PART 1

THE SACRAMENTS, DEEPLY ROOTED IN THE FLESH OF JESUS

The point of departure for studying the sacraments can only be the central rite instituted by Jesus in the context of his preaching and works. This invites us to focus our outlook on the Eucharist and, in relation to it, on baptism; from there I will identify several distinctive features so as to define what a sacrament is (chapter 2). Next I will examine the first two attempts to offer a unified view of the sacraments in terms of the life of Christ: St. John, who speaks to us about the signs and works of Jesus (chapter 3); and St. Paul, who deals with the revelation of the *mysterion-sacramentum* (chapter 4). These premises will enable us to establish the root of the sacraments in Christ; he instituted them when, throughout his life in the flesh, he opened a new space of relations animated fully by the love of God (chapter 5).

2 THE ORIGIN OF THE SACRAMENTS IN THE RITE OF JESUS

A conviction emerged from chapter 1: in the New Testament the sacraments open up the setting in which we can encounter the risen Lord—see his face, hear his voice, touch his wounds. Therefore, if every object of study has its suitable method, the sacraments are the ideal method for the object of theology: God, revealed in Christ for the salvation of mankind. Or also: if an organ corresponds to each sensation (and it would be absurd to attempt to taste chocolate with the tip of a finger), the organs appropriate for tasting the Christian mystery are the sacraments.

How can we inquire into the central features of the sacramental outlook? To answer that question, recall that the New Testament usually deals with the seven sacraments, not in general, but one by one: the Eucharist, baptism, penance, the anointing of the sick … yet, given the central position of the Eucharist in the early church, and its constitutive place in the story of Jesus, we cannot avoid starting with it. We will see that the Eucharist gives us the key with which to unlock the secret of the other sacraments. They will be sacraments to the extent that they draw near to it and participate in it, as the fundamental sacrament that it is; in turn, each sacrament will illuminate and reinforce a key aspect of the Eucharist.

After the Eucharist, the next in order of importance is baptism, the second major rite attested in the life of Jesus and of the early church. I will conclude, on the one hand, that baptism and the Eucharist, even with the clear differences between them, share many common elements: in this resemblance the first features of a sacramental outlook are revealed. Moreover, baptism will prove to be oriented to the Eucharist, as the concrete way in which the latter breaks into the life of Christians. In fact, baptism, the portal sacrament, will give us the key through which to associate the rest of the sacraments with the body offered by Jesus and his outpoured blood.

From the Eucharistic Rite to the Sacramental Organism

If the Eucharist opens up to us the space in which to encounter Christ, to participate in his work, to hear and proclaim his word, we now ask ourselves: what is the structure of this space inaugurated by Jesus, as it can be inferred from the celebration of the rite?[1] Before answering, it is important to note that the Eucharistic rite not only is our way of gaining access to the mystery of Christ, but also constitutes for Jesus himself the framework that marked out his mission, in the sight of the Father and of mankind, "before He suffered" (Lk 22:15). In fact, Jesus did not invent the rite from scratch; there was a received component of it, too. It was received in the traditions of his people, although he would then transform them profoundly in keeping with the fullness that is his own; received, ultimately, from his Father, the origin of Israel's liturgy and of the sacred sense of all creation.[2] The space into which the rite introduces us will be, therefore, the very same space in which Jesus lived and which he fashioned during his life, death, and resurrection.

The Context: The Jewish Passover and the *todah* Sacrifice

The context in which Jesus celebrates his rite is constituted, on the one hand, by the supper of the Jewish Passover (*pesach*), the eating of the lamb that recalls the liberation from Egypt. Exegetes, of course, debate whether the Last Supper was a Paschal meal. For while the Synoptics present it in this way, St. John follows another chronology: the *pesach* fell that year, according to him, on Good Friday, so that the death of Jesus coincided with the sacrifice of the lambs in the Temple.[3] In any case, we can say with certainty that Jesus' supper shares many features with the *pesach*. The same Gospel situates the bread of life discourse (where the words of institution, more or less, appear) around the celebration of the Jewish Passover (Jn 6:4).

What are the Paschal features of Jesus' celebration? In the first place we have the festive and ritual character of this meal: hence the use of wine,

1. Ratzinger, "Gestalt und Gehalt der eucharistischen Feier."

2. In this section I draw from Heinz Schürmann, "Die Gestalt der urchristlichen Eucharistiefeier," *Münchener Theologische Zeitschrift* 6, no. 2 (1955): 107–31; Peter Stuhlmacher, "Das neutestamentliche Zeugnis zum Herrenmahl," *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 84, no. 1 (1987): 1–35; Ferdinand Hahn, "Zum Stand der Erforschung des urchristlichen Herrenmahls," *Evangelische Theologie* 35 (1975): 553–63; and Michael Theobald, "Das Herrenmahl im Neuen Testament," *Theologische Quartalschrift* 183, no. 4 (2003): 257–80.

3. For a summary of the debate, see Joseph Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth*, vol. 2: *Holy Week: From the Entrance into Jerusalem to the Resurrection* (San Francisco, Calif.: Ignatius Press, 2011), 106–15.

which was reserved for such occasions. The *pesach* was, specifically, a memorial: those eating it gratefully recalled Yahweh's mighty deed when he gave birth to Israel by bringing his people out of Egypt. Jesus too remembered the gifts from his Father, within the memory of his people, asking the disciples to preserve the memory of him (Lk 22:19). And this was not to be just a nostalgic remembrance: ritual commemoration, as the Bible understands it, makes present what happened, again making God's saving arm felt.[4]

Moreover, in the Passover they sacrificed the lamb, the substitute for the firstborn sons of Israel, who were rescued from a deadly plague by the blood that marked the doorposts. By liberating the firstborn son, God confirmed the blessing of fertility that he pronounced over our first parents (Gn 1:28), a blessing that was the prefiguration of all his further promises and made possible the grateful memory and the full future of the people. The rite was offered, therefore, with the filial attitude of someone who knows that he is generated by Yahweh and, by acknowledging in him the origin of life, can conquer the power of death and be transformed into a father. In light of this, Jewish tradition would identify the lamb with a specific person who entrusts himself radically to God and professes him as the origin of paternity—for example, Isaac or the Servant of Yahweh. The firstborn sons were rescued, thus, not by the blood of irrational animals but rather on the basis of a filial life which, by offering itself for the chosen people, revived their hope. Jesus situates himself in this context of gratitude toward the Father, handing over his body as food and pouring out his blood for the sins of the multitude (Mt 26:28). He, as the firstborn Son, takes up the logic of the Passover rite so as to fulfill it.

Once we have accepted the context of the *pesach*, we must nevertheless ask ourselves: is Jesus' rite directly derived from it? There are many elements that lead us to distinguish between what was celebrated by Jesus and the Jewish Passover. For what the master leaves to his disciples, and what he orders them to repeat ("do this in memory of me") is not the entire supper, but rather two particular moments: the offering of the bread and wine with the words that accompany them.[5] It turns out that these moments, which Jesus innovated, do not belong to the *pesach*. Moreover, in the Upper Room definitive features of the Hebrew Passover disappear; and thus, for example,

4. Max Thurian, *L'eucharistie: Mémorial du Seigneur: Sacrifice d'action de grâce et d'intercession* (Neuchatel: Delachaux et Niestlé, 1963); Enrico Galbiati, "I segni sacri dell'Antico Testamento," *Sacra Doctrina* 45 (1967): 13–36.

5. Although for a time the Eucharist was celebrated within the context of an ordinary meal, soon it was understood that the latter was incidental, as Paul already points out to the Corinthians (1 Cor 11:17–22).

a lamb is not mentioned. The differences increase in the church's practice of celebrating the Eucharist, not once a year, but rather every Sunday; this is an important change, given that the *pesach* was connected with the rhythm of the people's life.[6]

A question is justified, then: because of this concentration on the offering of bread and wine, is Jesus taking into account some other rite of the Old Testament? There are plenty of indications that the master reinterpreted the Last Supper on the basis of what was called a sacrifice of *todah*, or of praise [and thanksgiving] (Lv 7:12–18).[7] Situated at the center of this sacrifice is not the life of a sacrificed animal, but rather the very existence of the one who offers it, who is in mortal danger: this is precisely the existential context of the Last Supper, celebrated "on the night when [Jesus] was betrayed" (1 Cor 11:23). In the *todah*, moreover, a man, after escaping from death, fulfills in the presence of God his vow with an offering that includes bread, symbol of the everyday life that the votary shares with his friends; the shared bread is, therefore, the sign of victory: a life has been recovered and is given to the brethren.[8] Finally, such a sacrifice of praise [and thanksgiving] or *todah* is part of the core of the spirituality of the Psalter: of interest in this light is Psalm 22(21), precisely the one that Jesus recited during his passion.[9] In this psalm, after the first part in which the afflictions of death are described (vv. 1–22), the Psalmist gives thanks to God for the salvation that he has received, offering his praise in the midst of the brethren (vv. 23–32).

The connection with the *todah* neatly explains why Christians later called the Christian rite the Eucharist (thanksgiving). Now, the new thing in Jesus' *todah* is the fact that his gratitude refers to a future act: he praises God, not after having received life, but rather with a death sentence imminent. This is explained only in terms of the unique relation of Jesus with his Father to which the Gospels testify. Christ's trust in God, whom he dares to call "Abba," is so deeply rooted that his gratitude anticipates everything in the future, including moreover the "non-future" of death. He overflows with such thankfulness that it precedes the benefit that he hopes to receive.

6. Ratzinger, "Form and Content of the Eucharistic Celebration," 307–8.

7. Hartmut Gese, "Die Herkunft des Herrenmahls," in his *Zur biblischen Theologie: Alttestamentliche Vorträge* (Munich: Kaiser Verlag, 1983), 107–27; Cesare Giraudo, *La structura letteraria della Preghiera eucaristica: Saggio sulla genesi letteraria di una forma: Toda veterotestamentaria, Beraka giudaica, Anafora cristiana*, Analecta Biblica 92 (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1981); Xavier Léon-Dufour, *Le partage du pain eucharistique selon le Nouveau Testament* (Paris: Seuil, 1982), 54.

8. Aletti, "Signes," 314: "the breaking of the bread confirms that there has been a victory, since the living person invites others to share in his life."

9. Hartmut Gese, "Psalm 22 und das Neue Testament: der älteste Bericht vom Tode Jesu und die Entstehung des Herrenmahles," *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 65, no. 1 (1968): 1–22; see also Pss 50:14, 66:13, 69:30.

He behaved similarly in multiplying the loaves and in raising Lazarus: he thanked God in poverty before receiving his favors.[10]

Jesus offers the *todah* of the Last Supper, we must conclude, not only for what God had given him, but also for what God was about to generate in him: the eternal life of his risen body, a life that would be poured out upon those who were his own.[11] This means that the Christian Eucharist, in the strict sense, is celebrated only after the resurrection and can be defined as "the *todah* of the Risen Lord."[12] The second part of Psalm 22(21), which was recited on the cross, adopts this eschatological perspective, which hints at the resurrection: "Yes, to Him shall all the proud of the earth bow down; before Him shall bow all who go down to the dust" (Ps 22:30). It is not surprising that Sunday proved to be the ideal day for the Eucharistic celebration.

It is important to emphasize that there is no contradiction between Jesus' *todah* and the context of the Jewish *pesach* (Passover supper). In both cases there is a memorial of thanksgiving for the son's rescue; and of a life handed over which, in obedience to the Father and in love for the brethren, is recovered so as to establish a new family. We could say that, in Jesus, the *pesach* is manifested as *todah*; in Christ it is revealed that the heart of the Jewish Passover was a sacrifice of praise [and thanksgiving]. Whereas with the *pesach* God began the journey of the chosen people, generating it to a new life, now the journey concludes with a definitive birth that also liberates from death.

The fact that the Eucharist is the *todah* of the risen Lord has a wealth of theological consequences. In the first place, the words spoken over the body and the blood will have to be understood in light of the glorified body, filled with the Spirit (Jn 6:63; Rom 8:11). In the second place, Jesus' rite, in pointing to his glorious Pasch, indicates the future when life has been recovered and the *todah* or praise [and thanksgiving] is offered; this means that through memory (*pesach*) the prospect of the definitive future is displayed (*todah* of the risen Lord). This then sets up two axes along which the central elements of the Eucharistic rite are situated and which demarcate the definition of the sacrament: the axis *flesh-Spirit* and the axis *memory-fulfillment*.

10. Albert Vanhoye, *Tanto amó Dios al mundo: Lectio sobre el sacrificio di Cristo* (Madrid: San Pablo, 2005).

11. According to *Pesikta de-Rav Kahana* 79a of the Mandelbaum edition (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1962), 1:159, all sacrifices will cease at the end of time, as well as all songs; but the *todah* sacrifice and the *todah* song will never cease.

12. Gese, "Die Herkunft des Herrenmahls."

The First Axis of the Rite: Bread and Wine—The Flesh and the Spirit

Keeping in mind the ritual form of the *todah*, let us begin to consider the center of Jesus' liturgy: the words spoken over the bread and the wine, with the gestures that accompany them. When Jesus distributes the bread he refers it to his body, which is "My body ... given for you" (Lk 22:19). It is easy to discover the Old Testament subtext of this phrase. The flesh, in the biblical view of man, is a continual reminder that the human person is not an isolated being. Let us recall several biblical expressions, individually applied to the familial connections of sonship, brotherhood, espousal: flesh of my flesh (Gn 2:23), one flesh (Gn 2:24), my/our own flesh (Gn 29:14; 37:27), and so on. Because they are flesh, Adam and his sons are defined in terms of the setting in which they are rooted; therefore, in order to encounter their genuine identity, they need to relate to their neighbors, with the people as a whole. It is understandable then that Jesus would later speak about his *body* "for you" (and not simply about his *life* for you). This is because the body is the place where one belongs to others, where one lives with others and for others, where life, finally, breaks through its isolation by mutual giving and receiving.[13] Inasmuch as Jesus took on our life so as to give it back to us renewed, this offering had to pass through the flesh.

Jesus channels this relational opening of the body primarily toward God the Father, as emphasized by the context of thanksgiving (*todah*) of the Last Supper. As the first bond that is forged in the flesh is a bond with the origin, whoever has a body cannot forget that someone engendered him, and he cannot deny the connection with his ancestors and, through them, with the creator, who formed us in our mother's womb (Jer 1:5). This explains why Jesus, in the Letter to the Hebrews, understanding that God "prepared a body" for him, feels moved to make an offering (Heb 10:6).

In terms of the original relation with God, the experience of the body speaks a language of unity with other human beings. For in the body the husband lives for his wife and the wife for her husband; the lives of parents are directed toward their children, and the lives of children come from their parents. Thus it is possible, for someone who accepts his embodied condition, to share the lot of the other, as attested by the concept of the "corporate person" that we encounter in scripture. Recall, in this regard,

13. Unless explicitly noted otherwise, I will use "body" and "flesh" as synonyms, fully aware that authors use them differently; in this regard see José Granados, *Teología de la carne: el cuerpo en la historia de su salvación* (Burgos: Monte Carmelo, 2012), 24.

the Servant of Yahweh (Is 53:12), who receives in himself the destiny of the people, so as to give them life. And also Isaac who, according to the Jewish tradition of the *akedah* (binding), participates actively in the sacrifice by letting himself be bound (Jn 18:12) and offers himself for the sin of all Israel. Jesus brings this journey to fulfillment: his words over the bread—"for you"—give expression to the language of donation that is inscribed in the flesh, which will attain fulfillment in the glorified body that will be fully communicative.

This perspective is rounded out with the words that Jesus pronounced in handing over the one chalice. According to the biblical view, life is contained in the blood (Dt 12:23); life which, in turn, is communicated to man by the divine breath (Gn 2:7), which is a participation in the spirit or breathing of Yahweh (*ruah*: Gn 6:3). This connection between blood and respiration is confirmed precisely in sacrifices, when steam from the outpoured blood is seen.[14] Hence a common mentality spread during antiquity: by means of blood, the vital or spiritual principle that proceeds from God comes into contact with human flesh.[15] In light of this, the gift of Jesus' blood would be associated with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, as the Letter to the Hebrews attests (Heb 9:14; 13:20).[16]

This relation blood-Spirit is confirmed if we pay attention to the key term in the words pronounced over the cup: *covenant*. Mark and Matthew speak about the "blood of the covenant," referring to the sacrifice of Moses, who sprinkled blood on the people (Ex 24:8), after which the leaders of Israel ate and drank with God (Ex 24:11). Luke and Paul for their part mention "the new covenant," following the prophetic tradition (Jer 31:31) and adding "in My blood." If the covenant is associated with blood (including when the new panorama of the prophets is assumed, as in Paul and Luke), it is because blood, as communication of life and Spirit to man, signifies communion between the creature and God. So it is understood in the insight of St. Ignatius of Antioch: "I desire the drink of God, namely His blood, which is incorruptible love and eternal life."[17]

The binomial "flesh-blood," symbolized by the bread and the wine, re-

14. Vanhoye, *Tanto amó Dios al mundo* and *Accogliamo Cristo nostro sommo sacerdote: esercizi spirituali con Benedetto XVI* (Vatican City: LEV, 2008).

15. One witness to this mentality is Irenaeus of Lyons, *Adversus haereses* V, 3, 2 (SC 153:48): "aliud arteriae et venae, sanguinis et spiritus transitoria" (another [part of the flesh became] arteries and veins, passages for the blood and the air). The English translation is taken from the Ante-Nicene Fathers series (hereafter ANF), ed. Alexander Roberts et al. (London: T and T Clark, 1867–85), 1:529b.

16. Albert Vanhoye, "Par la tente plus grande et plus parfaite," *Biblica* 46 (1965): 1–28.

17. Ignatius of Antioch, *Ad Romans* VII, 3 (SC 10:136; ANF 1:77); also Melito, *Peri Pascha* 32 (SC 123:76): "Tell me, angel, what frightened you? ... The *blood* of the lamb or the *Spirit* of the Lord?"

fers us, therefore, to the pair "flesh-Spirit." The first axis of the Eucharist endorses the biblical view of man, who is formed of the earth (flesh) and open to the gift and to the action of the divine breath (Spirit) (Gn 2:7).[18] We can understand now that the Eucharist, by its emphasis on the flesh and blood, unfolds before mankind, so to speak, a space of relations; I mean the space of Jesus' body (his concrete way of being situated in the world and open to the Father and to his brethren) which was forged during his earthly life and is permeated with the Spirit of communion. It is a space that the resurrection consummated and sealed, through which Jesus was able to introduce those who are his own into it, feeding them with his body and blood. The Spirit's province is to impel history toward its end; given that he acts in this space, this must be a dynamic space that is growing toward its maturity, when the flesh will become fully spiritual. Thus we come to the other axis along which the rite moves: an axis that runs through the ages.

The Second Axis of the Rite: From Memory to Eschatological Anticipation

The space inaugurated in the body and blood of Jesus is not a static space but rather ripens productively. Indeed, from it one gains access to the past and to the future, to the memory of the first gift and to the hope for the consummated gift.

In the first place, the Eucharistic space opens up to the past through memory. Jesus, in his rite, participates in the memorial of the people and entrusts his action to the memory of the disciples: "do this is memory of Me."[19] Memory, in the Bible, keeps alive the presence of Yahweh as the one who gave his people their origin by rescuing them. The privileged place of memory is worship, where these salvific deeds are made present. Hence Israel was constituted as such in the liturgy: only by remembering God's redeeming action, his mighty deeds [*hazañas*] for the benefit of its forefathers, can it recognize itself as chosen and loved by Yahweh. Therefore memory is the obligatory passage through which to know the God of the Bible, who reveals himself by acting in history and binds his name to the name and destiny of his own. To forget these past deeds is to forget who he is.

This memory reaches its zenith in the Eucharist of Jesus, his *todah*. Any *todah* sacrifice, being praise [and thanksgiving] for God's benefits, is an exercise of memory, the organ of filial gratitude. All the more so the *todah* of the risen Son: in light of the definitive and insuperable gift of the Father, who placed all things into his hands (Jn 13:3), Jesus professes that all being and all becoming has its origin in God. Therefore the Eucharist, together with the entire life of Jesus, recapitulates the broad history of Israel, which goes back to the molding of man; and it also contains the memory of the creation of the cosmos, represented by the bread and wine, fruits of the earth and of human work.

In the second place, this space of relations inaugurated by Christ in the Eucharist also points toward the future. This already occurred in the liturgy of Israel: the memorial, being the memorial of a promise, was the memorial of a future action of God that surpassed the previous ones. Therefore, just as the liturgy made the past present, so too it anticipated the future. Tomorrow proved to be just as real as the oath made by Yahweh to save his people; the future could be touched as one touches the fruit sown in the earth and the child stirring in the womb.

Jesus' rite, too, at the Last Supper, anticipates the future of the resurrection. Therefore Jesus mentions the fruit of the vine, which he will drink again only in his Father's Kingdom (Mt 26:29). St. John, in his discourse on the bread of life, corroborates this view, while concentrating on the eternal life received by those who are fed by the body and blood of Christ.[20] And the Eucharist celebrated by the church preserves this eschatological tension ("Maranatha! Come, Lord Jesus!"), which not only hopes for but also anticipates the definitive Passover of history. Someone who enters into the space inaugurated by Jesus in the Eucharist is capable of tasting and assimilating the final fruit of time: a future beyond which God has nothing greater left to promise.

St. Paul sums up this temporal Eucharistic axis when he states (1 Cor 11:26): "As often as you eat this bread and drink the chalice [present], you proclaim the Lord's death [past] until He comes [future]." By eating the bread and drinking the wine, we unite our time with Christ's time, making the past present and anticipating the future.[21] We should understand it in this sense when St. Irenaeus of Lyons calls the Eucharistic chalice *compendii poculum*, the cup in which the ages are summarized.[22]

18. Carlos Granados, "El Espíritu de Yahvé y el dinamismo de la creación en el Antiguo Testamento," *Anthropotes* 26 (2010): 45–65.

19. Thurian, *L'eucharistie*.

20. Jn 6:35, 39, 40, 44, 48; the Eucharist is different from the manna, which does not give eternal life (Jn 6:49); anyone who eats of the former will live forever (6:51), and already has eternal life (6:53, 57).

21. The last phrase, "until He comes," can be explained in the active sense: "so that He may come again"; Otfried Hofius, "'Bis dass er kommt' I.Kor XI.26," *New Testament Studies* 14 (1967–68): 439–41.

22. Irenaeus of Lyons, *Adversus haereses* III, 16, 7 (SC 211:314; ANF 1:443a).

All this implies that the Eucharist is, along with the real presence of the body and blood of Christ, also the real presence of his action in time. This means that in it we not only come into contact with Jesus, but also with his whole history, from his birth until his death and resurrection. Credit goes to the Benedictine monk Odo Casel (1886–1948) for reviving this view of the liturgy as participation in the mysteries of the life of Jesus.[23] For in the sacrament not only do the effects of Christ's bygone work reach us, but we also enter into the very action of Christ, inheriting his way of living in time.

Summary: Central Features of the Eucharistic Rite

We have now managed to sift out the central features of the Eucharistic rite inaugurated by Jesus, which are the features of the sacramental outlook. The whole rite is concentrated in the body of Jesus and in its ability to forge bonds, with the Father (to whom his thanks are directed) and with his brethren ("for you," "for the life of the world"). The words of institution refer the bread that is shared to the flesh of Jesus, to his relational way of living together with human beings and of directing everything to the Father; and they refer the wine poured out to his blood, where we encounter the Spirit, who enlivens the relations of communion between God and his own. In light of this, the material elements that are used in the rite acquire meaning also: the bread and the wine are placed at the service of the relational body of Christ, make it visible and tangible, and mediate man's assimilation of it as food. To celebrate the Eucharist, therefore, is to enter into the space of relations inaugurated by Jesus in his body, so as to receive in this space the bond of love that is his Spirit.

The rite is framed in a vital narrative: it contains within itself the memory of an origin and opens up a perspective of the ultimate future, as Jesus, the Alpha and Omega, experienced them. Moreover, given that Christ brings with him the fullness of time, the rite is capable of condensing all of history into his journey from the Father to the Father. The space of relations that opens up in the Eucharist is a space that unfolds, therefore, according to the rhythm with which Christ completed his passage through his earthly life. From the Eucharist we derive the coordinates by which to understand the other sacraments, which incorporate human beings into the new relations inaugurated by Jesus in his flesh, and into the dynamism with which they make their way to maturity.

23. Odo Casel, *Das christliche Kultmysterium* (Regensburg: Pustet, 1935).

Baptism, Being Born into the Body of Jesus

Together with the Eucharist, we encounter in the New Testament an abundance of testimonies referring to another rite: baptism. What is the relation between the two? One difference with the Eucharist hits the reader in the eye: Christian baptism appears to be spoken about, above all, in texts later than Easter. According to Matthew, Jesus ordered his disciples to baptize when he was already risen, as he was saying goodbye to them (Mt 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." Baptism appears also as part of their mission in the canonical conclusion of Mark (Mk 16:16).[24]

Some, relying on historical criticism, have said that these texts by themselves offer little basis for assurance that Jesus instituted the sacrament.[25] Would it not have been logical that, in discussing such an important mandate, all the sources would have attested it more clearly? So it is, in fact, with the Eucharist, as we have seen. And why does Jesus not speak about baptism during his public ministry? How is it that he does not baptize, just like John baptized?

On the other hand, without clear support in the teaching of Jesus, one would have trouble explaining the immediate spread of the practice among the first disciples. Indeed, it is difficult to find precedents among pagan customs. Nor does the baptism of Jewish proselytes offer much support, because of its differences with ecclesial baptism: it was not a ritual washing conferred by a minister, but rather by the neophyte himself; it did not apply to the other members of Israel who were born such; and, finally, it lacked eschatological features.[26] That being the case, only one option remains: to find the roots of the sacrament of baptism in John's baptism, which Jesus himself received.

John's Baptism and Baptism in the Name of Jesus

There are various similarities between John's baptism and Christian baptism: another person administers it (John "the Baptist"); it is directed to all Israel, not only to the proselytes; it is framed in an eschatological perspective, before God's definitive judgment and, therefore, happens only once.

24. Before the resurrection, Jesus alludes to baptism in his conversation with Nicodemus (Jn 3:5: "Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God").

