

THE SACRAMENTAL GRACE OF MATRIMONY

It is of faith that Matrimony is one of the seven channels of grace that are the sacraments. As with the other sacraments, theologians, in their discussions of Matrimony, make the distinction between the *sacramentum tantum*, the *res et sacramentum*, and the *res tantum*. The subject of this paper is focused on the *res tantum* of Matrimony, its sacramental grace. Yet no clear concept of the sacramental grace of Matrimony as distinguished from the sacramental graces of the other sacraments can be had except through an analysis of the *sacramentum tantum*, the external rite of the sacrament, and the *res et sacramentum*, which, in the case of Matrimony, is the bond; for the sacramental grace of Matrimony is precisely the grace that is signified and caused by the *sacramentum tantum*, signified and, on occasion, caused, by the *res et sacramentum*.

The sacrament of Matrimony, as all the sacraments, is a composite of matter and form; yet it realizes these common notions in a way that is unique. There is no exterior material element that is determined by the words of a form, but the human acts of the contracting parties are mutually matter and form. In this, Matrimony is closest to the sacrament of Penance, which at least in its matter depends on human acts.

The *res et sacramentum* of Matrimony likewise has a special reality of its own. It is not a character such as is impressed in Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Orders. Yet it is permanent until the death of one of the partners and so continuously visible as to make the structure of marriage approximate the structure of Holy Orders and more remotely of the Holy Eucharist.

In all the sacraments Our Lord has chosen natural elements to serve under the determination of the form as instruments for conferring His grace on men. Matrimony is unique in that it is the only sacrament in which a natural institution was elevated to the dignity

of a sacrament. The very group that is the smallest unit of human society has been chosen by Christ as the unit of His Society—the Church. This thought should, I believe, play a decisive role in our examination of the Sacrament of Matrimony and its graces.

As an approach to the problem of the sacramental grace of Matrimony, a brief review of the current doctrine on sacramental grace in general seems necessary. Sacramental grace presents many facets—all proposed with more or less certainty and unanimity by theologians.

There is one further preliminary point I should like to make. I'd like to propose as the ruling principle of this discussion of sacramental grace the principle of variety and diversity. As St. Thomas expresses it: "God brought things into being in order that His goodness might be communicated to creatures, and be represented by them; and because His goodness could not be adequately represented by one creature alone, He produces many and diverse creatures, that what was wanting to one in the representation of the divine goodness might be supplied by another. For goodness, which in God is simple and uniform, in creatures is manifold and divided; and hence the whole universe together participates the divine goodness more perfectly, and represents it better than any single creature whatever."¹

The wisdom of God has implanted the principle of diversity in the supernatural order as well as in the natural, for it is the wisdom of God, "which is reflected in the orderly distinction of things both natural and supernatural."² It is certainly no exaggeration to say that there must be much greater variety in the supernatural order than in the natural. Yet it is much less known or knowable to us. Consequently, we must use every means possible to penetrate somewhat into the mysterious variety of the supernatural. The notion of sacramental grace will, I believe, prove a great help.

¹ *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 47, a. 1 (Benziger Translation).

² *Summa Theol.*, Suppl., q. 37, a. 1. Cf. *In I Cor.*, xi, lect. 1. The same thought is expressed from a slightly different viewpoint by Hugh of St. Victor: "Now in these pursuits of virtue by wonderful dispensation God provided multiplicity and variety and intermission, that the human mind in multiplicity might find exercise, in variety delight, and in intermission recreation." *On the Sacraments of the Christian Faith*. Bk. I, Part IX, n. III. (The Medieval Academy of America, Publication 58. P. 158.)

God has taken the first steps to aid us by sending His only begotten Son, although at first sight this might seem to be something of a hindrance. For Christ, even as a Man, is a more perfect manifestation of the divine goodness than the whole of the universe both natural and supernatural.³ It would seem, then, that Christ alone is an adequate representation of the divine goodness. Yet in a mysterious way this is not so.

First of all, because the grace of Christ, while infinite from the aspect of uniting Him to God, has a determinate modality in its formal effect upon Him and upon mankind. The modality of grace in the soul of an Incarnate God whose mission is to redeem mankind from sin is different from the modality of grace in the soul of an Incarnate God who might be sent as the Head of a race of men who persevered in original justice. The modality of mercy, for example, is inseparable from the grace of Christ in the present order.

Secondly, even the fulness of Christ escapes us and must in turn be manifested in those who have received of His fulness. This is the mystery hidden in the words of St. Paul to the Colossians:⁴ "I am filling up on my part the deficiency of the sufferings of Christ in my flesh, for the sake of His Body, which is the Church;" and to the Ephesians:⁵ "And He subjected all things under His feet, and He made Him Supreme Head of the Church, which is His Body, the complement of Him, who in all things is made complete by means of us all."

The same law of variety and multiplicity holds then in regard to Christ and His members as holds in the whole universe in regard to God. We must remember though that it is not variety as such that is good but the order manifested in variety. And, let us repeat, ordered variety is brought about radically in the member of Christ by sacramental grace.

³ *Summa Theol.*, I, q. 20, a. 4, ad 1um: "Dicendum quod Deus Christum diligit non solum plus quam totum humanum genus, sed etiam magis quam totam universitatem creaturarum. . . ."

⁴ I, 24.

⁵ I, 22-23.

THE MULTIPLE FACETS OF SACRAMENTAL GRACE⁶

The mind of the theologian is capable of knowing that there is one reality, one *res significata* that corresponds to the term "sacramental grace"; it is also aware that the full reality of sacramental grace can be explicated only by several concepts.

Sacramental grace is a modality of sanctifying grace and of the virtues and gifts, determined by God in view of the special effects He wishes produced in the Christian life and of the state of human nature in the men who are to produce these effects. The modality is also the foundation of the title to actual graces needed by men to bring to fruition the finality impressed in sanctifying grace by sacramental grace. The modality is effected through the instruments chosen by Christ to effect it, the seven sacraments. And since Christ did institute seven sacraments, there are seven modalities, seven sacramental graces.

The *res significata* by the term sacramental grace is then the modality brought about by God in sanctifying grace through the sacraments, which modality has been carefully predetermined by God in view of the condition of the subject—man deprived of original justice—and the special effects of the Christian life, that is, the special effects God wishes to produce in and through men in this earthly life, although some of them will persist into the next life, and all will have repercussions there.

This modality of sanctifying grace, like sanctifying grace itself,

⁶ The following recent studies on sacramental grace have been indispensable helps in writing this section:

Lawrence P. Everett, C.S.S.R. *The Nature of Sacramental Grace*. Washington, D. C., 1948.

Charles B. Crowley, O.P. "The Role of Sacramental Grace in the Christian Life," in *The Thomist*, II (1940) 4.

George W. Shea. "A Survey of the Theology of Sacramental Grace," in *Proceedings of the Eighth Annual Convention of the Catholic Theological Society of America*. Baltimore, Md., 1953.

Charles A. Schleck, C.S.C. "On Sacramental Grace," in *Revue de l'Université d'Ottawa*, XXIV (1954) 4.

"St. Thomas on the Nature of Sacramental Grace," in *The Thomist*, XVIII (1955) 1-2.

