

**THE RELEVANCE OF THE CATHOLIC TÜBINGEN SCHOOL FOR
CONTEMPORARY DEVELOPMENTS IN CATHOLIC LITURGY AND
SACRAMENTAL THEOLOGY—SELECTED SESSION**

Topic: The Relevance of the Catholic Tübingen School for Contemporary
Developments in Catholic Liturgy and Sacramental Theology
Convener: Bradford Hinze, Fordham University
Moderator: Susan Roll, St. Paul's University, Canada
Presenters: Joris Geldhof, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven
Samuel Goyvaerts, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven

Susan Roll presented the paper prepared by Joris Geldhof, entitled “The Constitutive Role of Liturgy in Shaping the Church: Tübingen Theology and Contemporary Developments in Roman Catholic Liturgy and Sacramental Theology.” Geldhof’s paper advanced the argument that nineteenth-century Tübingen theologians offer important contributions for sacramental theology today in terms of their methodology and specific positions, such as in the area of the theology of the Eucharist. These claims were advanced by proposing that the recent writings of Walter Kasper provide a contemporary illustration of the Tübingen style of theology as marked by a historical—*ressourcement*—orientation, a hermeneutical-scientific method, and specific positions on the Eucharist and the Christological character of the Church as the foundation for a sacramental theology.

Samuel Goyvaerts’s paper, “The Catholic Tübingen School’s Approach to Liturgy: Between Tradition and Reform,” began with the conviction that the rich insights about the liturgy and the celebration of the Eucharist found in the writings of the Catholic Tübingen School have remained unfortunately largely unexplored. Goyvaerts is undertaking a rigorous study of the writings of major Tübingen protagonists such as Johann Sebastian Drey, Johann Baptist Hirscher, and Johann Adam Möhler. In this paper, he presented three elements of Tübingen thinking on liturgy and the Eucharist.

First, Goyvaerts reflected on the importance of the liturgy in the Tübingen theological system, for which he mainly referred to Johann Sebastian Drey. He argued that the liturgy has a pivotal place in Drey’s theology and that interestingly he attached a great deal of importance to the “external” elements of the liturgical celebration. Second, he explored the historical-liturgical scientific method of Tübingen theology as developed in the writings of Johann Baptist Hirscher and Johann Adam Möhler. Goyvaerts showed how the Tübingen theologians not only rediscovered the fathers of the Church but also attached major importance to liturgical sources. These nineteenth-century scholars seem to be only a small step away from what in our days has become known as “liturgical theology.” His third claim was that these Tübingen theologians give special weight to the communal nature of the Eucharist. Whereas most post-Tridentine theology failed to see the broader picture, and thus over-developed the centrality of sacrifice, the Tübingen scholars attempted to integrate Tridentine reflections into the larger whole of an encompassing eucharistic theology. This also led them to plea for multiple practical liturgical reforms in order to enhance the active participation of the faithful, e.g. a decent training of both the clergy and the laity, the celebration of the liturgy in the vernacular, frequent receiving of communion by the faithful, communion available under both species, and the repudiation of private masses.

Goyvaerts concluded by stating that the Tübingen scholars seem to represent something new and creative in the field of the liturgy and the Eucharist, both with regard to the method and

the content of their theology. Goyvaerts noted that, when reading these Tübingen theologians, the twentieth-century Liturgical Movement comes to mind, and indeed, one can consider the work of the Tübingen School as one of the most crucial turning points for the renewal in Eucharistic theology.

During the discussion period a short amount of time was devoted to the questions: what does it mean to speak of a Tübingen school and how are Geldhof and Goyvaerts using this formula? Goyvaerts conceded there is no strict method employed by the various early nineteenth-century theologians associated with the school and that they do not subscribe to the same theological position in various areas. There is, nonetheless, a historical and hermeneutical awareness among Tübingen theologians and a concern for a rigorous, what they would describe as scientific, method that was likewise practically oriented. As a student of Josef Geiselmann, the historical theologian who recovered and defined the Tübingen school, Walter Kasper can be said to broadly speaking represent this lineage even though particular correspondences in method or substance cannot be maintained.

There were several lines of inquiry explored pertaining to Goyvaerts' paper. Overall there was great appreciation for Goyvaerts' project and the significance of his findings as a precursor of elements of the liturgical reform movement in the twentieth century and of the *ressourcement* movement in theology more generally. There was special fascination with the interest in early liturgical sources among some Tübingen theologians. The question was raised whether any of the Tübingen theologians influenced the Benedictine theologian Odo Casel, whose work was so groundbreaking in liturgical theology in the twentieth century. Moreover, several wondered whether there was any attention given to the social implications of the Eucharist as we find exemplified later in the writings of another Benedictine, Virgil Michel.

The hallmark of Tübingen theology has been the importance of the living tradition of Catholic faith. But critical questions were raised about whether women have any role in this tradition as described and theologized by Tübingen theologians.

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