25. Gerhard Lohfink, "Der Ursprung der christlichen Taufe," *Theologische Quartalschrift* 156, no. 1 (1976): 35–54; Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology* III (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998), chap. 13, section III.1.d.

26. Lohfink, "Der Ursprung," 41.

This similarity nevertheless raises a question: why did the disciples take up again the practice of baptism, a practice going back before Jesus, which the master himself did not continue during his public ministry?

In order to answer, it is helpful to explain how Jesus takes up John's ministry and transforms it. According to St. Luke, the Baptist's preaching appears, in many respects, similar to the Savior's. Both speak about the nearness of the Kingdom and about the penitence necessary for the forgiveness of sins. In fact, now in his glorified body, Jesus resumes his missionary mandate with a formula similar to the one that sums up the Baptist's activity. Whereas John had come "preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins" (Lk 3:3), the Paschal Jesus announces to his disciples that "repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in His name to all nations" (Lk 24:47).

Note the detail that Jesus adds, which replaces the mention of baptism in Luke 3:3: repentance and forgiveness must happen "in His name" (Lk 24:47). This shows the difference; to the call to conversion announced by John, Jesus adds only one thing: he adds himself. The Baptist, in effect, proclaimed God's future judgment and called for preparation to face it. Christ, for his part, announces that the judgment is already here, as he is this judgment in person. Thus a judgment of mercy is offered which does not require that we convert first: God anticipates us gratuitously, turns toward us, offers us the life of his Son so that, united with him, "in His name," we might be able to abandon sin and be converted. Thus the place occupied by baptism in John's preaching corresponds, in the mandate of the risen Lord, to the name of Jesus, in other words, to the account of his life, which takes up ours. Whereas John baptized with water, the Christian is immersed in the life of Christ, who justifies us in the Father's sight.[27]

We can understand in these terms the preaching of the church that Luke himself relates for us in Acts. The apostles repeat, summarily, the formulas of the Baptist and of Jesus: "*Repent, and be baptized* every one of you *in the name of Jesus* Christ *for the forgiveness* of your sins" (Acts 2:38). Now baptism reappears, as in John's ministry (Lk 3:3), but associated with the name of Jesus, recalling the master's command (Lk 24:47). Between John's baptism and the church's baptism we encounter therefore, once again, the way of Christ ("in His name"): this is the difference between one kind of water and the other.

27. Ibid., 51.

Baptism in the Life of Jesus: The Jordan

We have started to calculate the distance between John's baptism and the Christian sacrament: it is measured exactly as the life of Jesus. Now, in order to explain why the apostles took up the rite of John in order to express bonding to Jesus, it is necessary to find some support in the way of the master. We have to consider, in this regard, one decisive fact. Although Jesus himself would not baptize with John's baptism, he himself was baptized in the Jordan. All the Gospels allude to this incident, pointing out the novelty of the event: the heavens open, the Father's voice is heard, the Spirit descends in the form of a dove (Mk 1:9–11; Mt 3:13–17; Lk 3:21; Jn 1:32–34; Acts 10:38). We understand then: the importance of the scene at the Jordan in Jesus' mission is what decisively roots baptism in his earthly life. Christ's words after Easter, recorded by St. Matthew (Mt 28:19), were not spoken, then, in a vacuum. In order to study them in greater depth it will be important to consider in detail this inaugural episode of his public ministry.

The baptism in the Jordan was certainly not an act of false humility by which Christ lowered himself in order to receive something he did not need. Nor did it involve the mere manifestation to men of a power that he already possessed from all eternity. According to the biblical testimony, Jesus experienced this baptism as a rite that was essential for his mission, in which he received authority and power from the Father. It signified for him, moreover, not only one particular act, but rather the framework that marked out his ministry, which was moved from then on in a singular way by the Holy Spirit.[28]

What happened in the Jordan is understood as the fulfillment of the anointings of the Old Testament, which signified the coming of the Spirit upon men of God, mediators of his love for the people. By being baptized, Christ associated himself in a new way to this history of humanity, which he had already taken up by becoming incarnate, and which advanced in Israel under the guidance of the Spirit.

In the background we find (as we already saw happening in the Eucharist) the idea of the "corporate person," whereby someone can contain the people within himself and mediate divine grace for them, as was foretold about the Servant of Yahweh (Is 42:1).[29] It is no accident that St. Luke places after the scene at the Jordan the genealogy of Jesus, which goes back to

28. Luis F. Ladaria, *Jesús y el Espíritu: la Unción* (Burgos: Monte Carmelo, 2012).

29. H. Wheeler Robinson, *Corporate Personality in Ancient Israel* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1964).

our first father, Adam, "son of God" (Lk 3:23–38). To this stream of generations in which he submerges himself, Jesus brings a new filiation or sonship, as the Father assures him: "You are My Son" (Lk 3:22).

In this way the Spirit will act patiently on the flesh of the Son, in which we all find ourselves contained, because we too are sons of Adam; and he will shape the flesh of Jesus so that it can fully mediate to us his divine sonship. Resting upon Christ, the Spirit will be able to bestow himself in an unprecedented way upon all flesh (Acts 2:17). Thus we understand why in Christian baptism the water is connected with the descent of the Spirit, something that did not occur in the rite of the Precursor: it is because water and Spirit were united in the scene at the Jordan. Jesus himself later speaks to the apostles, referring to Pentecost, about a baptism with the Holy Spirit, which surpasses the one of his cousin John (Acts 1:5).

I will now add another fact to this panorama: the baptism in the Jordan directs Jesus' life toward the Paschal mystery, toward his death and resurrection. Christ himself interpreted the entire arc of his life in terms of a baptism that he had to undergo, which he identified with the eschatological fulfillment of history. Recall his expressions: "I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how I am constrained until it is accomplished! (Lk 12:49); "Are you able to drink the chalice that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized? (Mk 10:38). Baptism is thus framed within the context of the redemptive death of Jesus "as a ransom for many," as the passage goes on to say (Mk 10:45; Is 53:10), and of his resurrection, when the Father will start a new age. The formula about the "ransom" alludes to the Servant of Yahweh, with which the theme reemerges of the "corporate person" in which the whole people is included.

In summary, in Jesus' life baptism involves, on the one hand, the descent of the Spirit on his flesh, giving to his entire story a dynamic that leads to the encounter with the Father; and, on the other hand, the eschatological action of this Spirit in his death and resurrection. All this is framed within a view of Jesus as representative of the people, the beginning of a new lineage; he mediates the Spirit, by his flesh, for all of us.

Baptism, Participation in the Body of Christ

From what has been said we can conclude: the first Christians found, not only in the Paschal commandment of Jesus, but also in his passage on earth, the basis for performing baptism and understanding its profundity. As a context for interpreting Jesus' commandment they preserved in their memory: (1) the baptism of Christ with water in the Jordan, which served as the

start of his mission; (2) the master's words about the baptism that awaited him, which referred to his death and new life; and (3) his announcement of a baptism that they would receive in the Spirit, which was accomplished on Pentecost.

Moreover the disciples set this remembrance or *anamnesis* upon the foundation of the history of Israel and their corporate view of mankind, whereby one person could mediate God's salvation for others. Precisely this unity of the people over the ages was experienced in their memorial acts of worship. It was to be expected, therefore, that the disciples would take for granted also a rite that would accompany their incorporation into Jesus. In fact, the baptismal formula, "in the name of" Jesus, or "in the name of" the God of our Lord Jesus Christ (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) invokes the ritual biblical *anamnesis* so as to situate us in a lively remembrance of the master. This is because the concepts of "name" and of "memory" are closely related in scripture, which ties personal identity to the story that each one lives through.[30] To invoke the name is, therefore, to evoke the whole way of Jesus (in which his identity is forged), and to associate the life of the believer to that way.[31]

Hence it is easy to understand the process by which Christian baptism originated. The command to baptize that St. Matthew records for us (Mt 28:19), far from appearing out of nowhere, was extensively linked to the history of Israel and to the life of Jesus, to the point where Luke can omit it without damaging the coherence of his account. The immersion of Jesus in the waters of the Jordan began a process that was to culminate in his Passover and would turn him into a wellspring of the Spirit upon mankind; now a similar baptism associated his disciples to this fullness of Christ, configuring them to his death and resurrection, and giving them to drink of one and the same Spirit. Given that the meaning of baptism is understood only in Paschal terms, when we contemplate all together the facts that we have reviewed, it is logical that the glorified Christ should carry out the institution of this sacrament (Mt 28:19).

St. Paul confirms in his letters the interpretation that I have outlined. To the Christians in Rome he speaks about baptism (Rom 6:3–8) precisely in the context of a comparison between Adam and Christ (Rom 5:12–21). We all belong to Adam, our first father, according to the Bible's characteristic

30. Bastiaan van Iersel, "Quelques présupposés bibliques de la notion de sacrement," *Concilium* 31, no. 1 (1968): 11–23, at 19.

31. Thomas F. Torrance, "Ein vernachlässigter Gesichtspunkt der Tauflehre," *Evangelische Theologie* 16, no. 3 (1956): 433–60 and 481–92.

view of corporate personality, which makes the origin of the lineage the representative of the whole people. This connection with Adam helps us to understand our baptismal bond with Christ, into whose new body we have been called to incorporate ourselves. The characteristic feature of baptism is to effect the change of membership: we put off the old body of sin, and we receive a new corporeal existence, that of the risen Christ, placing our members at the service of justice (Rom 6:12, 19). In this way, as St. Paul goes on to explain, the same Spirit can act in us who acted in the flesh of Jesus (Rom 8:11).[32]

Paul's interpretation offers us a final key for understanding how the practice of baptism arises in the church: the influence exercised by the Eucharistic celebration. Indeed, the apostle describes baptism as a birth to the body of Jesus, through which we are clothed with Christ by becoming one with Him (Gal 3:27–28); and precisely this key of the body ("My body which is for you": 1 Cor 11:24) is the one that Jesus offers us in his Last Supper in order to confer on us communion with himself ("The bread which we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?": 1 Cor 10:16). Moreover, if the Eucharist contains the memorial of his death and resurrection (1 Cor 11:26), baptism too assimilates us to the death, burial, and glorious rise of Jesus (Rom 6:4). In light of this we may conclude that, if Paul applies to baptism the language about the body of Christ, it is because of the influence of the master's Eucharistic words. In terms of the common basis of the Old Testament ("corporate person," "*anamnesis*"), Paul transposes to baptism the vocabulary that Jesus had used in the Eucharist, and explains the bath in water as a birth to his body.

Conclusion: Toward the Logic of the Sacrament, in Terms of Eucharist and Baptism

We have explored the two principal rites, baptism and Eucharist, to which the New Testament bears witness. From what has been said we can infer common elements that associate the two with each other, in terms of the life of Jesus. In the Eucharist, in continuity with the memory of Israel, Christ interprets his own death as thanksgiving (*todah*) to the Father for the fruitfulness that he communicates to his existence. The flesh and blood of Jesus open up a new space of relation with God and with men, to which Christians are incorporated. It is a dynamic space, where the remembrance of the original action of the Father is preserved and we come to know already the fullness to which his promises lead.

32. The same reasoning, applied in this case to Abraham and Christ, is found in the Letter to the Galatians (see esp. 3:26–29); see Van Iersel, "Quelques présupposés bibliques," 22.

On the other hand, Jesus is baptized in the Jordan: this is a rite that Christ receives from John, in terms of which his work is interpreted as the beginning of a new lineage which mediates the fullness of the Spirit of God. After he has risen, Jesus transmits to his disciples the order to baptize in his name, as a way of incorporating themselves into this life that he is inaugurating. Here too we have the entrance of the believer into the corporeal space of Christ and his adaptation to the rhythm with which he lived, for he is baptized "in His name," in other words, in the remembrance of his way on earth, until his glorious resurrection.

In my explanation the two rites appear to be intermingled with two central traditions of the Old Testament, which will be central also in order to understand the other sacraments. In the first place, we have the concept of *corporate person*: all the members of the people experience the fate of each one, so that Israel is like one person who goes through the ages.[33] This concept is not the primitive abstraction of those who have not yet developed the notion of the individual, but rather the rich vision of the relational, embodied person, the first testimony of which is preserved in familial experiences. Worship, the moment of the people's unity in the presence of God, is precisely what brings about the corporate integration of all Israel in terms of its foundational relation with God.

It is, moreover, the "memory" or *anamnesis*, the actualization of the past, that gives us a presentiment of its fruitfulness so as to illuminate the future; this actualization takes place effectively, once again, in worship. This is about activating the remembrance of God, who saved Israel from Egypt, establishing it as his people, born from the waters of the Red Sea. Having as its contents the actions of the unfathomable God, this memory always gives more than itself, overflowing over the present and the future. It is a living memory that allows each Israelite to consider himself as belonging to the generation that came up from Egypt (Dt 5:3). Israel's remembrance is the remembrance of a promise and thus it is the remembrance of the future that will arrive in this promise: the earth, the construction of the Temple, the happy life of the people with God.

This common background helps us to understand the connection be-

33. Robinson, *Corporate Personality in Ancient Israel*; Sang-Won A. Son, *Corporate Elements in Pauline Anthropology: A Study of Selected Terms, Idioms and Concepts in the Light of Paul's Usage and Background* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 2001).

tween baptism and the Eucharist: both make present the flesh of Jesus and the recapitulation of history in him. These are the first insights that will illumine, over the course of time, a definition of sacrament. Baptism and Eucharist show that a sacrament revolves around the flesh and its ability to knit relations, with God and with human beings, according to the measure of Christ. The sacraments inaugurate, therefore, a new relational space, that of the body of Jesus, where the believer is enabled to live. This space opened up by the sacrament is, moreover, a dynamic space, which accompanies the way of the person in his story. The sacrament allows us to live according to the temporal rhythm of Jesus, in other words, according to the way in which he acknowledged the origin and destiny of everything in the Father.

Let us add to this picture the primacy that the Eucharist has as the interpretive key of the sacramental logic. Christ's Eucharistic words, which are centered on his body and blood and run along the axis from memory to fulfillment, are the words that offer a framework in which to understand baptism, which is less obvious in the master's explanations. As we saw in St. Paul, baptism is understood as the believer's birth to the flesh offered by Jesus in the Last Supper. Or, in other words, as an extension of the Eucharistic body of Jesus to the body of the Christian.

In light of this, baptism serves as a paradigm by which to understand the relation of the other sacraments to the Eucharist. They, like baptism, are rooted in the earthly ministry of the master, sifted by the Paschal events, and interpreted eucharistically. And they contain the ways in which the body of Christ, constituted in the Eucharist, is associated with the various situations and stages of Christian life. I will return to this subject in chapter 5 when we study the institution of the seven sacraments by Jesus.

In this chapter I started from the life of Jesus and from the rites that he instituted, focusing the analysis on the two major ones: the Eucharist and baptism. They give us the key to understanding how the sacraments mediate the encounter with Christ and our birth and life in him. The basic common coordinates that associate the two rites offer the basis on which is founded the general concept of "sacrament" in the preaching and work of Jesus.

In order to continue a more in-depth study from this perspective it will be important to have recourse to two early readings of this sacramental logic, proposed by St. John and by St. Paul. Although allusions to the sacraments are scattered throughout the New Testament, it is in the Johannine and Pauline writings that we find a first uniform theological explanation of the sacramental outlook.

3 SIGNS AND WORKS

The Sacramental Outlook of St. John

In order to present to us the earthly Jesus, the fourth Gospel chooses the way of signs. John calls "signs" the prodigious works of the master which, written down one by one, would not fit on all the bookshelves in the world (Jn 21:25). The apostle left us a selection written down, so that we might believe and have life (Jn 20:30–31). John associates these signs with the sacraments: to Nicodemus, attracted by signs (Jn 3:2), Jesus suggests baptism (Jn 3:5); and the sign of the multitude filled with the loaves is clearly Eucharistic (Jn 6:51–58). We will see in this chapter that this is not a matter of isolated details; the signs structure the beloved disciple's testimony about Jesus and lead to the Christian sacraments. Let us begin by discussing a radical objection to this position.

A Sacramental Gospel?

A hasty or fragmented reading of the fourth Gospel could cause one to think that John does not value the sacraments very highly: thus, for example, he does not speak about the institution of the Eucharist, nor does he recount the baptism of Jesus. Bultmann went so far as to say that the fourth Gospel tries to present a Christianity without sacraments: he even speaks about an anti-sacramental text, preoccupied with showing the eschatological presence of the salvation of Jesus, without other mediations. The well-known exegete did recognize undeniable references to baptism and to the Eucharist (Jn 3:5, 6:51–58, 19:34), but he attributed them to a later author who supposedly corrected the tone of the Gospel, harmonizing it with the choir of the universal church.[1]

Today that is an outdated position. The clearly sacramental verses which

1. Rudolf Bultmann, *Das Evangelium des Johannes* (Göttingen: Vandenhhoeck and Ruprecht, 1953), 98n2.

Bultmann pointed out form part of the architecture of the passage in which they are found; and they are completely consistent with Johannine language. Moreover, by understanding the symbolic style of the Evangelist, exegesis has discovered other allusions to the sacraments.

Certainly, we must avoid all exaggeration; it seems unlikely, for example, that in the resurrection of Lazarus, John refers to penance (implicit in the words "loose him," as St. Augustine interpreted them),[2] or that the anointing at Bethany is about the anointing of the sick (based on the verse: "that she may keep it against the day of my burial," Jn 12:7). But there are well-founded reasons for discovering many references intended by the Evangelist. Raymond Brown has pointed out these allusions as certain: to baptism (Jn 3:5, the conversation with Nicodemus, and in Jn 9, the man blind from birth); to the Eucharist (Jn 6, discourse on the bread of life, and in Jn 15, the vine and the branches); baptism and Eucharist in the water and the blood which gush from the open side of Jesus (Jn 19:34);[3] penance, when the risen Christ breathes on the disciples (Jn 20:23).[4] Other occasions (such as the wedding at Cana for matrimony in Jn 2:1–11) are, according to him, more dubious, but not to be simply dismissed.[5]

Still, to understand the sacraments in John, it is not enough to give a list of the sacramental passages. For the sacramental element is not just this or that text, but the logic underlying the entire Gospel. This reading, diametrically opposed to Bultmann's, was championed by Oscar Cullmann.[6] According to the latter, John is interested not only in telling the story of Jesus, but in telling it *sacramentally*, approaching it from the viewpoint of the sacraments, the living presence of Christ in the church. That is, in accordance with John, the privileged key—the only key—to remembering Jesus correctly, in such a way that his story is not a thing of the past but a living

2. Augustine, *In Iohannis* XLIX, 24 (CCL 36:431); in Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers [hereafter NPNF-I for first series, NPNF-II for second series], ed. Philip Schaff (London: T and T Clark, 1886–1900), I, 7:277b–278a.

3. Bultmann imagined that Jn 19:34 was an addition by the church and commented on the passage: "It is difficult to find in it any other meaning but this: the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper have their foundation in the death of Jesus on the cross" (Bultmann, *Das Evangelium des Johannes*, 525).

4. This is taught by the Council of Trent (DH 1670).

5. Raymond E. Brown, "The Johannine Sacramentary Reconsidered," *Theological Studies* 23, no. 2 (1962): 185–206; for another interpretation that tends to maximalism, see Bruce Vawter, "The Johannine Sacramentary," *Theological Studies* 17, no. 2 (1956): 151–66. See also Kikuo Matsunaga, "Is John's Gospel Anti-sacramental? A New Solution in Light of the Evangelist's Milieu," *New Testament Studies* 27, no. 4 (1981): 516–24; James W. Bunce, "The Liturgy of the Last Gospel," *Expository Times* 126, no. 6 (2015): 270–80.

6. Oscar Cullmann, *Les Sacrements dans l'Évangile johannique: La vie de Jésus et le culte de l'Église primitive* (Paris: PUF, 1951).

event. We have a Gospel written from the perspective of the sacraments, so as to be understood sacramentally.

Evidence to support this opinion is not lacking, beginning with the general structure of the text. Recall that the fourth Gospel starts with the testimony of the Baptist, who prefigures Christian baptism in water and Spirit, and allows us to recognize Jesus: "for this I came baptizing with water, that he might be revealed to Israel" (Jn 1:31, 32–34; 3:5). This new birth is already present in the prologue, linked with the incarnation of the Word: to believe in Christ makes us sons of God through a generation not by blood or carnal desire (Jn 1:12). On the other hand, the Gospel culminates with the death of Jesus on the cross, from whose side flow blood and water, also an allusion to the sacraments (Jn 19:34, in light of 1 Jn 5:6). Moreover, is this not consistent with the liturgical character of the other Johannine scripture, the Book of Revelation?[7] And with the insistence in the First Letter of John on this birth from God that is baptism (1 Jn 3:9; 5:6)?[8]

To prove the thesis, I will start from the importance that the fourth Gospel gives to the signs and works of Jesus. And we will see how these signs are associated with the Christian sacraments, especially with baptism and the Eucharist. It will help us to keep uppermost in mind a liturgical key to the Gospel of John: the theology of the temple, identified by Christ with his own body, where the divine glory dwells.

The Great Sign: The Temple Destroyed and Rebuilt

It is well known that St. John uses the word "sign" to speak of the miracles of Jesus. In this way he indicates, on the one hand, that he is not just talking about wonders that astonish the onlookers and prove the authority of him who performs them. There is in the miracles, above and beyond all else, a revelation of the mystery of Jesus, who invites us to embrace him.[9]

7. King, "*Lex orandi, lex credendi*."

8. Giuseppe Segalla, "La testimonianza dei sacramenti (1 Giov 5, 6–12)," in *Sul sentiero dei sacramenti: Scritti in onore di Ermanno Roberto Ruta*, ed. C. Corsato (Padua: Messaggero, 2007), 171–88.

9. On the signs of Jesus in John, see Roland E. C. Formesyn, "Le sèmeion johannique et le sèmeion hellénistique," *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 38 (1962): 856–94; Sebald Hofbeck, *Semeion: Der Begriff des Zeichens im Johannesevangelium unter Berücksichtigung seiner Vorgeschichte* (Münster: Schwarzach, 1966); Xavier Léon-Dufour, "Towards a Symbolic Reading of the Fourth Gospel," *New Testament Studies* 27, no. 4 (1980–81): 439–56; Donatien Mollat, "Le semeion johannique," *Sacra Pagina* (1959): 209–18; Willem Nicol, *The Semeia in the Fourth Gospel* (Leiden: Brill, 1972); Peter Riga, "Signs of Glory: The Use of 'semeion' in St. John's Gospel," *Interpretation* 17, no. 4 (1963): 402–24; Willis H. Salier, *The Rhetorical Impact of the Semeia in the Gospel of John* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004); and Giuseppe Segalla, "Segno giovanneo e sacramenti," in *Segno e sacramenti nel Vangelo di Giovanni*, ed. P. R. Tragan (Rome: Anselmiana, 1977), 17–44.

Thus we understand that the signs have a structuring role in the fourth Gospel, concerned with arousing faith, that is to say, our Christian discipleship. It is easy to distinguish the book of signs (Jn 1:19–12:50) from the book of glory (Jn 13:1–20:31); the unity of the whole is assured, inasmuch as the distinctive purpose of *signs* is to reveal the *glory* of Jesus (Jn 2:11).

From this point of view the transfiguration of Jesus—the glory in his flesh—could be identified as a key to reading the Gospel.[10] For, although St. John does not recount this mystery, we find two important allusions to it in the text. First, the master, troubled by the nearness of the hour, hears the voice of God which glorifies his name in the Son (Jn 12:27–28). The two central features of the transfiguration transmitted by the Synoptics appear here: the glory of the Father and the passion of Jesus, in which this glory manifests itself (Jn 12:32). All of this recapitulates his entire ministry, precisely in the sight of men who do not believe in his signs (Jn 12:37). We have, then, a *concentration* of the entire episode in just two verses. Second, on the other hand, John *extends* the transfiguration to the whole Gospel. In effect, the prologue already tells of the Word made flesh (Jn 1:14), whose glory is contemplated over the course of his earthly life, and precisely through his signs (Jn 2:11).

This allows us to conclude that the signs flow from Jesus himself, the Word made flesh, as he travels through history; and they are manifested abundantly in the life, death, and exaltation of the Son, which meet with the incredulity of men.[11] For this reason it can be affirmed that "the signs are the flesh of the glory of God."[12]

It is not unusual for the Old Testament to present the life and works of a person, particularly of a prophet, as a sign in which God speaks and acts. Such a thing happens, above all, when worship is in crisis, for this was the sphere in which divine signs normally took place (Ex 3:12). The prophet is the new place where the Spirit moves, when the temple, because of the people's infidelity, is more a prison to God than a home. The novelty that the prophets bring is the fact that the signs are experienced in the flesh of the man of God: "Isaiah has walked ... as a sign" (Is 20:3); "I have made you

10. Riga, "Signs of Glory"; on the relation between Jn 1:14 and the transfiguration of Jesus, see Rainer Riesner, "John 1:14 and the Disciple 'whom Jesus loved,'" in *Rediscovering John: Essays on the Fourth Gospel in Honour of Frédéric Manns*, ed. L. D. Chrupcala (Milan: ETS, 2013), 303–36.

11. In the Synoptics we find also the Old Testament concept of sign, which reaches its apogee in Jesus. He is the sign of Jonah (Mt 12:38–45; Lk 11:29–32) which foretells the definitive, eschatological fulfillment of history. Therefore to discern him is to discern the "signs of the (last) times" (Mt 16:1–4; Lk 12:54–59).

12. Léon-Dufour, "Towards a Symbolic Reading," 442.

a sign" (Ezek 12:6).[13] Now the word of God is received and heard when his servant is received and heard; when one enters into the sacred space that the prophet establishes with his own bodily presence.[14]

Indeed, St. John follows this line of thought when he presents the body of Jesus as the new and definitive temple. Whereas from ancient times the glory of God dwelt in the sanctuary, whereas he commandeered the prophets so that they might work in his name and experience his own passion (Jer 20:7), now he has made a place for himself in the flesh of Christ, and he reveals himself in the earthly activity of the Son. The theology of the temple runs through the fourth Gospel and, associated with the liturgy of Israel, intermingles with the signs of Jesus and, as we will see, with the Christian sacraments.

