

HISTORICAL STUDIES (II) TOPIC SESSION

Topic: Sacraments and the Global Church in Modernity
Convener: Helen M. Ciernick, Mount Marty College
Moderator: Franklin T. Harkins, Fordham University
Presenters: Paul G. Monson, Marquette University
Rose M. Beal, St. Mary's University of Minnesota
Michon M. Mattheisen, Providence College

Paul Monson, in his “*Sacramentum* and *Stabilitas* in American Benedictine Monasticism” takes a cue from the first paragraph of *Lumen gentium* (LG) to explore how Benedictine missionaries in nineteenth-century America attempted to manifest a vision of Church “as a sacrament in Christ” and thus a “sign or instrument” for evangelization through the monastic community. His study engaged the thought of Swiss missionary Martin Marty (1834–1869) and his Bavarian confrere Boniface Wimmer (1809–87), arguing that these pioneer monks understood the monastery as an ecclesial *sacramentum* in the sense of LG, that is, as an instrument or sign of evangelization. He supported his thesis by analyzing two significant ideas that arose in each monk’s vision of monasticism in America: (1) the role of the Benedictine vow of *stabilitas* in America, and, through this vow, (2) the integration of the local Catholic community with the universal Church. While exploring these two missionaries’ different styles, Monson demonstrated how Marty and Wimmer envisioned the American monastery as a community with a distinct apostolic mission. Monson concluded that the lens of history allows one also to discern LG’s ideas of an ecclesial *sacramentum* in both visions. Both monks understood the communal dimension of what we refer to today as evangelization; both also grasped that the monastic “light” to America must not only be contemplative but also active. In closing, Monson noted how both visions converged in the American liturgical renewal, especially emphasizing the social dimension of forming “one body” in the eucharistic.

Michon M. Mattheisen, in his paper, “The Twentieth-Century ‘Sea-Change’ in Eucharistic Theology: Maurice de la Taille’s *Mysterium Fidei*,” argued that de la Taille’s work is not only a pivotal work in the Church’s articulation of a theology of eucharistic sacrifice, but that it also represents an early example both of liturgical renewal and *ressourcement* theology. Mattheisen explains that resurrecting the work of de la Taille for the contemporary Church achieves two goals: it re-opens and enriches theological discussion about eucharistic sacrifice and corrects an oversight in the historical narrative of twentieth-century theology, which too frequently bypasses de la Taille’s significance. In the first part of his paper, Mattheisen attended to the historical context and the prophetic nature of de la Taille’s methodology of *Mysterium Fidei*. In particular, Mattheisen pointed out that de la Taille wrote his master work (1905–1915) when most of the theologians who would cultivate a new method of theology were yet in their youth, that De la Taille’s methodology shows him to be a proto-*ressourcement* theologian in his retrieval of the sources of Scripture and the tradition, and that his articulation of the role of the theologian that looks forward to *nouvelle théologie*.

The second part of Mattheisen’s paper detailed de la Tailles’ theology of eucharistic sacrifice, demonstrating how he departs from the immolationist-centered theories of sacrifice and sets sacrifice squarely within the genus of *gift*. His detailed examination points out that de la Taille’s theory anticipates later twentieth-century thought by emphasizing the necessity of

genuine *devotio*, subjective affect. Matthiesen then suggested that de la Taille's thought appears in *Mediator Dei* and Vatican II's notion of *actuosa participatio* in the eucharistic liturgy.

In the third paper of the session, "The Influence of Liturgical Reform on Yves Congar's 'Total Ecclesiology,'" Rose M. Beal identified the personal and theological contexts in which Congar recognized the link between the liturgical and ecclesial reform and applied it to his theological task. Pointing out that examples of the influence of liturgical and sacramental theology on Congar's work toward ecclesiological reform abound, she noted that attention to baptismal theology influenced his theology of the lay vocation, and that developments in the sacramental theology of sacrifice and priesthood contributed to his appreciation of the inward and outward cults that framed his understanding of the priesthood of the faithful.

Examining the particular question of ecclesial reform, Beal noted that Congar gave liturgy a significant place as a monument to tradition and as a catalyst for reform while at the same time recognizing that ecclesial reform likewise forges the way for liturgical renewal. She explained specifically that Congar found in the liturgical reform movement and developing sacramental theology of the early twentieth century ways of thinking about the life of the Church that supported his shift from the dominant hierarchical framework to the "total ecclesiology" he sought to express the fullness of the mystery of the Church. The effects of this shift are felt in Congar's contributions to the drafting of *Lumen gentium* during the Second Vatican Council and in his ecclesiology as it developed after the Council.

Lively discussion followed the papers that centered on Congar's understanding of the relationship between liturgy and ecclesiology and de la Taille's understanding of the eucharistic sacrifice and its general lack of reception among twentieth-century theologians.

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