

THE SACRAMENTS AS THE CONTINUING ACTS OF CHRIST

One of the ideas that has been working most fruitfully in recent Catholic philosophy and theology—one that brings us into profound and important contact with the evolutionist character of contemporary thinking—is the idea of finality. Discussion of the eschatological aspect of biblical thought, investigation of the theology of history, study of the development of dogma—all of these are facets of this common thought trend. Today's paper on the continuing action of Christ in the sacraments hopes to draw from this current of theologizing, to study the final causality of the sacraments, to examine a little more closely the link between biblical eschatology and the understanding of the Christian mysteries. Our purpose is not to show that Christ continues to act in the sacraments; this is obvious. Rather, we wish to attempt some answer to the question: what is it that Christ continues to do in the sacraments?

To speak of finality is to bring under discussion the divine intent in creation. That there is a divine purpose guiding in orderly and purposeful manner the development of the world and the course of human history is at the very basis of revealed thought.¹ To the faith vision of the people of Israel, this intent of Yahweh was manifested in the historical events in which they were involved. Their very notion of God was of one who had brought them out of Egypt in the Exodus experience, saved them from the evil of the Pharaoh so that he might bring them to a promised land.² And this primitive experience of their God in act is repeated in varying fashion throughout their centuries-long existence.³

That the action of Yahweh in history is highly personal and

¹ Cf. W. Eichrodt, *Theologie des Alten Testaments* (5th edit., Göttingen, 1957), v. 1, 10-14, 188-9; E. Jacob, *Théologie de l'Ancien Testament*, 28-30.

² Nehemias 9:6ff., Deut. 5:2ff., Jer. 2:6. Cf. G. von Rad, *Theologie des Alten Testaments*, 1 (Munich, 1958), 127.

³ On the Exodus as a paradigm of Israel's religious experience, cf. Eichrodt, *op. cit.*, 309ff.; also J. Guillet, *Thèmes bibliques* (Paris, 1954), 105-108.

intelligent is reflected in the Israelitic notion of the power of Yahweh's word.⁴ It was by his word that the world came into being; it is his word channeled through the human speech of Moses or the prophets that roots up and destroys, builds and plants (Jer 1:10); his word is an irresistible power that comes down like the rains and will not return unfruitful (Is 55:10-11). This word of God is not a dumb force shaping the events of man's life; it is revelation (Amos 3:1-7; 4:13). The very events themselves speak of the God who has chosen Israel and who guides her history (Deut 32). For the Israelite of faith, and therefore in the faith record of Israel's history which is enshrined in the O.T. books, what is important about the things that happened to them is not just the brute fact, but the significance of the fact; and it is this significance which is seen as the deepest causal influence.⁵

What it was that the events of their early history signified was seen by the first centuries of Israel in very superficial fashion. Only with the passage of generations and the maturing experience of suffering and defeat does the deeper significance of exodus and covenant, of kingship and prophecy, of sin and salvation begin to dawn on them. As later events bring a greater insight into God's dealings with them, the Israelites see these more recent happenings as a fuller revelation of what God was already trying to tell them in his earlier interventions in their history. The history of Israel is a progressing revelation, a deepening word of Yahweh, in which earlier stages are types of later happenings, and these in turn are types of actions still to come.⁶

Through the whole life of Israel we find the message of revelation incarnated: in the people's wars and their laws, their family life,

⁴ As an indication of the attention paid recently to the O.T. "theology of the word," cf. J. L. McKenzie, "The Word of God in the Old Testament," *Theological Studies* 21(1960), 183-206. One of the most stimulating discussions of this topic is to be found in A. Neher, *L'essence du prophétisme*, (Paris, 1955), 105-115.

⁵ See the remarks of G. von Rad (*Studies in Deuteronomy*, London, 1953, 74-91) on the principle of historical interpretation utilized in the books of Kings.