Robert R. Masterson, O.P. "Sacramental Graces: Modes of Sanctifying Grace," in *The Thomist*, XVIII (1955) 3.

is only the root of the full flowering God intends to produce in men. It has its effect in the very nature of man, beginning the healing of that nature and ordering it, as only a nature can be ordered, remotely, to the special effects of the Christian life. For these special effects to be actually attained, the healing and the ordering must be extended to the potencies of man, by a modification of the virtues and gifts. This modification is brought about in two ways: (1) by the naturally prior modification of sanctifying grace, for the virtues and gifts that flow from sanctifying grace would carry the modification of that grace;⁷ (2) by the impulses of special actual graces, to which man has a right through sacramental grace, whereby God directs the development of the modification already wrought in sanctifying grace and the virtues and gifts.

Much could be said about all these aspects of sacramental grace, but I should like to concentrate on the basic aspect—the modification of sanctifying grace, which produces a certain healing of the nature and an ordering of sanctifying grace to certain special effects.

As has been recently pointed out by Father Masterson, O.P.,⁸ St. Thomas' doctrine on modes throws considerable light on his doctrine of sacramental grace, especially in the *Summa Theologiae*, where, without abandoning his teaching that sacramental grace is a remedy for sin, he emphasizes that it is a certain divine help for attaining special effects in the Christian life.

In the opusculum, *De Propositionibus Modalibus*,⁹ St. Thomas defines "mode" very broadly as "a determination adjoining something." Since a mode is a determination, only what is determinable can be modified. Hence modes are excluded from God, but they are found in all created beings. In the *Q. D. de Veritate*,¹⁰ St. Thomas states:

Wheresoever there is something received there must be a mode since what is received is limited according to the recipient: and

⁷ *IV Sent.*, d. 1, q. 1, a. 4, qu. 5: "Et ita patet quod gratia quam sacramentum directe continet, differt a gratia quae est in virtutibus et donis; quamvis etiam illam gratiam per quandam continuationem contineant."

⁸ *Art. cit.*, n. 6.

⁹ *Opuscula Omnia* (Ed. Mandonnet) Vol. IV, p. 505.

¹⁰ Q. 21, a. 6, ad 5um.

therefore since created being, essential and accidental, is received, mode is found not only in accidental things but in substantial things.

Since it is always form that is received, it is form that is the subject of mode. But since mode implies "determination according to a certain measure,"¹¹ the form cannot measure itself, but must be measured by something extrinsic. "To a form there is pre-required a determination or commensuration to its principles, whether material or efficient; and this is signified by mode."¹²

To quote Father Masterson in his application of these principles to sacramental grace:

Applied to the sacraments this means that if the grace produced through their instrumentality is to attain the end ordained by Christ in their institution, . . . it must possess not only the essential notes of sanctifying grace, but also a mode enabling it to accomplish the sacramental effects in a manner conformable to the intention of the principal agent, who in this case is God Himself.¹³

Note the introduction of the final cause, which must be considered when the efficient cause is an intellectual agent.

One further point must be made. If sacramental grace is a mode of sanctifying grace brought about by commensuration to its extrinsic principles, which of the two principles—man, the subject of grace, or God, the cause of grace—actually impose the mode? Certainly not the subject, but the Efficient Cause, Who also takes into consideration the condition of the subject. This means that the mode is in the action of the divine cause, else it would not be produced in the effect. Now, while there is no mode in the action of the First Cause, if we consider His absolute power (He can do anything with creatures short of contradiction), when He acts according to His ordinary power, He imposes a mode on His own action that is reproduced in the effect. But how do we know what mode God has placed on His action? We don't, always; but in the case of the

¹¹ *Summa Theol.*, I-II, q. 49, a. 2.

¹² *Summa Theol.*, I, q. 5, a. 5.

¹³ *Art. cit.*, p. 336-7.

sacraments we do know, for as Father Masterson points out: "The effect produced through their instrumentality is limited by their supernatural signification, the formal element of the sacramental instrument, producing in sanctifying grace the new mode which is termed 'sacramental grace'."¹⁴

St. Thomas makes this same point in speaking of the sacrament of Baptism, which, he says, "has the power to take away the penalties of the present life: yet it does not take them away during the present life, but by its power they will be taken away from the just in the resurrection."¹⁵ Obviously, Baptism has this power as an instrument in the hands of God, Who has determined to limit its power in this life. While the sacramental grace of Baptism does not remove the rebellion of the flesh, it does, St. Thomas says elsewhere,

effect this result, that the penalties which remain no longer dominate the person; that they become, on the contrary, more subject to him, and that he might use them to his own advantage, making them serve as an opportunity for virtue and an occasion of humility.¹⁶

This effect is not confined to Baptism, but is also assigned to the other sacraments.¹⁷

Here we get a preliminary glimpse of the possibilities for diversity inhering in sacramental grace.

There are the diversities of special effects that God wishes to produce in the lives of His children. These effects will be produced more or less perfectly, according to the designs of God and the co-operation of the faithful. I should like to emphasize that these are effects produced in men here below in imitation of the life of Christ.

Each effect will find diverse obstacles in the subject—man deprived of original justice. The special effect of Confirmation, e.g., will be hindered by "weakness" in human nature; the special effect of Matrimony, by "concupiscence." And not by the general condition known as "concupiscence," but by a special modification of it

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 351.

¹⁵ *Summa Theol.*, III, q. 69, a. 3.

¹⁶ *IV Sent.*, d. 4, q. 2, a. 1, qu. 3.

¹⁷ E. G., Confirmation, *IV Sent.*, d. 4, q. 3, a. 1; Extreme Unction, *Summa Theol.*, Suppl., q. 30, a. 1, c. et ad 2um.

that is found in those who are joined in matrimony. Certainly, concupiscence acts differently (or, more accurately, tends to act differently) in two people who have the right to carnal union and live in close intimacy, than in one who has dedicated himself to God through perpetual chastity. As St. Thomas points out: "Both guilt and punishment are diversified . . . according to the different states of men and their relationships."¹⁸ And again, he explicitly requires a special remedy against sexual concupiscence: "first, because by this concupiscence not only the person, but the nature, is infected; secondly, by reason of its vehemence whereby it clouds the reason."¹⁹

If, finally, we allow for individual diversity in the sexual dispositions of man, we begin to see how in the case of Matrimony alone, God produces great variety in the supernatural world of grace.

THE STRUCTURE OF SACRAMENTAL MATRIMONY

If the chief text on the nature of Baptism were something like the following hidden away in an Epistle of St. Paul: "This is a great mystery; I mean in respect to the death and resurrection of the Lord," we would be in an analogous position with regard to that sacrament, as we are in regard to the sacrament of Matrimony. Whether we maintain (as we must) that the Pauline text only insinuates the sacramentality of Matrimony,²⁰ or (as we may) go further and maintain that it implicitly contains the revelation of its sacramentality,²¹ we can say that given the sacramental status of Matrimony, the words of St. Paul reveal quite clearly the intention of Our Lord when He elevated the natural institution of Matrimony to the dignity of a sacrament. And it is only in the light of that intention that we can discover the precise mode of sanctifying grace that is conferred by the sacrament of Matrimony.

To make my position as clear as possible from the start, I should like to begin with suggesting the following as a definition of the sacrament of Matrimony:

¹⁸ *Summa Theol.*, III, q. 65, a. 1, ad 2um.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, ad 5um.

