresses the intrinsic efficacy of the sacraments of the Church through the

⁴ Ibid., 278.

⁵ DS, 1608, The Council of Trent, Decree on the Sacraments, (Session 7), can.8, on the Sacraments in General

⁶ Reginald M. Lynch, *The Cleansing of the Heart: The Sacraments as Instrumental Causes in the Thomistic Tradition*. (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America, 2017), 49-54; Also, see Lynch, "The Sacraments as Causes of Sanctification," *Nova et Vetera* (English edition), 12, no.3 (2014): 820-822.

⁷ DS, 1611. The Council of Trent, Decree on the Sacraments, Session 7, on the Sacraments in General.

phrase *ex opere operato*, which literally means “by the work worked” or “by the work that has been realized.”⁸ This means that grace is produced through the sacramental action, or in the words of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*: “by the very fact of the actions being performed.” The “work” here refers to the valid realization of the sacramental sign.⁹ Therefore, the efficacy of the sacraments is not derived from the minister's sanctity, but rather from the performance of “all the essentials that pertain to the effecting or conferring of the sacrament”¹⁰ with the aim of accomplishing the same thing that the Church does. The *Catechism* continues: “From the moment that a sacrament is celebrated in accordance with the intention of the Church, the power of Christ and His spirit acts in and through it, independently of the personal holiness of the minister.”¹¹ The Council of Trent's Decree on the Sacraments established the dogma of faith that the sacraments are efficacious *ex opere operato*, provided that the recipient does not possess any impediment. Canon 6 elucidates the teaching previously articulated by the Council of Florence¹² that all those who do not present an impediment receive the grace that the sacraments signify and contain.

Furthermore, the eighth canon condemns the Protestant perspective that attributes the effectiveness of the sacraments to the faith practiced during their reception, as opposed to attributing it to the sacrament's intrinsic power (*ex opere operato*):

If anyone says that through the sacraments of the new law grace is not conferred by the performance of the rite itself but that faith alone in the divine promise is sufficient to obtain grace, let him be anathema.¹³

⁸ Gallagher, *Significando causant*, 51.

⁹ CCC, 1128

¹⁰ DS, 1612 The Council of Trent, Decree on the Sacraments, Session 7.

¹¹ CCC, 1128

¹² Council of Florence, *Exultate Deo* (DS, 1310).

¹³ DS, 1608

The intrinsic efficacy of the sacraments comes from the fact that Christ is the principal minister, who, through His omnipotence, moves the instrumental cause, that is, the sacramental sign, to enable it to imprint character and infuse grace. Saint Thomas explains, "The sacrament is performed by the power of God and not by the righteousness of the celebrant or the recipient."¹⁴ The *Catechism of the Council of Trent* expresses this point with clarity:

Because in the performance of their sacred functions they represent not their own but the person of Christ, these instrumental ministers validly effect and confer the sacraments - no matter how good or evil they may be in their persons. The only conditions for this validity are that they use the matter on the form instituted by Christ and preserved in the Catholic Church, and that they intend to do what the Church does. Therefore, unless the recipients on their own part deliberately resist the Holy Spirit, nothing can prevent them from receiving the sacramental grace.¹⁵

The teaching of the Council of Trent on the causal efficacy of the sacraments is explained by the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*: Celebrated worthily in faith, the sacraments confer the grace that they signify. There are efficacious because in them Christ himself is at work: it is he who baptizes, he who acts in his sacraments in order to communicate the grace that each sacrament signifies..... this is the meaning of the Church's affirmation that the sacraments *ex opere operato* (literally: by the very fact of the actions being performed)¹⁶ that is to say, by virtue of the saving work of Christ, accomplished once for all.¹⁷

¹⁴ *ST* III, 68.8; also see *CCC*, 1128

¹⁵ *CCT*, part 2, intro., 25

¹⁶ *CCC*, 1127-1128.

¹⁷ Joseph. Ratzinger, "On the Concept of Sacrament," in *Theology of the Liturgy: The Sacramental Foundation of Christian Existence*. Vol. 11 in *Collected Works*. Ed. Michael Miller. Trans. John Saward, Kenneth Baker, Henry Taylor, et al. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2014), 180. See also Paul VI, *Mysterium Fidei*, 38.

On the contrary, the efficacy of prayers does not solely depend on the way they are done (*ex opere operato*); rather, it is the individual's own involvement that renders them fruitful. The phrase "*ex opere operantis*" in theology signifies this: "from the work of the person who is acting." It alludes to the moral excellence and merit of the individual performing the action.¹⁸

The sacraments possess intrinsic efficacy, or *ex opere operato*, by virtue that Christ is their principal agent, and the minister serves as a mere instrument in His service, comparable to a living paintbrush or chisel in His grasp. Put simply, the efficacy of the sacraments is derived from Christ rather than the sanctity of the instrumental minister.¹⁹

The principal agent, by divine power using sacramental signs, is the only one capable of working internally in the recipient's soul, imprinting character and bestowing grace.

Without the minister's sincere intention to emulate the actions of the Church, his personal unworthiness or even absence of faith does not impede the inward working of Christ and His Spirit within the recipient's soul. During an emergency, an unbaptized individual can perform a Baptism if they have the intention to carry out the actions of the Church. On this Saint Thomas responds:

The man who baptizes offers but his outward ministration; whereas Christ it is who baptizes inwardly, who can use all men to whatever purpose He wills. Consequently, the unbaptized can baptize: because, as Pope Nicholas I says, "the Baptism is not theirs," i.e., the baptizers', "but His," i.e. Christ's.²⁰

¹⁸ The formulae *ex opere operato* and *ex opere operantis* were first adopted by William of Auxerre in the early thirteenth century and were rapidly adopted in the course of that century. Cfr., Paul Haffner, *The Sacramental Mystery*, 3rd edn. (Herefordshire: Gracewing, 2016), 13-16; Michael Schmaus, *Dogma*, Vol.5. *The Church as Sacrament*, 14; J. F. Gallagher, *Significando Causant*, 57; Lynch, "The Sacraments as Causes of Sanctification" in *Nova et Vetera*, 801.

¹⁹ Otto Semmelroth, *Church and Sacrament*, 95-96.

²⁰ *ST* III, 67.5.1

Likened to a conduit through which Christ's grace passes, a wicked minister is capable of bestowing grace through the sacraments, despite not imparting his own sanctity as if he were the principal agent. Saint Thomas writes:

The ministers of the Church work instrumentally in the sacraments, because, in a way, a minister is of the nature of an instrument..... an instrument acts not by reason of its own form, but by the power of the one who moves it. Consequently, whatever form or power an instrument has in addition to that which it has as an instrument, is accidental to it..... Therefore, the ministers of the Church can confer the sacraments though they be wicked.²¹

It should not be assumed that the sacraments consistently bestow the same degree of grace merely because they function *ex opere operato*, as their operation is not mechanical or magical. While the sacramental graces are bestowed in accordance with the unchanging merits and power of Christ's passion, their fruitfulness and the degree of grace received by individuals may differ due to factors such as the recipient's disposition.²²

The International Theological Commission states that a suitable disposition requires more than just avoiding any external or internal contradictions with the sacraments meaning. A positive intention is necessary for a fruitful reception. Put simply, the recipient must have faith in both the substance and the existential aspect of what Christ provides through the Church's sacraments. The crucial point is that the recipient fully accepts the Church's doctrine.²³ Therefore, the effectiveness of sacramental acts is entirely attributable to Christ and not to the faith of the priest or recipient. In order to avoid falling into sacramental

²¹ *ST III*, 64.5

²² *CCC*, 1128: "Nevertheless, the fruits of the sacraments also depend on the disposition of the one who receives them."

²³ International Theological Commission, *The Reciprocity between Faith and sacraments in the Sacramental Economy*, Vatican (2020), 68

automatism or magic, it maintains the dialogical aspect of the sacramental event open.²⁴ Put another way, Christ's power, not human efforts, produces the sacraments' effects. Consequently, the sacramental causality is not derived "from the worker's work" or *ex opere operantis*.²⁵

However, in order for the sacrament to be fruitful or for the ultimate reality, it is necessary for humanity to willingly embrace God's gift of faith, which is faith. This is a fundamental element of the dialogical nature of the sacraments and is necessary for the transmission of grace, which occurs in the realm of signification, which is suited to symbols and signs. One cannot understand the meaning of symbols or signs unless they engage with the world that the symbol in its significance generates. In a similar vein, one cannot experience the fruitfulness or the benefits of sacramental grace without immersing oneself in the reality that these signals represent. And the key to entering the world where sacramental realities, or *res et sacramentum*, actually become signs that effectively cause divine grace is faith.²⁶

2.1 Ecclesiological Nature of *Res et Sacramentum*

The ecclesial aspect of the *res et sacramentum* is something we have previously discussed in the last chapter, though not in great length, particularly in regard to the seven sacraments. Matthias Scheeben was the first modern theologian, writing in the last decades of the 1800s, to emphasize the ecclesiological nature of the seven sacraments. Scheeben's contribution to the theology of the *res et sacramentum*, however, has not been widely recognised by English speaking theologians until the middle of the twentieth century, with the translation of his great classic, *Die Mysterien des Christentums* in 1961.

²⁴ International Theological Commission, *The Reciprocity between Faith and sacraments*, 69

²⁵ Paul Haffner, *The Sacramental Mystery*, 13.

²⁶ International Theological Commission, *The Reciprocity between Faith and sacraments*, 67.

Scheeben, revisiting the initial application of the phrase "res et sacramentum" in relation to the Eucharist, arrives at the following conclusion: "It is only through the body of Christ and our union with it in one mystical body that its fullness of graces is communicated to us, and we share in the divine life coursing in it."²⁷

This notion of a "unique union with the God-man as the head of His mystic body" also predominates in Scheeben's explanation of the *res et sacramentum's* significance. Scheeben, like William of Auvergne, perceives a unique consecration and objective holiness in the sacraments that imprint a character. By a stroke of theological brilliance, he compares this holiness to the substantive sanctity or objective holiness of Christ's humanity. Thus, Scheeben argues that the character finds its original model in the grace of the hypostatic union, where Christ's humanity is joined to the Trinity by the Word, necessitating habitual grace in His soul.²⁸

Likewise, our union with Christ in and through His Mystical Body, the Church, is established by the nature or *res et sacramentum* of the remaining sacraments; this creates a need for the unique sacramental graces that emanate from the Head to the different members. As previously mentioned in the preceding chapter, the outward sacramental sign permanently imprints character, which bestows upon Christians a sense of identity, an ecclesiastical mission, and the spiritual fortitude to execute it. Although Scheeben describes the *res et sacramentum* as a "title to grace," it is important to note that this title does not exist solely in the legal or moral order. By virtue of our unique union with the God-man as the Head of His Mystical Body, we are entitled to receive grace.

²⁷ Scheeben, *The Mysteries of Christianity*, 575.

²⁸ Scheeben, *The Mysteries of Christianity*, 584.