⁶ On the deepening understanding of O.T. happenings, see the valuable study of J. Guillet, *Thèmes bibliques* (just recently translated, 1961, under the title *Biblical Themes*).

their political existence, their births and their deaths; incarnated more specifically in those human words which record the sacred traditions of Israel. Basically, the message is quite simple: Yahweh is working to save Israel; but it is the insight into the meaning of this salvation that deepens over the centuries.

Yahweh's creative word is a revealing act, but it is also an irresistible force that is the bearer of Yahweh's intent; and for that reason to understand the meaning of Yahweh's word is to know something of the future, to have wisdom in planning the course of one's life.⁷ In this regard, it is interesting to notice the close association of word with that other mysterious force, Yahweh's spirit.⁸ Those most closely allied with the transmission of the word: Moses, the kings, the prophets were also those upon whom Yahweh's spirit descends. As it were, Yahweh's word is the shaping force, but the moving power that brings action to be is the spirit. But if it is the spirit that provides the dynamism conjoined with the word's function, it is the word alone that makes the spirit's activity intelligible, that gives it shape and definition.

All word bears power, all word of a ruler conveys the force of his will; yet a privileged place is held by that word which is law. If this view is found generally among ancient peoples, it is particularly true of Israel whose life and culture centered so much upon the law given through Moses.⁹ At the inception of their existence as a people, Yahweh had manifested himself as a lawgiver, as a conscious and powerful being showing forth his will to them. Mosaic law is given, not as a restriction on the people's behavior but as a guide; it is a path, and if the people will walk in this way they will come to the land promised them. Involved in the very notion of the law that they possessed was the Israelitic notion of history about which so much has been written these past few years.¹⁰ Even before

⁷ See the polemic in Isaiah 43 against the false gods; in this passage emphasis is laid on the fact that Yahweh alone knows and communicates knowledge of the future.

⁸ Cf. A. Neher, *op. cit.*, 106-7.

⁹ On the role of the Law in Israel's religious history, cf. E. Jacob, *op. cit.*, 220-221; J. Pedersen, *Israel I-II* (Copenhagen, 1954), 382ff.

¹⁰ Cf. J. McKenzie, *The Two-edged Sword* (Milwaukee, 1956), 60-71; also K. Prümm, *Christentum als Neuheitserlebnis* (Freiburg, 1939), 80-84.

the advent of the prophets, Israelitic thought is already essentially eschatological,¹¹ for the law itself was seen in terms of a goal to be attained. Even as late as the final wisdom writings, this finalistic notion of the law still prevailed; for the man who with wisdom planned his life towards a happy fruition was the man who followed the dictates of Yahweh's law (Prov. 2:6-8, Wisdom 6:12ff).

Though the Law was the expression of divine intent, it took the witness of the great prophets to point up the full impact of Yahweh's guidance of Israel.¹² It was they who by their own voice called the people to heed that "call" which had been Israel's heritage even in her patriarchal pre-history (Osee 11:1ff; Isaias 30:8ff; Jer 2:1ff). It was the great prophets and those who, like the Deuteronomic writer, were strongly influenced by prophetic thought who saw the deeper currents of development in human events. It was they who in the vision of faith saw and then witnessed to the irresistible intent of Yahweh to redeem his people through suffering and trial. It was the glory, too, of Israelitic prophetism that it drew attention to the profound dignity of the individual human, even the humblest—actually, it is to the humble remnant, the *anawim*, that the future of Israel will be entrusted, it is for them that Yahweh is preparing his day of salvation (Ezech 34:25ff). If one examines this attitude, one notices that the individual's importance is rooted in his election to a particular destiny which is dependent on his own choice (cf. Jer 31:29-30).

Much attention has been paid to the fact that the prophetic movement in Israel bears witness to an interpretation of Israel's history that clashed openly with the interpretation given it by

¹¹ In view of the widespread dispute on the notion of eschatology (and consequent ambiguity in use of the word), it would be well to state the sense in which this paper will use the word. By *eschatology* we will mean that aspect of historical events (or manner of viewing these events) that points towards a future fulfillment which, being itself a new beginning, will mark the end of the present historical sequence.