The concept appears on the very first page: "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us ... we have beheld his glory" (Jn 1:14). "Dwelt" means: he pitched his tent as did Yahweh in ancient times in the midst of his people. The Greek term (*skenóo*) shares consonants with the Hebrew *shekinah*: the presence of the glory of God. Moreover, when John says "the Word became *flesh*" and not simply "became *man*," the theology of the temple also resounds, the presence of God in the midst of the earth. For the human body is a primordial temple, inhabited by the breath of Yahweh (Gn 2:7); and, as we have just seen, the body of the prophet is the place of the revelation of God, when the temple of stone ceases to be hospitable to the Most High.[15]

John adds right away, in the dialogue with Nathaniel, another reference to the temple: "you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man" (Jn 1:51). This recalls the ladder of Jacob, and the memorial stone which the patriarch anointed, when he understood that he was setting foot in the house of Yahweh (Gn 28:12–22). Thus Jesus surveys, already in the Jordan, the final horizon of his life and work, when he ascends glorified to his Father's dwelling place.

Jesus' first collision with the Pharisees takes up again the image of the temple, this time openly in the context of signs.[16] To the Jews who seek

13. Is 8:18: "I and the children whom the LORD has given me are signs"; Is 20:3: "Isaiah has walked naked and barefoot for three years as a sign"; Ezek 12:6, 11: "I have made you a sign. I am a sign for you"; Ezek 24:24, 27: "Thus shall Ezekiel be to you a sign. So you will be a sign to them."

14. Martin Buber, "Sinnbildliche und sakramentale Existenz im Judentum," *Eranos Jahrbuch* 2 (1934): 339–67, at 350: "the prophet not only works in signs but also lives in signs. The sign is not ultimately what he does, but rather, inasmuch as he does it, the prophet himself is the sign."

15. Mario Cucca, *Il corpo e la città: studio del rapporto di significazione paradigmatica tra la vicenda di Geremia e il destino di Gerusalemme* (Assisi: Cittadella, 2010).

16. Scott Hahn, "Temple, Sign, and Sacrament: Toward a New Perspective on the Gospel of

a sign, Jesus offers the sign that forms the foundation and culmination of them all: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (Jn 2:19); "he spoke of the temple of his body" (Jn 2:21). The signs that will decant the life of Christ point to a supreme sign: the death and resurrection of Jesus as ruin and reconstruction of a temple (Jn 2:18–19).

Although Jesus does not explicitly call the cross and resurrection a "sign," he does so here in a veiled way, at the beginning of his ministry. Recall, moreover, that his first sign at Cana alludes to the decisive hour, when Mary reappears beneath the cross (Jn 2:4; 19:26); and that many signs are performed in the context of the Jewish Passover, which prefigures that of the master. Thus, the Eucharistic sign of the multiplication of the loaves (Jn 6) and that of the resurrection of Lazarus (Jn 11:47) forebode his death and resurrection (Jn 6:51, 62; 11:49–53; 12:7). A distinctive feature of the sign is its paradoxical character, for the zenith of its manifestation coincides with the moment of the greatest scorn for Jesus.[17]

This presentation of signs in the context of the new temple does not appear only at the beginning and end of the Gospel. On the contrary, it is possible to follow the topic throughout the master's journey, for John decants the signs, as we will see, in time with the feasts of Israel, which are located in the sanctuary and confer a chronology on the Gospel. Thus, through the connection with Jewish ritual, the link between the signs and the Christian liturgy is reinforced, especially baptism and the Eucharist.

For now, we can conclude that signs always refer to a space (the temple, which is the body of Jesus) where the full indwelling of God among the people lives. And that they point to a definitive sign through which this space is built: the death and resurrection of the Lord.

Signs and Incorporation into Christ

Signs, we have seen, invite us to enter into the space of the relationship with Jesus; this space is the new temple, where God can be adored in Spirit and truth (Jn 4:23) and unity can be established among men (Jn 11:52). How do signs bring us into this temple of the body? To answer this question, it is necessary to observe the dynamism of the sign, a dynamism which is discovered both through the connection between sign and faith, and also through the closeness of Christ's *signs* to his *works*.

John," *Letter and Spirit* 4 (2008): 107–43; Mary L. Coloe, *God Dwells with Us: Temple Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2001).

17. On the relation of the Johannine signs with the cross, see Jean Zumstein, "Le signe de la croix," *Lumière et Vie* 41, no. 209 (1992): 68–82; this author writes: "the ultimate fulfillment that verifies the seven signs and gives them their full validity takes place in the opposite key, namely, of ridicule and death" (73).

The Sign and Faith in Jesus

Let us take the multiplication of the loaves as our point of departure (Jn 6). It is a moment which sums up the entire ministry of Jesus, for here this union between sign and the flesh of Christ crops up again, referring us both to his birth (Jn 1:14) and to his passion, death, and resurrection (Jn 6:51). The theme of the dwelling place, which is the temple, also reappears in this passage: to eat the flesh and to drink the blood signifies dwelling in Christ, and Christ in us (Jn 6:56).

The sign, in the first place, invites us to set out on a journey so as to enter into a relationship with Jesus.[18] The multitude, full of bread, wants to crown him king responsible for the security that it needs, but it is mistaken. Anyone who contemplates the sign must be goaded, on the contrary, by uneasiness, by the search for a deeper satisfaction, through God. For this reason, after multiplying the provisions, the master mysteriously crosses over the waters to the other shore, thus inviting us with a new sign to follow him in his journey. Jesus reminds the Jews about something essential to the human experience: the nursing infant, in his mother's milk, does not merely desire a full stomach, either, but rather the relationship with his mother. Similarly, the sign was given so that men, in setting out on the journey, might establish a bond with the living bread, Christ; that is to say, the sign was given in order that faith might spring up.[19]

The Old Testament already testifies that a distinctive property of the sign is that it impels us to walk the path. Think, for example, of the sign that God gave Moses when he revealed his name to him: "I will be with you: and this shall be the sign for you, that I have sent you: when you have brought forth the people out of Egypt, you shall serve [i.e., offer sacrifice to] God upon the mountain" (Ex 3:12; 4:22–23). The sign that God offers to Moses surprises us, because it is a sign that will be given only in the future. Furthermore, it is not enough to open one's eyes to prove it: it is necessary for Moses to set out on the journey and to obey God's command. What is required, then, in order for there to be a sign, is that man accept it and respond to it; the very struggle of Moses, his liberty *en route*, the success of his enterprise,

18. For the following discussion see Paul Beauchamp, "Le signe des pains," *Lumière et Vie* 41, no. 209 (1992): 55–67; Luis Sánchez Navarro, "El misterio del pan," in *La sacramentalidad del ser*, ed. L. Granados (Madrid / Burgos: Didáskalos / Monte Carmelo, 2017).

19. Luis Erdozáin, *La función del signo en la fe según el cuarto evangelio*, Analecta Biblica 33 (Rome: PIB, 1968).

will be part of the sign. And, finally, it will be possible to contemplate this sign only on Sinai, in the space opened up by God for the people's worship.

Manna, administered by Moses himself, constitutes the background of the discourse on the bread of life. Jesus, who on the one hand identifies himself with this bread come down from heaven, does not fail, on the other hand, to highlight the differences. For manna is received passively, without fatigue or effort. It was not yet the food of the Promised Land, which would have to be cultivated. Hence it was forbidden to gather any surplus. On the contrary, the new sign of Jesus indicates entrance into the land, a place where it is possible to dwell and enjoy the fruits of one's own labor: the boy with the few loaves makes his contributions, and the disciples make sure that nothing is wasted. This entrance into the land occurs precisely with Christ; he, in reality, does not just come down from heaven, like the manna, but also rises up from below; he became flesh to fill the flesh with glory through his death and resurrection.[20]

The sign possesses, then, a dynamic character because it sets us on the path to Jesus; and a relational character, because it leads us into the space of bonds opened by him when he came into the world and became flesh. It becomes clear in this light why St. John associated the sign with faith, our personal adherence to Christ in order to become like him. This dynamic and relational character of the sign explains, on the one hand, that he gave the sign to us so that we might believe, for the divine action always precedes us (Jn 20:30–31); and, on the other, that only someone who believes—only someone who sets out on the journey and enters into a relationship with Jesus—can see the sign, for it is hidden from those who trust in the self-sufficiency of their outlook and, having blackened their own eyes, prove that they are blind (Jn 9:41). Entering into the sign, therefore, as we will see below, calls for a work.

Let us note, finally, that the sign has paradoxical features that cause scandal: Jesus' listeners abandon him when he commands them to eat his flesh (Jn 6:66). Jesus applies to stubbornness in the presence of signs the phrase from Isaiah (Is 6:9): so that they may see but not perceive, and may hear but not understand (Jn 12:37–43).[21] This same text appears in the Synoptics in reference to the parables (Mt 13:14; Mk 4:12). Signs and parables go, therefore, hand in hand, as though the sign were a parable incarnated in Jesus. Hence in the signs, as in the parables, the message does not impose itself

20. Beauchamp, "Le signe des pains," 62–64.

21. Recall that Ex 10:1 associated signs with the hardness of the pagan heart.

upon us, but appeals to our liberty.[22] That which signs announce, indeed, can be contemplated only if we allow ourselves to be attracted by them, if we enter into their splendor, renouncing judgment of them from without. For the sign opens a perspective opposed to that of the isolated subject, who only seeks security and contentment; the sign is meant to lead us to a different, relational outlook which, although it might seem to make us lose control, broadens our perspective enormously. He who closes himself to signs, on the contrary, entrenches himself ever deeper in his conceit, so that, seeing, he does not see. For this reason the fullness of signs passes precisely through the cross, a sign turned the wrong way around so as to uproot the stubbornness of the isolated subject and to open the space of unity with God and our fellow human beings.

Sign and Work: Common Action with the Father

In this context we can understand that John also refers to the miracles of Jesus as "works." The term recalls the central deeds of Yahweh in the Old Testament: creation and the exodus. As with the signs, we find ourselves within the context of the God who reveals himself in order to establish his presence among men. In fact, works and signs refer to the same reality, but from complementary points of view. The sign is that which everyone sees; it is the action contemplated from outside. The work, for its part, is the sign seen from within, for him who accepts it in his heart. For this reason, when Jesus speaks of himself, he does not refer to his signs, but to his works; works are signs from the perspective of Christ, who dwells at the center of the mystery. Thus, the author who called the sign "the body of the work" said it well.[23]

What is this perspective of Jesus, about which the works inform us? It is about his common action with the Father. He who walks the path opened by the sign discovers the secret of the miracles, not in the autonomous power of the wonder worker, but in the initiative of the Father who sent his Son, thus revealing himself as origin of all. Jesus refers therefore to his works as the works which the Father gave him to accomplish (Jn 5:36).[24] That is to

22. On the relation between signs and parables, see Riga, "Signs of Glory"; Enno Edzard Popkes, "'Das Mysterion der Botschaft Jesu': Beobachtungen zur synoptischen Parabeltheorie und ihren Analogien im Johannesevangelium und Thomasevangelium," in *Hermeneutik der Gleichnisse Jesu*, ed. R. Zimmermann (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 294–320.

23. Xavier Léon-Dufour, "Los milagros de Jesús según Juan," in his *Los milagros de Jesús* (Madrid: Cristiandad, 1979), 268; on the recognition of the works based on the signs, see Riga, "Signs of Glory," 417–23.

24. Albert Vanhoye, "L'oeuvre du Christ, don du Père," *Revue des sciences religieuses* 48 (1960): 377–419.

say, the Father did not just give Jesus static gifts to possess; he went further, giving him works, that is, inciting and accompanying the very action of his Son. Within the heart of the sign, which is the work, the Father's continual self-gift to the Son is discovered; and the Son's giving of himself in response, together with the Father, so as to include mankind in this communion.

We now understand the link between sign and work. Whereas signs, as we have seen, lead us to a relation with Jesus, to a grafting onto him, and culminate therefore in the destruction and raising of the temple of his body; works, for their part, call to mind that this space is the space of the mutual indwelling of the Father and the Son, who come to men to make their dwelling among them. The works corroborate that what has been revealed by Jesus through his signs is the mystery of the God who is a communion of persons.

The link between signs and works is confirmed when we notice that Jesus performs some of his signs on the Sabbath. Surely, his intention is not to trivialize the holy day of the Jews, to show them that all the days of the week are the same. If he favors the Sabbath it is because this is the fitting day for him to manifest himself. Indeed, the Sabbath is called in the Bible, "sign," inasmuch as it recalls that manual labor (the work) bears fruit when it carries the divine blessing (Ezek 20:12). The sign of the Sabbath thus proves to be a memorial sign that testifies to how God precedes, stirs up, invigorates human activity. There is no better framework for the activity of Jesus, whose food is to do the will of the Father.

We will see in the following section that, whereas signs and works tell us about the building of the new temple throughout the life of Christ, the sacraments will be the participation of the faithful in this temple, once it is erected. When speaking of the sign and the work, therefore, St. John prefigures the central elements of sacramental theology: the dimension of *sign* is joined by the dimension of *efficacious work*; and both are directed toward constructing a covenant with God, *communicating the grace of his presence.*[25]

From the Sign to the Sacrament

To prove that the signs worked by Jesus point to the sacraments, it helps to pay attention to the liturgical context within which they are situated. This has to do with the principal Jewish feasts, celebrated in the Temple,

25. On the "works" in St. John, see Raymond E. Brown, "Appendix III: Signs and Works," in his *The Gospel according to John* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1966–70), 1:525–33.

which decant the life of Jesus.[26] Given that St. John associates signs with the ancient liturgy, it is not surprising that he also links them to Christian worship. And, in fact, around the account of the signs there are plenty of allusions to baptism and the Eucharist. Let us see the combination of these elements (Old Testament feasts, signs, sacraments) during the three Passovers of the Savior.

The first Jewish Passover that the Gospel tells us about serves as an occasion to present baptism (Jn 2:13–3:21). To Nicodemus, a man who seeks signs (Jn 3:2), Jesus speaks about "being born again" in water and Spirit (Jn 3:5). Two distinct themes run through the text: the Pharisee understands that Christ is inviting him to come nearer to him, to believe in him; the Christians, for their part, discover more: this drawing near happens precisely in baptism.[27] The image used is that of birth (to be born again or to be born from on high), combined with water and the Spirit. The scene of the Samaritan woman shortly afterward again develops the theme of water, associating it with worship "in Spirit and truth" (Jn 4:24), which will no longer occur in the Temple of Jerusalem, but rather in the encounter with Jesus. It is not surprising that, when decorating the catacombs, Christian art should discover in the Samaritan woman a baptismal motif.[28] After this first Passover John mentions another Jewish feast that he does not identify (Jn 5:1), which frames the curing of the paralytic in the pond of Bethsaida, evoking once again salvific water.[29] These episodes bring to mind the Old Testament image of the temple, from which flows water in abundance (Ezek 47:1–12), symbol of the life-giving Spirit.

The second Passover is associated with the multiplication of the loaves, together with the Eucharistic discourse that follows it (Jn 6). We are facing an essential sign, for it is focused on the body of Jesus, at the same time manna and Paschal lamb (Jn 1:29), given by God the Father and sacrificed for the life of the world (Jn 6:51). The liturgical context is obvious if we recall that God had ordered Moses to preserve some of the manna in the temple

26. Gale A. Yee, *Jewish Feasts and the Gospel of John* (Wilmington, Del.: Michael Glazier, 1989); Hahn, "Temple, Sign, and Sacrament"; Coloe, *God Dwells with Us.*

27. According to Léon-Dufour, "Towards a Symbolic Reading," there are two complementary ways of reading the Gospel of John: first, as a fulfillment of the Old Testament in Jesus; second, as access to Jesus through the sacraments. Thus the conversation with Nicodemus was understood by the Pharisee in the first sense, the only one that was comprehensible to him; while Christians grasped it also in the second sense.

28. S. Smalley, "Liturgy and Sacrament in the Fourth Gospel," *Evangelical Quarterly* 29, no. 3 (1957): 159–70, at 168.

29. Tertullian interprets the passage in the baptismal sense: *De Baptismo* V, 5–7 (CCL I, 28:1–282; ANF 3:671b–672a).

(Ex 16:32–34), and that the sanctuary was where the lamb was offered. The master also mentions that to eat of the Eucharist is to enter into a space of mutual indwelling with him (Jn 6:56).

This episode is followed by the preaching of Jesus during the Feast of Tabernacles (Jn 7–8). We find ourselves in the temple, which has been prepared for the occasion with enormous containers of water and candelabra of light. When he identifies himself with the water ("let him come to me and drink, he who believes in me," Jn 7:37) and the light ("I am the light," Jn 8:12), Jesus presents himself once more as a temple. Baptismal echoes resound at the mention of the rivers which flow from the heart of Jesus and of those who believe in him (Jn 7:37), evoking again the temple-spring of Ezekiel.

Finally, John 9 (the curing of the blind man) also alludes to baptism. As with Nicodemus, there is a new illumination: the blind man was blind from birth, and his parents have a prominent place in the story, as if to underscore in this way his new origin, of which they remain ignorant. The aquatic motif reappears in the pool of Siloam, which means "sent" (Jn 9:7), a name which underscores the key to the mystery of Jesus: his procession from the Father, in which we take root through baptism, which begets us as sons (Jn 1:13).

Regarding *the third Passover,* when Jesus dies, the theme of the temple returns. In the farewell discourse, in a liturgical tone, there is an allusion to the many mansions or rooms of the house (Jn 14:2), the "place" or new temple which Christ goes to prepare for his disciples;[30] the context, through the mention of the vine into which the branches are incorporated, is Eucharistic (Jn 15:1–11). This is also the setting of the washing of the feet (Jn 13:1–20). Comparison with the Lucan account of the Last Supper, the outline of which the fourth evangelist adopts, shows that the washing takes place precisely where Luke situates the institution of the Eucharist. According to St. John, Jesus asks his disciples to imitate his humble act, which is possible only for someone who, through having been washed in his water, has a share in Christ. The association with the sacraments, which incorporate us into Jesus, springs up spontaneously.[31] There are even some who point out the link with the purification of the feet which was asked of those who entered into the Jewish sanctuary.[32]

30. James McCaffrey, *The House with Many Rooms: The Temple Theme of Jn. 14, 2–3* (Rome: Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1998).

31. Francis J. Moloney, "A Sacramental Reading of John 13:1–38," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 53, no. 2 (1991): 237–56; Yves-Marie Blanchard, "Lavement des pieds et pénitence: Une lecture de Jean 13, 1–20," *La Maison Dieu* 214 (April 1998): 35–50.

32. Alan Kerr, *The Temple of Jesus' Body: The Temple Theme in the Gospel of John* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2002), 268–313.

Finally, John 19:34 presents the image of the pierced side from which flows blood and water. The evangelist could have been thinking of the blood of the sacrifices which, having pooled beneath the altar, joined the water of the Cedron and flowed intermingled from one side of the Temple.[33] The definitive sign of Christ (Jn 2:19: "destroy ... I will raise it up ...") establishes a new temple, from whose heart spring streams of living water. Effects of this supreme sign—and, therefore, the place to which all signs point—are baptism and the Eucharist, water and blood which spring from the new sanctuary.

From all this we can conclude that the signs which occur in relation to the liturgical feasts of Israel and to Jesus as temple, point to the Christian sacraments. Two lines of thought come together here. First, *signs*: during his life Jesus opens the space (temple) where the liturgy of Israel arrives at its fullness, and which is the space of his body. This opening culminates in the cross and resurrection, definitive sign of the destruction and raising of the new sanctuary. The rest of the signs point to this final action: little by little, they display the space of relation to Jesus, incorporating into him those who believe. It is a space in which the Father and the Son dwell, *working* together in order to welcome the disciple.

Second, *sacraments*: Jesus glorified is the temple from which the new Christian liturgy is born. These appear similar to signs inasmuch as they too incorporate us into the place where the Father and Son dwell. At the same time, they are different from signs, because the latter led into a temple which was being formed; while the sacraments are expansions of the temple which, once the Passover has run its course, is now present and active in the world.[34]

The sacraments are, therefore, the final perspective for understanding the Johannine signs. The vanishing point of the signs and works of Jesus are baptism and the Eucharist, which spring directly from the great sign and the great work that is the death and resurrection of Jesus, where the new temple is inaugurated (Jn 2:18–21).[35] That is to say, baptism and the Eucharist are about being born into the body of Jesus, being grafted onto him, expanding his growth in history toward the celestial Jerusalem. *While the sign brings us into the space of Jesus, which is becoming established, the sacrament flows from*

33. Hahn, "Temple, Sign, and Sacrament," 114n49.

34. A similar relation is spelled out by Hofbeck, *Semeion*, 196: "the signs orient toward the divine life, the sacraments give it."

35. Léon-Dufour, "Towards a Symbolic Reading," 441: "The symbolic operation must be situated in the two dimensions of time defined by the Paschal event, the time of Jesus of Nazareth and the time of the glorified Lord."

this full space, already built, so as to incorporate the believer into it. Everything seems to be summarized in that question of the first disciples: "Where are you staying?" (Jn 1:38). According to the key that we have offered, the master responded a little later, when he spoke to Nathaniel about the "greater things" that the disciple would see, presenting himself as a new Jacob upon whom angels would ascend and descend, and thus alluding to the sanctuary which the patriarch prefigured (Jn 1:50). In the sacraments we can also identify some of those "greater works" that the disciples would perform after the ascension of Jesus, as he himself promised (Jn 14:12).[36]

From what has been said, we can figure out why John does not narrate the institution of baptism and the Eucharist. This absence helps to underscore the theological vision of the fourth Gospel. For thus the sacraments appear, not as isolated events, but as a lens through which to read the entire life of Christ. They are not present principally as an object of the narrative, but as the vanishing point to which everything tends and as the perspective from which everything is understood in unity. It becomes clear, then, that in the sacraments one accesses not only the rites that Jesus lived, but Jesus' life itself.[37] Thus, for example, in the Eucharistic discourse the rite in which the bread is transformed into flesh is not mentioned; taking it for granted, John concentrates on its ultimate fruit: the flesh of Jesus, true food, is the true bread.[38]

Conclusion

The Gospel according to John, beyond testifying to certain concrete rites, contains the principles of a sacramental logic. For the sacraments give the Christian access to Jesus so as to find him, not as a vague historical remembrance, but as the Living One *par excellence* (Rv 1:18). The leading thread is provided by the *signs* worked by Christ, which point to the great sign that is his death and resurrection, when his body is established as the new and definitive temple. Signs prepare this worship space, they disclose it, they explain it: it is the space of the common work of the Father and the Son which is meant to make room for all of humankind. On the other hand, these same signs, framed within the liturgy of Israel, prefigure the *sacraments.* Whereas the signs help us to associate ourselves with the earthly journey of Jesus toward the cross and resurrection, the sacraments (John focuses on baptism and the Eucharist, without neglecting others) permit us, starting from this same cross and resurrection, to live on the fullness of the risen Lord. Whatever is said about signs will be completed, sifted through the passion of Christ, and fulfilled in his glorious flesh, in the sacraments. Here are some keys to the sacramental outlook.

36. Hahn, "Temple, Sign, and Sacrament," 130–33.
37. Giuseppe Angelini, *Il tempo e il rito alla luce delle Scritture* (Assisi: Cittadella, 2006), 308.
38. Paul Beauchamp, "Le signe des pains," 66.

The sacramental logic is forged and revealed in the flesh, for that is where we are incorporated into the relational space opened by Jesus, a space that is the temple of his body (Jn 2:21). To be on pilgrimage through the *signs* does not mean, therefore, leaving behind what is exterior so as to settle down in the interior, as if, for example, the curing of the blind man did not really matter, and it was only about gaining acuity in the spiritual senses. On the contrary, the place toward which signs are directed is precisely the death and resurrection of Jesus in the flesh: they are signs that move to the fullness of the bodily encounter with Christ, where the new temple is raised.

The *sacraments,* for their part, receive and consummate these characteristic features of the sign. They flow from a fullness of what is corporeal in Christ, which they never leave behind. Although "the flesh is of no avail" (Jn 6:63), it is not because it has to be overcome in the Spirit; but rather because its vocation is to be filled with the Spirit, the only One who bestows life (ibid.). One distinctive feature of the sacrament consists of becoming rooted in the space of the body which, being the first place in which we are situated in the world and among our brethren, was the place assumed by Jesus in order to build the dwelling place of the Father with us.

The sacramental logic is a logic of active participation: only someone who sets out on the journey sees the sign and, having become a friend of Jesus, allows himself to be transformed by him. To enter into the space-temple of the body of Christ is to dwell in a network of relations animated by continual reciprocal giving, which originates continually from God the Father. This implies that the signs, besides enlightening the understanding, promote the active participation of the whole person. The sign can be understood only if one enters into it, receives it cordially, and follows the road which it opens up. Hence signs are also *works*: the common work of Jesus and his Father, the work of both in the believer. Hence too the deep connection between *sign and faith,* and their virtuous circle: the sign makes faith possible, faith enables us to see the sign.

The *sacrament,* for its part, fulfills what was begun in the signs. The sacramental epiphany, in order to be recognized, brings the whole person into play, introduces him into an action initiated by Christ. We will see that, by defining the sacrament as an efficacious sign of grace (sign that communi-

cates the grace which it represents), the theological tradition has preserved this double dimension—sign and work—of the Johannine vocabulary.

Finally, the sacramental logic enables us to capture the proper rhythm of salvation history, from the beginnings of created things up to their consummation in Christ. The signs of Jesus are signs-memorials that review the history of the Old Testament, which dates back to the dawn of the world. The space of his body, where the divine glory is manifested, is not foreign to the other spaces that God opened when he laid the foundations of the cosmos. Thus, the new birth from the waters refers to the old birth (Jn 16:21); and the Eucharistic bread has as its background work and the fruit of the earth (Jn 6:27). And this is because these original spaces also take root in the body of man, ever since the union of Adam and Eve (Jn 2:1–11), the body that the Word assumed when he was born of Mary.

It is not surprising, in light of what I have said, that tradition has called John the "Liturgist," nor that iconography has represented him holding a chalice, just as he appears, for example, on the façade of the Lateran Basilica.[39] There is a profound insight here. If John is honored with the name of "Theologian," it is precisely inasmuch as he is a "Liturgist." For a theologian is not only someone who soars, like an eagle, to scrutinize with burning eyes the splendor of the divinity of the Logos; but someone who adopts the sacramental outlook, which contemplates God active in the world and in history, and discovers that the glory of the Most High is reflected in the flesh of Jesus.