²⁰ Cf., Council of Trent, Session XXIV. Denz-Bann., 969.

²¹ Cf., e.g. *Sacrae Theologiae Summa*, Vol. IV, pp. 766-770 (Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, Matriti, 1953).

Matrimony is a sacrament of the New Law, instituted by Christ, in which the expressed consent of two baptized, legitimate persons of the opposite sex is used by God for elevating the conjugal bond into a permanent symbol of the union between Christ and His Church and for conferring a special grace that heals the wounds of sin that might be obstacles to the bond and orders the partners to a common life of virtue such as is required by the bond.

This definition contains the traditional elements:

The *sacramentum tantum* is the expressed consent of the two baptized, legitimate persons of the opposite sex.

The *res et sacramentum* is the elevated conjugal bond that is to be a permanent (that is, until death) symbol of the union between Christ and His Church.

The *res tantum* is sacramental grace, which has:

- (1) the direct effect of healing the wounds of sin that are obstacles to conjugal union and ordering the two partners to that union.
- (2) the concomitant effect of a title to actual graces appropriate to the married state.
- (3) the consequent modification of those infused virtues needed to lead a common life.
- (4) the end result—a life of virtue that manifests with great variety in each Christian family the bond of union that exists between Christ and His Church.

This definition makes explicit elements that are present in the usual definitions of Matrimony. Yet, obviously, the emphasis is different. It suggests that the principal effect of the sacrament of Matrimony is the bond, strengthened immeasurably and elevated into a supernatural symbol of a supernatural reality—the unity of Christ and His Church. It suggests, further, that sacramental graces, in all its phases, is given for the sake of the bond. In sum, it suggests that the structure of Matrimony is similar to Holy Orders, in which the principal effect is the “priestly power” (*potestas*

sacerdotalis) and the sacramental grace is ordered to the fitting use of the power.²²

Such a suggestion is founded on the express opinion of St. Thomas, when he discusses the sacramental grace of Matrimony. Matrimony, says the Angelic Doctor, when contracted in the faith of Christ, is able to confer the grace needed to accomplish all the works that Matrimony requires. And the proof of this is the principle that whenever God confers a special faculty on someone, He gives him the help needed to fulfill the functions attached to that faculty. "Therefore, since in Matrimony man receives by divine institution the faculty to use his wife for the begetting of children, he also receives the grace without which he cannot becomingly do so; just as we have said of the sacrament of Orders (Suppl. q. 35, a. 1)." And so, concludes St. Thomas, grace is "the last thing contained in this sacrament."²³

The same point is brought out by St. Thomas in his discussion of the three "goods of Matrimony."²⁴ The "sacrament," which is clearly the indissoluble bond, comes out first in dignity, since "it belongs to Matrimony inasmuch as it is a sacrament of grace." It is also, in a very determinate sense, the most essential, because, "indivisibility, which 'sacrament' implies, belongs to Matrimony *secundum se*, whereas "offspring" and "fidelity" are consequent to the bond. It is only the "intention of having children" and the "intention of keeping faith" that can be compared with the "sacrament," and then the "intention of having children" is first, for the "sacrament" and "fidelity" are ordered by God to the "good of the offspring."

According to Father Joyce, S.J.,²⁵ this view of Christian Marriage is also found in St. Augustine:

St. Augustine in more than one passage tells us that Christian Marriage confers a threefold benefit on those who enter it—

²² *Summa Theol.*, Suppl., q. 34, a. 2, ad 1um: "Wherefore it follows that inward character itself is essentially and principally the sacrament of Order." And ad 2um: "On the other hand, Order denotes power principally. Wherefore the character which is a spiritual power is included in the definition of Order, but not in that of Baptism."

²³ *Summa Theol.*, Suppl., q. 42, a. 3.

²⁴ *Summa Theol.*, Suppl., q. 49, a. 3.

²⁵ *Christian Marriage* (London, 1948), p. 150.

proles, fides, sacramentum. Two of these, the blessing of children, and the blessing of mutual fidelity belong to marriage even outside the Church. But the third benefit, the indissolubility consequent on its sacred symbolism (for *sacramentum* as here employed has this meaning, and is not used in its technical sense of "a sacrament") is, at least in its full perfection, peculiar to matrimony within the Catholic Church. But he insists strongly that the consecration thus acquired by Christian Marriage reacts on the other two benefits, and invests them with a new excellence. . . . Every aspect of marriage is thus elevated by the sacred character which the Christian revelation assigns to it.

Now it seems to me, that this is not the way in which the structure of Christian Marriage is presented by contemporary theologians. Take, for example, Father Doronzo, in his volume *De Sacramentis in Genere*. Speaking of the bond, he notes that it is the *res et sacramentum*: "it has the character of *res*, inasmuch as it is signified and caused by the external rite; it has the character of *sacramentum*, inasmuch as the contracting partners consent, not to any kind of bond, but to a sacred bond, to a bond elevated by the sacramental grace annexed to it to the dignity of a sign of the union of Christ with His Church."²⁶

Father Doronzo distinguishes two formalities in the sacrament of Matrimony—the natural contract and the sacramental rite. From these two formalities two effects spring—the bond and grace. If Matrimony is considered under the aspect of the bond, grace is ordered to the bond, for it is given as an aid to bearing the burdens and protecting the rights originating from the bond. If Matrimony is considered as a sacrament, then the bond is ordered to grace, for the smallest degree of grace surpasses any natural good.²⁷ Notice that in this view the bond is not at all affected intrinsically by the sacrament.

Something similar seems to be the position of other contemporary theologians, although none express themselves as clearly as Father Doronzo. For example, Father Carney says:

²⁶ *De Sacramentis in Genere* (Milwaukee, 1946), p. 327.

²⁷ *Op. Cit.*, p. 335.

From this it can be seen that Our Lord did not institute a new outward sign as a basis of the sacrament. He merely accepted a sign which is of necessity an element of every matrimonial contract. To this external expression of consent, then, he added a special significance and effect, viz, the power to signify and confer an inward effect of grace.²⁸

Here, again, the bond is passed over and only grace is mentioned. But the difficulty with this formulation is a hidden contradiction. How are we to reconcile the two statements: "Our Lord did not institute a new outward sign," and "He added a special significance." To add a special significance to a sign changes the sign. We might fall back on Father Doronzo's explanation and say that there are two formal significations and two distinct effects, but this runs into a special difficulty, for it seems to leave the bond intact as a merely natural entity.

There is, however, overwhelming testimony to the fact that the bond is affected in Christian Marriage, and that in two ways. First of all, it is strengthened intrinsically, even apart from grace. Secondly, it is the bond that primarily symbolizes the union of Christ and His Church, once again, even apart from grace. These two changes in the bond are mysteriously connected and so the testimonies cited will now stress one aspect and now another.

We are all acquainted with the passage from the Council of Trent in which the Fathers of the Council speak of the passion of Christ as meriting for us the grace "to confirm this indissoluble unity."²⁹ The Code of Canon Law speaks of a special firmness because of the sacrament.³⁰

The Pronouncements of the Roman Pontiffs provide further testimony.³¹

²⁸ *The Purposes of Christian Marriage* (Catholic Un. Press, 1950), pp. 73-74.

²⁹ Session XXIV. Denz-Bann. 969.

³⁰ Can. 1013.