See the stimulating remarks of K. Rahner in "Theologische Prinzipien der Hermeneutik eschatologischer Aussagen," *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 82 (1960): 137-158, especially 150.

¹² On the prophetic witness to the historic traditions of Israel, cf. A. Neher, *Amos* (Paris, 1950), 241-250; and more recently, the second volume of G. von Rad's *Theologie des Alten Testaments* (Munich, 1960).

secular-minded rulers and by the sycophantic priests and court prophets who surrounded them.¹³ While the kings of Israel and Judah are at pains to discern and influence the will of the rulers of Assyria or Egypt, the prophets proclaim that the only will that is truly governing events is that of Yahweh (Isaias 45:20-21); and the prophet not only announces that divine intent, his words transmit the power of that intent into the world of men (Jer 1:10). It is in later prophetic thought that a conscious "theology of the word" develops, and along with it a much more profound understanding of the prophetic vocation itself.¹⁴

Prophetic thought is polarized by two events, the Exodus and the Day of the Lord; each prophet estimates the significance of his own historical period by reference to these two events, one past and the other yet to come. The prophet's word is to make ever present to Israel the covenant enacted through Moses, and that same word is already a force tending towards the accomplishment of the Lord's coming in his day.¹⁵ It is an indication of the ambivalence of the prophetic word which, as Jeremias is told, is "to build or to destroy" (Jer 1:10) that the meaning of the "day of the Lord" shifts so drastically from emphasis on destruction in Amos to the proclamation of salvation in the second part of Isaias. Actually, what funnels into this transformation is the whole process of the deepening understanding of Yahweh himself and of the nature of the covenant that he wishes to establish with men. What deepens is the concept of Israel, the significance of salvation, the meaning of Yahweh's intervention in human history. This progressive development in prophetic insight not only indicates that there is an eschatological orientation to Israelitic thought—this there has been from the very beginning; it indicates that an evolution takes place in the very understanding of the *eschata*, the day of the Lord.

As seen by the prophets, the whole course of events that makes

¹³ Cf. G. Quell, *Wahre und falsche Propheten* (Gütersloh, 1952).

¹⁴ See especially Isaias 52-55, where one finds the famous passage on Yahweh's word (Isaias 55:7ff.) almost immediately after the final Servant Song which concretizes the ideal of prophetism in the Messianic figure.

¹⁵ Cf. A. Feuillet, "Isaïe," *Dictionnaire de la Bible, Supplement*, IV, 684-7.

up the history of Israel is a sign, a manifestation, of Yahweh's continuing guidance of his people. Among the elements that enter into this sign, the existence of the prophet himself is one of the principal signs of Yahweh's continued blessing. As long as there are prophets to witness to Yahweh, prophets raised up by Yahweh to bear his word to men, then instruction is not totally lacking in Israel. Only a hasty reflection upon the significance attached to the symbolic actions of Jeremias, or to the marital difficulties of Osee, is needed to realize that the prophet functioned as a "sacrament," a sign of the kind of salvation that Yahweh was effecting in Israel.

Much of the salvific significance of the prophetic movement as well as of the Davidic dynasty flows into the developing Messianic expectancy of Judah.¹⁶ Particularly in the Messianic figure of the Isaian Servant Songs can we find an idealization of the prophetic mission; he who will come in the day of salvation to establish a new covenant will bear the word to all peoples (Is 49:6), will stand as a banner announcing a reign of peace and justice even beyond the bounds of Israel (Is 52:13ff). Or to put it in terms of the question we are discussing: the Servant will be the supreme instrument of the divine redeeming intent (Is 49:2,9), but an instrument whose own characteristics and actions and *words* will flow into the specification of that redemption.