Having explored the Johannine vision, we can focus on other texts of the New Testament that also offer an overall perspective on the sacraments: the Pauline corpus. The term *mystery*—in Latin *sacramentum*—will call for special attention here. Although the theological tradition finds inspiration in St. John for the definition of sacrament as "sign of grace," St. Paul was the one who fostered our discourse today about the seven "sacraments."

39. On John as a liturgist, see Ethelbert Stauffer, *Die Theologie des Neuen Testaments* (Gütersloh: Bettelsmann, 1941), 45; Angelini, *Il tempo e il rito*, 296. The representation with the chalice is connected also with a legend about the life of St. John, whom the Romans tried to poison; when the apostle blessed the chalice, he drove out its poison. The iconography combined legend and Eucharistic allusion, which are not necessarily antithetical.

4 FROM ST. PAUL TO THE *MYSTERION-SACRAMENTUM*

Someone who investigates in scripture the meaning of the Greek word *mysterion*, translated in Latin as *sacramentum*, may be surprised. For it appears that the term is used in the New Testament in a sense different from the one that it has today, not only in theology but in the practice of the faithful. The Bible, indeed, does not seem to apply the word *mysterion* (*sacramentum*) to the Christian rites, such as baptism and the Eucharist. Is this because our language has moved away from the Gospel usage? And if so, for what reasons, and with what effects?

To answer these questions, I will delve more deeply into the meaning of *mysterion* in the New Testament, above all as St. Paul uses it. In the previous chapter we saw that the fourth Gospel approaches the sacraments starting from the signs and works of Jesus. I will show now that the apostle to the Gentiles bases his sacramental synthesis on the concept of *mysterion*. As I have already noted, later theological tradition would employ the Pauline language of *mysterion* to enumerate the sacraments, and it would prefer the Johannine view of the sign to define them.

From *mysterion* to the Sacraments

What does *mysterion* mean in scripture?[1] St. Paul employs the word to designate God's plan, hidden for ages and manifested with the sending of his Son (Rom 16:25; Eph 3:9; Col 1:26). Christ himself is the mystery of God,

1. D. Deden, "Le Mystère Paulinien," *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 13 (1936): 405–42; Gunther Bornkamm, "Mysterion," in *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1990), 4:809–34; Carolyn Osiek, "Il 'Mysterion' paolino," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 44 (1982): 521–22; Benjamin L. Gladd, *Revealing the mysterion: The Use of Mystery in Daniel in Second Temple Judaism with Its Bearing on First Corinthians* (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 2008); Gregory S. Magee, "Uncovering the 'mystery' in 1 Timothy 3," *Trinity Journal* 29 (2008): 247–65.

manifested in the flesh (Col 2:2; 1 Tm 3:16). In him, particularly in his obedience on the cross (1 Cor 2:1–2) and in his grateful resurrection from the dead, the Father revealed his eschatological design for history (1 Cor 15:51) and carried it to its conclusion.

Note that the *mysterion* does not consist of Jesus alone, isolated from the rest of mankind and from the cosmos, but rather of Christ as the one who recapitulates the ages (Eph 1:9–10): *mysterion* is a relational term that allows the actors in salvation history to be linked with one another. In this way the church too belongs to the *mysterion*, inasmuch as she extends to the world the fullness brought by Jesus (Eph 1:22–23). Therefore the *mysterion* consists in the unity of all, Jews and Gentiles, in one body (Eph 3:4–6, 9–10). The perspective of *mysterion* is thus interwoven with another major theme of the Pauline vision: the church, the body of Christ.[2]

We should add that this union in the body, for Paul, is not only the organic union of the head with the members, but also the personal union of the bridegroom with his bride in "one flesh," according to Genesis 2:24.[3] Paul would call the cohesion of Christ and his church, as the final destination of the way of man with a maiden (Prv 30:19), the "great mystery" (Eph 5:31–32). The expansion of the *mysterion* throughout the world follows the analogy of fertility, just as the union of husband and wife prolongs divine creation in their children.

I already noted that the word *mysterion* is not applied directly to baptism and the Eucharist. This raises the question with which I started this chapter: how can we explain the fact that little by little the Church Fathers and then medieval theologians would use the term *mysterion* and its Latin equivalent *sacramentum* to refer to Christian worship?[4]

Some answer that the church probably spoke about the sacraments as "mysteries" through an adaptation to the mystery religions of Hellenism. In those cults the history of a divinity was represented, for example that of the god Mithra, crowned by the sun and conqueror of the bull whose blood fertilized the earth with life.[5] The follower associated himself with these

2. Charles C. Ryrie, "Mystery in Ephesians 3," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 123 (1966): 24–31; Heinrich Schlier, "Die Kirche als das Geheimnis Christi," in his *Die Zeit der Kirche* (Freiburg: Herder, 1956), 299–307; and Gary W. Derickson, "The New Testament Church as a Mystery," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 166 (2009): 436–45.

3. Andreas J. Köstenberger, "The Mystery of Christ and the Church: Head and Body, 'One Flesh,'" *Trinity Journal* 12 (1991): 79–94.

4. Herbert Musurillo, "Sacramental Symbolism and the *Mysterion* of the Early Church," *Worship* 39 (1965): 265–74.

5. Franz Cumont, *Les mystères de Mithra* (Brussels: H. Lamertin, 1902); Robert Turcan, *Mithra et le mithracisme* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1993), and *Recherches Mithraiques: Quarante ans de questions et d'investigations* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2016).

events, thus obtaining salvation; in order to participate, it was necessary to go through an initiation rite that required an oath of silence about what was experienced—this feature may be connected with the etymology of *mysterion*, which seems to be derived from the Greek verb "to be silent."[6]

The thesis of this Hellenistic background was defended by some theologians, especially Protestants, of the first half of the twentieth century. The use of the word *mysterion* to speak about the Christian mystery, in this view, was a departure from the original purity recorded by St. Paul. Disappointed in their expectation of the imminent coming of the Messiah, which animated the apostolic community, the faithful transferred their interest to the sacraments, which presented the divine within reach by way of a ritual with a magical twist.[7]

The so-called theology of the mysteries of Odo Casel also supposed Hellenistic influence in the discourse of the Church Fathers. But he gave this finding a positive tone: pagan elements were accepted to convey the Christian newness which, according to the Benedictine scholar, finds no parallels in the Jewish tradition.[8] Still, without denying that there is some adoption of pagan vocabulary and ideas in early Christianity, the Hellenistic background falls short as an explanation of why *mysterion* would later be applied to the liturgy. It is worth the trouble to pursue a more probable line of investigation: the Old Testament.[9] This is recommended, above all, because it is the backdrop of the Pauline terminology of the *mysterion*, and because we find in it an initial *rapprochement* between liturgy and *mysterion* that offers a solid basis for the patristic development. As we will see, in the Bible the *mysterion* is already associated with worship: the first Christians did nothing but elaborate on the original connections.

The trail of the Old Testament leads us to notice the Hebrew term *sod*, a group of counselors with whom God decides the paths of history.[10] The term, which means the meeting of the council, came to signify

6. On the pagan mysteries see Carl Clemen, *Der Einfluss der Mysterienreligionen auf das älteste Christentum* (Giessen, 1913); R. Schulte, "Mysterion en el griego clásico y en el helenismo," in *Mysterium Salutis: Fundamentos de la dogmática como historia de la salvación*, ed. J. Feiner and M. Löhrer (Madrid: Cristiandad, 1969), 4.2:78–81; Tennyson Jacob Wellman, "Ancient Mystēria and Modern Mystery Cults," *Religion & Theology* 12, nos. 3–4 (2005): 308–48.

7. Rudolf Bultmann, *Geschichte und Eschatologie* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1958), 59; Ramón Arnau, *Tratado general de los sacramentos* (Madrid: Biblioteca de autores cristianos, 1994), 58.

8. Odo Casel, "Altchristlicher Kult und Antike," *Jahrbuch für Literaturwissenschaft* 3 (1923): 1–17.

9. Deden, "Le Mystère Paulinien," 442; Karl Prümm, "Mystères," *Dictionnaire de la Bible: Supplément* 6 (1960): 10–225.

10. Raymond E. Brown, "Pre-Christian Semitic Concept of Mystery," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 20, no. 4 (1958): 417–33, and "Semitic Background of the New Testament mysterion," *Biblica* 39 (1959): 70–87.

also the decisions made in it, designated with the Hebrew word *raz*, which the Septuagint would translate as *mysterion*. Later on the prophets were admitted to this meeting so that they might reveal those sublime plans to the people. The theme recurs in the wisdom literature, which talks about the divine secrets of creation (Sir 43:32) and associates the *mysterion* with the eschatological fulfillment of everything (Wis 2:22).[11] It is interesting that these pages already contain a certain critique of the mystery cults (Wis 2:22; 14:15) but, at the same time, speak in ritual terminology about Wisdom as an "initiate" (Wis 8:4). The *mysterion* appears forcefully, above all, in the apocalyptic literature: Daniel is the man who knows the divine *mysterion* about history and can therefore interpret the royal dreams (Dn 2:28; Mk 4:11; Rv 10:7).

Based on the Bible, the idea was taken up by the rabbis, who spoke about "the mysteries of the Torah" because in it is found the key that makes it possible to open the book of history and to read between its lines. Someone who knows the Torah can interpret God's eschatological will, the goal toward which he governs the eons.[12] *Mysterion*, in this context, is an exegetical tool for deciphering biblical prophecies.

Well, then, St. Paul assumes this rabbinical use, transforming it in view of his faith in Jesus: for the apostle, the place which the Torah occupied for the Jews is occupied by Christ. He alone, God's definitive Amen (2 Cor 1:20), breaks the seals so that the books might be opened and the fullness of time might be disclosed. Jesus is thus turned into the exegetical key to understanding the history of Israel to which scripture bears witness. Hence, in the Pauline use of the term, as I noted, the *mysterion* is Christ himself.[13] Or, more precisely, the *mysterion* is Christ as the one who recapitulates all things and all events; Christ as the center of the network of relations in which everything finds its order on the journey to the Father. Just as the *mysterion* in the Old Testament contains the way in which the eons point to their consummation, so too St. Paul interpreted the *mysterion* according to the unity of the ages which look to Jesus, who anticipates their definitive fullness.

In order to examine Paul's vision in greater depth it will be important, therefore, to pay attention to the understanding that Israel had of the divine designs for history, and to analyze how Paul took up this perspective from the vantage point of his faith in Jesus. The analysis will show us the profound association of the *mysterion* with divine worship, inasmuch as both aim to illuminate the same question: the way in which God works in history, leading the ages to himself.

11. Brown, "Pre-Christian Semitic," 424–25.
12. Bornkamm, "Mysterion," 823; Ratzinger, "Zum Begriff des Sakramentes."
13. See 1 Cor 2:1, 2:7, 1:23; see also Col 2:2, 1:27, 4:3; 1 Tm 3:16.

The Pauline *mysterion* from the Perspective of the Old Testament

How do the people of Israel perceive the unity of salvation history? What key enables them to read the years of it just as the pages of a book are read? One characteristic of Israel is its awareness that it experiences time as a plot, that is to say, with an origin, a conflict, and a resolution, all guided by the divine plan.[14] Other nations may travel through the cyclical time of the seasons or meditate on eternal recurrence: for Israel, on the contrary, history is a journey from the creative origin to a fullness which also will come down from God.

This does not mean that time is a straight line that travels arrogantly toward the future, while rejecting the past. On the contrary, Israel's future is possible only if a deepening of memory corresponds to each new event. Its time resembles a spiral that unrolls and rises only insofar as it turns back on itself; or the wheel of a vehicle that moves ahead because it revolves continually on its axle.

Therefore the key to biblical history lies in typology, whereby each event points to another future event in which fullness will be found. The Bible recounts for us the repetition of types or figures, the resonance of already-familiar musical themes that are performed in a new key. Those who crossed the Red Sea will traverse the Jordan; and those who fled from Egypt through the desert will return from Babylon through other barren regions. Each step forward revives the memory of gifts already received and brings a better appreciation of the fruit that was guarded in the seeds of those gifts.

Well, then, *in Israel the vantage point from which this rhythm of the covenant is discovered is worship*, the place of closeness between God and his people, where Yahweh reveals himself. Why can the unity of biblical history be revealed only from the perspective of the liturgy? As it happens, although Israel experiences time that points in a specific direction, this is not because the Israelites had greater abilities to imagine the progress of history. The explanation must not be sought in man and his plans, but rather in God, who acted on the path of his beloved little one. The explanation

14. José Granados, *Teología del tiempo, ensayo sobre la memoria, la promesa y la fecundidad* (Salamanca: Sígueme, 2012), 57–66.

must be found in Yahweh, who revealed himself as the Lord who saves. Indeed, the reason why Israel is not allowed to forget its *past* is because this past preserves the traces of God's action, and thus it has something unique and unrepeatable, just as God himself is unrepeatable in all that he does. And the reason why the *future* brings to Israel the fulfillment of its hope is because God has established tomorrow as the region of his coming, where his promise will reach maturity. Here, then, is the answer to our question: *because the ages are tied to the action and epiphany of God, only divine worship will succeed in revealing their enigma to us.*

It can be stated, in short, that the history of Israel is deciphered through typology, and that typology is linked with worship as the place where Yahweh's saving action is recalled and faith in his promise is renewed. Thus, only by drawing near to the Temple to offer the first-fruits of the earth that the Lord gave them, can the Israelites tell the mighty deeds of God who guided his people step by step (Dt 26:1–11).

In the third section of chapter 2, above, I introduced two biblical concepts in which this view that Israel has of its history is condensed. Through remembrance or *anamnesis* the blessings received from God are made present and one manages to see the strand that links the ages, which are threaded on Yahweh's irrevocable fidelity. In this way the people can perceive their unity down through the generations, as though they were one corporate person. I already noted that these two concepts (*anamnesis* and *corporate person*) are connected to worship. That is where the Israelites experience the fact that they belong to the whole assembly from the perspective of their common participation in the covenant with God.

From what has been said we can conclude: given that the *mysterion* has to do with the unity of God's plan and with its definitive fulfillment for the whole people, discourse about the *mysterion* presupposes an evocation of the Israelite context of worship where this plan is recognized and put into effect. An example of this linkage between *mysterion* and worship is the fact that the rabbis came to call circumcision a *mysterion*.[15] We can assume that St. Paul, who was well-versed in Jewish scripture, would understand ritual as the sphere in which to recognize God's plan for the world. Would it not be logical then for the apostle, in adopting the term *mysterion*, the revelation of this divine design, to have the Christian liturgy in mind also?[16] Two indications lead us to confirm this conclusion.

15. Melchior Verheijen, "Mysterion, sacramentum et la synagogue," *Recherches de science religieuse* 45 (1957): 321–37, at 334, citing *Tanchuma Buber* 6.23 and *Genesis Rabbah* 49.

16. Van Iersel, "Quelques présupposés bibliques."

First, Paul interprets the Christian liturgy precisely in terms of the two concepts—*anamnesis* and corporate personality—that we just saw intermingled with Israelite worship as the key to discovering the unity of history. Indeed, baptism is understood as remembrance in which we relive the death of Jesus and receive the pledge of his resurrection (Rom 6:3–4); the Eucharist too becomes a proclamation of his death, so that Christ hastens his second coming at the parousia ("*so that* he comes," 1 Cor 11:26).[17] On the other hand, the apostle interprets baptism and Eucharist in terms of the corporate unity of the people. Baptism inserts us into the body of Christ because it introduces us into his relational sphere, just as all human beings were already in the body of Adam; or as the Israelites "were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea" (1 Cor 10:2). And according to the same logic, the Eucharist is insertion into the body of Christ (1 Cor 10:16–17). The Christian liturgy appears, in this light, as the fullness of the Jewish liturgy; indeed, from the perspective of the Eucharistic experience Paul can say: "these things happened for your instruction" (1 Cor 10:11).

Second, the apostle explicitly associates the concept of *mysterion* with the types or figures in terms of which the plot of history is interpreted in a unified manner and which, as we know, are linked with Israelite worship. Indeed, *mysterion* is for Paul the creation of Adam from the clay of the earth, which prefigures his resurrection in Christ (1 Cor 15:45–51); and *mysterion* is also the union of Adam and Eve inasmuch as this union proclaims the extreme love of Jesus for his church (Eph 5:31–32).

In short, we can say that for St. Paul the Christian sacraments assume and fulfill both the *typology* that reads history as a unified whole and the *corporate* vision of the person; these two concepts are related both with Israelite worship and with the ability to perceive the *mysterion* or divine plan for the ages. Therefore everything points to the fact that the Christian liturgy was the soil in which the Pauline concept of *mysterion* took root and matured. Is it possible to prove this thesis from the apostle's texts themselves?

The Pauline *mysterion* and the Christian Sacraments

I have highlighted a clear connection, attested in Paul's writings, between the central coordinates of the *mysterion* and the central coordinates of the liturgy, both in the Old and in the New Testament, for both (*mysterion*, worship) illuminate the unity of the history of the people of God in light of

17. Hofius, "'Bis dass er kommt.'"

its definitive consummation in Christ. A question then arises: why did St. Paul not articulate more clearly the relation between *mysterion* and liturgy? For, indeed, it seems that when Paul speaks about liturgy (baptism, Eucharist) he does not use the term *mysterion*, and when he does use the term *mysterion*, he is not speaking about the liturgy.[18]

Mysterion, Baptism, Eucharist

Still, a more careful reading discovers the connection of *mysterion* and liturgy in the Pauline corpus. Take, for example, the Letter to the Ephesians, in which the *mysterion* has a predominant role. The purpose of the initial blessing, which presents Christ as the recapitulating *mysterion*, is that Christians might be "holy and blameless before him" (Eph 1:4). The ritual tone is evident: only what is irreproachable is worthy of divine service. Moreover the Letter teaches that the final end of the church is to worship God, as proved by the abundance of liturgical formulas: "To him be glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, for ever and ever. Amen" (Eph 3:21).[19]

It should be noted, moreover and above all, that the *mysterion* is joined to the Pauline definition of the church as body. The universal recapitulation in Christ occurs inasmuch as he is head of the church (Eph 1:22–23). And the *mysterion* is completed when Jews and Gentiles are united in one body, now that the wall that once separated them has been broken down (Eph 2:13–16, in light of 3:3). Thus *the Pauline vision of the church as body of Christ arises precisely in the Eucharistic context*. St. Paul speaks about the unity of Christians in one body in terms of his experience of the Lord's Supper and of Jesus' words about offering his body (1 Cor 10:16–17).[20] We can conclude, therefore: if the basis of the *mysterion* is the body of the church, and the basis of the church is the Eucharist, then the Pauline use of *mysterion* rests on Eucharistic foundations.[21]

Thus, even if St. Paul does not describe baptism or the Eucharist as a *mysterion*, liturgical experience inspires his use of the term. Worship is the place where one discovers that the body of Christ, prolonged in the body of the church so as to reunite all creatures in God, is the key to the unity of history and is therefore identified with the *mysterion*. In fact, surrounding the image of the church as body there is no lack of allusions to baptism and

18. Eberhard Jüngel, "Das Sakrament–was ist das?," *Evangelische Theologie* 26, no. 6 (1966): 320–36, at 331; Jüngel follows Günther Bornkamm, "Mysterion," 809.

19. Mussner, "Die Kirche als Kultgemeinde," 256–67.

20. Son, *Corporate Elements in Pauline Anthropology*.

21. Schlier, "Die Kirche als das Geheimnis Christi," 306.

the Eucharist. Thus, after associating *mysterion* and body, Paul speaks about "one body and ... one baptism" (Eph 4:4–5).[22] And before speaking about the great mystery of the unity of Christ and his church (Eph 5:31–32), he points out that Christ purified her—his body and bride—in water and the word (Eph 5:26, an allusion to baptism), nourishing her as his own flesh (Eph 5:29, a Eucharistic allusion).

Why does the apostle not refer directly to baptism and the Eucharist with the term *mysterion*? One reason is obvious: in this way he attempts to avoid confusion with the Hellenic mysteries. The warning against these rituals appears already, as I noted, in some books of the Old Testament (Wis 14:15) and continues to be present among the early Fathers. They shied away, at first, from terms related to the theology of the mysteries. Only around the fourth century, when Christianity had established its social presence and dispelled the danger of misunderstandings, did the Fathers apply profusely to the liturgy the vocabulary of the pagan religions, speaking about "mystagogy" and "initiation" and using the "discipline of the arcane."

Distinguishing terminology was useful, moreover, to clarify the novel elements of New Testament worship in comparison to the Hellenic religions. The latter proposed a religious ecstasy that separated the initiate from everyday life so as to enclose him in the secret sphere of the divine. In the Christian liturgy, on the contrary, man does not abandon the creaturely coordinates of his body and his time, but rather encounters them again fully in Jesus. For this reason baptism and Eucharist are not for a few elect; on the contrary, they possess a transparent simplicity because they are anchored in the most elemental features of man's experience, which is taken up and confirmed in Christ; and therefore these rites comes within the reach of everyone. "Rational worship," as St. Paul would say, the acceptance of God's truth that illuminates existence, is not found by distancing ourselves from the concrete reality in which we live, but rather by offering our own body (Rom 12:1–2). This was the conviction that motivated Speratus, a second-century martyr, when he tried to explain to the proconsul Saturninus how close to everyday life the Christian religion was: he called it *mysterium simplicitatis*, in contrast to the complex Hellenic rites.[23]

22. Edouard Cothenet, "L'économie du mystère et le baptême selon l'Épître aux Éphésiens," in *Mystagogie: pensée liturgique d'aujourd'hui et liturgie ancienne*, ed. A. M. Triacca (Rome: CLV, 1993), 85–101.

23. *Passio Sanctorum Scillitanorum* 4, in *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, ed. Herbert Musurillo (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 86.

Mysterion and Marriage

Until now I have spoken about baptism and the Eucharist because they are the rites that Paul discusses more carefully. But in his texts on the *mysterion* there are also hints of the presence of another sacrament: matrimony. This proves to be especially interesting because of its connection with the union of Christ and the church in one flesh, the pivotal point of the Pauline *mysterion*.[24] Matrimony is, in fact, the only one of the seven that Paul explicitly relates to the term *mysterion*, in Latin *sacramentum*. It is true that we do not have here the technical usage that theology would employ later in speaking about "the seven sacraments." But this does not diminish the importance of the fact because, as we see, the Pauline *mysterion* is found at the root of Christian worship, which therefore includes marriage.[25]

Furthermore, in the Letter to the Ephesians, marriage is associated with the *mysterion* in the key context of typology. Indeed, in Ephesians 5:31–32 Paul cites a verse from Genesis (2:24: "a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife") to prove that there is a great *mysterion* in the union of Adam and Eve, in relation to Christ and his church. The passage is important because in it the typology dates back from Jesus not only to the history of Israel, but as far as the foundations of creation. The union of man and woman, insofar as it prefigures the union of Christ and his church, contains a leitmotif that explains the unity of the ages from their beginning.

Paul thus follows the logic of the Old Testament: there too the history of the people goes back to creation so as to show that it is universal from its origin. As a result, Israelite worship would reflect man's primordial experiences, and in particular family life. Indeed, God caused Israel to be born of the waters as his Son and led him by way of the desert to educate him through this trial. Then, too, the history of the people is the history of the abandoned woman on whom God looks with life-giving love so as to protect her in a spousal covenant. Or, finally: Israel's future is the hope for a son who will come to fulfill the desires of the people, inaugurating the Holy Land with his flesh and building in it the dwelling place of God with mankind. In short, the time of the covenant is measured with the original time of the family. In fact, when the liturgy of Israel becomes perverted, the

24. For the following discussion see José Granados, *Una sole carne en un solo Espíritu: Teología del matrimonio* (Madrid: Palabra, 2014).

25. Of all people, a Protestant theologian advocates stressing the link between matrimony and the concept of sacrament: Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematische Theologie* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1993), 3:267; translated as *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998), vol. 3.

prophets, in order to replace that corruption, have to decipher the meaning of history in their own body, staking their own life and their family relationships.

Marriage, moreover, belongs to the framework of Israelite worship, inasmuch as the unity of the people through the generations is perceived in the latter. On the one hand, through marriage, creation and the narrative of history are taken up into worship itself, in keeping with biblical *anamnesis*. Is the family not the place where we learn to string our days together, starting from the love that generated us and from the spousal promise that seals this love? Moreover, in the second place, marriage enables us to understand the *mysterion* in its entirety as the unity of all the people, in keeping with the "corporate person" of scripture. Is the family not the place where we perceive for the first time the singular way in which the flesh enables us to become one?

To the extent that Paul, as we have seen, understands Christian worship too in terms of the concepts of *anamnesis* and the corporate person, it was logical that he would assume the backdrop of familial experiences: the relation man-woman goes on to give shape to the *mysterion* in a structural way, as the key with which to decipher it. And in turn, given that Christ inaugurates the full way of being one body and of recapitulating history (*anamnesis*), those who become his members through baptism and the Eucharist (Eph 5:30) will see that their union "in one flesh" is transformed too, and that they are able to love one another at a new level, as Christ loves his church (Eph 5:21–33). The presence of matrimony then adds a profound outlook on how the *mysterion* is rooted in the creaturely condition of the human person; and it attests to Jesus' power to transform our concrete way of life in the body, establishing there his liturgy of oblation (Rom 12:1–2).

Pauline *mysterion* and Johannine Sign

Finally, in order to round off what the Pauline *mysterion* means, it may help us to compare his approach with the one offered by the fourth Gospel (see chapter 3 above). Whereas John made use of the "sign" to describe the sacramental economy, St. Paul adopts the perspective of the *mysterion*. Note the parallelism between the two outlooks. Both are centered on Christ, who with his incarnation brings to fulfillment a process that runs through the Old Testament. For he is, in St. John's writings, the meeting place of all the signs which introduce man into the space of the new temple, or rather, of the glorified body of Jesus. And he is also, in the writings of St. Paul, the *mysterion par excellence*, precisely in his incarnation, death, and resurrec-

tion from the dead. This is to say that both the "sign" and the *mysterion* are explained in light of the body of Jesus, who takes upon himself the flesh of Adam. The closeness of these two visions was formulated as follows by St. Irenaeus of Lyons: "For there are many mansions in the Father's house (Jn 14:2), inasmuch as there are also many members in the body (Rom 12:4; 1 Cor 12:12, 20)."[26]

There is, we should add, a common relation of the *sign* and of the *mysterion* with typology. Indeed, recall that the Johannine *signs* (united with the *works* of Jesus) take up the liturgy of Israel, which decants the history of the people; and they point to the Paschal mystery from which the sacraments flow. And the *mysterion*, as I just explained, signals the eschatological fulfillment of the ages in Christ, who recapitulates them.