³¹ I am deeply indebted to Sr. M. Augustella, C.S.C., of St. Mary's College, Notre Dame, Ind., and her associates for permitting me to make extensive use of a series of volumes they are preparing for publication: *Studies in Sacred Theology*, First Series: *The Sacraments: II, Sacramental Grace*; VII, *Marriage: A Great Sacrament*. Unless otherwise indicated, translations of pontifical documents and passages from the Fathers are taken from this work.

Innocent III (*Quanto te magis*, May 1, 1199—letter to Ugo, Bishop of Ferrar) "Between believers, however, Matrimony is both true and ratified, because the sacrament of faith, which was received once for all is never lost, but it ratifies the sacrament of Matrimony, so that the latter sacrament remains in the spouses as long as the former sacrament remains."

Pius VIII (Encyclical *Traditi Humilitati*, May 24, 1829) "For it is certain knowledge that this conjunction of Matrimony, of which God is the author, signifies a perpetual and supreme conjunction of Christ the Lord with the Church, and that this closest of associations between man and wife is a sacrament, that is, a sacred sign of Christ's immortal love towards His Bride."

Leo XIII (Encyclical *Arcanum divinae sapientiae*, February 10, 1880)³² This Pontiff indicates that even before Christ, Matrimony was a "foreshadowing" of the Incarnation. (19) Christ raised it "from a rite of nature to be a sacrament" (39), "in a wondrous way, making Marriage an example of the mystical union between Himself and His Church." (9) Most explicitly, Leo XIII places the significance of Matrimony in the bond: "Marriage, moreover, is a sacrament, because it is a holy sign which gives grace, showing forth an image of the mystical nuptials of Christ with the Church. But the form and image of these nuptials is shown precisely by the very bond of that most close union in which man and woman are bound together in one; which bond is nothing else but the marriage itself." (24)³³

In an earlier letter (*Ingens nobis*, June 1, 1879) the same Pontiff had stated: "From the beginning, God Himself, the Supreme artificer of nature, ordained through this union both the propagation of the human race and the constitution of the family, and, elevating it in the law of grace to the dignity of a sacrament, rendered this same union even more noble."

Pius XI (Encyclical *Ubi arcano*, December 23, 1922) states that it is Christ Himself who made marriage "a great sacrament," "which He willed should be a figure, both holy and effective of holiness, of

³² Translations of passages from this Encyclical are taken from the text published by The Paulist Press. Numbers refer to that edition.

³³ *Op. cit.*, p. 15.

that perpetually abiding bond by Which He is united with His Church."

The same Pontiff in the great Encyclical *Casti Conubii*, December 31, 1930,³⁴ after having exposed the natural sacredness of Matrimony, continues: "To this must be added that new element of dignity that comes from the sacrament. . . . This religious character of marriage, its sublime signification of grace and of the union between Christ and the Church evidently requires that those about to marry should show a holy reverence towards it. . . ."

Pius XII (Pastoral Instruction, Lent, 1945³⁵) "In Christian marriage the power of the sacrament is joined to the mutual consent of the parties; their 'yes' becomes a source of grace and thus the conjugal bond is invested with that supernatural dignity which makes of it the symbol of the union of Christ and the Church, while with the very sanctification of marriage there redound also upon the family, and through the family on all social life, the beneficent effects of the superior world of grace."

A careful study of the Fathers would, I believe, support the contention that the bond is the central reality of Christian marriage. A few texts will be added here.³⁶

It is very significant that one of the earliest Fathers, known as the Apostle of the *sacramentum unitatis*, refers to Matrimony thus: "It is fitting that those who marry should make their union with the approval of the bishop, that the marriage may be according to the Lord, and not according to lust. Let all things be done in honor of God."³⁷ A full appreciation of this text can be had only when one understands the eminent position of the bishop in the thought of St. Ignatius.

Tertullian: "How beautiful is the yoke of two believers. . . ."³⁸

³⁴ Translations of passages from the Encyclical are taken from the text published by The Paulist Press.

³⁵ Translation in *American Ecclesiastical Review* CXIII (July-Dec. 1945) 464.

³⁶ *Studies in Sacred Theology*, First Series: *The Sacraments: VII; Marriage: A Great Sacrament*.

³⁷ *Epis. ad Polycarpum*, V. (PG V, 724).

³⁸ *Ad uxorem*, II, 9. (PL I, 1416).

which introduces a magnificent passage on the common life of virtue that is expected of the married partners.

St. John Chrysostom, speaking of the fact, with which he seems much impressed, that those to be married leave their parents and are bound to each other, adds: "Seeing that this has also come to pass in Christ and the Church, and most of all there, Paul is struck with amazement and wonder."³⁹ He sums up the whole Christian ception of Matrimony in the words: "Marriage is a type of the presence of Christ."⁴⁰ Inveighing against the excesses in the marriage celebrations of his contemporaries, he cries out: "And you who entertain these things, will you celebrate a mystery of Christ, and invite the devil?"⁴¹

St. Augustine: "Without any doubt, *huius sacramenti res* is that a male and a female, joined in marriage, shall remain inseparable as long as they live. . ."⁴²

St. Cyril of Alexandria: "For it behoved Him who was bringing the nature of man under a new head, and refashioning the whole of it for the better, not only to dispense the blessing to those already called into existence, but also to make ready grace for those to be born and to make holy their way into being."⁴³

It can, then be stated as theologically certain that the bond is affected in Christian marriage. The problem remains to explain how. The last quotation from Pope Pius XII points up an ambiguity in the traditional testimony. The Holy Father states that in the sacrament of Matrimony "their 'yes' becomes a source of grace and thus the conjugal bond is invested with that supernatural dignity which makes of it a symbol of the union of Christ and His Church."⁴⁴

³⁹ *Laus Maximi et quales ducendae sint uxores*, 3. (PG LI, 229).

⁴⁰ *In epist. ad Colossios*, Hom. XII (PG LXII, 389).

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *De Nuptiis et concupiscentia*, I, 10. (PL XLIV, 420).

⁴³ *In Joan.*, II, 1. (PG LXXIII, 224).

⁴⁴ "Nelle nozze cristiane la virtù del Sacramento è congiunta col mutuo consenso degli sposi; il loro 'sì' deviene una sorgente della grazia; et così il vincolo coniugale è insignito di quella dignità soprannaturale che ne fa il simbolo dell'unione di Cristo e della Chiesa, mentre con la santificazione stessa del matrimonio ridondano anche sulla famiglia, e mediante la famiglia su tutta la vita sociale, i benefici effetti del mondo superiori della grazia." AAS, XXXVII, n. 2, p. 34.

On the other hand, we have the statement of Leo XIII: "Marriage is, moreover, a sacrament, because it is a holy sign which gives grace, showing forth an image of the mystical nuptials of Christ with the Church. But the form and image of these nuptials is shown precisely by the very bond of that most close union in which man and woman are bound together in one: which bond is nothing else but the marriage itself."⁴⁵

In the first text, it would seem that it is grace which somehow elevates the bond; in the other, it would seem that the elevation of the bond requires grace that its significance may be brought out.

Since, as theologians, we are still free to accept either position, for the sake of brevity, I shall accept the second position and try to give reasons for its validity. In other words, I believe that the bond itself is intrinsically affected by the sacrament and that sacramental grace is given in view of the bond.