Some years ago we might have had to justify ourselves in moving directly from prophetic to cultic thought, but present-day O.T. studies have tended to indicate the fundamental unity of the traditions in Israel and the close link of prophetism to the Yahwistic shrines.¹⁷ We know much better now how important a role the cult played in the preservation and transmission of the historical recollections of Israel. Actually, that which is most characteristic of Israelitic ritual is the fact that it is essentially commemorative of the interventions of Yahweh in Israel's history; it is this which acts

¹⁶ On Messianism, cf. J. McKenzie, "Messianism and the College Teacher of Sacred Doctrine," *Proceedings of the Society of Catholic College Teachers of Sacred Doctrine* 6 (1960, 34-53.

¹⁷ In this regard, the studies of the Scandinavian Scripture scholars (Mowinkel, Kapelrud, Engnell, et al.), though at times exaggerating the cultic influence, have been of great value.

as a transforming principle in the process of absorbing into Israel's cult many of the natural sacramentalisms found in the religions of surrounding peoples.¹⁸ It is because of this historical dimension of symbolism that there can be a rather broad borrowing of non-historical sacramentalisms, yet the uniqueness of Israel's religion remains inviolable

Israel's sacrificial and festal system is essentially related to the Sinaitic covenant; the great sacrificial feasts not only recall the Exodus experience, they make it possible for each generation of Israel to enter into this continuing relation with Yahweh (Lev 23). Not that the actual practice of religion in Israel always expressed this purity of outlook—indeed much of the prophetic exhortation bore on people's misconception of sacrificial significance (Osee 6:6); but the central current of orthodox O.T. thought not only keeps but develops the covenant significance of the sacrifices.¹⁹ Reflecting as it does the religious mentality of the O.T. people, Israelitic ritual looks not just to the past but ahead to the future realization of Yahweh's promises. This becomes increasingly the case as the Messianic hopes become more developed so that in the later centuries of Jewish worship the cultic act is at once a sign of Yahweh's great deeds of the past, of his continuing support of Israel, and of his promised glorification of his people.²⁰

In a manner somewhat parallel to the prophet's word, the Israelitic liturgy served as Yahweh's word. If the interventions in Israel's history were the great words that Yahweh spoke to his people, then the festal ceremonial that commemorated these interventions continued this process of revelation. Actually, the liturgical celebrations were a most important instrument for the gradual development of

¹⁸ Cf. G. van der Leeuw, *Phänomenologie der Religion*, 368-9; A. Neher, *L'essence du prophétisme*, 145-153.

¹⁹ T. Chary in his *Les prophètes et le culte à partir de l'exil* (Paris, 1955) shows how the whole notion of the covenant dispensation came to be more and more attached to the Temple ritual; see especially his conclusions, 275ff.

²⁰ "La plupart des offices juifs sont liés à la commémoration d'un événement passé, ou à l'attente messianique d'un événement à venir. . . . Ainsi la liturgie juive est, au sein de l'histoire, un des moments privilégiés dans lesquels le temps se perpétue et notre destin s'accomplit." R. Aron, "Réflexions sur la notion du temps dans la liturgie juive," *Maison-Dieu*, n.65 (1961), 19-20.

the people's understanding of the significance of God's actions. Shrine and Temple ceremonial reminded the people of the presence of Yahweh's salvific intent in their midst; but this ceremonial also acted as a specifying cause of that sanctification which God was working in his chosen people. Even if no other evidence existed, the Psalms would bear witness to the way in which Israel's religious aspirations, experience, and categories of thought (particularly in the post-Exilic period) were profoundly marked by the Temple and its liturgy. It is true that the Jewish liturgy did not function sacramentally, in our Christian sense of sacrament; but it would be a serious misunderstanding to make them nothing more than empty occasions of grace, with no effectiveness of their own.²¹

If the events and institutions of the O.T. are the "sacraments" of the divine intent to save mankind and bring it to a supernatural destiny, the redemptive Incarnation fulfills in transcendent fashion this process of revealing Yahweh's redeeming love. Careful reading of the N.T. literature makes it abundantly clear that the primitive Christian community saw that a new epoch had begun:²² the Father had spoken to men his own Word, had sent his own Spirit to work through the humanity of Christ and the mystery of the Church.