Scheeben reaches the following conclusion regarding the *res et sacramentum* of sacraments besides the Eucharist: “consists in a special union with the God-man as head of His Mystical Body, by which participation in the spirit, that is, in the divinity and the divine life of the God-man, is granted to us on the basis of a special supernatural title, and for a special supernatural end.”²⁹

2.2 The Ecclesial Dimension of *Res et Sacramentum* in Sacramental Dialogue

The concept of *Res et Sacramentum* delineates the dual dimensions of sacraments, comprising both their physical, tangible manifestations (the *res*) and their profound spiritual effects (the *sacramentum*). This duality serves as a foundational aspect of sacramental theology, intertwining the physical and spiritual dimensions of sacraments. This distinction is crucial, as it resonates with Avery Dulles’ notion of the Church as a revelatory symbol, which bridges the gap between spiritual and physical realities, reinforcing a sacramental ecclesiology that emphasizes the church’s role in divine self-communication.³⁰

Because the Church itself serves as a sacrament of Christ and actively mediates divine grace, this dualism promotes a greater sense of ecclesial identity. The Church emphasises its place in the salvation story, which is characterised by community and connection, by becoming both the subject and the object of faith in this sacramental dialogue. This notion is reinforced by the theological discussion around ecclesiology, as Susan Wood demonstrates, which places the Church in a broader framework.³¹ Furthermore, by strengthening the bond between

²⁹ Ibid., 575.

³⁰ Abraham B. Fisher, *The Church as Symbolic Mediation: Revelation Ecclesiology in the Theology of Avery Dulles* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2013), 66-68.

³¹ Susan Wood, “The Sacramental Foundations of Ecclesial Identity: Barrier or Passageway to Ecumenical Unity?,” in *Believing in Community : Ecumenical Reflections on the Church*. Eds. Peter de Mey, Pieter de Witte, and Gerard Mannion. (Leuven: Peeters Publishers, 2013), 455-475.

sacrament and community in promoting spiritual communion, Abraham Fisher's ideas support the idea that the Church serves as a symbolic mediator of revelation.³²

Furthermore, the interaction between Scripture and the liturgy demonstrates how sacramental participation transcends simple ritual and embodies a more profound spiritual involvement that draws the faithful into communion with Christ, ultimately enhancing both personal and communal theological discussion.³³ This perspective makes *res et sacramentum* more than just an academic idea; rather, it is a dynamic source for comprehending sacramental dialogue in the Church.

2.3 Personal and Ecclesial Faith in Sacramental Dialogue

Ganoczy argues that the human equivalent of this creative and free interaction between God and humanity is faith in a sacramental act. The fundamental position of faith also includes self-communication. The sacraments therefore challenge the believer to open himself up to an interactive relationship with God in his entirety as a bodily being. This is the aim of the entire symbolic language of sacramental celebration. Thus, at its foundation, the sacrament points towards a distinctive kind of dialogue between God and humanity, which serves as a channel for a variety of complex forms of communication between people. Therefore, the reality that the manifestations of grace represent has a communication aspect.³⁴

While the recipient's or each person's faith is undoubtedly not the source of the grace at work in the sacrament, it is a component of the appropriate disposition required for the sacrament's

³² Fisher, *The Church as Symbolic Mediation*, 66-68

³³ Gerlach, Matthew Thomas, "Lex Orandi, Lex Legendi: A Correlation of the Roman Canon and the Fourfold Sense of Scripture" (2011). Dissertations (2009 -), 154-157.

http://epublications.marquette.edu/dissertations_mu/122.

Gerlach, Matthew Thomas, "Lex Orandi, Lex Legendi: A Correlation of the Roman Canon and the Fourfold Sense of Scripture" (2011). Dissertations (2009 -). Paper 122.

http://epublications.marquette.edu/dissertations_mu/122.

³⁴ Ganoczy, *An Introduction to Catholic Sacramental Theology*, 175-176.

fruitfulness in order for it to be fruitful.³⁵ A subjective understanding of faith (*fides qua*) that is unrelated to the real truth of God (*fides quae*), transmitted by revelation and upheld by the Church, is impossible. As such, there is a deep connection between the things to which we consent and the act by which we believe.

It is the sacramental signs represent God's presence in the world and history, serving to inspire, express, and maintain faith. According to Christian beliefs, faith must be expressed through sacraments and not be reduced to personal beliefs. Similarly, sacramental practices should be rooted in ecclesiastical faith rather than mere ritualism. If faith does not involve aligning with confession and participating in the life of the Church, then it is not a true incorporation into Christ.³⁶

Thus, before, during, and after the celebration, the sacraments are symbols of faith in all facets of their realization. As a result, they require faith, and it is clear that the person receiving the sacraments is a member of the Church.³⁷ As a result, personal faith is a participation in ecclesial faith, a response to the sacramental experience of revelation witnessed, proposed, and inspired by the Church and the Holy Spirit.³⁸

From this particular standpoint, every sacrament is inherently an act of the Church. These actions constitute expressions of ecclesiastical faith. Prior to the faith of the individual faithful, there exists the faith of the Church. It is, in fact, an individual manifestation of the ecclesiastical faith.³⁹ Hence, in the absence of active participation in the ecclesiastical faith, symbols of a sacramental nature remain symbolic and lack their intended significance.

³⁵ International Theological Commission, *The Reciprocity between Faith and sacraments*, 90.

³⁶ Theological Commission, *The Reciprocity*, 51.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 57

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 60

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 21; also 39.

Sacramentality denotes communion and personal communication between the believer and God through the Church and sacramental mediations.⁴⁰

3. *Res et Sacramentum* and the Causation of Grace

The fundamental tenet that regulates the sacraments is that they effectively bestow the grace that they signify. As will be argued in the following sections, since the reality and sign, *res et sacramentum*, is an invisible and durable sacramental sign in and of itself, it produces effectively what it signifies so long as no obstacle prevents it from accomplishing its purpose.

In the 12th and 13th century Western European Scholastic theologians aimed to provide a more precise formulation of Catholic teaching on the sacraments befitting of a university context for the study of religion. In response to the Berengarius controversy surrounding the Eucharist, scholastic theologians were compelled to counter Berengarius' claims about the efficacy of the sacrament. It just so happened that in the Western Latin world, this shift occurred at the same time as people were getting back into Aristotle's ideas on causality.⁴¹

While all scholars during this era supported the effectiveness of the sacraments, there was no agreement on how to theologically justify that effectiveness. They provided three distinct solutions:

a) In accordance with a divine covenant, the sacraments are essential circumstances or occasions for the bestowal of grace (Saint Bernard, Saint Bonaventure, Scotus, and the Nominalist tradition). This will explained in the following section.

b) The sacraments bestow the *res et sacramentum*, an essential disposition for the bestowal of grace (Saint Albert, Alexander of Hales, and early teachings in Saint Thomas); or

⁴⁰ Ibid., 19.

⁴¹ Feingold, *Touched by Christ*, 358, 403-404.

c) Subsequently developed simplified teachings of St. Thomas regarding the sacraments as two-fold instrumental causes of grace entailed the imprinting of the *res et sacramentum*, which afterwards served as the instrumental cause for the infusion of grace.⁴² Within this particular framework Saint Thomas's doctrine regarding the causality of the sacraments emerges as an exceptional contribution to the inquiry into the efficacy of the sacraments. It is deserving of careful consideration and incorporation into the Church's *ex opere operato* doctrine.⁴³ Hence, I adopt his teachings to support my argument on the subject matter of the whole discussion here. Besides, on a practical level, dealing with all the Fathers and other theologians on this issue will indeed lose focus on the topic we discuss. After all it is not the sacramental causality precisely that we are dealing with. And hence, St Thomas Aquinas.

Saint Thomas proceeded to appropriate a precise understanding of causality in order to elucidate the manner in which Christ influences the faithful through the sacraments. This was accomplished by adopting Aristotle's fourfold understanding of causality and using it to justify how the sacraments produce specific effects, such as new birth, regeneration, illumination, and so forth, as revealed in Scripture.⁴⁴

Aristotle's famous "four causes" represent his contemplative approach to causality, which is basically an attempt to explain why realities exist in the order of being.⁴⁵ A cause is an actual principle that is essential to the existence or development of anything else.⁴⁶ Saint Thomas

⁴² Nutt, *General Principles of Sacramental Theology*, 112-113.

⁴³ Nutt, *General Principles of Sacramental Theology*, 99-100.

⁴⁴ Liam Walsh, OP, "Sacraments," in *The Theology of Thomas Aquinas*, ed. Rik Van Nieuwenhove and Joseph Wawrykow (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), 330.

⁴⁵ See *Aristotle's Metaphysics*, trans. Richard Hope, 26th edn. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007), 88.

⁴⁶ Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle's Physics.*, bk.1, lect.1, no.5, trans. Richard J. Blackwell, Richard J. Spath, and W. Edmund Thirkel (Notre Dame: Dumb Ox Books, 1999), 3.

teaches that the term principle is understood only in “an order or sequence, where is the term cause implies some influence on the being of the thing caused.”⁴⁷

Four types of causes were distinguished by Aristotle: material, formal, efficient, and final. The causes serve as explanatory factors or explanations for realities in their most fundamental states. The internal principles that constitute a reality are elucidated by the material and formal causes, while the agency that brings about that reality and the ultimate goal or purpose for which the agent acts are explicated by the efficient and final causes.⁴⁸

Aristotle defines efficient causality, the form of causality linked to the sacraments, as “the agent through which an initial state of rest or change is generated.”⁴⁹ And again, “any agent generally is the factor whereby a change or state of being is initiated.”⁵⁰ Each of these instances demonstrates that the cause of the motion is explained by efficiency in the order of causality. Francis Meehan in his doctoral thesis provides the subsequent synopsis of Aristotle's stance:

Our study of Aristotle's concept of efficient cause has led us definitely to the conviction that what he had in mind was a cause that contributed to the being of another or influenced the existence of another by way of motion, in other words, a moving cause (*aitia kinousa*), a cause which is responsible for the initiation of change, becoming, and the like.⁵¹

The sacraments explain the action or agency that results in the state of sanctification through sacramental grace, which is why the causality of the sacraments is explained in terms of

⁴⁷ *Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics.*, bk.5, lect.1, no.751, trans. John P. Rowan (Notre Dame: Dumb Ox Books, 1995), 277.

⁴⁸ *Aristotle's Metaphysics*, trans. Richard Hope, 355.

⁴⁹ *Aristotle's Metaphysics*, 88.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 89.

⁵¹ Francis Meehan, “Efficient Causality in Aristotle and St. Thomas” (Ph. D. Dissertation, The Catholic University of America, 1940) Cited in Nutt, *General Principles of Sacramental Theology*, 102.

efficient causality. The main focus of efficient causation is the agency or activity that explains a being. What the efficient cause does is create a being that is different from itself by its real, physical action. This is not the action of a mechanical force. It is relational, deliberate, and meaningful.⁵²

Under the new labels of moral and physical causation, the opinions that were disputed in the thirteenth century persisted in the air. Karl Rahner presented a quite different sort of thought in the middle of the 20th century. This theory views the sacraments as "intrinsic symbols" that express what the Church already is rather than as having efficient causality attached to them.⁵³

This stance, as it pertains to contemporary theology, neglects to emphasize the fundamental significance of the Incarnation, the origin of the sacramental economy. It also neglects to demonstrate how Christ builds up the Church, His Bride, through the sacraments, symbolized by the water and blood that flows from His pierced side on the Cross in John's gospel (19:34). It is difficult to explain how the sacraments bring about a new infusion of grace, remission of sins, and new supernatural realities like sacramental character, the bond of marriage, and most importantly, the Body and Blood of Christ in the Eucharist, without the exercise of efficient causality.⁵⁴

4. Sacraments as Conditions for Receiving the Grace in Franciscan School of Theology

In an effort to elucidate the efficacy of the sacraments, numerous mediaeval theologians viewed the Sacramental rituals as identifying the recipient of God's action in granting grace. This encompasses the sacraments, which are conditions or occasions that Christ established

⁵² Nutt, *General Principles of Sacramental Theology*, 102.