The first change would be in the *sacramentum tantum*, the exterior rite.⁴⁶ Such a change is admitted by theologians when they admit an added signification. Now this added signification need not be a formally distinct signification, as suggested by Father Doronzo. The difference between the signification of the natural rite of matrimony and the sacramental rite is that between the potential and remote, on the one hand, and the actual and proximate on the other. The consent of the two partners has always been potentially and remotely a sign of the will of Christ giving Himself to the Church and the Church giving herself to Christ. But only the baptized can actually and proximately imitate and signify the will of Christ. As St. Thomas states: "Moreover, the consent, properly speaking, signi-

⁴⁵ "Huc accedit, quod ob hanc causam matrimonium est sacramentum, quia est sacrum signum et efficiens gratiam, et imaginem referens mysticarum nuptiarum Christi cum Ecclesia. Istarum autem forma ac figura illo ipso exprimitur summae coniunctionis vinculo, quo vir et mulier inter se conligantur, quodque aliud nihil est, nisi ipsum matrimonium." *ASS*, XII, p. 394.

⁴⁶ "Così il Matrimonio, che sotto la Legge era il tipo e la figura della futura unione di Cristo con la Chiesa, cambiò significato (perchè Dio lo conservò *in ratione signi*) quando questa unione fu consummata sul Golgota; da profetico divenne commemorativo, da speculativo, pratico, da inerte, efficace." *Enciclopedia Cattolica*, VIII, "Matrimonio," by A. Piolanti, c. 409.

fies not the union of Christ with the Church, but His will whereby His union with the Church was brought about."⁴⁷

St. Thomas explicitly states that the union of Christ with His Church is signified by the union of the man and woman.⁴⁸ He also makes it quite clear that marriage is essentially a kind of joining (*coniunctio*).⁴⁹ "Matrimony is the bond by which they are tied formally, not effectively, and so it need not be distinct from the joining."⁵⁰ This is the first perfection of Marriage, as he explains, that which gives it its specific perfection: "Now the form of Matrimony consists in a certain inseparable union of souls, by which husbands and wife are pledged by a bond of mutual affection that cannot be sundered."⁵¹

This *coniunctio*, this *vinculum* is a great good prepared by God for His children.⁵² It is a permanent, *common good*, which, invisible in itself, should be made as visible as possible in the lives of those bound by it. It is a common good on both the natural and supernatural levels. It is a good destined by God primarily for the offspring, but capable in a secondary way of perfecting the spouses.

It is a law of created perfection that the common good is a better, because a diviner, good than the private good. God wishes to initiate His children into this law right from the start.⁵³ Since it is

⁴⁷ *Summa Theol.*, Suppl., q. 45, a. 1, ad 2um: "nec consensus, proprie loquendo, coniunctionem Christi ad Ecclesiam significat; sed voluntatem eius qua factum est ut Ecclesiae coniungeretur."

⁴⁸ *IV Contra Gentiles*, c. 78: "per coniunctionem maris et feminae coniunctio Christi et Ecclesiae figuratur."

⁴⁹ *Summa Theol.*, Suppl., q. 44, a. 1.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, ad 1um: "Dicendum quod matrimonium est vinculum quo ligantur formaliter, non effective. Ideo non oportet quod sit aliud a coniunctione."

⁵¹ *Summa Theol.*, III, q. 29, a. 2: "consistit in quadam indivisibili coniunctione animarum, per quam unus coniugum indivisibiliter alteri fidem servari tenetur."

⁵² "We concede that marriage has its own goodness, not because it procreates children . . . but because it procreates socially." St. Augustine, *De sancta virginitate*, XII, 12 (PL XL, 401).

⁵³ "Man, as Plato first saw and Aristotle then elaborated, cannot be satisfied by a life the meaning of which is only his own small self. Thus we are confronted with a fresh contradiction in human existence: Man must give himself to something greater than himself to have himself wholly; he must lose himself to gain himself." J. Messner *Ethics and Facts*, St. Louis, Mo., 1952, p. 95.

a law that is more perfectly realized in the supernatural than in the natural order, God wishes His baptized children to be initiated into it in a special way. That is why He elevated the marriage bond into a sign of the union of Christ and His Church. That is why He wishes it to be continuously visible—a living image of union. It can remain visible by reference back to the expressed consent that brought it into being in the first place, but more importantly it can be made visible in the lives of the married couple, though only with the help of sacramental grace.

We should note that the *coniunctio*, or *vinculum* is not itself a principle of operation. Hence the distinction between the end of the work itself (*finis operis*) and the end of the worker (*finis operantis*) has no meaning in respect to it. These distinctions are applicable to the second perfection of matrimony, which, according to St. Thomas, is carnal union and all the other mutual services of husband and wife in the task of rearing their children. No, the bond is a great good enshrined especially in Christian Marriage, which can be shared by all the family. Even Christian parents cannot bestow divine life on their offspring: but when the child returns from the church a member of Christ's Mystical Body, they are able to provide for him an environment that is a living symbol of the unity that pervades the body of Christ and of the more perfect unity that will exist between Christ and His members and the Father, for all eternity.

THE SACRAMENTAL GRACE OF MATRIMONY

A. *Modification of Habitual Grace*

We are now, I hope, in a position to penetrate into the nature of the sacramental grace of Matrimony. We have already seen that all sacramental grace is a modification of habitual grace for certain effects God wishes to produce in the Christian life. We have seen also that in Marriage God wishes to produce a visible manifestation of the union of Christ and His Church. It would follow, then, that the special modification wrought by the sacrament of Matrimony

in habitual grace is a "grace of conjugal union" (*gratia unionis coniugalis*), a grace that will fundamentally dispose the man and the woman to a life that will be *manifestative* of the union already existing in the bond.

This is not an entirely new conception. St. Thomas states: "Grace is conferred by this sacrament whereby they belong to the union of Christ and the Church; this is most necessary for them, for they must preoccupy themselves with carnal and worldly matters, but in such a manner as not to destroy their union with Christ and the Church."⁵⁴

The most explicit exponent of this concept is the sixteenth century theologian, Peter de Ledesma. "Hence the proper and particular effect of this sacrament is grace given as a bond or a joining."⁵⁵ Peter is clearly referring to habitual grace, for he places an objection with reference to it: "Grace itself, since it is in the essence of the soul, inheres in the soul and has an order to it; therefore, it cannot bring about a joining with another, since it is not of its nature to imply an order to something extrinsic."⁵⁶ To this he replies: "Even though grace is in the essence of the soul, inheres in it, is ordered to it, nevertheless it can bring about a joining with another, an ordering to the other partner. The general ratio of grace is that it inhere in the soul, uniting it with God, who is the Spouse of the soul; the particular ratio of the sacramental grace of this sacra-

⁵⁴ *IV Contra Gentiles*, c. 78: "Per hoc sacramentum gratia conferatur, per quam ad unionem Christi et Ecclesiae pertineant; quod eis maxime necessarium est ut sic carnalibus et terrenis intendunt quod a Christo et Ecclesia non disiungantur." Scotus speaks of the "gratiosa coniunctio contrahentium." *Reportatio Par.*, IV, d. 28, n. 24.

⁵⁵ "Unde hoc sacramentum habet pro proprio et particulari effectu gratiam datam coniugibus per modum vinculi et coniunctionis." *Tractatus de magno matrimonii sacramento*. Salmanticae, 1592. Quoted by Johantobers, *De Praecipuis Effectibus Gratiae Matrimonii penes Theologos saeculi XVI*. Verona, 1940, p. 28.