Certainly the perspective of the sign appears to be centered on the manifestation, while the *mysterion* indicates instead what is hidden. But this is only an apparent contrast, because for Paul *mysterion* is bound up with preaching; it is precisely what the apostle cannot stop saying. There is a paradox here: etymologically "mystery" comes from the verb "to be shut, to keep silent" (*myo*), but Paul relates it to the word. Thus, according to Ephesians 6:19, the *mysterion* is the content of the Gospel; and in 1 Corinthians 2:1 it is associated with announcing the good news.[27] This highlights the fact that the ultimate secret of the biblical God is not that he is beyond words, but rather that he is closer to us than these very words: he is ineffable, not because he eludes all discourse, but rather because he is the very power that allows us to speak.

Based on this harmonious vision of the sign and the *mysterion*, the church went on to develop sacramental theology. As I have already noted, the term *mysterion* (*sacramentum* in Latin) would be used to designate the sacraments, while the Johannine sign would serve to define them. To conclude this chapter, I will show how the Church Fathers take up and develop the content of the Pauline *mysterion*. In chapter 8, below, I will examine the way in which the perspective of the fourth Gospel was received.

Toward the Classical Use of the Term "Sacrament"

I began this chapter by noting the apparent disconnect between the biblical terminology of the *mysterion* and the traditional use of the word "sacrament" that is connected with worship. I proved that this discrepancy is illusory: St. Paul offers a solid basis for relating the *mysterion* (*sacramentum*) to the Christian liturgy.

Note that the Church Fathers closely follow the Pauline inspiration. Indeed, in their view too, *mysterion* must be combined with typology and explains the definitive meaning of the *historia salutis* (history of salvation) in Christ and his church.[28] Therefore they frequently use the term as an exegetical tool to explore the passages of the Old Testament. The great *mysterion* is Jesus himself in the events of his life; in him is contained the ultimate future of history to which everything tends.[29] And precisely because the Christian, in baptism and the Eucharist, has access to this perfect fullness of the ages from which the coherence thereof can be observed, *mysterion* would be applied to the liturgical rite also.

One of the first witnesses to this connection of ideas is St. Ignatius of Antioch, who speaks in his Letter to the Ephesians about three "mysteries" that the devil did not know because they happened in the hidden depths of God: the conception of Mary, her childbirth, and the cross of Christ. As in Paul's writings, the use of the term is Christological: it deals with events that testify to the truth of the Son's flesh.[30] And, also as in Paul, Ignatius refers the *mysterion* to participation in Jesus, thanks to which "our life has sprung up again by him and by his death."[31] The context allows us to interpret the phrase in a liturgical key: this *mysterion* requires us to live "in observance of the Lord's day," Sunday, which replaces the Jewish Sabbath. Everything leads us to connect the *mysterion* with baptism (the new life "by him") and the weekly celebration of the Eucharist. This reading is confirmed by another passage in which Ignatius refers to "the ministers of the mysteries of Christ Jesus," who "are not ministers of meat and drink, but servants of the Church of God."[32] The martyr is referring again to the Eucharistic service.[33]

We observe the same continuity with Paul in the writings of St. Justin. The martyr is one of the first to develop extensively the typological key: the mysteries inhabit the Old Testament in its reference to Jesus.[34] Therefore

26. Irenaeus of Lyons, *Adversus haereses* III, 19, 3 (SC 211:382; ANF 1:449b).

27. Gene R. Smillie, "Ephesians 6:19–20: A Mystery for the Sake of Which the Apostle is an Ambassador in Chains," *Trinity Journal* 18 (1997): 199–222.

28. On the mystery in patristic writings see Bornkamm, "Mysterion," and Eliseo Ruffini and Enzo Lodi, *"Mysterion" e "sacramentum": La sacramentalità negli scritti dei Padri e nei testi liturgici primitivi* (Bologna: EDB, 1987).

29. Pannenberg, *Systematische Theologie*, 3:379–82; Musurillo, "Sacramental Symbolism."

30. Ignatius of Antioch, *Ad Ephesians* XIX, 1 (SC 10:88; ANF 1:57).

31. Ignatius of Antioch, *Ad Magnesians* IX, 1 (SC 10:102; ANF 1:62).

32. Ignatius of Antioch, *Ad Trallians* II, 3 (SC 10:112; ANF 1:67).

33. This is the interpretation of Raphael Schulte, "Los términos *mysterion* y *sacramentum* en orden a una teología de los sacramentos," in *Mysterium Salutis*, 4.2:76–98, 108–9.

34. Justin, *Dialogus cum Thryphone* 74, 3 (PTS 47:197; ANF 1:235b): the saving *mysterion* that

the *mysterion* is an exegetical tool and is applied to phrases of scripture that prophesy future fulfillments. Speaking to Trypho the Jew, Justin argues that Christians know "all the mysteries" (in the plural), because they are able to trace the whole Law back to the mystery (in the singular) of Christ.[35]

It is remarkable that the saintly philosopher, who is well acquainted with the pagan mysteries, does not see them as a source of inspiration to explain the sacraments. Just the opposite happens: for Justin Martyr the mystery religions are the ones that plagiarize Christian worship (baptism and Eucharist) because they have not understood the Old Testament.[36] And this is because the devil, who knows the ancient prophecies only partially, aped them unsuccessfully. The pagan mysteries, then, are derived from an erroneous exegetical reading that is unaware of the fullness of Jesus. Baptism and Eucharist, on the contrary, are part of the *mysterion* inasmuch as they already actualize the fullness of time that Christ brought. Therefore Justin can refer to the mystery of our regeneration, which is baptism,[37] and speak in reference to the Jewish Passover about the "mystery of the Lamb" with whose blood the bodies of Christians are anointed.[38]

The typological reading of the Bible gradually centers the outlook of the Fathers on the ritual prescriptions of the Old Testament, which are interpreted in reference to Jesus. This does justice to the Israelite practice of grasping in ritual the unity of history and anticipating in the liturgy the fulfillment of the promises. Melito of Sardis, in his *Peri Pascha*, gives a good example of this exegesis, speaking about the "Paschal mystery" and describing its prefigurations (types) in the sacrifices of the Old Testament, in which "the mystery of the Lord" was already being fulfilled.[39]

We see, therefore, that the *mysterion* terminology is associated increasingly with the liturgical rites, starting with baptism and the Eucharist. The liturgy is linked with the *mysterion* because it prolongs in history the great *mysterion* of the incarnation, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, just as

is Christ's passion, contained in the church's preaching; ibid., 115, 1 (PTS 47:267; ANF 1:256b): the prophets predicted the mystery of Christ in parables and in a hidden manner; ibid., 138, 2 (PTS 47:308; ANF 1:268b): the story of Noah contains the mystery of the cross, etc.

35. Ibid., 44, 1–2 (PTS 47:142; ANF 1:217a): Christians know "all the mysteries," which is to say, the interpretation of the Law that points to "the mystery of Christ."

36. Justin, *1 Apologiae* 54, 6 (PTS 38:109; ANF 1:181a): "The devils, accordingly, when they heard these prophetic words, said that Bacchus was the son of Jupiter, and gave out that he was the discoverer of wine, and they number wine among his mysteries; and they taught that, having been torn in pieces, he ascended into heaven"; *Dialogus cum Thryphone* 69, 2 (PTS 47:189; ANF 1:233a); *1 Apologiae* 66, 4 (PTS 38:128; ANF 1:185b).

37. Justin Martyr, *Dialogus cum Thryphone* 85, 7 (PTS 47:218; ANF 1:242a).

38. Ibid., 40, 1 (PTS 47:136; ANF 1:214b).

39. Melito of Sardis, *Peri Pascha* 1–3 (SC 123:60–62) and 33 (SC 123:76).

the Old Testament was riddled with mysteries that pointed to Christ. The distinction that Justin makes in the above-cited passage between "the mysteries" and "the mystery" neatly takes up this articulate synthesis.

On the other hand, the first Church Fathers have reservations when it comes time to use terms that belong to the Hellenic religions. Thus, for example, at first they avoid the plural *mysteria*, which was applied more specifically to the cults. Clement of Alexandria is a pioneer in appreciating the similarities between the Hellenic mysteries and the Christian sacraments. He would speak about "the mysteries of the Word (Logos)," "truly sacred mysteries."[40] From him, for example, comes the first mention of the "discipline of the arcane," which commanded Christians to keep silence about the rites of initiation. Clement also called the bread and wine of the Eucharist "mystical."[41] One typical characteristic of the Alexandrian school would be, especially in Origen, the philosophical use of the term "mystery," which was already very common among the Platonists: the true worship is philosophy and the true initiation consists of discovering the foundation of things in the invisible God.[42]

The terminology of the mystery religions was not embraced entirely until the fourth century, when the new religion was established and no longer felt threatened by syncretism. This is demonstrated, for example, by St. John Chrysostom, who states that the "ineffable mystery" is consummated in the stroke of the lance that pierced Jesus' side, and speaks about the "initiated" who are regenerated by the water and are fed by the flesh and blood.[43] The same author situates the *mysterion* along the axis that runs from the visible to the invisible, an axis that one travels along not by merely human wisdom, but rather thanks to the gift of the Spirit, who enables us to receive the unfathomable revelation of God.

The Latin-speaking church, where the term *mysterion* is translated by *sacramentum*, deserves special mention.[44] It is logical to wonder about the

40. Clement of Alexandria, *Exhortation to the Heathen* XII (SC 2:187–93; ANF 2:205a–b); H. G. Marsh, "The Use of MYSTERION in the Writings of Clement of Alexandria," *Journal of Theological Studies* 37 (1936): 64–80.

41. Marsh, "The Use of MYSTERION," 75–80.

42. Henri Crouzel, "Origène et la structure du sacrement," *Bulletin de littérature ecclésiastique* [hereafter *BLE*] 63 (1962): 83–92; Hans Urs von Balthasar, "Le mystère d'Origène," *Recherches de science religieuse* 26 (1936): 513–62; 27 (1937): 38–64.

43. John Chrysostom, *Homily 85 on John 19, 31–37* (PG 59:463b–c); see also *Homily 7 on 1 Cor 2, 6–7* (PG 61:55–56); and, on the mystery in Chrysostom, see Van Roo, *De sacramentis*, 13–17.

44. Joseph de Ghellinck, *Pour l'histoire du mot "Sacramentum." 1. Les Anténicéens* (Louvain-Paris, 1924); Adolph Kolping, *Sacramentum Tertullianeum: Untersuchungen über die Anfänge des christlichen Gebrauchs der Vocabel sacramentum* (Münster, 1948); Christine Mohrmann, "Sacramentum dans les plus anciens textes chrétiens," *Harvard Theological Review* 47 (1954): 141–52, and "Quelques

reason for this step, given that the word *mysterium* existed in Latin and would also be used by the Fathers. Besides the fact that it was common to find a Latin equivalent of every abstract term (as is the case with *mysterion*), there was a weighty reason for the change, which is already familiar to us: avoiding confusion with the pagan rites. And thus, for example, the plural *mysteria* was not used and other terms were avoided, such as *initia, sacra, arcana*, which were proper to those cults; *sacramentum*, for its part, was free of associations with the mystery religions.

Among the ancient Romans, in what senses was the word *sacramentum* used? In general it expressed a certain relation with the sacred; more concretely it referred to an action that consecrates, for *sacramentum* comes from *sacrare*, in the active sense.[45] Moreover *sacramentum* connoted the public character of such an action, which was legally binding; for this very reason it became more difficult for the mystery cults to use this term. Based on these two features (sacred force and juridical weight), the *sacramentum* can be defined as a public *religious obligation*, which gives rise to three meanings of the term.[46] (1) Inasmuch as this obligation incorporates into a new group, *sacramentum* implies an initiation. (2) Based on that, *sacramentum* can refer also to the oath that is taken at the initiation; the word was used in fact for the promise of loyalty to the army (like the pledge of allegiance today) which in those days acquired a sacred force.[47] (3) Finally, *sacramentum* designates the sacred bond itself that is created by this obligation; this usage is reflected, for example, in the expression *sacramentum amicitiae* (sacrament of friendship).[48] The connotation of *sacramentum* as a sacred bond explains why the Fathers call not only the rite of baptism itself a *sacramentum*, but also its permanent effect on the Christian, who is associated in a singular way to God in Christ (what later would be called the baptismal "character").[49]

Why was the term *sacramentum* chosen rather than others? As we have

observations sur 'sacramentum' chez Tertullien," in W. den Boer et al., *Romanitas et Christianitas* (Amsterdam: North-Holland, 1973), 233–42; and Joseph T. Lienhard, "*Sacramentum* and the Eucharist in St. Augustine," *The Thomist* 77, no. 2 (2013): 173–92.

45. I follow above all Mohrmann, "Sacramentum dans les plus anciens textes," 146.

46. Ibid., 145.

47. In various passages Tertullian uses *sacramentum* as a synonym for the oath that was taken in the army: *Ad martyras* III, 1 (CCL 1:5; ANF 3:694b); *De corona* XI, 1 (CCL 2:1056; ANF 3:100b); *Scorpiace* IV, 5 (CCL 2:1076; ANF 3:637a); *De idolatria* XIX, 2 (CCL 2:1120; ANF 3:73b). This does not mean, as I have already noted, that he is talking about the original meaning which was, rather, that of a religious bond: Mohrmann, "Sacramentum dans les plus anciens textes," 150.

48. Mohrmann, "Sacramentum dans les plus anciens textes," 146.

49. Nicholas M. Haring, "St. Augustine's Use of the Word 'Character,'" *Medieval Studies* 14 (1952): 79–97; I will study this subject later in chapter 12.

seen, its public and juridical features distanced it from the mystic rites and freed it for Christian use. At the same time, points of contact can be noted between the Pauline *mysterion*, which designated union with Christ (Col 1:27) and the force of the "sacred union" contained in the Latin *sacramentum* (the third meaning listed above).[50] Tertullian was very important in spreading this equivalence between *mysterion* and *sacramentum*, but he only spelled out a fact that was already present in the Christian communities and attested in the ancient versions of the Bible.

The translation of *mysterion* as *sacramentum* left free the term *mysterium*, which is a direct translation of the Greek *mysterion*. Some authors, such as Lactantius, started to use *mysterium* as if it were a synonym of *sacramentum* to indicate the totality of the salvation wrought in Christ and the concrete rites that communicate it.[51] Little by little, in the Latin church, a separation of meanings resulted: *sacramentum* was reserved more for the ritual (according to its Roman use), and *mysterion* was used to designate the ultimate salvific reality that the rites represent.[52] This clear distinction, which would not be available in Greek theology, is useful for the analysis of the structure of the sacrament, provided that one is careful to integrate correctly the distinct aspects of the visible and the invisible.

We can also understand the medieval usage, which grew on the patristic soil, in light of what has been said.[53] I should note in the first place that *mysterion* and *sacramentum* remained broad enough that they could refer to all of salvation history and, concretely, to typological exegesis. Although the word "sacrament" was restricted gradually to liturgical acts, its general scope was never abandoned. Hugh of St. Victor, for example, when he explained the sacraments based on the biblical story of King Hezekiah, who was cured with a poultice, would be able to make this play on words: the account presents to us "a sacrament about the sacraments."[54]

In the second place, given this association with the types of biblical figures, medieval writers see the sacraments accompanying man throughout his history: rooted in creation, they are multiplied by the old covenant; with the arrival of the new covenant they are then concentrated into the

50. Mohrmann, "Sacramentum dans les plus anciens textes," 148.

51. Vincenzo Loi, "Il termine *mysterium* nella letteratura latina cristiana prenicena," *Vigiliae Christianae* 19 (1965): 210–32; 20 (1966): 25–44.

52. About St. Augustine, see Lienhard, "*Sacramentum* and the Eucharist."

53. Artur Michael Landgraf, "Die Lehre vom geheimnisvollen Leib Christi in den frühen Paulinenkommentaren und in der Frühscholastik," *Divus Thomas* 24 (1946): 217–48 and 393–428; 25 (1947): 365–94; 26 (1948): 160–80, 291–323, 395–434.

54. Hugh of St. Victor, *De sacramentis christianae fidei* I, 9, 5 (PL 76:325): "magnum de sacramentis sacramentum commendatum est."

seven that we know today. For this reason Hugh of St. Victor can entitle his principal work in which the entire *historia salutis* is set forth: *On the Sacraments of the Christian Faith* (*De sacramentis christianae fidei*). The Middle Ages, moreover, continue to refer all the sacraments to Christ, the incarnate Word, "sacrament of the sacraments," who recapitulates all of history.[55] Following the Church Fathers, the medieval theologians understand the sacraments of Israel as sacraments of the future, of Christ who was to come. The new sacraments, on the contrary, are the remembrance of Jesus who has come and, with his power, colonizes our present while preparing his coming again in glory.

The richness of the term *sacramentum* was important, therefore, in order to keep the Christian rites united with the entire economy of salvation; they prove to be ways of marking time in salvation history. The biblical heritage, recapitulated in St. Paul, continued to be very much alive: the worship of the church, in continuity with Jewish worship, gives us the key with which to understand the unity of history, condensed in the life and work of Jesus. St. Thomas Aquinas shows that he is an heir to this tradition when he says that the sacrament is a sign of three things: remembrance of the past, present manifestation of grace, and a foretelling of future glory.[56]

In the last three chapters I have explored the essential features of the biblical data: the roots in Jesus (chapter 2) and the first sacramental elaboration in the writings of St. John (chapter 3) and of St. Paul (chapter 4). From all this we can draw a conclusion that I will analyze in the following chapter: the sacraments are rooted in Christ's life in the flesh.

55. Hugh of St. Victor, *Sententiae de divinitate* II, ed. A. M. Piazzoni, *Studi Medievali* 23 (1982): 912–55, at 921.

56. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* [hereafter *ST*] III, q. 60, a. 3, co.

5 THE INSTITUTION OF THE SACRAMENTS IN THE FLESH OF CHRIST

Starting with the rite of Jesus, which takes up into itself the whole remembrance of Israel, I described the perspective of the New Testament: the sacraments are the space from which the Christian revelation is contemplated while participating in it. It is not surprising, then, that the early reflection of theology does not address them directly, just as our view does not focus either on the window that opens onto the landscape. What is of primary interest is the encounter with the risen Christ, present in his church, an encounter that the sacraments mediate for us. This gives rise to the foundational question of sacramental theology: what relation do the sacraments maintain with the life and work of Jesus?

The question is decisive in this hour of the faith. Our era, which is fond of the silhouette of the Nazarene, has difficulty encountering him in the church; and if it accepts the church, it does so inasmuch as it expects her to give them understanding, closeness, tolerance ... worrying about the rites, perhaps, only as an expression of this welcome and affection. People today believe, yes, that they can get closer to Christ by communion, but not by the Mass; by authenticity, but not by confession; by love, but not by matrimony. I will attempt to show, nevertheless, that the sacraments are the only way of touching Christ in the flesh, so that his presence becomes real and concrete, without the idealistic, ethereal contours with which we usually imagine him. *Numquam sine aqua Christus*, we can say with Tertullian: one never encounters Christ without the water of baptism and the other salvific rites.[1]

The insight that the sacraments are rooted in Jesus brought to maturity

1. Tertullian, *De Baptismo* IX, 4 (CCL 1:284; ANF 3:673b).

a sure article of faith which was defined at the Council of Trent: Jesus instituted the seven of the New Testament.[2] As I study this article of faith in the following pages, I will conclude that the sacraments are not connected with Jesus solely by virtue of a decision of his, as though their effect were comparable to that of a law that is in force. Rather, they are connected with Jesus above all because he himself forged them in his body over the course of his life and continues to make himself present in them, touching the Christian's flesh and conforming it to himself. Hence this chapter is not a prologue to the study of the sacraments, but rather the source from which the following discussion proceeds. Having already distilled in the preceding pages the biblical teaching about the institution of the sacraments, we will start by seeing how the Church Fathers delve into it.

The Sacraments, Starting with the Body of Christ: Fathers of the Church

The Fathers of the Church do not speak yet about the seven sacraments, nor do they outline a common definition for them. Moreover, the term "sacrament" is broader for them; even when it is restricted to worship, it includes the ceremonies of Israel and other liturgical practices of the church. Still, although they recognize this variety of "sacraments," they are well aware of the great differences between rites: what distinguishes the central acts of the Christian liturgy is that they are founded on a command of Jesus.

St. Augustine states, for example, that some sacraments—like baptism or the celebration of his body and blood—were handed on to us by the Lord himself and by the apostolic teaching.[3] Thus there is an essential difference between the rites that are found in the canonical scriptures and others, like the annual celebration of Easter, that do not appear in the biblical text, although they are admitted by the universal church and depend on an ancient tradition, sometimes even one of apostolic origin.[4] In order for a

2. Heinrich Denzinger, *Enchiridion Symbolorum* (43rd ed.), ed. and trans. by Peter Hünermann (San Francisco, Calif.: Ignatius Press, 2012) [hereafter DH], 1601.

3. Augustine, *De doctrina christiana* III, 9, 13 (CCL 32:11; NPNF-I 2:560b): "sed quaedam [signa] pauca pro multis … ipse Dominus et apostolica tradidit disciplina" (but our Lord Himself, and apostolic practice, have handed down to us a few rites [signs] in place of many).

4. Augustine, *Epistolae* LIV 1, 1 (Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum [hereafter CSEL] 34.2:159; NPNF-I 1:300a–b): "unde Sacramentis numero paucissimis, observatione facillimis, significatione praestantissimis, societatem noui populi conligauit, sicuti est Baptismus Trinitatis nomine consecratus, communicatio corporis et sanguinis ipsius, et si quid aliud in Scripturis canonicis commendatur, exceptis his quae seruitutem populi ueteris pro congruentia cordis illorum et prophetici temporis onerabant, quae et in quinque libris Moysi leguntur" (He has bound his people under the new dispensation together in fellowship by sacraments, which are in number very few, in observance most easy, and in significance most excellent, as baptism solemnized in the name of the Trinity, the communion of his body and blood, and such other things as are prescribed in the canonical scriptures, with the exception of those enactments which were a yoke of bondage to God's ancient people, suited to their state of heart and to the times of the prophets, and which are found in the five books of Moses).

sacrament to proceed from Jesus it is necessary, therefore, to have scriptural testimony, which reflects either the authority of the master himself or that of the apostles, his witnesses and envoys. For the distinctive feature of these few rites is having been created by the Wisdom of God made man.[5]

In all this, Augustine's argument runs along the channels of tradition. St. Ambrose had already said: "Who is the author of the sacraments, except the Lord Jesus?"[6] And later on Pope Leo would declare that Christ, after Easter, gave to his disciples "the form and the power to baptize,"[7] that is to say, he not only conferred the authority but also prescribed the rite.

Once that principle is established, the Church Fathers add little concerning the institution of the sacraments; they are not concerned, for example, about enumerating the seven, nor do they specify, based on proof texts, when Christ established each of them. On the other hand, they open up for us another perspective with a greater scope: the sacraments are connected with the whole life of Christ in the flesh. I will examine the case of the Eucharist, and of baptism, because of their foundational character among the salvific signs; then I will draw several inferences that can be applied generally.

The Eucharist Contains the Mystery of Christ

The Eucharist is rooted in Christ; this is proved, in the first place, by the fact that his very words are the ones that are repeated in the rite. As St. Ambrose says: "this sacrament that you receive is brought about by the word of Christ."[8] The bishop of Milan states that at the consecration the priest no longer uses his own words, but rather those of Jesus.[9] That is to say, the ministers do not merely quote the master, but rather he speaks through them so as to lend efficacy to the rite.

5. Augustine, *De vera religione* XVII, 33 (CCL 32:14): "ab ipsa dei sapientia homine assumpto, a quo in libertatem uocati sumus, pauca sacramenta saluberrima constituta sunt" (the few most salutary sacraments were instituted by the very wisdom of God, after he had assumed the manhood by which we are called to freedom).

6. Ambrose, *De sacramentis* IV, 4 (SC 25:82).

7. Leo the Great, *Epistolae* XVI, 3 (PL 54:699): "postea quam resurrexit a mortuis, discipulis suis, in quibus omnes Ecclesiarum praesules docebantur, et formam et potestatem tradidit baptizandi" (after he rose from the dead, he handed over to his disciples, in whom all the prelates of the Churches were taught, both the form and the power to baptize).

8. Ambrose, *De mysteriis* IX, 52 (CSEL 73:112).

9. Ambrose, *De sacramentis* IV, 4 (SC 25:82).

Furthermore, what happens when the consecratory formula is pronounced reflects the events themselves of the life of Jesus. Indeed, the *parallel between the Eucharist and the incarnation* is a commonplace in patristic writings.[10] We find this already in St. Justin Martyr: just as the Word took on flesh and blood when he was born among us, so too in the Eucharist the words of the prayer pronounced by the minister transform the bread and wine into the body and blood of Jesus. Therefore, when we eat and drink this food, our body is nourished by immortality, for it participates in the immortal flesh of Jesus.[11] In the Eucharistic rite, then, we see the life of Christ condensed as though in a compendium: his coming from the Father when he became incarnate and his return to the Father when he rose from the dead. Therefore Jesus instituted the sacrament not only inasmuch as he gave an order for the rite to go into effect, but rather because the rite makes present the same mystery of the Word made flesh and of his passage through the earth to lead us on high.[12]

And not only that: the Eucharist, by associating us with the life of Christ, also introduces us into his divine mystery. Given that the Eucharist makes present the Son of God, who feeds continually on the Father, *to eat it is to receive the paternal food, that is, to participate in the eternal generation of the Son*.[13] In this way we delve into the biblical data explored above (chapter 2). For, indeed, the Eucharist of Jesus is his *todah*, his thanksgiving to the Father for having received all gifts from him; still, such an immense gratitude, corresponding to such blessings, reveals that we are in the presence of the only-begotten Son, who came to mold his filiation in our flesh. Hence in the Eucharist we can become sons in the Son, fed by the bread that comes from the mouth of God.