To this unparalleled fact the actions of Christ's own public life bear witness in the purest and fullest sense of Israelitic prophetism.²³ Like the great prophets before him, it is not just by his words that Jesus gives testimony to the will of his Father to give life to men, it is above all by what he is and what he does. His very presence among the Jews of his day was—as Matthew points out in relating Christ to the Emmanuel prophecy, and as Luke does by narrating the presentation of the infant Christ²⁴—a sign of a new and active dwelling of God-among-men. It is a coming that restores the true eschatology of the prophetic view; because Christ claims for himself

²¹ *S.T.*, III, 62, 6, ad 3.

²² Cf. W. Kümmel, "Eschatologie im ältesten Urchristentum," *N. T. Studies* 5 (1959), 113-126.

²³ Just as Christ fulfilled the O.T. function of prophetism, so also he fulfilled the role of the Law; cf. G. Söhngen, "Gesetz und Evangelium," *Catholica* 14 (1960), 81-104.

²⁴ Cf. R. Laurentin, *Structure et théologie de Luc I-II* (Paris, 1957), 60-63.

as Son of Man the power and kingdom given the apocalyptic figure in Daniel 7, but claims them as something that is to operate within human history, not just beyond.²⁵ Eternal Wisdom comes actually to live out the wise way of human life, to let men actually see in him the destiny which lies at the end of that way: he who sees me sees the Father (John 13:9).²⁶

It is in this context that the Gospel writers describe the miracles of Christ, and our contemporary reevaluation of the role of miracle is fortunately recovering some of this mentality.²⁷ Christ's extraordinary actions are *signs*, signs that are consciously related (by Jesus and by the faith of the primitive Christian community) to Yahweh's O.T. actions—whether these were worked directly or through some human mediator. Jesus' deeds go beyond those of Moses, or Elias, or David, even beyond the promised deeds of the Messiah; for Jesus is Yahweh fulfilling the process of giving the word of life to men. These signs of Jesus not only speak the *fact* that he is Messiah and God, they speak of the *way* in which the Word become flesh is carrying out the mission given him by the Father. Through Christ, the Spirit is working to overthrow the powers of evil, but it is the humanity of Christ that translates into finite expression the undefined immensity of divine love and power.

What precisely is the role played by the human nature of Jesus in transmitting the divine causal intent? Obviously, whatever it is that Christ as man does in contributing to salvific causality involves his human consciousness and free choice; so we can immediately proceed to a more specific question: what in the area of salvific action is the causality exerted by Christ's human intent?

First of all, it is good to remember that all the human acts

²⁵ Cf. A. Feuillet, "L'exousia du Fils de l'homme," *Recherches de science religieuse* 42 (1954), 161-192; also, G. Ladd, "Eschatology and the Unity of New Testament Theology," *Expository Times* 68 (1956/57), 268-273.

²⁶ In addition to the Wisdom background of Mt. 11, which has been remarked repeatedly, it is interesting to notice the parallels between the book of Wisdom and John's Gospel to which G. Ziener draws attention in "Weisheitsbuch und Johannevangelium," *Biblica* 38 (1957), 396-416.