⁵⁶ "Nam ipsa gratia, cum sit in essentia animae, inhaeret ipsi animae et habet ordinem ad ipsam, ergo non potest causari per modum coniunctionis cum alio, siquidem non potest in suo esse dicere ordinem ad alium extrinsecum." *Ibid.*, Johantobers, p. 29.

ment, is that the uniting be not only with God, but also with the other partner."⁵⁷

The sacramental grace of Matrimony, then, would be a modification of sanctifying grace in the souls of the spouses, elevating their natural inclination to each other and giving them a supernatural ordering to the virtues and operation that will perfect their union. In other words, it would bring about a radical ordering to the special effects God wishes to produce in Christian married life, which, as we saw, is to be a living image of the union between Christ and His Church.

B. *The Remedy against Concupiscence*

In order to direct, even radically, the spouses to the special effects of Christian married life, sacramental grace must overcome to some degree the obstacles on the part of the natures of the two who are joined.

Even in the *Summa*, St. Thomas maintains that: "Christ's power operates in the sacraments by way of healing and expiation."⁵⁸

The sacrament of Matrimony is not ordered to the remission of sin, although, *per accidens*, it may remit a mortal sin under the same conditions as other sacraments of the living.

Would it be possible to maintain that the sacrament of Matrimony has special satisfactory value; that is, that it remits the temporal punishment due to all the sins of the couple being married that have been committed against the good of Matrimony—solitary sins, for example, sins with others, sins with each other during courtship? It certainly seems fitting that God would, as it were, wipe the slate clean and give them both a new start when they are making a generous donation of themselves to each other. If this effect

⁵⁷ "Quod quamvis gratia sit in essentia animae et inhaereat illi et dicat ordinem ad illam, nihilominus tamen potest causari per modum coniunctionis cum alio et cum ordine ad alium coniugem. Ration enim generalis gratiae est quod inhaeret ipsi animae coniungendo illam ad Deum, qui est animae sponsus, ratio vero particularis gratiae sacramentalis huius sacramenti est, quod sit coniunctio non solum cum Ipso Deo, verum etiam altero coniuge." *Ibid.*, Johantobers, p. 29.

⁵⁸ *Summa Theol.*, III, q. 52, a. 8, ad 2um. Cf. also, III, q. 62, a. 2, ad 2um.

cannot be assigned to the sacrament *ex opere operato*, it certainly seems possible *ex opere operantis*.

But we are more concerned with the healing effect of the sacrament of Matrimony—the remedy it provides for concupiscence. In a luminous text,⁵⁹ St. Thomas explains the total effect of the sacrament of Matrimony on concupiscence, and, as we pointed out above, he means concupiscence as it presents itself in the marriage situation.⁶⁰ There are, he says, three ways in which concupiscence may be remedied—one on the part of concupiscence itself, two on the part of the act of concupiscence. The remedies on the part of the act are available in any marriage. They are: (1) “that the act to which concupiscence inclines, should extrinsically lack culpability.” Concupiscence is inclined to any act that will give pleasure, but especially to carnal union because of the vehemence of the pleasure involved. The “goods of Matrimony” justify eliciting an act that will bring such great pleasure, for in the marriage situation the pleasure is ordered to goods that have value in themselves.

(2) “That culpable actions should be hindered.” The simple fact of being married, while it provides a setting for the legitimate use of sexual pleasure, does not of itself insure against disordered acts. Yet marriage does provide an opportunity to satisfy concupiscence and to do it reasonably.⁶¹ In other words, through the ordered use of sexual pleasure the virtue of conjugal chastity (both infused and acquired) is more firmly radicated in the concupiscible appetite, which is gradually made more submissive to reason.

(3) It is only the sacrament of Matrimony that provides a radical remedy for concupiscence “*ex parte ipsius concupiscentiae*.” Only the grace of Matrimony can penetrate deep enough “to repress it in its root.”

It will be recalled that in the *Commentary on the Sentences*,

⁵⁹ *Summa Theol.*, Suppl., q. 42, a. 3, ad 4um.

⁶⁰ *Matrimonium est in remedium concupiscentiae, quae coarctatur ad determinatam personam.* In *I Cor.*, vii, lect. 1. Cf. also *IV Sent.*, d. 2, q. 1, a. 2, ad 8um.

⁶¹ “We are not easily caught by lust for things we are able to enjoy, since their availability permits the soul to be at ease.” St. John Chrysostom, *De virginitate*, XXXIV (PG XLVIII, 556).

where St. Thomas held the simplified opinion that sacramental grace was merely a remedy for the defects left by past sin, original or actual, he admitted that these defects were hidden, nameless.⁶² Now obviously, he was not thinking of the classical "wounds" of original sin—ignorance, malice, weakness, and concupiscence—for these are obvious and namable, since they are defects in the potencies. So it would seem that the "hidden defects" are in the very nature, though only from its ordination to action; they are the radical disorder that infects the complex nature of man. And sacramental graces are ordered by God to overcome somewhat these defects of sin in the nature.

There are limits, set by God, to the power of sacramental grace. Thus, no nature, except Mary's, is so healed that it does not pass on original sin by the act of generation. No nature, except by a special grace of God, such as Mary also possessed, is free from some rebellion of the lower nature against the higher. But sacramental grace can do much to subdue the lower nature and submit it to the workings of grace.

In this regard, it is quite likely that the sacramental grace of Matrimony would also heal that strange concomitant of the sexual instinct in the male—the instinct of domination—as well as the weakness of sinful submission on the part of the female.

One final point before concluding this section: I should like to have developed this question of sacramental grace as a remedy in terms of the modern concept of "sublimation." There are some suggestive pages written by Messner in his *Ethics and Facts*,⁶³ during which he states: "From our analysis of the reality of human existence in its various aspects, it seems that 'sublimation' is required even for the fulfillment of sex-inspired love itself."⁶⁴ If "sublimation" is required, then, it would seem that the sacramental grace of marriage would give the married couple the means to obtain it.

⁶² IV Sent., d. 1, q. 1, a. 4, qu. 5. Cf. also, *De Verit.*, q. 27, a. 5, ad 12um; *Summa Theol.*, III, a. 62, a. 2.

⁶³ *Ethics and Facts*, pp. 59-67.

⁶⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 63.

SUMMARY

We have been discussing what I take to be the *res significata* by the term "sacramental grace of Matrimony." It is the radical modification produced by the sacramental rite in the habitual grace of the two being wed, which orders that grace to the special effects in the Christian life demanded by the bond that unites them and remedies somewhat the defects of nature that might prevent them from submitting to the promptings of grace. As St. Ephraem expressed it: "But marriage sits crushing adultery under its feet and fostering sanctity in its bosom. Adultery has been made the footstool under its feet and sanctity the crown upon its head."⁶⁵

C. *Right to Actual Grace and Special Increase of Infused Virtues*

The modification produced by God in habitual grace through the sacrament is only the beginning.⁶⁶ The special effects God wishes to produce in the lives of His children are virtuous actions required by the determinate situation in which they have been placed. Such virtuous actions come from an increase of the infused and acquired virtues and such increase is inspired and directed by God through actual graces.