⁵³ Rahner, *The Church and the Sacraments*, 34-40.

⁵⁴ Feingold, *Touched by Christ*, xlv

for the application of the grace that he earned for us on Calvary. They function as markers that indicate who should receive grace. In technical terms, the sacraments would not be causes of grace in the appropriate sense, but rather necessary conditions for the perception of grace as a result of a covenant established in the blood of Christ. Saint Bernard⁵⁵ implied and St. Bonaventure defended this probable position,⁵⁶ which could be referred to as sacramental occasionalism, sacramental extrinsicism,⁵⁷ or covenantal causality.⁵⁸ Duns Scotus, Durandus, and Gabriel Biel, as well as the followers of the Scotist and Nominalist schools, continued to maintain it into the 14th century.⁵⁹

Saint Bonaventure illustrates this theory through the example of a lead coin or seal, which would be a monetary instrument similar to our paper currency. He attributes this analogy to great theologians who preceded him:

To this they offer this example: a king decreed that anyone who had a certain seal would receive a hundred pounds. After his decree the seal does not have any absolute property that it did not previously have. However, it is ordered to something to which it was not previously. Thus, because it possesses an effective ordering, it is said to have the power to cause someone to have hundred pounds. Therefore, that seal is said to be worth hundred pounds, and nevertheless it does not have more value now than previously. So if you should ask what is the power in that seal, the response is that it is not something absolute, but it is power for something.⁶⁰

⁵⁵ William Courtenay, "Sacrament, Symbol and Causality in Bernard of Clairvaux," in *Bernard of Clairvaux: Studies Presented to Dom Jean Leclercq*, ed. Basil Pennington (Washington, DC: Cistercian Publications, 1973), 111-122.

⁵⁶ Reginald Lynch, "The Sacraments as Causes of Sanctification," 805-807.

⁵⁷ Gallagher, *Significando Causant*, 262-263.

⁵⁸ Courtenay, "The King and the Leaden Coin: The Economic Background of 'sine qua non' Causality," *Traditio* 29 (1972): 185-187.

⁵⁹ Feingold, *Touched by Christ*, 409.

⁶⁰ Bonaventure, In IV Sent., d.1.p.1.a.1, q.4, in *Commentary on the Sentences: Sacraments*, trans. Hellmann, 71-72.

According to Saint Bonaventure, these theologians arrive at the conclusion that the sacraments are "causes" of grace in a manner similar to our currency. It is a symbol that does not possess intrinsic value, as it is not composed of gold. However, it does allow one to acquire a specific quantity of gold. In the same vein, the sacraments would not contain grace; rather, they would serve as symbols that, when embraced in the context of sacramental liturgy, would enable the properly disposed recipient to receive grace directly from God:

Thus they say that the sacraments are similar seals decreed by God, so that when one receives them in the proper manner they should have a measure of grace or have grace for this act. Such effective ordering, I say, is according to them the power of the sacrament, and by reason of it, it disposes the human being to have grace, because it effectively orders to having and receiving grace. Again they say that on the basis of this covenant the Lord binds himself in some way to giving grace to the receiver of a sacrament.⁶¹

The sacraments, in this view, are essential conditions instituted by divine decree, yet not actual sources of grace. Their immediate effect is the identification of the receiver of a sacramental action, wherein grace is conferred alone by God. Saint Bonaventure perceives them as possessing sanctifying power solely in connection to God's active power during their celebration.⁶²

Saint Bonaventure does not explicitly advocate for this theory in his commentary on the *Sentences*. Despite his belief that this position is more easily defended, he leaves the debate open between this theory and another, which is defended by the *Summa* of Alexander of

⁶¹ Ibid., 71-72.

⁶² Feingold, *Touched by Christ*, 410

Hales and Saint Albert. The latter theory views the *res et sacramentum* of the sacraments as a dispositive cause of grace.⁶³

St. Bonaventure provides a succinct summary of his stance in his *Breviloquium*. Hugh of St. Victor and Peter Lombard maintain that the sacraments are "vessels" or "causes" of grace, respectively. However, they are not genuinely efficacious causes. This is due to the fact that grace can only be instilled into the consciousness by God, who is the sole effective cause:

Finally, it is in and through these divinely instituted sensible signs that the grace of the Holy Spirit is encountered and received by those who approach them. Therefore, these sacraments are called "vessels of grace" and the "cause" of grace. This is not because grace is substantially contained in them or causally effected by them, for grace dwells only within the soul and is infused by none but God. Rather, it is because God has decreed that we are to draw the grace of our healing from Christ, the supreme physician in and through these sensible signs, "although God has not restricted his power to the sacraments."⁶⁴

Bonaventure's perspective was further elaborated upon by Duns Scotus.⁶⁵ The sacramental sign was a necessary disposition or condition for God to create both the *res et sacramentum* and the effect of grace, and Scotus presented a variety of arguments against St. Thomas' theory of instrumental efficient causality, which have been repeated over the centuries.⁶⁶ His stance appears to be that sacraments are essential conditions, as stipulated by a divine treaty or covenant, for God to infallibly produce the *res et sacramentum* and to infuse grace, despite the fact that he employed a different terminology.⁶⁷

⁶³ Bonaventure, in *Commentary on the Sentences*. Translated by Hellmann, 73.

⁶⁴ Bonaventure, *Breviloquium*. Translated by Dominic V. Monti, O.F.M. (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 2005), 213-214.

⁶⁵ Richard Cross, *Duns Scotus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 136-137.

⁶⁶ Gallagher, *Significando Causant*, 149-151.

⁶⁷ Feingold, *Touched by Christ*, 412.

Peter of Aquila (d.13700), a fourteenth-century Scotus disciple, provides a fine defence of this type of view, which was maintained by Scotists and nominalists following the Council of Trent:

Because a cause is that upon which whose existence something else follows, there are two ways of Speaking of a cause. The first, in the strict sense, when upon the presence of one being, by its power and from the nature of things, there follows the being of the other, and thus fire is the cause of heat. But the other way of speaking of a cause is less strict, when at the presence of one being the other being follows, but not through the power of the first, nor by the nature of things, but merely from the will of someone; and in this sense a condition, or a *causa sine qua non*, is called a cause..... The sacraments of the New Law in the first sense are not effective causes of grace, but they are causes in the second and less strict sense. Whence, when the Master [Peter Lombard] and the saints say that the sacraments effect what they signify, they must not be understood as if sacraments in the strict sense effected grace, but that God effects grace at their presence, and this is sufficient to justify the Master and others in fixing a difference between the sacraments of the Old and of the New Law.⁶⁸

This theory's most significant flaw is that the sacraments of the New Covenant would be regarded as sacred signs of God's action, which is inconsistent with the robust understanding of sacramental efficacy that is evident in the New Testament and the writings of the Fathers of the Church. These sources, as previously mentioned, describe the sacraments as having the causal efficacy to impart the spirit, forgive sins, and grant supernatural life. Moreover, this explanation posits that they would not be fundamentally different from circumcision in the Old Covenant except for their institution by Christ.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ Peter of Aquila, *In 4 Sent.*, q.1,c.1, cited in Leeming, *Principles of Sacramental Theology*, 11.

⁶⁹ Bonaventure, in *Commentary on the Sentences*. Translated by Hellmann, 79.

5. Thomas Aquinas' Instrument Efficient Causality of the Sacraments

Instrumental causality is when a cause generates an effect by utilizing a subordinate agent as a mediator. This subordinate agent is referred to as an instrument or instrumental cause, acting as an efficient cause that generates an effect of greater magnitude. This occurs because the instrument is being directed and utilized by a higher cause known as the *principal cause*, which directly or indirectly guides the instrument to carry out a plan aligned with or planned by the principal cause.⁷⁰

Aquinas offers the following opinion when contemporary theologians were unable to explain how sensible and physical signs could be the true cause of grace: "Some, however, say that they [the sacraments] are the causes of grace not by their own operation, but insofar as God causes grace in the soul when the sacraments are employed."⁷¹ As an alternative viewpoint, Thomas refutes this conviction on the grounds that it contradicts the revealed patrimony and the "authority of many Saints." Thomas argues that "according to this opinion, the sacraments of the new law would be mere signs" rather than "causes" of grace.⁷² According to Thomas, the fundamental error in this theory of sacramental causality is the rejection of the idea that grace results from the sacraments' actions.⁷³

The problem that plagued theologians of the day was resolved by Saint Thomas' proposal of instrumental causality: how could the sacraments, which are tangible realities, have a supernatural and spiritual effect?

Roger W. Nutt points out that Thomas placed greater emphasis in his earlier works, including the *Commentary on the Sentences* (circa 1256), on the connection between the instrumental

⁷⁰ A concise view of Instrumental Causality according to St Thomas has already been dealt in Chapter 4 especially regarding the sacramental signs.

⁷¹ *ST III*, 62.1

⁷² *ST III*, 62.1

⁷³ Nutt, *General Principles of Sacramental Theology*, 111.

causality of the sacraments and their immediate effect, or *res et sacramentum*. Furthermore, Thomas explored how this connection connected to the bestowal of sacramental grace, or *res tantum*.⁷⁴ According to him, Christ utilized the external sacramental sign as an effective instrumental cause to bring about the supernatural effect of the *res et sacramentum*.

It is noteworthy that Saint Thomas' initial stance on sacramental causality shared similarities with that of Saint Albert and the *Summa* of Alexander of Hales. Both believed that the sacramental sign, when functioning as an instrumental cause, establishes a disposition towards grace (*res et sacramentum*), but did not itself function as a true instrumental cause of grace. Early Saint Thomas thus restricted the instrumental causality of the sacraments to the provision of the *res et sacramentum*, which merely establishes the condition for receiving grace and does not cause it instrumentally.⁷⁵

Saint Thomas, by the time he composed *Disputed Questions on Truth (De Veritate)* and, more significantly, the third part of the *Summa Theologiae*, maintained the initial tenet of his early stance, namely that the sacramental sign produces the *res et sacramentum* instrumentally. However, he later came to believe that the *res et sacramentum* is not merely a disposition, but rather an instrumental cause, for the infusion of grace. By means of the *res et sacramentum*, which can be interpreted as the enduring "continuation" of the sacramental sign, Christ, the principal agent, imparts grace to the recipient. This is analogous to the way in which written words supersede spoken words.⁷⁶

This is most evident in relation to the Eucharist. In this case, the *res et sacramentum*, the sacramental sign consisting of the matter of the bread and wine and the words of the sacramental form, is the instrumental cause of transubstantiation, through which Christ

⁷⁴ Nutt, *General Principles of Sacramental Theology*, 112-113.

⁷⁵ Feingold, *Touched by Christ*, 433.