We can then confirm that the Church Fathers understand the Eucharist in close union with Christology. And it could not be otherwise: how could the mystery of Christ's person and the mystery of the sacrament that contains the body and blood of Christ not shed light on each other? From this connection a "Eucharistic Christology" can be developed. It should be

10. Johannes Betz, "La Eucaristía, misterio central," in *Mysterium Salutis*, 4.2:186–310, at 210.

11. Justin Martyr, *1 Apologiae* 66 (PTS 38:127; ANF 1:185b).

12. Also Irenaeus of Lyons, *Adversus haereses* IV, 18, 5 (SC 100:117; ANF 1:486a): "Eucharistia, ex duabus rebus constans, terrena et caelesti" (the Eucharist, consisting of two realities, earthly and heavenly), in other words, in the Eucharist there is an earthly reality, the species of bread and wine, and another heavenly reality, the risen body of Jesus. See Dominic J. Unger, "The Holy Eucharist according to St. Irenaeus," *Laurentianum* 20 (1979): 103–64, at 127.

13. Manuel Aroztegi, "Eucaristía y filiación en las teologías de los siglos II y III," in P. de Navascués et al., *Filiación: Cultura pagana, religión de Israel, orígenes del cristianismo* (Madrid: Trotta, 2012), 4:257–89, at 289: "In the second and third centuries there was a conviction that the divine generation that takes place in Christ in the bosom of the Trinity occurs in those who share in the Eucharist."

noted, as we ponder the various opinions that the Fathers support concerning the mystery of Jesus, that when it comes to speaking about the Eucharist they usually agree on one central point: their interest in the flesh of Christ as the key of human salvation. St. Cyril of Alexandria summarizes the common opinion when he calls the Eucharist "Christ in us by means of his sacred flesh."[14]

Furthermore: because it contains the entire life of Christ, *the Eucharist also takes up all of history, which is recapitulated by him, starting with the history of Israel*. For Melito of Sardis, for example, Jesus was present in the Old Testament not only as the preexisting Son, but also because the flesh that he would offer was being prepared then, in the different sacrifices and libations.[15] We speak, therefore, about the "mystery of [Israel's] Passover ... in the Lord's body."[16] St. Ambrose, too, when he says that Christ is the author of the sacraments, is referring not only to the Eucharist, but also to the earlier sacrifices that prefigured it. And he asserts that the Christian sacrament is older than the ones celebrated by Abraham and Moses.[17]

Finally, *the Eucharist expands Christ's life to the era of the church*, between his ascension and his second coming. After the flesh of Jesus goes up to heaven, it is presented before the Father as the first-fruits of humanity, so as to fill the whole cosmos from its place with God: this is why it can take possession of sensible matter in the sacraments. This bodily presence of Jesus on the altar is the seed that generates the church as the communion of those who share not only the same heart and mind but also the same flesh, insofar as they are born as members of a new family. The patristic vision of humanity as a whole into which Christ kneads himself when he becomes incarnate, springs from this Eucharistic terrain.[18]

To summarize: *according to the Church Fathers, the Eucharist is instituted when the flesh of Christ is shaped as glorious flesh that joins with the flesh of believers so as to communicate its life to them.* The preparations for this institution begin with the creation of the world and run through the Old Testa-

14. Gaspar Hernández Peludo, "Cristo en nosotros por medio de su santa carne: Trasfondo cristológico y pneumatológico de la doctrina eucarística en Cirilo de Alejandría," in *Sacramentos: historia, teología, pastoral, celebración: homenaje al prof. Dionisio Borobio*, ed. José María de Miguel González (Salamanca: Biblioteca Salmaticensis, 2009), 225–54.

15. Melito, *Peri Pascha* 31–32 (SC 123:76): "Tell me, angel, what frightened you [during the Jewish Passover]? ... The death of the lamb or the prefiguration of the Lord?"

16. Melito, *Peri Pascha* 56 (SC 123:91).

17. Ambrose, *De sacramentis* IV 3, 8–12 (SC 25:81).

18. Emile Mersch, *Le corps mystique du Christ: Études de théologie historique* (Paris: Desclée, 1936), 418–34; José Granados, "Los sacramentos y el don del Espíritu sobre Jesús," in *La unción de la gloria: en el Espíritu, por Cristo, al Padre: Homenaje a Mons. Luis F. Ladaria, SJ*, ed. Manuel Aroztegi et al. (Madrid: Biblioteca de autores cristianos, 2014), 113–42.

ment, from generation to generation, so as to converge with the life of Jesus. Then, during his path on earth, his flesh is slowly shaped by the Spirit until it contains the fullness of communion with God and mankind and ascends into heaven "that he might fill all things" (Eph 4:10). The Eucharistic body is thus forged, which can be called a "narrative body," for it recapitulates the whole story of Christ and expands during the era of the church until it embraces the remotest human spaces.

Baptism, Birth into the Body of Jesus

The preferred image used from antiquity to speak about baptism is birth.[19] Jesus spoke about it with Nicodemus (Jn 3:5); St. Paul assumes it when he presents baptism as the reception of a new body, conformed to Christ's risen body (Rom 6:3–14; see also Ti 3:5: "the washing of regeneration"). Based on this, the Fathers focused not only on the concrete event of the celebration but also on the new being that is received, which embraces the believer's entire life: baptism imprints on a human being a "seal" that makes him like Jesus, and the believer is called to guard it.[20] Taking an image from Origen, we can say that the river in which we baptize, our Jordan, is Jesus himself: baptism plunges us into his life and introduces us into his narrative.[21] Let us study this connection of baptism with the person of Jesus.

Jesus' baptism in the flesh, the foundation of Christian baptism The first clue linking baptism to Jesus is given to us by the mystery of the Jordan. The Christian's birth is preceded by a new birth of Christ who, in order to institute baptism, performed it first on himself. Clement of Alexandria presents the episode as a model of the baptismal liturgy, with its various stages: we are submerged, we are illumined, we are anointed when we come out of the water, and we then receive the fullness of the Spirit.[22]

19. See, among many other authors, Theophilus of Antioch, *Ad Autolycum* II, 16 (SC 20:141): "God blessed the creatures born of the water, because one day men would be regenerated by water"; Pseudo-Barnabas, *Epistolae* VI, 13–15 (SC 172:127): "born again, we received hearts of flesh so as to enter into the promised land inaugurated by the risen Lord"; *Epistolae* XVI, 8 (SC 172:193): "we are new creatures, recreated from the foundations up"; Irenaeus, *Epideixis* 3 (SC 406:89): "This baptism is the seal of eternal life and of the new birth for God"; *Epideixis* 7 (SC 406:92): "the baptism of our new birth"; Augustine, *Sermo* 216, 8 (PL 38:1081).

20. See, for example, Irenaeus, *Epideixis* 3 (SC 406:89): "the seal and the new birth for God"; *Epideixis* 100 (SC 406:220): "the three articles of our seal"; Peter-Ben Smit, "The reception of the Truth at Baptism and the Church as Epistemological Principle in the Work of Irenaeus of Lyons," *Ecclesiology* 7 (2011): 354–73.

21. Origen, *Homilies on Luke* XXI, 4 (SC 87:294).

22. Clement of Alexandria, *Paedagogus* I, 6, 26, 1–2 (SC 70:159; ANF 2:215b): "The same also takes place in our case, whose exemplar Christ became. Being baptized, we are illuminated; illuminated, we become sons; being made sons, we are made perfect; being made perfect, we are made immortal. . . . This work is variously called grace, and illumination, and perfection, and washing." Antonio Orbe, "Teología bautismal de Clemente Alejandrino," *Gregorianum* 36, no. 3 (1955): 410–48.

The fact that Christ was baptized is not due to a sort of humility which necessarily would have been false. At least for the Church Fathers of the Asiatic school, the event is rooted instead in the very truth of Jesus who, as Son, receives everything from the Father. Having taken on flesh, the place *par excellence* of receptivity and openness to God's hands, this flesh requires, for its progressive divinization, that the Spirit be poured out upon it.[23] Moreover, the transformation that the Spirit works in Christ during his mortal life, because it refers to the flesh that he has in common with all mankind, would entail a renewal of those who believe in Jesus. As St. Justin says: Christ is born in the Jordan "for men"; that is to say, he is born so that we can all be reborn as children of God.[24]

The water of baptism is conformed to the flesh of Jesus so as to give us a share of his Spirit The link between Jesus' baptism and ours comes about through water. The Fathers commonly teach that Christ transforms the waters when he touches the Jordan with his flesh. Thus, according to Ignatius of Antioch, the Lord is baptized in order to sanctify the water,[25] while Tertullian adds that his flesh communicated his purity to the waters.[26] He did not come to be washed, St. Ambrose states, but rather to wash the waters themselves, so that they might obtain the right to baptism.[27] *Everything happens as though the water were configured with the flesh of Jesus so as then to assimilate Christians to him when it touches them.*

What does the touch of this water communicate to us? Its waves transmit in turn the sanctity that Christ's flesh transmitted to them. Hence Tertullian can describe the baptismal water as filled with the Spirit, who acts in it and communicates himself through it.[28] As we are incorporated by the

23. Ladaria, *Jesús y el Espíritu.*

24. Justin Martyr, *Dialogus cum Tryphone* 88, 8 (PTS 47:224; ANF 1:244a). I do not follow here the variant put in by the editor.

25. Ignatius of Antioch, *Ad Ephesians* XVIII, 2 (SC 10:86; ANF 1:57).

26. Tertullian, *De pudicitia* VI, 15–16 (CCL 2:60): "[caro] quae munditias suas aquis traderet" ([flesh] that imparted its purity to the waters). See also Tertullian, *Adv. Iud.* VIII, 14 (CCL 2:106): "sanctificante aquas in suo baptismate" (in his baptism that sanctifies the waters).

27. Ambrose, *Expositio evangelii secundum Lucam* II, 83 (CCL 14:1124): "Baptizatus est ergo Dominus, non mundari volens, sed mundare aquas; ut ablutae per carnem Christi, quae peccatum non cognouit, baptismatis jus haberent." See also Chromatius de Aquileia, *In Matthaeum* XII, 4 (CCL 9A:32): "numquam enim aquae baptismi purgare peccata credentium potuissent, nisi tactu dominici corporis sanctificatae fuissent" (for the waters of baptism could never wash away the sins of believers unless they had been sanctified by the touch of the Lord's body).

28. Tertullian, *De Baptismo* IV, 2 (CCL 1:278; ANF 3:671a); also Justin Martyr, *Dialogus cum Tryphone* 86–88 (PTS 47:219–24; ANF 1:242a–244a); Irenaeus of Lyons, *Adversus haereses* III, 17, 1 (SC 211:328–30; ANF 1:444b).

water into the flesh of Jesus, we receive the same Spirit who, after descending upon Christ, now dwells in his flesh.

Complete institution of baptism: from the Jordan to Easter Although it is certain, as I said, that the foundation of Christian baptism lies in the baptism of Jesus, it should be noted that the latter frames the master's entire life and especially his death and resurrection. Indeed, the baptism in the Jordan, as the descent of the Spirit on the flesh of Christ, contains the code of the entire route traveled by Jesus, which consists of a series of anointings until the definitive Paschal anointing, when his flesh proves to be full of the Spirit of life. Therefore those who see the institution of baptism at the Jordan or on Golgotha are not in opposition. St. Ignatius of Antioch already associates the two moments when he says that Christ purified the waters with his passion.[29] And St. Justin, describing baptism, surveys the cross present above the waters.[30]

This explains why the baptismal liturgy, besides reproducing the Lord's baptism, also represents his burial and return to life. St. Gregory of Nyssa explains the imitation or *mimesis* that occurs in the liturgy through the rite: the passion and resurrection of Jesus is reproduced so that the baptized person can escape with him from the labyrinth of death.[31] St. Basil expresses himself along the same lines, using the image of an athlete who, after completing one course at the stadium, catches his breath before starting the next one; thus Christ paused in death, so as then to rise again.[32] St. Leo the Great, for his part, teaches that Jesus instituted baptism on the cross,[33] and therefore only after Easter he would explain to the disciples how to baptize.[34]

The Christian's flesh is born to the flesh of Jesus What are the effects of baptism in the believer who receives it? The Christian's flesh, through the water, is touched by the flesh of Jesus and is thus grafted onto his body. This

29. Ignatius of Antioch, *Ad Ephesians* XVIII, 2 (SC 10:86; ANF 1:57).

30. Justin Martyr, *Dialogus cum Thryphone* 86 (PTS 47:219–20; ANF 1:242b); also Tertullian, *De baptismo* XI, 4 (CCL 1:286; ANF 3:674a): "Quia tunc utique a discentibus dari non poterat [baptismus] utpote nondum adimpleta gloria Domini nec instructa efficacia lavacri per passionem et resurrectionem, quia nec mors nostra dissolvi posset nisi Domini passione nec vita restitui sine resurrectione ipsius" ([baptism] at that time, of course, could not be given by his disciples, inasmuch as the glory of the Lord had not yet been fully attained, nor the efficacy of the font established through the passion and the resurrection; because neither can our death see dissolution except by the Lord's passion, nor our life be restored without His resurrection).

31. Gregory of Nyssa, *The Great Catechism* XXXV (SC 453:302–6; NPNF-II 5:502b–503a).

32. Basil, *Treatise on the Holy Spirit* XV (SC 17:169–70; NPNF-II 8:21b).

33. Leo the Great, *Epistolae* XVI, 7 (PL 54:701; NPNF-II 12:29b).

34. Ibid., 4 (PL 54:699; NPNF-II 12:28b).

is why we speak about a new birth: one is born to a new flesh, which is the flesh of Christ who died and rose again. It is surprising that authors with very different anthropologies share this perspective, as if they all conformed their thought to the cultic practice. St. Hilary of Poitiers, for example, tells us that baptism regenerates us in a new body that is conformed to the body of the glorified Christ.[35] And according to St. Gregory of Nyssa, in baptism, through the flesh that was assumed and deified by the Word, and through the water, which resembles the earth from which our flesh was molded, this same flesh is saved.[36] St. Leo the Great, for his part, stated the maxim: "the body of the regenerated Christian becomes the flesh of the Crucified" (*corpus regenerati fiat caro Crucifixi*).[37]

New relations in the church open up to the believer when he is associated with the body of Jesus.[38] According to St. Leo the Great, what God conferred on Mary so that Jesus might be born in the Spirit he also conferred on the waters of baptism so as to illuminate believers.[39] The water, therefore, which as we already know is associated with the flesh of Christ, is linked also to a maternal womb, the womb of the church, in which the believer is regenerated.[40]

To summarize, baptism in the Fathers is connected directly with Jesus, for it makes us participate in his life in the flesh. Contact with his body, through the mediation of the water, generates in us a new body, open to the outpouring of the Spirit. The church takes part in this corporeal birth; her maternal body generates and nourishes through the waters of baptism.

The Sacramental Economy, Rooted in the Flesh of Jesus

The Eucharist, therefore, contains the flesh of Christ. Baptism, for its part, engenders us to this flesh. Just as the water serves to knead the flour that will be baked into bread, so too, St. Irenaeus points out, when we are moistened

35. Hilary of Poitiers, *De Trinitate* VIII, 7 (CCL 62A:320; NPNF-II 9:139b): "unum sunt in eiusdem regeneratione naturae" (they are one by regeneration into the same nature).

36. Gregory of Nyssa, *The Great Catechism* XXXV (SC 453:303; NPNF-II 5:502a–b).

37. Leo the Great, *Sermo* LXIII (CCL 138A:114; NPNF-II 12:177a): "quaedam species mortis et quaedam similitudo resurrectionis interuenit, ut susceptus a christo christumque suscipiens non idem sit post lauacrum qui ante baptismum fuit, sed *corpus regenerati fiat caro Crucifixi*" (all this is a sort of dying and rising again, whereby he that is received by Christ and receives Christ is not the same after as he was before he came to the font, for the body of the regenerate becomes the flesh of the Crucified).

38. Tertullian, *De Baptismo* XX, 5 (CCL 1:295; ANF 3:679b).

39. Leo the Great, *Sermo* XXV: "dedit aquae quod dedit matri" (he gave to the water what he gave to the mother) (CCL 138:130). See also *Sermo* XXIV: "the same Holy Spirit fills the font, Who filled the Virgin" (NPNF-II 12:135b).

40. Augustine, *Sermo* CXIX (PL 38:674): "vulva matris, aqua baptismatis" (the water of baptism is the mother's womb).

by baptism we form the one lump of dough of the Eucharistic body.[41] Baptism and Eucharist allow an initial general outlook on the sacraments: they cause the human being to take root in the flesh of Jesus. Recall that the word *mysterion* (and *sacramentum*, among the Latin Fathers) is used in patristic writings to describe both the entire salvific work of Jesus upon the flesh, and also the liturgical rite. This is because the two are very closely linked, as St. Leo the Great explains: "that which was visible of our Redeemer has passed into the sacraments."[42]

What has been said is recapitulated in the patristic exegesis of John 19:34: from Jesus' side flowed blood and water.[43] The Fathers, following St. John, interpret this as an allusion to the sacraments. Tertullian applies the passage to the two baptisms, of water and of blood (martyrdom).[44] St. Augustine includes the Eucharist also: "from whence have flowed forth *the sacraments* of the Church."[45] One of his followers, Quodvultdeus, later explained: "immediately blood and water flowed out, the two twin sacraments of the Church. The water, in which the Bride is cleansed; the blood, in which she finds her dowry."[46] The sacraments flow from the Paschal mystery of Jesus at the precise moment when the church is formed.[47]

From this source the other sacraments flow too. In the patristic literature *confirmation* appears as closely united with baptism, for it contains a further gift of the Spirit that perfects the baptismal seal.[48] As for *penance*, it is understood as an arduous return to the vital coordinates of baptism; hence Origen associates it also with the water and blood that flowed from the pierced side: "All purification of sins, even that which is sought through Penance, requires the aid of him from whose side flowed water and blood."[49]

41. Irenaeus of Lyons, *Adversus haereses* III, 17, 2 (SC 211:332; ANF 1:444b–445a).

42. [Translated from Latin.] Leo the Great, *Sermo* LXXIV, 2 (CCL 138A:42; NPNF-II 12:188b): "Quod itaque redemptoris nostri conspicuum fuit, in sacramenta transiuit."

43. Alban A. Maguire, *Blood and Water: The Wounded Side of Christ in Early Christian Literature*, Studies in Sacred Theology 108 (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1956), 18–167; Edward Malatesta, "Blood and Water from the Pierced Side of Christ," in *Segni e Sacramenti nel Vangelo di Giovanni*, ed. Pius-Ramon Tragan (Rome: Anselmiana, 1977), 164–81; Sebastian Brock, "The Mysteries Hidden in the Side of Christ," *Sobornost* 7, no. 6 (1978): 462–72.

44. Tertullian, *De baptismo* XVI, 1 (CCL 1:290; ANF 3:677a).

45. Augustine, *In Iohannis* CXX, 2 (CCL 36:661; NPNF-I 7:434b).

46. Quodvultdeus, *De symbolo* I, 6 (CCL 60:16).

47. Leo the Great, *Epistolae* XVI, 4 (PL 54:699; NPNF-II 12:28a–b).

48. Burkhard Neunheuser and Patricio de Navascués, "Confermazione," in *Nuovo Dizionario Patristico e delle Antichità Cristiane*, edited by A. di Berardino (Milan: Marietti, 2006), 1:1150–54.

49. Origen, *Homilies on Leviticus* VIII, 10 (Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte [hereafter GCS] 29:411; SC 287:50); Isidore, *De ecclesiasticis officiis* II, 25, 3 (PL 83:820); on Origen, see Karl Rahner, "La doctrine d'Origène sur la Pénitence," *Recherches de science religieuse* 37, no. 1 (1950): 47–97, 252–86, 422–56, where he observes the connection between the penitential rite and the baptismal catechumenate.

In the same way, the consideration of *matrimony* revolves around John 19:34, where the Fathers contemplate the mystery of the new Eve, built up from the side of the new Adam. This sacrament contains, therefore, the creaturely language of the body of man and woman, a language that Jesus takes up in order to strengthen it; and it points to the newness of the Eucharistic body, the spousal union between Christ and his church. The ministerial *priesthood*, for its part, is also linked to the spousal body of the Eucharist, for in the ordained minister Christ makes himself present to his church as her head and origin. St. Ignatius of Antioch already saw the image of Jesus in the bishop, as the source of Eucharistic unity for the church.[50] St. Augustine, for his part, later associated matrimony and holy orders with baptism, grouping them together with the term *sacramentum* in its classical sense of a sacred bond. This is because the three rites conform the person to Christ with a unity that remains firm even if we are unfaithful to him.[51]

To summarize, we can conclude: (1) the Fathers are intent on emphasizing the *connection of the sacraments with Christ's life in the flesh.* Rather than focusing on particular gestures or words, they contemplate the whole existence of Jesus in the flesh as the moment of institution. Using a sentence by St. Augustine we can say: "Christ is the life of all the sacraments."[52] (2) Originated by the flesh of Jesus, the sacraments are moreover *the expansion of his bodily presence throughout history.* They are testimony that the life of the Lord confers unity on all time, from creation until the end of the world: he already acted in the ancient sacrifices and, after ascending into heaven, continues to offer himself in his church. (3) *The center is in the Eucharist and in baptism*, which more evidently flow from his side; from them we understand how the rest of the sacraments conform us to the flesh of Christ.

Christ, Author and Cause of the Sacraments: Medieval Theology

The fact that the sacraments are rooted in Christ remained central to theological reflection during the Middle Ages. This is confirmed by the outline that Peter Lombard adopted for his *Sentences*, which would also serve as the

50. Ignatius of Antioch, *Ad Smyrneans* VIII, 2 (SC 10:162; ANF 1:89–90); *Ad Magnesians* VII, 1–2 (SC 10:100; ANF 1:62).

51. Augustine, *De nuptiis* I, 10, 11 (CSEL 42:223), where baptism and matrimony are associated and the bond is compared with the character; *De bono coniugali* XXIV, 32 (CSEL 41:226–27) for the connection between matrimony and holy orders; in *De baptismo* I, 1, 2 (CSEL 51:146) relations between baptism and holy orders appear.

52. Augustine, *Sermo* X, 2 (CCL 41:2): "[Christus] qui omnium sacramentorum vita est"; the context is a discussion of circumcision.

basis for his successors: the explanation of the sacraments follows Christology, because they are medicines of the Good Samaritan.[53] Moreover, in the words of Hugh of St. Victor, Jesus is the sacrament *par excellence*: "sacrament of the sacraments."[54]

The continuity with the patristic era is evident in two other respects. In the first place, the Eucharist, in which Jesus himself is made present in the flesh, continues to exercise a gravitational force that makes the other sacraments revolve around it. Through the Eucharistic prism, as we will see (chapter 9), the main concepts of medieval sacramental theology are forged.

In the second place, the sacraments extend also, and with the very same breadth of outlook, to the entire *historia salutis*, which is recapitulated in the Savior: the old covenant had sacraments and the new covenant has sacraments. Certainly, the latter spring from Christ, like the river that flows from a source, making present his action among the faithful. But the signs of the old covenant too are connected with Jesus, for they arouse faith in the future Messiah and, given that they take up created reality, they rely on the firstborn Son in whom all things were made. This outlook would allow theologians to describe the institution of the sacraments dynamically, taking into account the course of the ages.

What new ideas does the medieval period contribute to this topic? It begins the task of seeking, for each sacrament, the concrete moment in which Jesus established it. This concern, which is less present in the Fathers, arises together with the gradual development of a generic concept of sacrament that is applicable to all seven. From this emerge the first difficulties, as with some sacraments it is not easy to identify the passages that corroborate their institution by Jesus. The Middle Ages saw two different solutions, which we can study in their most highly developed forms in the works of St. Bonaventure and St. Thomas Aquinas.

St. Bonaventure and the Gradual Institution of the Sacraments

St. Bonaventure closely follows the conclusions of Alexander of Hales, one of the first theologians to wonder whether all the sacraments come from Christ.[55] Alexander maintained that the ultimate authority (*auctoritas*) to

53. Peter Lombard, *Sent.* III, *Incipit* (SpBon 5:23).

54. Hugh of St. Victor, *Sententiae de divinitate* II, ed. A. M. Piazzoni, *Studi Medievali* 23 (1982): 912–55, at 921.

55. Alexander of Hales, *Summa* IV, q. 1, m. 3, a. 4; q. 5, m. 2–3; q. 9, m. 1, and *Glossa in quatuor libros Sententiarum* IV, d. 7, n. 1, in Bibliotheca Franciscana Scholastica Medii Aevi [hereafter BFSMA] XV (Quaracchi, 1957), 129; on the institution of the sacraments in Alexander of Hales, see E. Guillaume, "De institutione sacramentorum et speciatim confirmationis juxta Alexandrum Halensem," *Antonianum* 2 (1927): 437–68; Joseph Bittremieux, "L'institution des sacraments d'après Alexandre de Hales," *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 9 (1932): 234–51; Franz Scholz, *Die Lehre von der Einsetzung der Sakramente nach Alexander von Hales* (Breslavia: Franke, 1940).

institute a sacrament belongs to God, for he alone gives grace. At the same time he explained: God can institute a sacrament through human ministry (*ministerium*) and did so throughout salvation history, acting for example through Moses and the apostles. Christ's role is unique because he is at the same time God and man: he has *auctoritas* and also performs a *ministerium*; his, moreover, is a unique ministry from which the other ministers derive their power. The institution of the sacraments will unfold, therefore, in distinct phases, with a distinct intervention of Christ in each one of them. Hence, if Alexander speaks about the institution of any sacrament by the apostles (like confirmation or extreme unction), he always does so based on the central ministry of Jesus.

St. Bonaventure adopts the view of his master and enumerates three sacramental ages: the time of nature, the time of the written Law, and the time of the Gospel.[56] Thus we can distinguish one sacrament from another and their gradated relation with Jesus. First, there are *sacraments of nature, common to the Old and the New Law*. These are matrimony, the union of a man and a woman for the purpose of generating children, and penance, the natural ability of the sinner to repent and turn to God, which had its origin when the Lord said to Adam, "Where are you?" These sacraments, instituted from the beginning by the creator, were then confirmed and approved by Jesus, who furthermore brought them to maturity: with him matrimony proves to be perfectly indissoluble; penance is perfected with auricular confession.