It is here that the principle recalled at the start of this paper—the principle of diversity—finds full expression. Not that diversity is absent from the radical modification of sanctifying grace, but it is made visible, as it were, in the virtuous lives of married couples. The Protestant theologian, R. Niebuhr, has recently observed: "Thus each marriage relation takes place upon the common ground of hetero-sexuality. But each such partnership is a unique and distinctive drama of mutual adjustment which exhibits some unrepeatable elements. It becomes a moral and artistic achievement

⁶⁵ *Hymni de confessoribus et martyribus*, Hymnus IV. In *Sancti Ephrem Syri hymni et sermones*. Edited by Thomas J. Lamy. Quoted in *Studies in Sacred Theology* First Series: *The Sacraments: VII, Matrimony: a Great Sacrament*.

⁶⁶ *Summa Theol.*, I-II, q. 49, a. 3, ad 3um: "Dicendum quod sanitas dicitur habitus, vel habitualis dispositio, in ordine ad naturam . . . In quantum tamen natura est principium actus, ex consequenti importat ordinem ad actum."

rather than a scientific one, though science must master many of the common and general elements at its foundation. . . ." ⁶⁷

Not much need be said of sacramental grace as the basis of, or as a title to, actual grace.⁶⁸ If it were nothing more than a title, the writing of this paper would have been considerably simplified. Unless one wished to conduct a phenomenological investigation of existing marriages to determine the various situations in which actual grace is needed.

The special increase of certain infused virtues seems to follow, first of all from the radical modification of habitual grace, and, secondly, from the play of actual grace. Speaking of sacramental grace in the *Summa*, St. Thomas says that it adds "over and above grace commonly accepted and over and above the virtues and gifts a special divine helps."⁶⁹ This deliberate separation of "grace commonly accepted," which seems to signify sanctifying grace, and "the virtues and gifts," indicates that the "special divine help" is added to both. This could only mean some special modification of the infused virtues and gifts. And this seems to be called for in Christian Marriage.

From the moment that the family comes into existence, the need for domestic prudence arises. There are also special applications of justice in all its phases. This is true of the husband, who is the "head" of the family;⁷⁰ and of the wife, who must "govern her household."⁷¹ There is a distinctive prudence for the man and the woman, and hers is subordinated to his. Moreover, it is required for all the actions that they perform together as members of the conjugal society. Of course, there will be plenty of opportunity for

⁶⁷ *The Self and the Dramas of History*. New York, 1955. pp. 33.

⁶⁸ "We may say, then, that since the seventeenth century, at the latest, there has been almost universal agreement that the *jus ad auxilia actualia* belongs to the notion of sacramental grace." George W. Shea, *art. cit.*, pp. 119-120.

⁶⁹ ". . . super gratiam communiter dictam et super virtutes et dona quoddam divinum auxilium." *Summa Theol.*, III, q. 62, a. 2.

⁷⁰ *I. Cor.*, xi, 1-3.

⁷¹ *I Tim.*, v, 11-15. According to St. John Chrysostom the wife is "a ruler of second rank." *In epist. ad Ephesios*, V; homilia XX, 4 (PG LXII, 140). He recommends that the husband say to his young wife: "You share in the government of my home." *Ibid.*, 8 (PG 146).

individual action in matters that do not concern the welfare of the family.⁷²

Then, there is the special modification of charity. The Council of Trent declared that the sacrament of Matrimony perfects the natural love of the spouses.⁷³ This natural love is a special modification of love and can be perfected by a special modification of charity. As we have seen, this modification is rooted in the modification of habitual grace by sacramental grace, but its full flower is seen in conjugal charity. The love of Christian spouses for each other is as it is because they are related to each as Christ and His Church.

There are finally the special requirements of conjugal chastity. This too was started by the healing effects of sacramental grace, which removed the obstacles to a higher development of chaste wedlock.

A word might be added about the special gifts of the Holy Spirit needed by the wedded couple. Certainly the Gift of Knowledge would enable them to penetrate in a supernatural fashion the meaning and value of the worldly goods with which they have to concern themselves. The many puzzling situations that can arise, especially in a large family, could be handled with ease if the assistance of the Gift of Counsel were available. The father, who is the head of the family, in whom authority resides primarily, must make certain that he is subjected to someone greater than himself; the Gift of Piety would develop a profound sense of filial subjection to the Father in heaven.

In conclusion, I wish to refer briefly to another point I'd like to see further developed. It is based on a suggestion in one of the chapters of a volume edited by Father Albert Plé, O.P., *Love of Our Neighbor*. The chapter is entitled: "Psychoanalysis and Love of One's Neighbor," by Dr. Nodet. "Analytical experience constantly makes one assertion which does not, I think, contradict traditional

⁷² "Just as the civic life denotes not the individual act of this or that one, but the things that concern the common action of the citizens, so the conjugal life is nothing else than a particular kind of companionship pertaining to that common action; wherefore, as regards this same life the partnership of married persons is always indivisible, although divisible as regards the acts belonging to each party." *Summa Theol.*, Suppl., q. 44, a. 2, ad 3um.

⁷³ Session XXIV. Denz.-Bann., 969.

philosophy: 'Man's natural and specific vocation is marriage.'"⁷⁴ In other words, the normal man and woman is the one who has the capacity to be fully husband and wife, father and mother. He adds: "We cannot insist too often that it is not marriage itself that is a psychological necessity. It is the capacity for marriage which seems to be necessarily linked to the psychic development of the adult, which determines all the various relations with other people."⁷⁵ And finally: "Love is mankind's great business. . . . To be capable of loving genuinely and fully, in the widest and most vital sense of the term, man must be wholly man and woman wholly woman, even if, for reasons of great moment, they make no use of that natural (and sacramental) actualization of love, marriage."⁷⁶

This, then, is the special effect God desired when he raised Matrimony to the dignity of a sacrament—to provide a setting for every child coming into the world, in which he might develop to the full his capacity of loving, both natural and supernatural.

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Digest of the Discussion:

Father Eugene Gallagher, S.J., of Georgetown University, opened the discussion period by asking about the expression "dispositions, seeds of grace" used by Pius XI in *Casti Conubii*. Father wondered whether the seeds of grace were something different from the title to actual graces, whether they might be the virtues and gifts, or something beyond. Father Egan thought it possible that the expression was used to summarize all that went before, as the use of *denique* might indicate. He was rather inclined, however, to think that the seeds of grace would be something more than the mere title to actual graces since this would be only extrinsic whereas seeds and dispositions are intrinsic. Used as a metaphor, the word "seed" would look to something embryonic; it would have meaning in terms of the flower. He thought, therefore, that the seed would refer to a radical modification in the very habitual grace itself; the dispositions would be modifications of the infused virtues which, by actual grace, would develop the seed.

Father Paul Palmer, S.J., of Woodstock, Md., then asked whether the title to actual graces were rooted in sanctifying grace in such a way that if

⁷⁴ London, 1955. p. 140.