⁷⁶ See Gallagher, *Significando Causant*, 102-109; *ST* III, 84.1.3

becomes present in His Body and Blood. In turn, the grace received by the faithful—*the res tantum*—is instrumentally caused by the Body and Blood received in Holy Communion. Christ's humanity, which is the linked instrument of His Godhead, may generate grace in us through His Body and Blood. Faithful people are divinized when they receive His humanity. Saint Thomas also maintains that similar things occur in the other sacraments through the *res et sacramentum*, which functions as an instrumental cause in the bestowal of grace by configuring the soul to Christ.⁷⁷

A few years subsequent to his commentary on the *Sentences*, Saint Thomas had already revised and simplified his perspective in *De Veritate*, q.27.⁷⁸ He discarded the metaphor involving parents and procreation, which establishes the immediate disposition for the infusion of the soul. Conversely, he imparts the straightforward doctrine that the sacrament is an instrumental cause of grace by virtue of an instrument of Christ's humanity, which in turn signifies His divinity. A series of instrumental causes interconnect here. By means of the sacramental minister, the Eternal High Priest Christ, who utilizes the matter and form of the sacrament to imprint the *res et sacramentum*, grace is bestowed upon the subject who is suitably disposed by means of faith and contrition. Each individual link in this chain serves as an instrumental cause for the subsequent effects.⁷⁹

6. Sacraments Contain Grace

Saint Thomas effectively demonstrates how God utilizes the sacramental operation to cause grace through the application of instrumental causality. Similar to other mediaeval theologians, he inquires as to whether grace is present in the sacraments. It appears illogical to assert that the sensible sacramental signs—such as words, oil, or water—contain a

⁷⁷ Feingold, *Touched by Christ*, 437-438.

⁷⁸ Bernard Blankenhorn, "The Instrumental Causality of the Sacraments: Thomas Aquinas and Louis-Marie Chauvet." *Nova et Vetera*, English edn. 4.no.2 (2006):270-273.

⁷⁹ Feingold, *Touched by Christ*, 438.

supernatural quality equivalent to divine participation. Saint Thomas responds that grace does not exist substantially or as a persistent intrinsic quality in the sacramental sign, but rather in the same way that an instrument acquires the power of a principal cause while in use.⁸⁰

It is well observed that individuals often use tools (such as pens, knives, musical instruments, etc.) to achieve certain outcomes. These instruments help achieve the effect, but they need to be used by a principal agent.⁸¹ Similarly, sacraments function as temporary and transient instruments of grace.⁸² The timely realization of the outward sacramental sign imparts its sacramental effect as soon as it is finished. The power of bestowing grace is momentarily contained in the sacramental sign when the sacramental gesture is carried out.⁸³

Through an instrumental *movement* in which Christ uses the sacramental sign to impart a supernatural quality to the recipient, Saint Thomas contends that grace is "incompletely" present in the sacramental sign.⁸⁴ He describes this transient instrumental power at work in Baptism:

Now, the sanctification is not completed in water; but a certain sanctifying instrumental virtue [power], not permanent but transient, passes from the water, in which it is, into man who is the subject of true sanctification. Consequently, the sacrament is not completed in the very water, but in applying the water to man- i.e., in the washing.⁸⁵

⁸⁰ Feingold, *Touched by Christ*, 438.

⁸¹ Nutt, *General Principles of Sacramental Theology*, 112-113.

⁸² *ST III*, 62.3.3

⁸³ We have already mentioned in the fourth chapter regarding the sacramental signs; a sacramental sign enables the realization of the effect of grace in two significant ways: first, it makes present the omnipotent signs of sanctification that are Christ's words and gestures; and second, it applies these signs to a specific subject matter. By operating through them to accomplish the sanctification that they symbolize, the principal agent's omnipotent power elevates the sacramental signs. Also, see Feingold, *Touched by Christ*, 444.

⁸⁴ *ST III*, 62.4.2

⁸⁵ *ST III*, 66.1

Therefore, it is inaccurate to compare the sacraments to a container harbouring medicinal substances or paint when we state that they "contain" grace in a stable sense. On the contrary, their grace content is considered imperfect, solely to the extent that they are employed and moved by Christ as instruments to impart supernatural attributes within us. In a similar vein, the piano lacks intrinsic musical qualities and instead derives a fleeting instrumental beauty from the performer during the instant of operation. Similarly, when Christ performed miracles through His words, He endowed them with a temporary instrumental authority to serve as the instrument of His omnipotent divine will restoring the deceased and curing the ill.⁸⁶

Thomas teaches that similar to how Christ imparts grace through the outward sacramental sign, which is endowed with a temporary instrumental power, Christ also employs the *res et sacramentum*, which is imprinted by the external sign, as an everlasting instrumental power to continue bestowing grace.⁸⁷

In contrast to the sacramental sign, which vanishes with the cessation of the words, the *res et sacramentum* endures permanently, particularly regarding the sacramental characters. The printed word, which continues to function as a means of communication well beyond the written word, is a human analogy for the enduring character of the instrumental power of the *res et sacramentum*. It is possible to say that the printed word contains meaning so long as it endures. Likewise, *res et sacramentum* can be described as "containing" grace due to the fact that it functions as a steadfast and instrumental word of power. The *res et sacramentum*, which consists of the Body and Blood of Christ, possesses an enduring sanctifying effect in the Eucharist by virtue of the hypostatic union that the humanity of the Word passes through. The sanctifying power of the *res et sacramentum* in the remaining sacraments derives from the fact that it is a configuration to Christ's humanity, enabling Him to operate through it as

⁸⁶ Feingold, *Touched by Christ*, 440-441.

⁸⁷ *ST III*, 63.2

His enduring, effective word imprinted on the soul rather than on paper. As discussed in the preceding chapter, the *res et sacramentum* of the remaining three sacraments also imparts a unique configuration to Christ, although this imprinting is most evident in the three sacraments that impart indelible character. In the sacrament of Matrimony, this arrangement pertains to Christ the Groom in His matrimonial union with the Church. The configuration in Penance is with Christ, who atoned for sins, and in Anointing of the Sick, it is with the redemptive suffering of Christ.⁸⁸

In summary, Saint Thomas considers the sacraments to be instrumental causes employed by Christ's humanity. According to his simplified and modified perspective, the *res et sacramentum* is caused by the outward sacramental sign. The *res et sacramentum*, in its capacity as a *sacramentum*, is an effective sign of the grace that is bestowed, provided that no impediment exists. Thus, a double sacramental causality exists, proceeding from the exterior sign to the interior sign to the infusion of grace.

According to Feingold this position seeks to meet the major difficulty by the analogy of instrumental causality. Because the instrument is elevated by the principal cause that uses it, it always acts above its own level. So, even if the instrumental cause is the ultimate source of the impact, the effect itself goes beyond it. To rephrase, the words and signs of the sacrament are instruments that can accomplish their intended purpose only to the extent that they are Christ's words and signs.⁸⁹

In contrast to sacramental occasionalism, one of the major strengths of this theory is the manner in which the incarnation is integrated into sacramental efficacy.⁹⁰ Christ is the perfect mediator and our eternal high priest by virtue of the hypostatic union. He exercises his priesthood through the sacraments, which function as distinct instruments through which he

⁸⁸ Feingold, *Touched by Christ*, 440-441.

⁸⁹ Feingold, *Touched by Christ*, 495.

⁹⁰ Lynch, *The Cleansing of the Heart*, 2-3.

communicates with us today and expands the scope of his humanity.⁹¹ Saint Thomas' thoughts did not get widespread recognition until the 16th century when Cardinal Cajetan popularized it.⁹² Saint Thomas' stance is the closest to the sources of revelation and demonstrates exceptional fittingness. However, it faces significant challenges due to its emphasis on the sacrament's role in imparting grace as an instrument of Christ. It addresses those challenges by delving into Christ's miraculous actions in the Gospels as a model for His sacramental work, reaching out to us with grace and power.⁹³

⁹¹ See Francois Taymans d'Eypernon, *The Blessed Trinity and the Sacraments* (Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1961), 36-38.

⁹² Lynch, "The Sacraments are Causes of Sanctification," *Nova et Vetera*, 810-812.

⁹³ Feingold, *Touched by Christ*, 495-496.

CONCLUSION

Many notable examples of the organic growth of theology throughout centuries may be found in the teachings of the Church, especially on the sacraments and the sacramental system. The definition of the sacrament itself has undergone a lengthy and extensive evolution. Saint Augustine, Hugh of St. Victor, Saint Thomas Aquinas, and Peter Lombard have been shown to have important roles. The Church concluded that the seven sacraments met the criteria provided by theologians of the 12th century, who emphasized the sacraments' ability to confer the grace for which they signify.

An additional point to consider is that an effective definition of sacrament delineates its fundamental components. Christ specifically instituted and entrusted to the Church the sacraments of the new covenant, which are sacred signs of human sanctification. Beyond all else, they are instrumental in the grace they signify. These signs are sacred, and they are human and divine at the same time, akin to Christ. The words have power to achieve what they indicate because they are Christ's, uttered through a minister in *persona Christi*.

As the Second Vatican Council confirms, in the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium*:

The purpose of the sacraments is to sanctify men, to build up the body of Christ, and, finally, to give worship to God; because they are signs, they also instruct. They not only presuppose faith, but by words and objects they also nourish, strengthen, and express it; that is why they are called “sacraments of faith.” They do indeed impart grace, but, in addition, the very act of celebrating them most effectively disposes the

faithful to receive this grace in a fruitful manner, to worship God duly, and to practice charity.¹

The Three Levels of the Sacraments

One of the most important developments in sacramental theology is the distinction between three levels of the sacraments: a) the outward sacramental sign, (*sacramentum tantum*) which causes two invisible effects: b) the *reality and sign* (*res et sacramentum*) and c) the reality of grace and communion with God and the Church (*res tantum*).

Chapter five and six traced various stages of the development of this doctrine. The concept of the intermediate level of *reality and sign* was initially understood in relation to Baptism and Holy Orders by observing the liturgical tradition that emphasizes the unique consecration of both sacraments. The Donatist argument prompted Saint Augustine to define the enduring impact of Baptism and Ordination as separate from grace, known as sacramental character.

Responding to Berengarius' error was the second step in the process of growth. This made scholars in the 1100s quickly come up with the three levels of the sacraments. The real presence of Christ in the Eucharist is the best example of the *res et sacramentum*, which is the middle level of reality and sign. The *res et sacramentum*, which was subsequently applied to the remaining sacraments, has since become an indispensable element in the Church's comprehension of the sacramental system. This reality manifests itself either through the Eucharist, which directly manifests Christ's humanity, or through the other sacraments as a configuration to Christ.

The fact that configuration to Christ entails participation in His tripartite mission and membership in His Body gives the *reality and sign* a dual emphasis on Christology and the ecclesiology. As we have seen, this *reality and sign* are interconnected in the following ways:

¹ Second Vatican Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 59, December 4, 1963.

it imparts an ecclesiastical mission associated with that sacrament, a Christian and ecclesiastical identity, and the spiritual fortitude necessary to carry out that mission gradually.

The Church Fathers initially interpreted the sacraments in relation to the bodily form of Christ. However, with the reduction of the sacrament to a sign introduced by Berengar, theologians were compelled to adopt the species of bread and wine as the current point of reference, rather than the real body present on the altar. Insofar as his notion gained widespread acceptance, there was a concurrent trend to see that tangible and observable sign inside the rite as a sacrament in the truest sense. By continuing to refer to the Body of Christ as a sacrament, the authors of the period maintained the key relationship between sacrament and body that is found in the New Testament and the Fathers of the Church.