There are also *intermediate sacraments* which run through salvation history. These were anticipated by the figures of the Old Testament and, with the arrival of the Gospel, were instituted by Jesus. These include baptism, the Eucharist, and holy orders. Within the institution by Christ, Bonaventure distinguishes various phases, which extend into the time of the church. Thus, for example, Jesus himself *suggested* baptism (when he was baptized by John and in his conversation with Nicodemus); *instituted* it (for Jesus himself baptized through his disciples); and *confirmed* it (when he had risen and sent his disciples to baptize).[57]

Finally, there are sacraments of the new era, which have no figures in the Old Testament because they are proper to the outpouring of the Spir-

56. Bonaventure, *In IV Sent.*, d. 2, a. 1, q. 1 (Quaracchi 4:49): "Tempora legis naturae, legis scriptae et Evangelii conveniunt institutioni Sacramentorum, tamen secundum magis et minus"; d. 23, a. 1, q. 2 (Quaracchi 4:591); Bittremieux, "L'institution des Sacraments."

57. Bonaventure, *In IV Sent.*, d. 3, p. 2, a. 1, q. 1 (Quaracchi 4:77–78).

it, which occurred only after Easter. These include confirmation, in which we are anointed as soldiers (for combat); and the anointing of the sick, in which we are anointed as kings (to enter into the Kingdom of God). In these two cases, St. Bonaventure, following Alexander of Hales, says that Christ *suggests* the sacraments, but the Holy Spirit *institutes* them by means of the apostles. And from this perspective he defends the thesis that confirmation and extreme unction were established by the church, as there are no passages that corroborate that they came directly from Jesus.

Later on the Council of Trent would define that the seven sacraments were instituted by Christ.[58] Does this mean that St. Bonaventure's opinion is rejected? Certainly not, because Trent did not wish to settle legitimate debates between the schools, as we will see later.[59] In reality, when we evaluate the position of the Seraphic Doctor we must take into account the fact that in his day the theological vocabulary—the precise scope of terms such as "institute" or "promulgate"—was not yet fixed. In fact, in order to be able to speak about institution Bonaventure demands the presence of all the elements necessary to confect the sacraments—the matter and form of the hylomorphic theory—which from the outset makes it impracticable to trace several of them back to Jesus.

In any case, the learned Franciscan stated that confirmation and extreme unction were at least "suggested" by Christ, thus anchoring all the sacraments in the life of the Lord.[60] Moreover in his opinion the Spirit, when he institutes the sacraments, always works together with Jesus, making explicit what was already contained in the master's words and deeds. The institution of confirmation, for example, thus proves to be the work of the Holy Spirit, who continues in the church the task of Jesus even after the apostles' death.[61] Then, as the Spirit is a doctor too, he can institute sacraments; but it should not be supposed that there are two who institute them, for Christ and the Spirit of Christ do not add up to two distinct legislators, but rather one and the same.[62]

In short the fact that there are sacraments that were not instituted by

58. DH 1601.

59. The question, moreover, was introduced at the Council based on the intervention of a Franciscan friar, Richard de Mans; it would have been strange for him to seek the condemnation of two famous Doctors of his order. Ferdinand Cavallera, "Le décret du Concile de Trente sur les sacraments en général," *Bulletin de littérature ecclésiastique* 6 (1914): 401–25, at 416.

60. Bonaventure, *In IV Sent.*, d. 23, a. 1, q. 2, co. (Quaracchi 4:591): "haec duo sacramenta [confirmatio, extrema unctio] a Christo fuerunt insinuata, sed post a Spiritu Sancto fuerunt instituta" (these two sacraments were suggested by Christ but were later instituted by the Holy Spirit).

61. Bonaventure, *In IV Sent.*, d. 7, a. 1, q. 1 (Quaracchi 4:164); q. 2 (Quaracchi 4:166).

62. Ibid., d. 23, q. 1, a. 2, ad 1 (Quaracchi 4:592).

Jesus does not mean that they are unrelated to Jesus. Rather than focus on the term "institution," therefore, it is necessary to look at the connection of the sacraments with Christ as their source, a link affirmed by St. Bonaventure which is, as we will see, what the Council of Trent later sought to save. On the other hand, we can note two advantages of the Bonaventurian approach: his view of the sacraments as a leitmotif of salvation history; and the free space that it opens up for the Holy Spirit, through whom Christ continues to be active in the church. Insisting on these points does not diminish the centrality of Jesus, whose power is displayed in the whole salvific economy and always through the Spirit. To prove this, it is enough to take a look at the summary of sacramental theology that Bonaventure offers in his *Breviloquium*. There every statement, either about the sacraments in general or about one of the seven, is explained in reference to Christ. The thirteen questions posed receive as their first response, thirteen times, this refrain or a similar one: "because the principle that heals us, that is, the Incarnate Word."[63]

St. Thomas Aquinas: Institution from the Space of the Body of Christ

St. Thomas contributes a new approach, the merit of which lies in his having related the incarnation closely to the sacraments. From this perspective he supports his thesis: Christ instituted by himself the seven of the New Law that are recognized by the church.[64] I am interested, above all, in the theological vision on which Aquinas bases his teaching. Christ institutes the sacraments, in the first place, as God, with authority to communicate divine grace—something that is impossible for any human being. Following a common terminology, St. Thomas speaks about a power of authority (*potestas auctoritatis*) that is proper to the author or origin.[65]

To this he adds that Christ institutes the sacraments as man also. That is to say, God communicates grace through the human ministry of his Son, for this is a grace that comes to save what is human. He, by his life on earth, particularly in his passion and resurrection, made himself the channel of sanctity and justice for mankind. Therefore his mysteries in the flesh are not only the meritorious cause but also the instrumental cause of our salvation, as the brush is for the portrait painter.[66] We have, then, a second power of

63. Bonaventure, *Breviloquium*, p. 6, c. 1 (Quaracchi 5:265); p. 6, c. 2 (Quaracchi 5:266).

64. Thomas Aquinas, *ST* III, q. 64.

65. On the institution of the sacraments in St. Thomas, see Bertrand-Marie Perrin, *L'institution des sacraments dans Le commentaire des sentences de saint Thomas* (Paris: Parole et Silence, 2008).

66. Humbert Bouëssé, "La causalité efficiente instrumentale de l'Humanité du Christ et des sa-

Jesus, the power of ministry (*potestas ministerii*) which he gains from having established his own body as the principal instrument of salvation.[67] Every sacrament proves to be, therefore, a prolongation of Jesus' humanity, in such a way that he can be conformed with men in the various situations that they go through. Christ associated the material of the sacraments to his own flesh so as to touch us by means of them.[68] Here we find the foundation of the classic principle: *sacramenta sunt propter homines*, the sacraments are for human beings.

Thus it is understood that this ministry of Christ to institute sacraments is quite unique, not comparable to other ministries like that of Moses or that of the apostles. For this reason St. Thomas explains that Jesus' power of ministry is a *potestas excellentiae*: it far exceeds the power that others possess. For, in the first place, he was the only one who did not need rites in order to communicate grace: his humanity, and particularly his passion, is the root of all sacramental efficacy.[69] Moreover, to him alone belonged the power to institute new sacraments by associating a sign with the bestowal of a grace.[70] Finally, it was reserved to Jesus to institute sacraments in his own name, given that they work through faith in Christ's passion.[71]

According to St. Thomas, Jesus in principle could have communicated this "power of excellence" to others. There might have been, then, for example, a baptism "in the name of Paul," or a church capable of increasing the number of the sacraments. But the Lord did not act in that way: the power of excellence is, using an Augustinian expression on which there was much medieval commentary, a power "that Christ could have given but did not give."[72] He decided not do so, according to Aquinas, in order to manifest

crements chrétiens," *Revue Thomiste* 39 (1934): 370–93; Joseph Lécuyer, "La causalité efficiente des mystères du Christ selon saint Thomas," *Doctor Communis* 6 (1953): 91–120.

67. *ST* III, q. 62, a. 5, ad 1.

68. Ibid., q. 66, a. 3, ad 4: "virtus Christi derivata est ad omnem aquam" (Christ's power flowed into all waters). See also Aquinas, *Commentum in quatuor libros sententiarum* (Paris: Parma, 1929–47) [hereafter Parma], d. 26, q. 2, a. 3, ad 1 (7:922): "sicut aqua baptismi habet quod corpus tangat et cor abluat ex tactu carnis Christi" (just as the water of baptism has from the touch of Christ's flesh something with which to touch the body and to wash the soul).

69. *ST* III, q. 62, a. 5: "utrum talis virtus in sacramentis derivetur a passione Christi ... ex latere Christi dormientis fluxerunt sacramenta per quae salvata est Ecclesia" (Whether the sacraments of the New Law derive their power from Christ's passion? ... From the side of Christ asleep on the cross flowed the sacraments which brought salvation to the Church).

70. Ibid., q. 72, a. 1, ad 1: "instituere novum sacramentum pertinet ad potestatem excellentiae, quae competit soli Christo" (The institution of a new sacrament belongs to the power of excellence, which belongs to Christ alone).

71. Ibid., q. 64, a. 3, co.

72. A. Landgraf, "Der frühscholastische Streit um die *potestas quam Christus potuit dare servis et non dedit*," *Gregorianum* 15, no. 4 (1934): 524–72; the reference is to Augustine, *In Iohannis* V, 11 (CCL 36:46; NPNF-1 7:35a).

more clearly the unity of salvation, so that divisions might not crop up in the church, as in the verse: "I belong to Apollo; I belong to Peter" (1 Cor 1:12).[73] For this reason Christ handed over to his followers only the power of ministry (*potestas ministerii*), by which they can administer the sacraments in the name of Jesus, but not institute them. To summarize: Christ possesses a *potestas auctoritatis* as God, and a *potestas ministerii* as man, a power that in him reaches a supreme degree and is therefore called *potestas excellentiae*; this includes the ability to institute sacraments, which is reserved to the Savior.[74]

Having offered this general theological framework, St. Thomas endeavors to ascertain on what occasion of his life Jesus instituted each sacrament. For there to be an institution it is necessary, Aquinas explains, not only for Christ to conform the sacrament to his humanity so as to enable it to be a source of grace, but also for him to transmit to the apostles the concrete rite that they have to celebrate. It is certain that sometimes words of Jesus in this regard are lacking, for example about confirmation or the anointing of the sick. St. Thomas then supposes that the master transmitted them to the apostles in private, and it was up to them to make them public by promulgating the sacrament. His syllogism on this point runs contrary to the one used by St. Bonaventure. The Seraphic Doctor argues: the reason why the words are not in the New Testament is because Jesus did not say them, for how could his followers have forgotten to write them down?[75] Aquinas reasons: even though the words are not found in the New Testament, Jesus must have said them, for how would they have dared to celebrate the sacrament without having sure support in the master's teaching?[76]

We must take into account the fact that Thomas is handling historical data that are not very precise; he thinks, for example, that confirmation was administered with the anointing of chrism from the apostolic age onward. Among other things he relied on the testimony of Dionysius the Areopagite, a fifth- or sixth-century author whom he supposed to be an immediate disciple of the apostles and a good witness, therefore, of their liturgical practices. This limited historical knowledge leads Thomas to think that Christ determined the details of each sacrament, even though there is no record of

73. *ST* III, q. 64, a. 4, ad 1.

74. Perrin, *L'institutions des sacrements*, 577–78.

75. Bonaventure, *In IV Sent.*, d. 7, a. 1, q. 1 (Quaracchi 4:164); d. 23, a. 1, q. 2 (Quaracchi 4:591).

76. Thomas Aquinas, *ST* III, q. 72, a. 4, ad 1: "Multa enim servabant Apostoli in sacramentorum collatione quae in Scripturis communiter propositis non sunt tradita" (For the apostles, in conferring the sacraments, observed many things which are not handed down in those scriptures that are in general use).

it in scripture, and to leave unexplained the evolution that history observes in some sacramental rites.

The richness of this perspective, in any case, lies in its having rooted the sacraments in the earthly actions of Jesus, which prefigure or already represent the sacramental event although they do not contain it in all its details.[77] Its weak point is that it required furthermore a complete determination of the rite (matter and form) on the part of Christ. It is true, on the other hand, that St. Thomas distinguishes the two aspects: the institution of the sacrament and the transmission of the complete rite. Thus, for example, baptism is instituted when Jesus is baptized in the Jordan, although he determines then neither the order of baptism nor the formula; or matrimony in the loving self-sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, although without an explicit teaching by the master in that hour about marriage. St. Thomas recognizes, moreover, that to institute a sacrament does not mean to celebrate it: Jesus instituted confirmation by "promising it," for it was administered by the apostles only after Pentecost.[78] Based on these facts it has been possible to establish a distinction, within the thought of Aquinas, between the *institution of the sacrament* (with an action of Jesus that represents the grace) and the *institution of the rite* in matter and form.[79] Later reflection would agree that Jesus performed the first; his role in the second, nevertheless, would need further explanations.

To summarize: the Middle Ages left us a broad framework in which to discover the relation of the sacraments to Christ. St. Bonaventure underscores the unity of all salvation history, in which God sowed the sacraments; and he sees the Spirit as the one who prolongs Jesus' action in the church. St. Thomas, for his part, takes as his basis a firm Christological principle centered in the incarnation and Christ's redemptive death; and he sees the sacraments as extensions of the Lord's humanity, rooted in his concrete life in the flesh—and therefore in concrete acts of the earthly Jesus—which allow him to associate us with himself. The two theologians share a key insight: the connection of all the sacraments with the life of Jesus. They also share a pending question: determining what it means "to institute," in other words, what elements necessarily have to proceed from Christ.

Moreover, although their answers are different, St. Thomas and St. Bonaventure ultimately rely on a common trust in the church, who determines whether a sacrament comes from Jesus, either because she preserves

77. Perrin, *L'institution des sacrements*, 584–86.
78. Thomas Aquinas, *ST* III, q. 72, a. 1, ad 1.
79. Perrin, *L'institution des sacraments*, 586–91.

the memory of Christ's words (St. Thomas), or because she prolongs his work (St. Bonaventure). These are precisely the principles that later would be called into question with the arrival of the Protestants, who as a result would deny that various sacraments proceed from Jesus and, therefore, are authentic. This will cause the interest to shift, in Catholic theology too, from the foundations of the sacrament in the life of Christ (the patristic and medieval perspective) to the search for the words and gestures of Jesus that legitimize the existence of the traditional set of seven.[80]

The Protestant Reformation and the Council of Trent

With the Protestant Reformation a new stage in the reflection on the sacraments begins.[81] A debate on the sacraments prompts Luther's denunciation of Rome going astray in sacramental matters and thus sending the church into a new Babylonian captivity. Here too, as in other points, the Reformer asserts his exclusive Christocentrism: by insisting excessively on the institution of the sacraments by Christ he would eliminate the role of the church and, with it, would deprive most of the seven of their basis in Jesus.

Luther: Expurgate the Sacraments Instituted by the Church

The fact on which Luther insists is traditional: that the sacraments are rooted in the Savior. Indeed, for him, if one wanted to follow the biblical language literally, one would have to speak only about one sacrament, Christ.[82] Moreover Luther shares a concern with St. Thomas: finding in scripture—interpreted however without the mediation of the church—explicit proof of the institution of the sacraments, which are, according to his perspective, signs associated with a promise of grace.[83] Based on this premise, Luther drastically reduces the set of seven: in the strict sense he accepts only baptism and the Eucharist; in the broad sense, penance as well.[84] What principles organize his reasoning?

80. Colombo, "Dove va la teologia," 697.
81. Josef Finkenzeller, *Die Lehre von den Sakramenten im allgemeinen: Von der Reformation bis zur Gegenwart* (Freiburg: Herder, 1981), 10–13.
82. Martin Luther, *Disputatio de fide infusa et acquisita* 16–17, in *Werke*, Weimarer Ausgabe (hereafter WA), 6:86: "Nullum sacramentorum septem in sacris literis nomine sacramenti censetur. Unum solum habent sacrae literae sacramentum, quod est ipse Christus Dominus" (None of the seven sacraments is mentioned in sacred scripture by the name of sacrament. The sacred scriptures have only one sacrament, which is Christ the Lord himself).
83. Thus Luther denies the sacramental character of extreme unction because it is not given to an apostle "sua auctoritate sacramentum instituere, id est, divinam promissionem cum adiuncto signo dare" (to institute a sacrament by his own authority, that is, to give a divine promise with a conjoined sign).
84. Luther, *On Genesis* (WA 9:349.1–5): "Matrimonium, unctio, Confirmatio non sunt

Luther judges everything in terms of the criterion of justification by faith: God saves us without any work on our part, if only we believe in his forgiveness. The sacraments too obey this logic: they are signs that promise salvation, by way of visible words so as to elicit faith.[85] For this reason, if these promises are not found on the lips of Christ, the only one who can guarantee them, they will be fictions rather than sacraments.

Moreover Luther denounces what he believes are the abuses of the church in regulating the rites. Therefore he insists that the only sacrament that can be accepted is one that with no doubt whatsoever is attested in scripture as coming from the master. As we have seen, medieval theologians resolved the problems about the institution of some sacraments by having recourse to the continuity between the work of Christ and that of the church. Based on the principle "Christ alone" and *sola Scriptura,* Luther, on the contrary, undermines the foundations that anchor the sacraments in Jesus.

To summarize, only two sacraments will be accepted, the ones for which there is irrefutable evidence in the words of the master: baptism and the Eucharist.[86] Based on this conviction, Luther demotes the other sacraments to sacramental rites. And he accuses the church not only of having invented novelties of which Jesus was not aware, but also of having eliminated things

sacramentalia signa, quae non habeant annexam promissionem. Ordo figmentum est" (Matrimony, extreme unction, Confirmation are not sacramental signs; they do not have a promise attached to them. Holy orders is a figment). *De captivitate babylonica* (WA 6:501.33): "Principio neganda mihi sunt septem sacramenta et tantum tria pro tempore ponenda, Baptismus, Poenitentia, Panis" (On principle I must deny that there are seven sacraments and reckon only three for the moment: Baptism, Penance, Bread). About priestly orders he goes so far as to say in *De captivitate babylonica* (WA 6:560.20–21): "Hoc sacramentum Ecclesia Christi ignorat, inventumque est ab Ecclesia Papae: non enim solum nullam habet promissionem gratiae ullibi positam, sed ne verbo quidem eius meminit totum novum testamentum" (Christ's Church knows nothing of this sacrament; it was invented by the Pope's Church: not only does it have no promise of grace made anywhere, but the whole New Testament says not even a word about it).

85. Luther, *De captivitate babylonica* (WA 6:550.19–20): "sacramenta servant credentes promissioni divinae" (sacraments preserve those who believe in the divine promise). In a letter to Spalatin (WA Briefwechsel, 1:594) he adds: "quod sacramentum non sit, nisi ubi expressa detur promissio divina, que fidem exerceat, cum sine verbo promittentis et fide suscipientis nihil possit nobis esse cum Deo negotii" (because it is not a sacrament unless an explicit divine promise is given somewhere, which is the object of faith, because without the word of the one who promises and the faith of the one who receives it there can be for us no dealing with God).

86. Luther accepts as actions of God: "Verbum Evangelii, Baptismum, eucharistiam" (The Word of the Gospel, Baptism, Eucharist) (WA 6:560); in the strict sense, in order for a sacrament to exist, a sign is required, which would lead him to exclude penance: "si rigide loqui volumus, tantum duo sunt in Ecclesia dei sacramenta, Baptismus et panis, cum in his solis et institutum divinitus signum et promissionem remissionis peccatorum videamus" (Strictly speaking, there are only two sacraments in God's Church, Baptism and the bread, because in them alone do we see both a divinely instituted sign and a promise of the forgiveness of sins). Penance is, definitively: "via ac reditus ad baptismum" (the way or a return to baptism; WA 6:572).

desired by him, for example, by denying communion under both species for the laity. What Christ established, he argues, must be maintained strictly, for "if we allow even one institution by Christ to be changed, then we annul all his other laws."[87]

To this we must add that Luther evolves in his view of the sacraments. He does so as a result of debates with other reformers who reduce them to a mere sign, denying the presence of Christ in the Eucharist and the necessity of baptism, or insisting that it could be repeated.[88] And in fact, if a sacrament is only a visible word, a divine call to a response of faith, what specific contribution does it make as opposed to preaching? To answer this question, Luther would come to accept the fact that a sacrament saves, not only because we believe in the promise that it contains, but because it was instituted (*quia institutum est*). This means that faith has to accept the concrete signs of water, bread, and wine inasmuch as they are willed by God and keep us from falling into subjectivism. The institution, from this perspective, proves to be decisive, not only in order to establish what rites are sacraments, but also to substantiate their salvific import.

The Response of Trent and of Later Theology

Trent counters, in the first place, the negation of various sacraments, the most serious point of the Lutheran challenge. In its Session VII, when it formulates various canons about the sacraments in general, the Council affirms that seven of them, no more and no less, were instituted by Christ, and it enumerates them.[89] The context is, just as in Luther's writings, the theme of justification, but now in order to affirm that it does not depend on faith alone: it comes about through the sacraments, it grows through the sacraments, and it is regained through the sacraments if it is lost. The doctrine about their institution by Jesus is reaffirmed next when some specific sacraments are discussed.[90]

Still, Luther had also denounced supposed abuses by the church in reg-

87. Luther, *De captivitate babylonica* (WA 6:503.13–15).

88. W. Schwab, "Luthers Ringen um das Sakrament," *Catholica* 32 (1978): 93–113; I will return to this point in chapter 10, below.

89. Council of Trent, Session VII, *Decree on the Sacraments*, canon 1 (DH 1601).

90. On the institution of holy orders, see DH 1773; on extreme unction, see DH 1695: "vere et proprie sacramentum Novi Testamenti a Christo Domino nostro, apud Marcum quidem insinuatum, per Iacobum autem Apostolum ac Domini fratrem fidelibus commendatum ac promulgatum" ([it] was instituted by Christ our Lord as a true and proper sacrament of the New Testament. It is alluded to indeed by Mark [Mk 6:13], but it is recommended to the faithful and promulgated by James the apostle and brother of the Lord). See also DH 1716: "a Christo Domino nostro institutum et a beato Iacobo Apostolo promulgatum" (a sacrament instituted by Christ our Lord and promulgated by the blessed apostle James).

ulating the rites. Therefore, after affirming their institution on the part of Christ, Trent adds that the church's intervention is not illicit interference.[91] She has the right, for example, to determine that the laity should receive the Eucharist only under the species of bread. The Council affirms the ecclesial power to modify aspects of each sacrament according to the diversity of circumstances, times, and places, taking into account the benefits for those who receive it and the worthy veneration that is due to them;[92] it does warn that no one can make such changes on his own initiative.[93]

In order to justify this position it was necessary to respond to the accusations of Luther, who thought that the church had arrogated to herself the power to institute sacraments apart from the master's will. Trent wishes to legitimize the church's intervention without denying that the origin is always in Christ. And it notes, for this reason, a limit to the ecclesial power: *salva illorum substantia*, in other words, while keeping intact what pertains to the "substance of the sacraments."[94]

What does this expression mean? Some have tried to interpret it in keeping with the hylomorphic theory that was prevalent then: the substance would be the union of matter and form.[95] Viewed this way, Christ

91. Council of Trent, Session XXI, *Doctrine and Canons on Communion*, chap. 2 (DH 1728); see also canon 9 of Session XXII, *Sacrifice of the Mass* (DH 1759).

92. Council of Trent, Session XXI, *Doctrine and Canons on Communion*, chap. 2 (DH 1728): "declarat, hanc potestatem perpetuo in Ecclesia fuisse, ut in sacramentorum dispensatione, salva illorum substantia, ea statueret vel mutaret, quae suscipientium utilitati seu ipsorum sacramentorum venerationi, pro rerum, temporum et locorum varietate, magis expedire iudicaret" (declares that, in the administration of the sacraments—provided their substance is preserved—there has always been in the Church that power to determine or modify what she judged more expedient for the benefit of those receiving the sacraments or for the reverence due to the sacraments themselves—according to the diversity of circumstances, times, and places). Next it cites 1 Cor 4:1: "ministros Christi et dispensatores mysteriorum Dei" (servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God) and 1 Cor 11:34: "cetera, quam venero, disponam" (About the other things I will give directions when I come).

93. Council of Trent, Session VII, *Decree on the Sacraments*, canon 13 (DH 1613); later on I will say more about the church's authority over sacramental matters (see chapter 14, below).

94. Council of Trent, Session XXI, *Doctrine and Canons on Communion*, chap. 2 (DH 1728); the very lively debate on the formula subsided around the time of Vatican II. See Heinrich Lennerz, "Salva illorum substantia," *Gregorianum* 3, no. 3 (1922): 385–419 and 524–57; Adhémar D'Alès, "Salva illorum substantia," *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 1 (1924): 497–504; Johann Baptist Umberg, "Die Bedeutung des tridentinischen *salva illorum substantia* (s. 21 c. 2)," *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 48, no. 2 (1924): 161–95; G. Koerperich, "De substantia sacramentorum iuxta Concilium Tridentinum," *Collectiones Namurcenses* 30 (1936): 325–34; Hyacinthe-François Dondaine, "Substantia sacramenti," *Revue de sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 29, nos. 2/4 (1940): 328–30; André Poyer, "À propos du *Salva illorum substantia*," *Divus Thomas* (*Piacenza*) 56 (January–March 1953): 39–66, and "Nouveaux propos sur le *salva illorum substantia*," *Divus Thomas* (*Piacenza*) 57 (1954): 3–24; Artur Michael Landgraf, "Substantia sacramenti," in his *Dogmengeschichte der Frühscholastik* (Regensburg: Pustet, 1954), 158–68; Albert Michel, "Modification des éléments sacramentaires par l'Église *Salva illorum substantia*," *Doctor Communis* 12 (1959): 5–30, and "Salva illorum substantia," *Doctor Communis* 20, no. 3 (1967): 5–32.

95. Peter Lombard already distinguishes: *verbum* and *elementum* are *de substantia*; other things *pertinent ad solemnitatem ejus* (have to do with its solemnity). *Sent. IV*, d. 3, c. 1, n. 3 (SpBon 5:244).

would have had to institute, for each sacrament, the material sign and the words that accompany it. Still, let us recall a general principle for interpreting Trent: the Council claims only to rebut the Protestant position, without deciding other debates between the theological schools.[96] Therefore one has to assume that the different opinions continue to be licit, unless it is possible to prove the contrary by the text itself or by the debate conducted during its composition.