²⁷ O. Cullmann's works have exerted a key influence in this area, particularly his *Les sacrements dans l'Évangile Johannique* (Paris, 1951). For a good summary volume on miracles that incorporates much of the contemporary reevaluation, cf. L. Monden, *Le miracle signe de salut* (Bruges, 1959).

of thought and love performed by Christ flow from and are the expression of his sanctifying grace which is the *gratia capitis*. Thus there lies behind his human acts, not just the infinite causal principle of his divine Person, but that grace which, being unlimited in its own species, is completely co-extensive with the whole mystery of man's transformation in grace.²⁸ In all giving of grace to men, this unique grace of Christ functions in an instrumental fashion; for this reason all grace is a participation in the grace of Christ and bears as a result a resemblance to Christ.²⁹

However, it would be unbecoming the dignity of Jesus' humanity to think of his grace being utilized by the Trinity as an impersonal force. Christ's nature and the transformation of that nature which was his grace found expression—as it does in all us humans—through the actions of his human powers of activity, themselves supernaturally transformed so that they could be the bearer of this new causal stream. It was, then, the human intent of Jesus to accept his Messianic role, to give up his life so that he could then give new life to men, it was this basic choice (which governed all Christ's acts) that was and is the medium for the divine causality of grace.³⁰

Christ's own conscious finalistic orientation of himself to man's redemption is the instrument that enters into each man's sanctification; and because his human intent does occupy this instrumental role, we can speak of a certain "addition" that it gives to the divine creative activity that flows through it.³¹ Clearly, we are using the word "addition" loosely in this context, because we know that the precise proper effectiveness of such an instrument lies in the area of specification, that is to say, of limitation. What actually happens is that all grace given to men bears not just the specification coming from Christ's grace, but the specification coming from that sacrificial acceptance of death which is the cause of our redemption. We can see that Jesus' acceptance of Calvary is not just a meritorious

²⁸ S.T., III, 8, 5; *Mystici corporis* (America Press) 63-64; M. Schmaus, *Katholische Dogmatik*, 2 (Munich, 1949), 648-652.

²⁹ S.T., III, 7, 11; 8, 5; 56, 2, ad 4; see also, M. Scheeben, *Mysteries*, 625-630.

³⁰ Cf. M. Schmaus, *op. cit.*, 2, 768ff.

³¹ On instrumental role played by Christ's humanity, cf. W. Van Roo, *De Sacramentis in genere* (Rome, 1957), 335-340.

cause of our grace, but an instrumental specifying cause as well.³² Our grace is very profoundly an assimilation to the redemptive mysteries of Christ.

When we return now to a consideration of the "signs" that Christ worked, we can see that they are much more than pedagogical devices, more than a claim to be recognized as Messiah and God. They are, as conscious expressions of Christ's redeeming intent, and culminating in the actions of Holy Week, actually part of the Christian specification of grace.³³ As we shall see in just a moment, Christ purposely introduced into those acts all the religious significances of the O.T. dispensation, so that the specification given grace by the signs of Christ is a recapitulation of all the "words" of God in the centuries prior to the Incarnation. Possessed as he was of beatific vision, Jesus was completely aware of this role and able to catch up into his intent the entire history of the human race.

Intent says more than just knowledge; so we might briefly recall the instrumental function of Christ's human love in the causing of redemption. This love, natural and supernatural, was the intrinsic motive force directing all Christ's activity towards the fulfillment of that cosmic finality described in the beginning of *Ephesians*. Everything in Christ as man was eschatologically oriented by this act of love of his Father and of men. This human love provided a deep and complete dedication of himself to his Father, a dedication that finds expression in the action of sacrifice; and this act flows into our grace and charity which gives us a share in this Christian dedication of our selves and our activity.³⁴ Again, as with Christ's grace and his consciousness, it is not the charity of Christ as an unspecified power that works in our sanctification, it is the charity of Christ expressing itself in his actions of Cenacle, Calvary, and Resurrection that flows into the causation of our grace and our charity.

As a moment's reflection suffices to indicate, this specification of our Christian sanctification by Christ's own sacrificial love points to

³² *S.T.*, III, 48, 6.

³³ It is interesting, too, to recall that all the actions and experiences of Christ "left their mark on him," so that they all flowed into his final act of knowing and loving.

³⁴ Cf. *Mediator Dei* (NCWC), 93-99.

the profound link between sanctity and sacrifice. As preparation for considering this in terms of the Christian sacraments, let us discuss one last area of Christ's own fulfillment of the O.T. eschatology: the *ritual expression* by Jesus of his divine-human intent to save men.