As previously said, the extended language begins with the Eucharist and separates three distinct aspects of each sacrament for this purpose. *Sacramentum tantum*, the initial dimension of a sacrament, most closely aligns with Berengar's definition: bread and wine are symbolic representations that indicate the existence of an additional unseen reality. The novel characteristic that rectifies the Berengarian lenses pertains to the second dimension, specifically the *res et sacramentum* (the body of Christ), which both signifies and represents reality

The sacramental character is linked to what writers in the Middle Ages called "res et sacramentum." We now know that this phrase was comprised to refer to the dogma of the Eucharist. It is meant to complete the narrow view of sacrament as a mere sign (*sacramentum tantum*) of a faraway reality (*res tantum*), which would make people doubt that Christ is really present: on the altar would be the sacrament, not the reality it represents. Consequently, the phrase "*res et sacramentum*" serves to remind us that the sacrament principally consists of the body of Jesus and not of the bread and wine. This physical form, similar to all others,

simultaneously functions as a signified reality and a sign (*sacramentum et res*). Specifically, it represents the individual's actual existence and the dynamic interactions that define him in his whole.

The expression *res et sacramentum* would eventually be used to describe the Baptismal character. The allusion is to the body once more, this time to the Christian body insofar as it is conformed to the body of Jesus, which is the principal impact of Baptism. It is worth noting that Baptism, beginning with Peter Lombard and following the authority of Saint John Damascene, is precisely associated with the character that it imprints. The sacrament in this context is not *sacramentum tantum*, but rather *res et sacramentum*, or the Christian who celebrates the ritual, insofar as he is incorporated into Jesus. This is consistent with the patristic terminology that is mentioned before, which saw character as a lasting impact or seal of Baptism on the believers. Saint Thomas' insight follows the same lines: the character conforms the baptized person to the body of Jesus, and Baptism becomes an instrumental cause of grace, transformed into a sacrament.

The three dimensions determined for the Eucharist were likewise applied to the other sacraments. The most straightforward application is to the three sacraments that imprint character, because the sacramental character is the *res et sacramentum*.

Therefore, it appears that Saint Thomas Aquinas was the first to defend the view that character is a spiritual power ordered to Christian worship and to the receiving and administration of the sacraments. He rejected the notion that character is a *habitus*, that is, a quality which perfects the soul intrinsically and fits it to receive grace. This ability is not inherent in human nature since it is supernatural; rather, it must be gained from above. It is an instrumental power subject to Christ and His priesthood since it makes it possible to be actuated by Christ and His Spirit. Thus, character is a supernatural instrumental force of the

soul that allows the soul to be raised and conformed to Christ in order to engage in Christian worship and devote the world to Him.

Hence, one could argue that sacramental character is an efficacious sign permanently imprinted on the soul that shapes and dedicates it to Christ, bestowing Christian identity in accordance with a particular state in the Church, and a matching ecclesial mission to partake in Christ's priesthood in that state. Additionally, it is a fundamental spiritual power to involve in Christ's priestly ministry by administering the sacraments through the reception of Holy Orders, actively fostering the growth of the Church and bearing witness to the faith in public through Confirmation.

The sacrament of Matrimony has an intermediate effect that is separate from the transitory outward sign and the grace effect that mortal sin might impede. This lasting effect is the sacramental commitment or bond that remains till the death of one partner, and it is what makes the *res et sacramentum* of matrimony. This union is created by the external sacramental sign, which is the couples' joint assent in the presence of witnesses. In each couple, the sacramental bond serves as a sacred sign and unseen reality, connecting them in communion that represents the inseparable relationship between the Church and Christ.

It is reasonable to assume that Anointing of the Sick serves a similar configuration to Christ bestowing a Christian identity, ecclesial mission, and spiritual power in a medical condition, even though it does not imprint character because it can be received more than once and does not confer a stable ecclesial mission. By means of this configuration with Christ, the Church's solidarity in this affliction is effectively demonstrated. This explains why the Anointing of the Sick sacrament may only be received once during a particular disease or stage of an illness: by understanding the *res et sacramentum* of Anointing as a consecration of the sick person configured to the suffering of Christ. Hence, the duration of a consecration is proportional to

the object's identity. Accordingly, the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick confers a consecration that endures for the duration that the individual continues to be terribly afflicted with this sickness.

Peter Lombard, among the 12th century's mediaeval thinkers, relates the sacrament of Confession to the Eucharist and associates its *res et sacramentum* with interior penance. The three acts of the penitent—confession, satisfaction, and contrition—along with the form of absolution given by the priest constitute the outward sacramental sign, according to Saint Thomas, who bases his view on Lombard's idea. Accordingly, the *res et sacramentum*, or inner contrition, is brought about by the outward sign. Grace, in the form of forgiveness for sins and infusion of sanctifying grace, is brought about by this internal repentance in conjunction with the outward sign. This stance is rational due to the fact that justification and the remission of sins require an inward contrition that arises from participation with actual grace. This view highlights the significance of the penitent's internal repentance, which is a crucial aspect. As a result of the sacramental sign, this inward penance also serves as an instrumental cause to its final effect of absolution. Therefore, the *res et sacramentum* of Penance might be conceived as the sacramental configuration that connects the penitent to the Penance of Christ. When one turns to Christ in repentance and submits to His mercy and forgiveness, it becomes an efficacious sign of that compassion that they can use as an instrument for Christ to bring down the graces they need to make up for their sins. Because of this, it is a lasting internal sign and instrument of the grace that the sacrament's external celebration brings.

The categorization of three levels in the sacraments is essential for comprehending the significant role of the recipient's dispositions in receiving sacramental grace throughout time. While all individuals who validly receive a sacrament obtain the enduring *reality and sign*, not all are granted the grace of the sacrament. One may present the challenge of unrepentant hearts, and among those who do receive its grace, it is at the disposition of the individual to receive it. Given that both the *reality and the sign* endure, they establish a lasting basis for the sacramental graces associated with that particular sacrament as time passes, consistently aligning with the recipient's evolving dispositions.

The Role of *Res et Sacramentum* in the Sacramental System

As we have discussed in the third chapter, The origin of the Church and the origin of the sacraments are inextricably connected. While the Church has always been aware of sacramental causation and effectiveness since its beginnings, a detailed and organised comprehension of the sacraments did not instantly become prominent among her followers. Over time, a more sophisticated understanding of sacraments and their inherent power emerged from the teachings of Church Fathers and theologians throughout history.

We have seen in the fifth chapter, the causality of the sacraments, down through the centuries, posed great difficulties to theological reflection. In determining the efficacy of the sacramental signs in conveying the grace they signify is a distinct matter. Examining the manner in which sensible and material realities can serve as agents for the supernatural and imperceptible reality of grace is an entirely separate matter.

Even though numerous patristic and mediaeval theologians had investigated the role of the sacraments in the bestowal of grace through the analogy of instruments of various kinds, it was St. Thomas Aquinas who had made a particularly significant contribution to this inquiry. He was the first to coherently apply a theory of instrumental causality and explain how

sensible sacraments can be true causes of a reality that immeasurably transcends them. As instruments employed by Christ, they are capable of imparting that which they lack personally.

It is appropriate for an instrument to function beyond its inherent characteristics and exert an effect at the level of the principal agent. The Trinity, through Christ's humanity and his Paschal mystery (the conjoined instrument), is undoubtedly the principal agent in this case. The Trinity then acts through sacramental ministers, who use the sacramental signs to produce the effect of sanctification through the action of the Holy Spirit in conforming the faithful to Christ.

While Saint Thomas initially upholds sacramental instrumental causality in his early commentary on the Sentences, a pivotal progression in his own theology was the simplification of this doctrine. He maintained in his early writings that the outward sacramental sign of the sacrament was merely an instrumental cause of the underlying *reality and sign* (*res et sacramentum*), which was the immediate disposition to receive grace. Therefore, rather than being the primary cause of grace, the sacrament established a disposition towards grace.

Saint Thomas argues, in his revised and simplified position, that just as the sacramental sign facilitates the enduring *res et sacramentum*, so too does it facilitate the bestowal of grace, provided that no impediment exists. Because the outward sign is performed by a minister through whom Christ's humanity acts, and His divinity is at work through His humanity, the sacrament can have this kind of causality. Saint Thomas delineates a sequence of instrumental causes that are guided by the principal cause, God. God bestows grace through the minister, the matter and form of the sacramental sign, and the sacramental character or *res et sacramentum*. The latter is a lasting sacramental sign imprinted by Christ, and it is capable of

effecting the grace that it represents. In this manner, one could compare the *res et sacramentum* to an enduring word, which allows Christ's word to continue to *resound* and invoke graces for the duration of the *res et sacramentum*.

One notable advantage of this theory is that it elucidates the close relationship between the Incarnation and the sacraments more explicitly than alternative theories do, and it gives Christ's humanity at work in sacramental action a more prominent place. We have already seen in the second chapter the strong connection between the Incarnation and the sacraments, especially as the dialogue initiated from the Divine to reach out to us. The hypostatic union is the crucial connection between divine power and Christ's human activities, which instituted the sacraments and continues to communicate through human ministers acting *in persona Christi*. Thus, we ought to reflect on the words of absolution and consecration in the Eucharistic liturgy as spoken by Christ through his ministers.

This sophisticated and balanced theory of Thomas was not immediately carried out. In contrast, the majority of his disciples adhered to his earlier perspective rather than his simplified one, which did not gain prominence within the Thomistic school until Cardinal Cajetan's commentary in the 16th century. While Saint Thomas' twofold simplified theory of instrumental causality is highly influential and fruitful in theology, the Magisterium still has not formally embraced it. This leaves various theological schools with the liberty to persist in their debate regarding the manner in which the sacraments produce their efficacy.

***Res et Sacramentum*, A Dialogical Reality**

It would be a shame, then, to confine *res et sacramentum* as a mere product of scholastic theology on the sacramental causality. As the modern scholarly translation of *sign and reality* is not only *symbolic reality*,² but its characteristics also reach broader dimensions in so many

² Leeming, *Principles of Sacramental Theology*, 251.

ways on a practical level too. To avoid sacramental automatism that would undermine the whole purpose of the dogma of *ex opere operato*, the *symbolic reality* of the sacrament should be seen from a different approach too. The symbolic reality is more than symbolic, and its dialogic aspect cannot be overlooked. In that sense, it would be fitting to denote it as a *dialogical reality*.

A further understanding of the *res et sacramentum* outside the scholastic world is also essential in the contemporary sacramental theology. Regarding the locus of the communicative aspect or dialogue within the sacramental system, one might easily be inclined to point at the outward domain of the sacraments, namely, the *sacramentum tantum*, symbols or signs or the symbolic rituals. That is, dialogue at an empirical level or at an external level. The external dialogue has its basis through the means of catechism, dogmas or any other means which gives a notion about the sacramental world. It takes place in the outer domain of the sacraments, namely the symbolic rituals of the sacramental celebration. It brings about the knowledge, conviction, and external disposition necessary for the celebration of the sacramental mysteries. And this external dialogue serves the dynamic reality of the sacraments expressed in faith. However, it does not necessarily imply a fruitful reception of the sacraments. In other words, it is a preparation for the sacramental realization, without prejudicing the fruitfulness of the sacrament or lack thereof.

Should the dialogue be made through the external aspects of the sacraments, then it would surely bring an internal dimension to it, especially through the doors of faith. In that sense, *res et sacramentum*, the internal and abiding nature of the sacrament and its role in this part invites further exploration as a dialogical reality. The fact is, the core of the sacramentality of each rite is sometimes overlooked projecting the stipulative dimension of the sacraments.

The International Theological Commission teaches that it is the sacramentality, which is the inseparable relationship of the sacramental symbols and their symbolized reality,³ which has a pivotal role in the sacramental system. In other words, *res et sacramentum*, the sacramentality, brings about the sacramental realization. In that sense identification of *res et sacramentum* as the nucleus of the sacramental system is to be justified.