We have already seen that some of the theories proposed in the Middle Ages distinguish between one sacrament and another: they are all tied to Christ, but some only indirectly. In order to condemn the Protestant teaching it was enough to affirm that the institution of the set of seven is traced back to Jesus, without any need to specify how this occurs; the Council Fathers were primarily interested in the fact, not in the manner.

Moreover, a study of the acts of the Council reveals that the expression *salva illorum substantia* was not meant to have a technical sense.[97] In other words, Trent does not understand the word "substance" here in the philosophical sense, as the union of matter and form, but rather in a theological sense: substance is what proceeds from Jesus himself and therefore constitutes the nucleus of the sacrament. We must distinguish, then, between the substance of the sacrament (which cannot change) and the substance of the sacramental rite, its matter and form (which can, in some cases, be modified). Pius XII, speaking about the sacrament of holy orders, would describe this *substantia sacramenti* as that which "with the sources of divine revelation [i.e., scripture and tradition] as witnesses, Christ the Lord himself decreed to be preserved in a sacramental sign."[98]

The post-Tridentine theologians would have heated debates about the interpretation of the Council.[99] They ask, for example, whether the institution by Christ has to be immediate or mediated. In the first case, which almost all of them were inclined to favor, Jesus himself would have instituted each sacrament; in the second case he would have delegated (to the apostles or to the whole church) the ability to institute some of them.[100] An immediate institution appears to be more in keeping both with the nature

96. Heinrich Lennerz, "Das Konzil von Trient und theologische Schulmeinungen," *Scholastik* 4, no. 1 (1929): 38–53.

97. Lennerz, "Salva illorum substantia," 524–57; the discussion of the theologians, which revolves around Communion under both species, is found in *Concilium Tridentinum: Diariorum, actorum, epistularum tractatuum* [hereafter *CT*], ed. Klaus Ganzer (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1901), 8:528.

98. Pius XII, *Sacramentum Ordinis*, Apostolic Constitution, November 30, 1947 (DH 3857).

99. Finkenzeller, *Die Lehre von den Sakramenten im allgemeinen*, 79–93.

100. Pierre Pourrat, *La théologie sacramentaire: Étude positive* (Paris, 1903), 268–72.

of the sacraments, inasmuch as it assures their direct connection with Jesus, and also with the awareness of the church, which never claimed to institute sacraments herself. At least in the case of extreme unction, Trent ruled out the possibility that Christ delegated the power to institute it to James, who limited himself to promulgating it.[101] Later Magisterial declarations against Modernism clarified that the sacraments do not spring from a gradual discernment by the church.[102]

Another question agitates the minds of theologians: is it necessary for Jesus to have determined each sacrament in its particular details, or is it enough that he offered, at least in some cases, a general indication? This is the difference between institution *in genere* (without determining the finishing touches of the sacrament) or *in specie* (establishing concretely the matter and form of each one). As I demonstrated above, the theory that agrees best with the revealed data is immediate institution (Jesus did not delegate to others the institution of the sacraments), but this does not mean that the institution was accomplished *in specie*. If, as Trent asserts, there are differences between one sacrament and another, there will be differences also in the manner of their institution.[103] Historical investigations conducted from the seventeenth century onward to rebut Protestant teachings confirmed that the church in various cases modified the structure of the sacramental rite: the anointing with oil in confirmation appears only in the second century; the handing over of the instruments of priestly orders originated in the Middle Ages; the prayers for the rite of confirmation and of the anointing of the sick varied greatly, even at the dawn of Christianity, from one region to another, and so on.[104] These inquiries promoted the theory of an institution *in genere* of various sacraments, wherein Jesus left some aspects undetermined which the church then specified.

In order to explain why the seven sacraments instituted by Christ were enumerated only with the passage of time, we can turn also to the essay by John Henry Newman about the development of dogma.[105] In light of his arguments, some have proposed an *explicit* institution of baptism and the Eucharist on the part of Jesus, and an *implicit*, as it were "seminal" institution of the rest of the set of seven. This would explain why the ecclesial

101. DH 1695 and 1716.

102. Pius X, *Lamentabili Sane*, Decree, pars. 39–51 (DH 3439–51).

103. Council of Trent, Session VII, *Decree on the Sacraments*, canon 3 (DH 1603).

104. Pourrat, *La théologie sacramentaire*, 74–83 and 313–14; Michel, *"Salva illorum substantia,"* 485–87.

105. Pourrat, *La théologie sacramentaire*, 273–74; the English cardinal expounds his teaching in John Henry Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989).

awareness about some sacraments had developed only over the course of the years; while continuing to maintain that the essential data are already found present from the beginnings.

Institution of the Sacraments Starting from the Church-Sacrament: Karl Rahner

The concern of post-Tridentine theology with anchoring the individual sacraments in the words and works of Jesus ran into obstacles with the arrival of the modern era. This was due, on the one hand, to a development of our understanding of how revelation is transmitted. Some theories about the institution of the sacraments supposed the existence of traditions that are not reflected in scripture, but were passed on to the church orally from Jesus and the apostles. Today, nevertheless, most scholars reject the thesis that tradition includes a set of sayings not contained in the Bible; tradition is, rather, the way in which the church preserves and interprets scripture and, thanks to apostolic succession, transmits this interpretation.[106] Note that, from this perspective, not only are the sacraments attested in the tradition, but also, in the case of priestly ordination, they are a vehicle by which tradition is conveyed.

Another difficulty arises from the historical-critical investigation into the life of Jesus. According to this approach, it is not enough to cite texts that place the institution on the master's lips, for even these texts could have originated in the early church. Thus it is called into question, for example, that the account of baptism in Matthew 28:19 comes from Jesus. Even the institution of the Eucharist is turned into a debated question: what exact words did Jesus use at the Last Supper? Although for Luther the distance between baptism (which he accepted as a sacrament) and the anointing of the sick (which he rejected because it does not come from Jesus) was clear, it is not as obvious today for historical criticism, which emphasizes the influence of the community on the composition of the Gospel.[107]

To avoid these obstacles, some have proposed starting from a vision of the church as the root-sacrament from which the other sacraments are derived; the chief proponent of this view was Karl Rahner. From this vantage point it is possible to elaborate a theory of institution that avoids a cer-

106. Karl Rahner and Joseph Ratzinger, *Offenbarung und Überlieferung* (Freiburg: Herder, 1965); translated as *Revelation and Tradition* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1966).

107. Pannenberg, *Systematische Theologie*, 3:306–7; Karl Rahner, "What is a Sacrament?," in *Theological Investigations*, vol. 14: *Ecclesiology, Questions in the Church, the Church in the World* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1976), 135–48, at 136.

tain apologetic anxiousness to find in the Bible words of Jesus about the seven sacraments.[108] I will return to this connection between the church-sacrament and the seven sacraments (in chapter 15, below). For now it is enough to say that, for Rahner, Christ is the primordial sacrament who makes himself present in the church, which is the root or stem sacrament, because from her spring the branches of the other seven. From this perspective, Rahner concludes, sacramental theology is a chapter of ecclesiology,[109] and the sacraments are the concrete acts in which the sacramental being of the church is revealed and gains strength.

The way to prove the origin of the sacraments in Jesus is thus expedited: he instituted them in instituting the great sacrament of the church. It is not necessary, therefore, to seek words of Jesus that are the basis of each one of the seven. In fact, again according to Rahner, such words probably do not exist for holy orders, matrimony, confirmation, and extreme unction. And there is no need to choose the easy escape of supposing that Christ made private revelations to the apostles, of which we find no trace in the Gospels. For we do not come across signs of the precise rite of some of these sacraments either in the first three centuries after Christ: if the church had received some word from Jesus on the subject, why would she have delayed so long in identifying the rites?

Does this mean that, in Rahner's view, we must deny the institution of these sacraments on the part of Jesus? Certainly not: it is a fact affirmed by Trent. Rahner's point is that the foundation of some rites in Christ can be ascertained by another path, that of the church as sacrament. Indeed, every act of the church in which she is implied as a historical and eschatological presence of redeeming grace (that is to say, as a radical or root sacrament) has been performed in her by Jesus and is, therefore, a sacrament.

Notice that Rahner is not saying that Christ delegated to the church the ability to institute sacraments. Rather, Jesus included the sacraments, as hidden seeds, in the genome of the church, and she herself is the root sacrament. In this way the church, over the course of history, institutes no sacrament; she limits herself to recognizing within herself the presence of the sacraments implanted by Christ. And thus, for example, because she defined that they are seven in number, there are no new sacraments that she can list.

Rahner's proposal highlights the importance of ecclesial mediation in clarifying the origin of the sacraments in Jesus. Thus he touches on a decisive point, which is central to the different visions of Trent and Luther. One result of his theory is of interest to us: it is necessary to keep the church in mind, not only because she specifies the rites or promulgates them, but also because she herself belongs to the sacramental act.

108. Karl Rahner, *Kirche und Sakramente* (Freiburg: Herder, 1961), 37–67; translated as *The Church and the Sacraments* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1963).

109. Karl Rahner, *Kirche und Sakramente*, 38.

On the other hand, some have voiced criticisms of Rahner's position that prompt us to revise some aspects of it or to fill in the gaps.[110] By insisting that the sacraments come from the church, our author overlooks another more primordial side of the story: *the church is born from the sacraments*. As we will see in detail further on (in chapter 15, below), together with the line Christ-church-sacraments and preceding it, we have to draw another line: Christ-sacraments-church. In other words, the sacraments are not only actualizations of the church's ministry, but above all actualization of the mystery of Christ in order to generate the church.[111]

It follows that in order to prove the institution of a sacrament it is not enough, as Rahner intended, to prove that Jesus established the church as a sacrament; it is necessary to prove also that he established the sacraments as the foundation of the community of salvation.[112] Consequently we cannot renounce the exegetical effort to find, in Jesus' earthly life itself, a basis that supports the creation of each sacrament. The church plays a part in discerning and determining the rite, but it is a subordinate part that can never dispense with the figure of Jesus, with his words and works. And this root in the life of Christ must be supported in some way in the Bible, which is the normative testimony of the revelation of Jesus in the flesh. I will attempt to do justice to these facts by offering a synthesis, bearing in mind the central place of the Eucharist, both in order to understand the role of the church and also in order to analyze the connection of the other sacraments with Christ.

Institution of the Sacraments by Jesus: Synthesis from the Perspective of the Eucharist

The seven sacraments are anchored in Jesus, who instituted them; this is an article of faith. In order to explain this truth, theology, because of its internal vicissitudes, has concentrated on the words and gestures with which

110. William A. Van Roo, "Reflections on Karl Rahner's 'Kirche und Sakramente,'" *Gregorianum* 44, no. 3 (1963): 465–500, at 493–98. See also Pannenberg, *Systematische Theologie*, 3:375; in Pannenberg's judgment Rahner's theory threatens a central principle of Christian theology, that every sacrament must find its origin in Jesus Christ, the head of the church.

111. Colombo, "Dove va la teologia."

112. Van Roo, "Reflections on Karl Rahner," 497.

Christ determined each rite. The study of patristics and of medieval theology helps us to extend this outlook: the entire life of Jesus in the flesh is what institutes the sacraments. Only in this way can they be an effective radiation of Christ's life and love to mankind. Jesus' decision to institute rites, so that we might participate in his lot, makes sense only in conjunction with the path that he traveled in the flesh.

In order to substantiate this approach and to shed light in turn on the modern question about the institution of the sacraments, it seems appropriate, as I just pointed out, to start from the Eucharist, the true root (or radical) sacrament from which the emergence of the others is understood.[113] For here the institution by Jesus is transparent, attested in all four Gospels, and it allows us to proceed from the clearest so as to illuminate those that are less clear, and thus to outline the connection of the seven sacraments with the words and works of Christ.

Eucharistic Point of Departure

Jesus instituted the Eucharistic rite at a precise moment of his life, to which historical criticism bears witness in its main features (see chapter 2, above). This rite is framed in a Jewish Passover meal: Jesus performs an act of remembrance that gathers up within it the history of the people of Israel from the creation of the world. At the same time there are evocative new features, for the master focuses on the words over the bread and wine, which he identifies with his body and blood and distributes among the Twelve, in gratitude to the Father. Thus he performs a *todah* or sacrifice of praise for the original gift of life and for the definitive redemption thereof that was to arrive on Easter. All this shows us that the institution of this sacrament is not reduced to an isolated moment: it expands its hours to embrace the whole journey of Jesus, from the Father to the Father. The first Christian Eucharist was celebrated perfectly only after the resurrection (the first Sunday), when Christ, reunited with his brothers, lifted up a hymn of glory to the Father.

From these facts we infer that the rite revolves around the axis of the body and blood of Christ: a body received from the Father, filled with the Spirit of life, given up for mankind. That is to say, the rite opens up for us the relational space of the body of Jesus, a most suitable sphere for communion with God and the brethren. And given that this space is forged over the course of his entire earthly journey, the Eucharistic body is a "narrative" body, so to speak: it contains the remembrance of the master's steps and

113. Colombo, "Dove va la teologia," 707: "specifically, it is a matter of 'deriving' all the sacraments from the Eucharist, rather than from the Church."

anticipates his glory. The space of this body is generated, in fact, with the incarnation of the Son of God; if every body preserves in some way the marks of the one who shaped it, then Jesus' body points in a unique way to his radical origin in the Father. Moreover, this body receives the Holy Spirit, who comes down upon it and works in Christ over the course of his life, shaping his flesh so as to provide lodging for full communion. At the Paschal mystery of the cross and resurrection, the body of Christ will be associated definitively with the Father's glory and the regeneration of the children of Adam.

I am interested in drawing from all this a twofold conclusion: first, the institution of the rite is based entirely on the space of relations that originates in the body of Christ. Therefore the taking of bread and wine and the distribution of them to the disciples with the words that accompany it is placed at the service of the relational and narrative significance of this body that is offered and of this blood that is shed. Second, precisely because the Eucharistic rite flows from the language of the flesh of Jesus, it not only embraces his personal history but also is open to that of his brothers and sisters. For in the Bible the flesh always bands us together with other: it is flesh of flesh, one flesh, the same flesh, and so on. In fact, Jesus institutes his rite by taking up into it the whole history of salvation experienced in Israel, and by including in himself the body of the church, gathered around her master after Easter to offer the *todah*. The church, therefore, is not foreign to the constitution of the sacrament, but rather takes part in it. Here lies firm support to prove her singular authority over the salvific rites.

To summarize: Jesus institutes the sacrament inasmuch as he associates a material rite to the language of his flesh, which was forged over the course of his earthly journey, from his origin to his destination in the Father. Therefore the institution is not performed only at one moment, but rather embraces the arc of Christ's life, culminating in Easter, when Jesus offers the sacrifice of praise together with his brothers. As a result, the institution is not foreign to the church, for she is attached to the body of Jesus as his bride, one flesh with him.

Baptism, Integration into the Eucharist

It is time now to consider baptism, which illumines us, as we will see, about the connection of the other sacraments with the Eucharistic body. We note right away one difference with the Eucharist: now the rite is on the lips not of the pre-Paschal Jesus—although the master refers to baptism in John 3:5—but rather of the risen Lord (Mt 28:20; Mk 16:16); and the exact

formula appears only in Matthew among the four evangelists. This prompts us to think that the baptismal practice of the church was not only based on these words but derived from the entire life of Jesus.

Indeed, as we saw earlier (in chapter 2, above), the apostles preserved in their memory the episode at the Jordan, when the Spirit descended upon the Son of man, who in his flesh represented all of us. And they preserved also the words of Jesus about the other "baptism" that he had to receive by dying and rising from the tomb. These remembrances, heightened by the light and word of the risen Lord, and against the background of the liturgy of the Old Testament, would bring the apostles to practice baptism as a means of being incorporated into Jesus and of receiving his Spirit.

The influence of the Eucharistic celebration was decisive in this step from the remembrance of Jesus to the practice of baptism. In fact, the New Testament interprets baptism in the light of the Eucharist, as putting off the old body of Adam and being engrafted onto the body of Jesus, the true vine. Therefore baptism consists of the transformation of our members so as to work justice (Rom 6:19). Whereas the Eucharist opens the space of the body of Christ (i.e., of the bodily relations that he inaugurates), baptism signifies the incorporation of the believer into this space, in such a way that at the center of the institution stands once again the body of Jesus with the relational meanings that are forged in his flesh.

Thus we understand why the institution of baptism occurs after Easter: it is fitting to establish it when the new body of the risen Lord is already constituted and can receive the believer into itself. We understand also that there is greater participation of the apostolic church in the determination of the baptismal rite. She, born of the Eucharist, is the one who welcomes Christians in her bosom—an image which we know has been connected with the water of baptism from as early as the patristic era.

To understand this intervention of the church it helps to observe the differences between the Synoptics (see chapter 2, above). While in Matthew and Mark the institution of the rite is acknowledged as coming from the risen Jesus, Luke does not mention the institution, but rather narrates for us in Acts how the church baptized in the name of Christ. Thus the rite which in Matthew is on the lips of the risen Jesus is described by Luke in the concrete activity of the apostles.

According to the Lucan account, then, it falls to the apostolic church to perform the baptismal rite, without any need to transcribe explicit words of the master. The firm anchorage in the life of Jesus is given to us by the elements that I have outlined: his baptism in the Jordan, where he received

the Spirit in the name of all (Lk 3:21–38); his words about the eschatological baptism that awaited him in his death and resurrection (Lk 12:49–50); the light that the Eucharist shed on the ritual manner in which we participate in the life of Christ (Lk 22:19–20).

In Luke's view, the church preserved these events in her heart and meditated on them against the background of the Old Testament, which already situated in a liturgical context the unity of the people in one mediator. In this way she started to practice the rite, recognizing it as the master's will and capable of incorporating us into him. This step from the life of Jesus to the baptismal rite was possible because of the disciples' encounter with the risen Lord, from which a penetrating outlook on the whole path of Jesus extended. This Paschal light is the one that Matthew mentions explicitly in narrating the institution of baptism: "Go and baptize ..." (Mt 28:19). From the perspective of a holistic reading of the Gospel, it makes little difference whether the church *practices* baptism in terms of its memory of Jesus, as in Luke, or the church *recalls the words* of Jesus who establishes baptism, as in Matthew. This proves to be paradigmatic in understanding the institution of the other sacraments, for which explicit sayings of the master are lacking in the Gospels, as they are lacking for baptism in Luke.

Institution of the Other Sacraments, Starting from the Eucharist and Baptism

We can suppose for the other sacraments a process analogous to what St. Luke allows us to glimpse with respect to baptism. Then, as the first sacramental syntheses in the writings of John and Paul showed us (in chapters 3 and 4, above) and as I will prove in the following pages, the distinct sacraments arise through the branching out of the Eucharistic space of Jesus to all spheres of Christian life, a ramification that is inaugurated in every believer with baptism.

For the church, therefore, it was in the first place a matter of recognizing the different expressions of the body of Christ that follow from the Eucharist and accompany the different places and time of a believer's life. Secondly, it was a matter of associating with each corporeal sign a suitable ritual expression, which is inferred from the words and works of Jesus as a whole, against the background of the Jewish liturgy. The light by which to discern this link between the meaning of the body of Christ and each concrete rite came to the apostles from their encounter with the risen Lord, which according to St. Luke has Eucharistic overtones: "[We] ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead" (Acts 10:41).

Notice that what the apostles achieve is not the union of a ritual sign with the divine grace that accompanies it—only Christ could achieve that, as Scholastic theology correctly reasoned. But rather they limit themselves to testifying as to what ritual sign best captures, from the faithful memory of Christ's life, the different relational meanings that Jesus forged in his body. For it is by adopting these meanings (these ways of being situated in the world, among our fellow human beings, and with respect to God) that we can receive from Christ's very Spirit.

Such an intervention of the church therefore takes nothing away from the immediate institution on Christ's part, which is guaranteed inasmuch as the central sign that constitutes the sacrament is contained in the body of Jesus itself; and inasmuch as the ecclesial verification of the rite proceeds from the deeds and sayings of the master, always against the background of the Old Testament. The apostolic church plays an irreplaceable role in this process: she alone, as witness of the life of Jesus, could identify, in an act of memory illuminated by the resurrection, the authority of Christ as the origin of the sacramental gestures and words. The institution of each sacrament has to find support, therefore, as St. Augustine pointed out, either in the life of Jesus, or in the apostolic preaching, as they are contained in the New Testament.[114] This scriptural basis is necessary in order to determine the *substance* of the sacraments, in other words, those elements of them that are foundational for the church because they came from Jesus himself, the essential memory of whom was preserved and transmitted by the apostles.

It helps to think that a parallel task fell to the apostles themselves: that of composing the New Testament, thus recording the nucleus of Jesus' message and offering their authorized interpretation. This was also an exercise of memory, in that they transmitted faithfully the Lord's preaching and the narrative of his life. It is logical that this role with respect to the word was joined to another similar role with respect to the sacraments, which are the place where the word can resound and be heard.

We understand too now what the patristic contribution was: just as it was up to the Church Fathers to determine the biblical canon, so too they play a decisive role both in verifying which rites proceed from Jesus and are the spinal column of the church, and also in creating "the fundamental forms of the Christian liturgical service."[115] We are talking about a slow

114. Augustine, *De doctrina christiana* III, 9, 13 (CCL 32:11; NPNF-I 2:560a–b); *Epistolae* 54, 1, 1 (CSEL 34.2:159; NPNF-I 1:300a–b).

115. Joseph Ratzinger, *Theologische Prinzipienlehre: Bausteine zur Fundamentaltheologie* (Munich: Erich Wewel, 1982), 139–58, at 155; translated as "Importance of the Fathers for the Structure of the Faith," in *Principles of Catholic Theology: Building Stones for a Fundamental Theology* (San Francisco, Calif.: Ignatius Press, 1987), 133–52, at 150; Eugenio Romero Pose, "Exégesis patrística y liturgia," in *Liturgia y Padres de la Iglesia*, XXIV Jornadas de la Asociación Española de Profesores de Liturgia (Bilbao: Grafite Ediciones, 2000).

process during which the church became aware of the seeds already sowed by Christ, a process that would lead her to distinguish the seven sacraments as the ones instituted by Jesus. Here too there is a parallel with the canon of scripture: the Council of Trent definitively fixed both the set of seven sacraments and the list of biblical books.[116]

I can now finally indicate the main lines of the institution of each sacrament. *Confirmation* is rooted in the baptismal event, emphasizing its dynamic aspect; the Spirit, after constituting the believer as a child of God in baptism, impels him so that he too generates communion with God and with the brethren, a communion that expands into the missionary witness of faith. Jesus instituted the sacrament inasmuch as the Spirit brought to perfection the love that he lived in his flesh, showing him the way in his ministry and broadening his activity so that it might embrace all the spaces where human beings dwell. The apostles captured this dynamic meaning of the body of Christ in the rite of imposing hands, while praying over the believer (Acts 8:14–17; 19:1–6). The anointing with oil, not attested in apostolic usage, was introduced shortly afterward as necessary for the validity of the rite; given the biblical practice of anointing, this expresses more clearly the language of Jesus' body in the power of the Spirit. The prayer formula was fixed by the church: fidelity to the master required only affirming the harmony between the ritual gesture and the language of Christ's anointed body.

Through *penance*, the believer goes back to the vital coordinates of baptism. Christ instituted this sacrament inasmuch as the relations that he forged during his life in the flesh, and into which we are incorporated when we are baptized, never abandon someone who strays from them, however great his transgression may be. This is because these relations, inaugurated by Jesus in his body when he endured death in his fidelity to the Father, reach to what is most primordial in the human person, that filial foundation that no guilt can blot out and to which it is always possible to convert. Inasmuch as this conversion is capable of regenerating concrete relations in the flesh (and not only in the isolated interior of the individual), reintegrating us visibly into the body of Jesus, the sacrament includes the confession of sin before the church. In order to determine the rite in fidelity to Christ it was

116. The presuppositions presented here justify the authority of the church of all ages to modify the rite, provided that she does not alter its substance, an authority that will be the subject of study further on (see chapter 14, below).

enough to indicate, in the absolution, that the sinner is loosed from sin; the fact that the words are pronounced by the priest, the representative of Jesus, clarifies that their purpose is to reincorporate the penitent into the body of Jesus and into the narrative of his life.

Christ carried out the institution of *matrimony* inasmuch as he took up, in his life in the flesh, the creaturely meanings of the body, and brought to fulfillment, in his passion and glory, their ability to express communion. In this way the union in "one flesh" (Gn 2:24) of two persons who, because they are baptized, belong to Christ's flesh, will be a union according to the measure of the flesh of Christ, the bridegroom of the church and one flesh with her. Given that the bodies themselves of the spouses receive a new meaning within the body of Christ when they join in marital union, it is not necessary to add any rite to express the reference to the body of Jesus which characterizes the seven sacraments.

The Savior instituted *holy orders* inasmuch as his body was set up in the Eucharist, culminating in his death and resurrection, as the source of life for the church. Thus his paternity was configured in a new way—that is, his bodily ability to generate life, which now transmits the eternal life of God.[117] The apostolic church, in practicing the imposition of hands to confer holy orders, carried out an act of memory: this is the rite that captures the paternal meaning of the flesh of Jesus and configures the priest to this flesh. Over the course of history the church added elements to the rite, such as the conferral (which was required during the Middle Ages) of the chalice and of other instruments that expressed various functions of the priestly ministry.

The *anointing of the sick* refers to the language of the body in exactly the same existential situation that Christ was going through at the Last Supper when he offered his *todah*, in the midst of sorrow until the resurrection. And it was instituted when Jesus shaped his suffering flesh in openness to the Father and to the brethren, in such a way that his wounds could come to be glorious wounds at his resurrection. The Letter of James, based on his faithful memory of the master, established the rite of anointing with oil and determined that a prayer was necessary (Jas 5:14–15). In this way it captured the meaning of Jesus' body, afflicted and full of hope, in order to bring about the configuration of the sick person to him.

To summarize, the substance of all the sacraments consists of containing and mediating the way of experiencing the body that Jesus forged during his

117. To understand these statements, see my discussion in chapter 14, below.

journey so that we might be able to receive a share of his Spirit. The Savior instituted the sacraments in his flesh, shaping it with salvific meaning and incorporating us into it by means of a rite. This centrality of Christ's body, which is entrusted to us in the Eucharist, will be decisive in part 2 of this treatise, in which we will journey toward a definition of sacrament.