⁷⁵ *Loc. cit.*

⁷⁶ *Op. cit.*, p. 142.

sanctifying grace were lost the title would be lost also. Father Egan replied that the title in strict justice would demand sanctifying grace. But he also thought that by the very fact of Christian marriage there might be room for some sort of title in the broad sense, a title in fitness, as it were. It would all depend on whether the bond itself is elevated. Father Egan noted that there is no reason to suppose that everything supernatural would have to go with the loss of sanctifying grace since, after all, faith and hope remain. Father Palmer then asked if Father Egan considered the bond as a juridical entity or a supernatural ontological reality. Both agreed that the bond is a supernatural ontological reality and consequently that the title to actual graces is radicated in the supernatural ontological reality that is the marriage bond. Father Palmer thought that there is an analogy here with the sacrament of Orders: the charismatic gift of the priesthood as a supernatural reality is the reason for the title to the actual graces needed for the exercise of the priestly ministry.

Father Francis Connell, C.S.S.R., of Washington, D. C., then raised the question of the origin of the title to actual graces in those who are baptized subsequent to marriage. Both Father Connell and Father Egan agreed that the bond, at the very moment of Baptism, becomes a supernatural *vinculum* by the direct action of God. Father Connell wondered whether the consent given previously would have any efficacy in bringing this about. Father Egan indicated that the matrimonial consent remains in much the same way as the efficacy of the words of consecration remain for a consecrated host. Thus the matrimonial consent produces the bond but the bond is not the total result. The persistent consent remains in the bond so that God can elevate it at the moment of Baptism and use it as a means to confer grace.

Father Gerard Owens, C.S.S.R., of Woodstock, Ontario, then asked Father Egan whether he would distinguish, in the teaching of St. Thomas, between the title to sanctifying grace and the title to sacramental grace; this distinction, he thought, would seem to be held by the Angelic Doctor in his commentary on the *Sentences*. Father Egan began his reply by pointing out that St. Thomas explicitly states in his commentary on the *Sentences* that the bond is the first effect of the sacrament and that the bond is the disposition and title to sanctifying grace. In the case of unworthy reception, there would still be an exigency for grace but the title to grace would be rooted in the bond. Father Owens pointed his question more directly by asking whether both the title to sanctifying grace and the title to sacramental grace were rooted in the bond. Father Egan said that they would both be so rooted. He elaborated the distinction by pointing out that the Christian life involves more than saving one's soul, the end to which sanctifying grace is ordered. Sacramental grace is ordered more directly to the Christian life here below and, in the case of marriage, this is rooted in the bond.

Father John Sweeney, S.J., of Woodstock, Md., returned to the problem raised earlier by *Father Connell* concerning the elevation of the marriage bond of those baptized after marriage. *Father Sweeney* asked whether this supernaturalization were effected by some special act of divine power or whether it were brought about by a special and unique effect of Baptism. He suggested that the solution might be sought in the complete transformation by Baptism of this man and this woman, these peculiar subjects in this particular married status. *Father Egan* was inclined to agree with this suggestion, remarking that any grace conferred would have to come through some external sign and that the only external sign present seemed to be that of Baptism. Thus everything there would be supernaturalized by Baptism. *Father Connell* then suggested that we might say that God has elevated marriage *qua tale* to the supernatural order: the only reason that the marriage of the unbaptized is not supernatural is that fact that the partners are not baptized; remove this obstacle—non-Baptism—and grace comes. *Father Egan* illuminated this comment by reference to the patristic teaching that the elevation of water in Baptism to the level of an efficacious sign of grace took more, so to speak, than the elevation of matrimonial consent.

At this point, *Father Patrick Sullivan, S.J.*, of Woodstock, asked for further clarification concerning the earlier statement that the sacramental marriage bond is not a juridical entity. Specifically, he wondered whether the natural bond were juridical and, if not, what the nature of this new entity might be. *Father Egan* admitted that the natural bond is a juridical bond but insisted that it is produced by more than the mere consent of the partners. Even naturally speaking, the consent of the two produces something beyond what they would be capable of; the total effect of their consent, the natural bond, is something produced by God *through* the consent of the partners. This natural bond, while it has its juridical aspect, is also remotely and potentially a sign of the union between Christ and His Church. The sacrament ontologically elevates the natural bond so that it becomes an actual sign of the union between Christ and the Church. Thus the bond establishes a real relation between the two who consent; it inheres in the wills of the two partners; yet it is not totally produced by the activity of the human wills but by God Himself through the acts of the two wills. The difference between a natural and supernatural bond would lie in this relation; that is the thing that is changed. Thus a supernatural bond would be proximately a sign of the union of Christ and the Church—as distinct from the remote signification of the natural bond—and would be effected through the consent of two partners who are baptized.

Father Owens asked *Father Egan* whether he meant to imply that marriage from the beginning, from the time of Adam and Eve, was not intended by God to be formally a symbol of the union of Christ and the

Church. Father Egan answered that God had some such intention from the beginning but that the question concerned the status of the symbolism, that surely there would be some difference after the institution of the sacrament. Father Owens suggested that the only difference might well be simply in the causality of grace. The question of the Baptism of two married pagans might be cited here, he thought, particularly with reference to whether or not they were receiving *two* sacraments of the New Law. Either Baptism is causing the grace of two sacraments or else it is removing an obstacle that is preventing the bond of marriage from having the additional note of being a practical sign of grace.

In response to a question from *Father John Pesce, C.P.*, of St. Michael's Monastery, Union City, Father Egan admitted that the whole question of the nature of sacramental grace was basic to the discussion and that his own inclination to follow the view of John of St. Thomas rather than that of Cajetan or Banez had guided his reading of the texts. Father Egan insisted, however, that he had presented weighty documentation for the bond as a symbol in connection with the sacramental grace of matrimony. This, he thought, would tend to support the theory of sacramental grace as including a radical modification even of habitual grace.

Monsignor Joseph C. Fenton of Catholic University then returned the discussion to the problem of the difference between the natural and the sacramental marriage bond. Monsignor Fenton thought that any modification would be in the persons rather than in the relation which, after all, exists between two persons. The exchange of bodily rights and other aspects of the contract would be the same in both cases; the difference would come in the quality or power to perform acts which would be beyond the power of the unbaptized. He based his conclusion on the fact that, while marriage symbolizes the union of Christ and the Church, the purpose of this union with Christ is that the Church be sanctified. Thus before Baptism, a married couple would not be in a position to work for each other's sanctification; after Baptism, they are so capable, their work is directed to this end, their imitability of the union that exists between Christ and the Church is perfected. Thus the change is not in the relation but in the persons. The baptismal character is the *power* to receive the sacraments and this is something the people did not have before. As a result, the relation as such isn't touched but only the people. Father Egan, in reply, insisted that the union of Christ and His Church had as its purpose the sanctification of the members precisely in order to unite Christ and the members. Thus the primary signification of the marriage bond would not only be to sanctify the partners but to manifest this union; the sanctification is ordered to the manifestation of the union. Consequently there is needed an elevation of the bond and not the mere presence of grace. Father Egan added that he could not see how the mere presence of grace would elevate the bond. From the analogy of the character

in some of the sacraments he argued to an effect on the marriage bond itself that would enable it to manifest the union of Christ and the Church. With reference to the objection that only the married persons are affected by the reception of Baptism, Father Egan thought it important to stress that the persons involved are married persons, and that the only thing that brings about a marriage is a bond. Thus an unmarried couple who would adopt children would not constitute a family. The marriage bond exists, therefore, for the supernatural purpose of being a constant image of the union of Christ and the Church, to convey to the couple a sense of the totality of the divine manifestation. On this note, the discussion came to an end.

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