The role of *res et sacramentum*, also, must be identified from a pastoral point of view, especially its communicative and dynamic dimensions. The identification of *res et sacramentum* as configuration to Christ can be applied to Christians to manifest in the modern society through the Christian virtues of faith, hope and love.

The configuration to Christ signifies a transformative journey that believers experience by their interactions with the sacraments. This significant relationship is not solely theoretical; it appears in concrete ways, affecting daily actions and decisions. This thesis illustrates that the Fathers of the Church and the Magisterium assert that through the sacraments, believers are active participants in divine life, promoting a comprehensive integration of faith into daily life. The theology associated with these sacred rites demonstrates their influence on moral and spiritual identities, offering a robust framework for comprehending one's purpose in the world. Ultimately, conforming oneself to Christ functions as a guiding concept that resonates with the Church's teachings, encouraging individuals to embody Christ's image in their lives

Current discourse on faith emphasises the importance of authentically embodying one's beliefs through daily activities and theological comprehension. This tangible manifestation of faith can be comprehended through the concept of *res et sacramentum*, which underscores the importance of physical actions as channels of divine grace.

³ International Theological Commission, *Reciprocity*, 16.

Participating in rites like Communion or Baptism can act as significant reminders of Christ's presence in daily life, fostering closer connections with both God and the community. The examination of configuring Christ into daily life reveals that this significant relationship necessitates ongoing thinking and deliberate intention. Individuals are urged to embody love, compassion, and justice, therefore testifying to Christ's presence in a fractured society. The incorporation of the theology of *res et sacramentum* into everyday practice not only promotes individual spiritual development but also cultivates a community profoundly anchored in Christ, inspiring others to initiate their own paths of configuration and change.

In a world marked by individuality and fragmentation, the significance of *res et sacramentum*, conformity with Christ, acts as a catalyst for healing and reconciliation, demonstrating how such configuration can mitigate existential threats and foster holistic flourishing in society.

The theology of *res et sacramentum* is not just an invention of the medieval theologians to appease the impact caused by the heresy of Berengar of Tours. Instead, the characteristics of it bearing the *sign* of one thing and the *reality* of another is unique and invites further exploration in this field of the sacramental theology.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

A Greek- English Lexicon of the New Testament, Translated, Revised and Enlarged by Joseph H Thayer. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977, 595.

A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature, 3rd edition, Revised and edited by F.W. Danker. Chicago: The university Press, 2000.661.

Ambrose, Glenn P. *The Theology of Louise Marie Chauvet: Overcoming Onto-Theology with the Sacramental Tradition*. London: Routledge, 2012.

Aquinas, Thomas. *Summa Theologiae*. 2nd edition. Translated by Fathers of the English Dominican Province. London: Burnes, Oates, and Washbourne, 1920-1932.

_____. *Summa Contra Gentiles* IV a.41. Translated by The English Dominican Fathers Burnes, Oates & Washbourne, 1924.

_____. *Summa Contra Gentiles*. Translated by Anton Pegis, James Anderson, Vernon Bourke, and Charles O'Neil. Vol.4. Notre Dame: University Press, 1975.

_____. *Commentary on Aristotle's Physics*. Translated by Richard J. Blackwell, Richard J. Spath, and W. Edmund Thirkel. Notre Dame: Dumb Ox Books, 1999.

_____. *Commentary on the Sentences, Book IV*. Translated by Beth Mortensen. Vol.8 of Latin/English Edition of the Works of St. Thomas Aquinas. Green Bay: Aquinas Institute, 2017.

Aristotle. *Categories in Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation*. Ed. Jonathan Barnes, Vol. I. Bollingen Series LXXI-2. Princeton: University Press, 1995.

_____. *Metaphysics*. Translated by Richard Hope. 26th edn. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007.

Athanasius. *The Letters of Saint Athanasius Concerning the Holy Spirit*. Translated by C.R.B. Shapland. London: The Epworth Press, 1951.

Augustine. *Letters: Vol I (1-82)*. Translated by Wilfrid Parsons, FC 12. Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1951.

_____. *City of God. Books VIII-XVI*. Translated by G.G. Walsh and G. Monahan, FC 14. Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1952.

_____. *Letters: Vol III (131-164)*. Translated by Wilfrid Parsons. FC 20. Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1953.

- _____. *St. Augustine on the Psalms*. Vol.1. *Psalms 1-29*. Translated by Scholastica Hebgin and Felicitas Corrigan. ACW 29. New York: Paulist Press, 1960.
- _____. *Tractates on the Gospel of John 11-27*. Translated by J.W. Rettig. FC 79. Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1988.
- _____. *Sermons (230-272B)*. Translated by Edmund Hill. WSA III/7. New Rochelle: New City Press, 1993.
- _____. *Contra Faustum Manichaeum*. Translated by Richard Stothert. NPNF-1. Vol. 4. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994.
- _____. *De Civitate Dei*. Translated by Marcus Dods. NPNF-1. Vol.2. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994.
- _____. *De Doctrina Christina*. Translated by J.F. Shaw. NPNF-1. Vol. 2. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994.
- _____. *Epistolae*. Translated by J.G. Cunningham. NPNF-1. Vol. 1. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994.
- _____. *In Iohannis*. Translated by John Gibb and James Innes. NPNF-1. Vol. 7. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994.
- _____. *Sermo*. Translated by R.G. Mac Mullen. NPNF-1. Vol. 6. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994.
- _____. *Expositions of the Psalms 73-98*. Translated by Maria Boulding. WSA III/18. Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2002.
- _____. *Sermons 272*. Translated by Lawrence Johnson, *Worship in the Early Church: An Anthology of Historical Sources*. Vol. 3. Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2009.
- _____. *Baptism*. Translated by Boniface Ramsey in *The Donatist Controversy I*. New York: New City Press, 2019.
- _____. *Answer to the Letter of Parmenian*. In *The Donatist Controversy 1*. Translated by Maureen Tilley and Boniface Ramsey. New York: New City Press, 2019.
- Avis, Paul. *A Church Drawing Near: Spirituality and Mission in a Post-Christian Culture*. London: T&T Clark International, 2003.
- Blankenhorn, Bernard. "The Instrumental Causality of the Sacraments: Thomas Aquinas and Louis-Marie Chauvet." *Nova et Vetera*, (English edn.) 4. no.2 (2006): 270-273.
- Boff, Leonardo. *Sacraments of Life, Life of the Sacraments*. Washington DC: Pastoral Press, 1987.

- Bonaventure. *Commentary on the Sentences: Sacraments*. Translated by Wayne Hellmann, Timothy Lecroy, and Luke Davis Townsend. St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 2016.
- Bordyne Philip and Morrill, Bruce T. *Sacraments: Revelation of the Humanity of God. Engaging the Fundamental Theology of Louise-Marie Chauvet*. Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2008.
- Bornkamm, Gunther. "Mysterion", in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Edited by G. Kittel and G. Friedrich. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967, 802-828.
- Bowden, John. *Edward Schillebeeckx: Portrait of a Theologian*. London: SCM Press, 1983.
- Brown, Raymond E. "Pre-Christian Semitic Concept of Mystery," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 20, no.4(1958): 417-422.
- Brox, Norbert. *A History of the Early Church*. London: SCM Press, 1994.
- Callahan, Annice. *Karl Rahner's Theology of Symbol: Basis for his Theology of the Church and the Sacraments* in *Irish theological Quarterly* 49, no. 3 (1982): 193-195.
- Calvin, John. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Translated by Henry Beveridge. Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers 2008.
- Carstens, Christopher. *Principles of Sacred Liturgy: Forming a Sacramental Vision*. Chicago: Hillenbrand Books, 2020.
- Casel, Odo. *The Mystery of Christian Worship*. New York: Crossroad, 1999.
- Cassirer, Ernst. *An Essay on Man: An Introduction to a Philosophy of Human Culture*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1944.
- Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Dublin: Veritas, 1994.
- Catechism of the Council of Trent. (The Roman Catechism)* Translated by Robert I. Bradley and Eugene Kevane. Boston: St. Paul Editions, 1985.
- Chapp, Carmina Magnusen. "Kilmartin, Edward J." In *New Catholic Encyclopedia Supplement 2010*, Vol. 2. Ed., Robert Fastiggi. Detroit: Gale, 2010.
- Chauvet, Louise Marie. *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, trans. Patrick Madigan and Madeleine Beaumont. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1995.
- _____. *The Sacraments: The Word of God at the Mercy of the Body*. Translated by Madeline Beaumont. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1997.

- Chrysostom, John. *Homilies on the Epistles of Paul to the Corinthians*. Oxford Translation. NPNF-1. Vol.12. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994.
- Congar, Yves. *Lay People in the Church: A Study for a Theology of Laity*. Westminster: Newman Press, 1965.
- _____. *I Believe in The Holy Spirit*. Translated by David Smith. New York: Crossroad, 1997.
- _____. *Tradition and Traditions: An Historical and a Theological Essay*, trans. Michael Naseby and Thomas Rainborough. New York: Macmillan, 1967.
- Cooke, Bernard. "Synoptic Presentation of the Eucharist as Covenant Sacrifice" in *Theological Studies*, 21 (1960): 25-27.
- Coolman, Boyd Taylor. "The Christo-Pneumatic-Ecclesial Character of Twelfth-Century Sacramental Theology." In *The Oxford Handbook of Sacramental Theology*, ed. Hans Boersma and Matthew Levering. Oxford: University Press, 2015.
- Courtenay, William. "Sacrament, Symbol and Causality in Bernard of Clairvaux," in *Bernard of Clairvaux: Studies Presented to Dom Jean Leclercq*, ed. Basil Pennington. Washington, DC: Cistercian Publications, 1973.
- Cyprian of Carthage. *Treatises*. Translated by Roy Deferrari. Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1958.
- _____. *The Letters of St. Cyprian of Carthage*. Vol.4. *Letters 67-82*. Translated by G. W. Clarke ACW.47. New York: Newman Press, 1989.
- Cyril of Alexandria. *Commentary on John*, Translated by David R Maxwell. In *Ancient Christian Texts*. Vol.1. Edited by Joel C. Elowsky. Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2013.
- Cyril of Jerusalem. *Mystagogic Catecheses*. In Edward Yarnold, *The Awe-Inspiring Rites of Initiation: The Origins of the R.C.I.A.*, 84. 2nd edition. Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1994.
- d'Eypernon, Francois Taymans. *The Blessed Trinity and the Sacraments*. Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1961.
- Damascene, John. *An Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*. In *Writings*. Translated by F.H. Chase Jr. FC 37 Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1958.
- de La Soujeole, Benoit-Dominique. "The Economy of Salvation: Entitative Sacramentality and Operative Sacramentality," *The Thomist* 75 (2011): 538.

- de Lubac, Henry. *The Splendor of the Church*. Translated by Michael Mason, Reprint. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986.
- _____. *Catholicism: Christ and the Common destiny of Man*. Translated by Lancelot Sheppard and Sr. Elizabeth Englund. San Francisco: Ignatius press, 1988.
- Del Vitto, Jason Gary. *Encountering Eucharistic Presence Within a Postmodern Context: A Dialogue Among Chauvet, Schmemmann and Zizioulas*. Doctoral dissertation, Duquesne University, 2013.
- Denzinger, Heinrich. *Enchiridion Symbolorum. Compendium of Creeds, Definitions, and Declarations on Matters of Faith and Morals*. 43rd edition. Edited by Peter Hunermann. English edition edited by Robert Fastiggi and Anne Englund Nash. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2012.
- Derickson, W. "The New Testament Church as a Mystery," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 166 (2009): 436-445.
- Dicastery for the Doctrine of Faith, *Gestis Verbisque*. On the Validity of the Sacraments, Vatican, 25th January 2024.
- Dictionary of the Later New Testament and its Developments*. Editors, R.P Martin and P.H. Davids. Illinois: Inter Varsity Press, 1997. 782-783.
- Dillistone, Frederick H. *The Power of Symbols in Religion and Culture*. New York: Crossroad, 1986.
- DiNoia Augustine and Fox, Joseph. "Priestly Dimensions of the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick," *The Priest* 62 (Aug 2006): 12.
- Duffy, Mervyn. *How Language, Ritual and Sacraments Work: According to John Austin, Jurgen Habermas and Louis Marie Chauvet*. Rome: Gregorian University Press, 2005.
- Duffy, Regis A. "Sacraments in General" in *Systematic Theology: Roman catholic Perspectives*, Volume.2. Edited by Francis Schussler Fiorenza & John P Galvin. Minneapolis: Fortress press, 1991.
- Edinger, Edward F. *Ego and Archetype*. New York: Putnam's, 1972.
- Edwards, Denis. *Deep Incarnation: God's Redemptive Suffering with Creatures*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2019.

- Emery, Gilles. "Reconciliation with the Church and Interior Penance: The Contribution of Thomas Aquinas on the Question of the *Res et Sacramentum* of Penance." Translated by Robert E. Williams. *Nova et Vetera* 1, (English edn.) no.2 (2003): 283-302.
- Emmanuel, Nathan. "Truth and Prejudice. A Theological Reflection on Biblical Exegesis." *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* (2007): 281-318.
- Evans, E. *Tertullian's Homily on Baptism*. London: SPCK, 1964.
- Fagerberg, David W. *Theologia Prima: What Is Liturgical Theology?* Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 2022.
- Feingold, Lawrence. *Faith Comes from What is Heard: An Introduction to Fundamental Theology*. Stubenville: Emmaus Academic, 2016.
- _____. *Touched by Christ: The Sacramental Economy*. Steubenville: Emmaus Academic, 2021.
- Fisher, Abraham B. *The Church as Symbolic Mediation: Revelation Ecclesiology in the Theology of Avery Dulles*. Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2013.
- Gallagher, John F. *Significando Causant: A study of Sacramental efficiency*. Fribourg, CH: University Press, 1965.
- Ganoczy, Alexander. *An Introduction to Catholic Sacramental Theology*. Translated by William Thomas and Anthony Sherman. New York: Paulist Press, 1984.
- Gerken, John D. "Dialogue Between God and Man" in *Readings in Sacramental Theology*. Edited by C. Stephen Sullivan. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1964.
- Goergen, Donald J. *Fire of Love: Encountering the Holy Spirit*. New Jersey: Paulist Press, 2006.
- Granados, Jose. *Introduction to Sacramental Theology: Signs of Christ in the Flesh*, translated by Michael J. Miller. Washington DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2021.
- Greek-English Dictionary: Sigma–Omega*. Eds., Thoralf Gilbrant and Tor Inge Gilbrant. Missouri, Springfield: The Complete Biblical Library, 1991, 485.
- Gregory the Great. Letter to John, Bishop of Ravenna. Translated by Charles Lett Feltoe. NPNF-2. Vol 12. Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994.
- Gustafson, Hans. *Finding All Things in God: Pansacramentalism and Doing Theology Interreligiously*. Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2015.

- Haffner, Paul. *The Sacramental Mystery*, 3rd edition. Herefordshire: Gracewing, 2016.
- Hall, Jerome M. *We Have the Mind of Christ: The Holy Spirit and Liturgical Memory in the Thought of Edward J Kilmartin*. Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2001.
- Haring, Nicholas M. "Berengar's Definitions of Sacramentum and Their Influence on Mediaeval Sacramentology," *Medieval Studies* 10 (1948):110-144.
- _____. "St. Augustine's Use of the Word *Character*," *Mediaeval Studies* 14 (1952): 85-86.
- Hegy, Pierre. *Worship as Community Drama: Introduction to Liturgy Evaluation*. Oregon: Wipe & Stock, 2019.
- Holy Office, Decree *Lamentabili*. July 3, 1907.
- Hovadelien, Olav. "Edward Schillebeeckx" in *Key Theological Thinkers: From Modern to Postmodern*, edited by Staale Johannes Kristiansen and Svein Rise. London: Taylor and Francis Group, 2013.
- Howell, S.J., C. *Of Sacraments and Sacrifice*. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1952.
- Hugh of St. Victor. *On the Sacraments of Christian Faith*. Translated by Roy J. Deferrari. Cambridge: Medieval Academy of America, 1951.
- _____. *On the Sacraments of the Christian Faith*. Translated by Roy. J. Deferrari. Cambridge, MA: Mediaeval Academy of America, 1951.
- International Theological Commission, *The Reciprocity between Faith and Sacraments in the Sacramental Economy*, Vatican (2020).
- Ireneus. *Against Heresies*. Translated by Alexander Roberts and William Rambaut. In *The Ancient-Nicene Fathers* 1. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994.
- Isidore of Seville. *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, 6.19.40, (PL 82:255). Translated by Stephen A. Barney (Cambridge: University Press, 2006.
- Janowiak, Paul. *The Holy Preaching: The Sacramentality of the Word in the Liturgical Assembly*. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2000.
- John Paul II. *Familiaris Consortio*. Apostolic Exhortation on the Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World. November 22, 1981.
- _____. Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici*, 14. December 30, 1988.
- Jones, A.H.M. *Constantine and the Conversion of Europe*. Revised ed. New York: Collier Books, 1962.
- Jung, Carl. *Psychological Types*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1949.

- Justin, Martyr. *I Apologiae* 54,6. Patristische Texte und Studien 38:109. Translated by Leslie William Barnard in ACW 56. Westminster: Newman Press, 1963.
- _____. *Dialogus cum Thryphone* 74,3 Patristische Texte und Studien 47. Translated by Thomas B. Falls in FC 6. Washington DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1948.
- Kalambukattu, Naiju Jose. "Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara: A Catechetical Scion" *Herald of the East* 15, no.2 (2023): 109-114.
- Kavanagh, Aidan. *On Liturgical Theology*. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1984.
- Kelly, Geoffrey B. *Karl Rahner: Theologian of the Graced Search for Meaning*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993.
- Kelly, Anthony J. "The Body of Christ: Amen!": The Expanding Incarnation." *Theological Studies*, 71 (2010): 792-816.
- Kennedy, Philip. *Schillebeeckx, Outstanding Christian Thinkers Christian Series*, Edited by Brian Davies. London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1993.
- Kheng, Christina. "Paradigm Shifts in Ministry: Insights from the Resurgence of Trinitarian Theology" *Sedos Bulletin* 48 (2016): 3-11.
- Kiesling, Christopher. *Confirmation and Full Life in the Spirit*. Cincinnati: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1973.
- Kilby, Karen. *Karl Rahner in Fount Christian Thinkers Series*. Edited by Peter Vardy. London: Fount, Harper and Collins, 1997.
- Kilmartin, Edward J. *Christian Liturgy: Theology and Practice, 1. Systematic Theology of Liturgy*. Kansas City: Sheed and ward, 1988.
- _____. "Sacraments as Liturgy of the Church," *Theological Studies* 50 (1989): 527.
- King, R. F. "The Origin and Evolution of a Sacramental Formula: *Sacramentum Tantum, Res et Sacramentum, Res Tantum*." *The Thomist* 31 (1967): 21-82.
- Köstenberger, Andreas J. "The Mystery of Christ and the Church: Head and Body, 'One flesh,'" *Trinity Journal* 12 (1991): 79-94.
- Kubicki, Judith Marie. *Liturgical Music as Ritual symbol: A Case Study of Jacques Berthier's Taize Music*. Leuven: Peeters, 1999.

- La Fontaine, S. ed., *The Interpretation of Ritual: Essays in Honour of A.I. Richards*. London: Tavistock, 1972.
- Lawler, Michael G. *Symbol and Sacrament: A Contemporary Sacramental Theology*. New York: Paulist Press, 1987.
- Leeming, Bernard. *Principles of Sacramental Theology*. New edition. London: Longmans, 1960.
- Leithart, Peter J. *Blessed are the Hungry: Meditations on the Lord's Supper*. Moscow: Canon Press, 2000.
- Lennan, Richard. *Tilling the Church: Theology for an Unfinished Product*. Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2022.
- Leo the Great, Sermon 74.2, in *Sermons*, Translated by J.P. Freeland and A. J. Conway. FC 93. Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1996.
- Levering, Matthew. *Christ and the Catholic Priesthood: Ecclesial Hierarchy and the Pattern of the Trinity*. Chicago: Hillenbrand Books, 2010.
- Lienhard, Joseph. "Sacramentum and Eucharist in St. Augustine." *The Thomist* 77, no.2 (2013): 173-192.
- Livingston, James C. *Modern Christian Thought: The Twentieth Century*, 2nd edition, Volume. 2. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006.
- Loisy, Alfred. *The Gospel and the Church*, Translated by Christopher Home. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1909.
- Luscombe, D.E. *The School of Peter Abelard: The Influence of Abelard's Thought in the Early Scholastic Period*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.
- Luther, Martin. *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*. In *Luther's Works*, Vol. 36. *Word and Sacrament II*. Translated by A.T.W. Steinhauser. Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1959.
- Lynch, Reginald M. "The Sacraments as Causes of Sanctification." *Nova et Vetera* (English edition) 12, no.3 (2014): 795.
- _____. *The Cleansing of the Heart: The Sacraments as Instrumental Causes in the Thomistic Tradition*. Washington, DC: Catholic University of America, 2017.
- Martinez, German. *Signs of Freedom: Theology of the Christian Sacraments*. New York: Paulist Press, 2003.

- Martos, Joseph. *Doors to the Sacred: A Historical Introduction to Sacraments in the Christian Church*. London: SCM Press, 1981.
- Matthew Thomas, Gerlach. "Lex Orandi, Lex Legendi: A Correlation of the Roman Canon and the Fourfold Sense of Scripture" (2011). Dissertations (2009 -), http://epublications.marquette.edu/dissertations_mu/122).
- McAuliffe, Clarence. *Sacramental Theology: A Textbook for Advanced Students*. Saint Louis: B. Herder, 1961.
- _____. "Penance and Reconciliation with the Church," *Theological Studies* 26. no.1 (1965): 4.
- Minch, Daniel. "Language, Structure, and Sacrament: Reconsidering the Eucharistic Theology of Edward Schillebeeckx" in *Approaching the Threshold of Mystery: Liturgical Worlds and Theological Spaces*, Edited by Joris Geldhof, Daniel Minch and Trevor Maine. Regensburg: Verlag Friedrich Putset, 2015.
- Mohrmann, Christine. "Sacramentum dans les plus anciens textes chretiens," *Harvard Theological Review* 47, no.3 (1954): 141-152.
- Mudd, Joseph C. *Eucharist as Meaning: Critical Metaphysics and Contemporary Sacramental Theology*. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2014.
- Musurillo, Herbert. "Sacramental Symbolism and the Mysterion of the Early Church." *Worship* 39 (1965): 265-274.
- Noll, Ray Robert. *Sacraments: A new Understanding for a New Generation*. Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 1999.
- Nutt, Roger. "Configuration to Christ the Priest: Aquinas on Sacramental Character," *Angelicum* 85 (2008): 698-711.
- _____. *General Principles of Sacramental Theology*. Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2017.
- O'Neill, Colman. *Meeting Christ in the Sacraments*. Cork: The Mercier Press, 1964.
- _____. *Sacramental Realism: A General Theory of the Sacraments in Theology and Life Series 2*. Dublin: Dominican Publications, 1983.
- O'Neill, John F. *Trinitarian Ecclesiology; Charles Journet, the Divine Missions, and the Mystery of the Church*. Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2024.

- Okoro, Tobias. *Dancing the Post-modern Tune: The Future of the Sacrament of Reconciliation Among the Igbo People in Religions and Discourse*, Vol. 51. Oxford: Peter Lang, 2010.
- Osborne, Kenan B. *Sacramental Theology: A General Introduction*. New York: Paulist Press, 1988.
- _____. *Sacramental Theology: Fifty Years After Vatican II*. Cincinnati: Lectio Publishing, 2014.
- Palmer, Paul F. "Theology of *Res et Sacramentum*" in *Readings in Sacramental Theology*, Ed. C. Stephen Sullivan. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1964.
- Pannenberg, Wolfhart. *Systematic Theology*, vol.3. Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998.
- Paul VI. Apostolic Letter *motu proprio Sacrum Diaconatus Ordinem*, June 18, 1967.
- _____. *Humanae Vitae*. Encyclical on the Regulation of Human Births. July 25, 1968.
- Pelikan, Jaroslav. *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine*, vol.3, *The Growth of Medieval Theology 600-1300*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1978.
- Peter Lombard. *The Sentences. Book 4: On the Doctrine of signs*. Translated by Giulio Silano. Medieval Sources in Translation 48. Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval studies, 2010.
- Pilon, Mark A. *Magnum Mysterium: The Sacrament of Matrimony*. New York: St. Paul's, 2010.
- Pius XII, Encyclical on the Sacred Liturgy *Mediator Dei*. November 20, 1947.
- Pivarnik, Gabriel R. *Toward a Trinitarian Theology of Liturgical Participation*. Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2012.
- Pompulan, Trent. "Post-Tridentine Sacramental Theology" in *The Oxford Handbook of Sacramental Theology*, edited by Hans Boersma and Matthew Levering. Oxford: University Press, 2015.
- Poschmann, Bernhard. *Penance and the Anointing of the Sick*. Translated by Francis Courtney. New York: Herder and Herder, 1964.
- Pourrat, P. *Theology of the Sacraments: A Study in Positive Theology*. St Louis: B. Herder, 1910.

Power, David N. "Sacraments" in *Systematic Theology: Roman Catholic Perspectives*, 2nd edition, Edited by Francis Schüssler Fiorenza and John P. Galvin, Editors. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2011.

Rahner, Karl. "Current Problems in Christology," in *Theological Investigations*, Vol.1, Translated by Cornelius Ernst, O.P., Baltimore: Helicon, 1961, 189-200.

_____. *The Christian Commitment: Essays in Pastoral Theology*. New York: Sheed and Ward, 1963.

_____. *The Church and the Sacraments*. London: Burns & Oates, 1963.

_____. "Forgotten Truths Concerning the Sacrament of Penance," in *Theological Investigations*, vol.2. Translated by Karl-H. Kruger. Baltimore: Helicon, 1963.

_____. *Theology of Pastoral Action*, trans. W.J. O'Hara. New York: Herder and Herder, 1968.

_____. *Theological Investigations*, Vol. IV, Translated by Kevin Smyth. London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1966, and Vol. XIV, Translated by D. Bourke, 1976.

_____. *Foundations of Christian Faith. An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity*. New York: Crossroad, 1997.

Ratzinger, Joseph. *Behold the Pierced One: An Approach to a Spiritual Christology*, trans. Graham Harrison. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986.

_____. *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, trans. John Saward. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2000.

_____. "On the Concept of Sacrament," in *Theology of the Liturgy: The Sacramental Foundation of Christian Existence*. Vol. 11 in Collected Works. Edited by Michael Miller. Translated by John Saward, Kenneth Baker, Henry Taylor, et al. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2014.

_____. *Called to Communion: Understanding the Church Today Called to Communion*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1996.

Reynolds, Philip L. *How Marriage Became One of the Sacraments*. Cambridge: University Press, 2016.

Richter, Klemens. *The Meaning of Sacramental Symbols: Answers to Today's Questions*. Translated by Linda M. Maloney. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1990.

Ricoeur, Paul. *The Symbolism of Evil*, Trans. Emerson Buchanan. New York: Harper and Row, 1967.

- Riggs, John W. "Christian Liturgy: Theology and Practice, Vol. 1, Systematic Theology of Liturgy. Edward J. Kilmartin." *The Journal of Religion* 71, no.4 (1991): 584-585.
- Rinderknecht, Jakob Karl. "Order, Out of Order: Rahner's Tectonic Proposal for an Ecumenical Difficulty." *Horizons* 42 (2015): 341-367.
- Ross, Susan A. *Extravagant Affections: A Feminist Sacramental Theology*. New York: Continuum, 2001.
- Sampson, Tyler. "Scripture, Tradition, and *Ressourcement*: Toward an Anglican Fundamental Liturgical Theology," *Anglican Theological Review* 96, no. 4 (Spring 2014): 305-310.
- Schaefer, M. M. "Kilmartin, Edward J." in *New Catholic Encyclopaedia*. 2nd edition, Volume. 8. Detroit: Gale, 2003.
- Scheeben, Matthias. *The Mysteries of Christianity*. Translated by C. Vollert. St Louis: B. Herder, 1961.
- Schillebeeckx, Edward. *Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God*. Oxford: Rowan & Littlefield Publishers, 1963.
- Schlesinger, Eugene R. *Missa Est! A Missional Liturgical Ecclesiology*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2017.
- Schmaus, Michael. *Dogma, Volume.5, The Church as Sacrament*. Translated by Mary Lederer. Kansas City: Sheed and Ward, 1975.
- Second Vatican Council. Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*. December 4, 1963.
- _____. Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions *Nostra Aetate*. October 28, 1965.
- _____. Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests *Presbyterorum Ordinis*. December 7, 1965.
- _____. Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests *Presbyterorum Ordinis* 2, December 7, 1965.
- _____. Decree on the Mission Activity of the Church *Ad Gentes*. December 7, 1965.
- _____. Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum*. November 18, 1965.
- _____. Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, November 21, 1964.

- _____. Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*. December 7, 1965.
- Semmelroth, Otto. *Church and Sacrament*, Translated by Emily Schossberger. Notre Dame: Fides Publishers, 1965.
- Stone, Darwell. *A History of the Doctrine of the Holy Eucharist*. Volume 1. London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1909.
- Suess, Paulo. "Missio Dei and the Project of Jesus: The Poor and the 'Other' as the Mediators of the Kingdom and Protagonists of the Churches", *Sedos Bulletin* 44 (2012): 2–9.
- Sweeney, Conor. *Sacramental Presence After Heidegger: Onto-theology, Sacraments, and the Mother's Smile*. Oregon: Cascade Books, 2015.
- Taylor Charles. et al., *Church and People: Disjunctions in a Secular Age*. Washington, D.C: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2012.
- Tertullian. *De resurrection carnis*. Translated by Ernest Evans, *Tertullian's Treatise on the Resurrection*. London: SPCK, 1960.
- _____. *Adversus Marcionem*. Translated and edited by Ernest Evans. Vol. 2. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972.
- _____. *De Baptismo I*, In *Worship in the Early Church: An Anthology of Historical Sources*, Vol., edited by Lawrence J. Johnson. Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2009, 119-132.
- Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Eds., G. Kittel and G. Friedrich, Vol. 7. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971: 948-950.
- Thomas Marsh, "The Sacramental Character." In *Sacraments: The Gestures of Christ*. Ed., Denis O'Callaghan. New York: Sheed and Ward, 1964.
- Thomas Scirghi, "Edward J. Kilmartin: Reuniting *Lex Orandi* with *Lex Credenti*" in *Primary Sources of Liturgical Theology: A Reader*. Edited by Dwight. W. Vogel. Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2000.
- Tillich, Paul. "The Meaning and Justification of Religious Symbols" in *Religious Experience and Truth*. Edited by Sidney Hook. New York: New York University Press, 1961.
- Tovey, Phillip. *Inculturation of Christian Worship: Exploring the Eucharist*. London: Routledge, 2019.
- Turner, Victor. "Symbolic Studies" in *Annual Review of Anthropology* (1975):151.

- Vagaggini, Cyprian. *Theological Dimension of Liturgy*, trans. Leonard Doyle and W. A. Jurgens. Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1976.
- Van Ommen, Armand Léon. "The Sacramental Nature of Peacemaking Rituals: A Case for a Sacramental Spirituality of Reconciliation" in *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church*, 18. No.1(2018): 16-30.
- Van Roo, William A. *De Sacramentis in genere*. Rome: Gregorian University Press, 1957.
- _____. "Reflection on Karl Rahner's *Kirche und Sakramente*." *Gregorianum* 44 (1963): 465-500.
- _____. *The Christian Sacrament*. Rome: Editrice Pontificia Università Gregoriana, 1992.
- Vass, George. *The Sacrament of the Future: An Evaluation of Karl Rahner's Concept of the Sacraments and the End of Time*. Herefordshire: Gracewing, 2005.
- Vollert, Cyril. "The Church and the Sacraments" in *Readings in Sacramental Theology*. Edited by C. Stephen Sullivan. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1964.
- Vorgrimler, Herbert. *Karl Rahner: His Life, Thought and Work*. Translated by Edward Quinn. London, Burnes & Oates, 1965.
- _____. *Sacramental Theology*, Translated by Linda M Maloney. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1992.
- Walsh, Liam G. "Summa Contra Gentiles" in *The Theology of Thomas Aquinas*. Edited by Rik Van Nieuwenhoye and Joseph P Wawrykow. Notre Dame: University Press, 2005.
- _____. *Sacraments of Initiation: A Theology of Rite, Word and Life*. 2nd edition. Chicago: Hillenbrand Books, 2011.
- Wellman, T. J. "Ancient Mysteria and Modern Mystery Cults," *Religion and Theology* 12, nos.3-4 (2005): 308-348.
- Whitehead, Alfred North. *Symbolism: Its Meaning and Effect*. New York: Putnam's, 1959.
- Wood, Susan K. "The Paschal Mystery: The intersection of Ecclesiology and Sacramental Theology in the Care of the Sick" in *Recovering the Riches of Anointing: A Study of the Sacrament of Sick*. An international Symposium. The National Association of Catholic Chaplains. Edited by Genevieve Glen. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2002.
- _____. *One Baptism: Ecumenical Dimension of the Doctrine of Baptism*. Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2009.

_____. "The Sacramental Foundations of Ecclesial Identity: Barrier or Passageway to Ecumenical Unity?," in *Believing in Community : Ecumenical Reflections on the Church*. Eds. Peter de Mey, Pieter de Witte, and Gerard Mannion. Leuven: Peeters Publishers, 2013.

Ysebaert, J. *Greek Baptismal Terminology: Its Origins and Early Development*. Nijmegen: Dekker and Van de Vegt, 1962.