No matter what particular theories one may hold as to the sacrificial nature of the Last Supper and of Christ's death on the cross, it seems beyond question that that which was most important in this redemptive act, that which was most properly redemptive, was Christ's internal attitude of self-giving to his Father and to mankind.³⁵ Not that one would wish to discount the true causal efficacy of the externals of his action; but it was the humanly conscious choice that gave the action its moral specification and therefore made it a meritorious cause; and it was this same conscious choice of Jesus that can and does act as the instrumental exemplary cause of that Christian orientation in us that constitutes our intrinsic redemption.³⁶ This attitude of Jesus, which upon examination is seen to be the internal element of an act of sacrificial worship, links together Cenacle and Calvary in an inseparable unity. Moreover, this sacrificial choice flows on unbroken in the mystery of the risen and ascended Christ, and as long as it exists it possesses a finality directed to the redemption of man and an intrinsic specification coming from the death on Calvary that is the object of the choice.

Ritually expressed in actions whose symbolic richness is so great that centuries of theological investigation will never comprehend it, the redemptive sacrifice of Christ was the goal towards which tended everything else Christ said and did. The Gospels witness to the fact that Jesus and the primitive Christian community saw these events of Holy Week as the *eschata*, as the day of the Lord; everything that is narrated of Christ earlier in the Gospels is preserved by the Evangelists as a means to better understanding the final redemptive act—and its continuation in the Christian sacramental life.³⁷ Care-

³⁵ *S.T.*, III, 48, 1, ad 1.

³⁶ *S.T.*, III, 48, 6; *DB* 799-800.

³⁷ Cf. A. Feuillet, "La synthèse eschatologique de saint Matthieu," *Revue biblique* 56 (1949), 340-364; 57 (1950), 180-211. On the Gospels as "Sacramental catechesis," cf. B. Vawter, "The Johannine Sacramentary," *Theological Studies* 17 (1956), 151-166.

ful examination of the Gospels, Synoptics as well as John, shows that earlier scenes in the public life of Christ are seen as the inchoative stage of that ritual which finds full expression from the Last Supper onwards. All the significance of these earlier events is contained eminently in that which was seen clearly by Christ as their fulfillment; in a sense, we can say that the Supper, death and resurrection of Jesus had a kind of pre-existence in the intrinsic finality contained in these earlier actions—and extending this principle to the realm of Christ's divine causative intention, we can see a pre-existence by way of finality even in the events of the O.T. Already in the Baptism of Christ, in his Transfiguration, in the multiplication of loaves, in the miracle of Cana, there is evidenced Christ's identity as the Servant of Yahweh who is going on to establish the Eucharistic covenant and seal it with his blood, and the externals used by Jesus to express this sacrificial intent are themselves highly symbolic and ritualistic.³⁸ In Luke particularly, the atmosphere of priesthood pervades the narrative, from its first scene of Zachary in the act of sacrifice until the final lines which tell of the Apostles expressing in the Temple their gratitude for the glorification of Jesus.

If the earlier "signs" of Jesus functioned, as we have seen, to reveal the manner in which God is redeeming mankind; this is eminently true of the final stage of Christ's ministry. Not as some detached and neutral meritorious cause does the action of Supper and Calvary and Resurrection bring about our salvation; in all the significances of this three-stage action Christ speaks to us of the kind of salvation that is ours (one of being fed with his life-giving body and consecrated by his sacrificial blood), speaks with a sacramental word that is efficiently operative according to its significances. To know what Christian redemption truly is, one must probe in faith and charity the meaning of that act of sacrifice begun by Jesus in the upper room; the great orthodox traditions of spirituality in the Church have always seen this and have made the redemptive act of Christ a privileged object of contemplation.

Nowhere does Christian eschatology come to richer focus than in this redemptive sacrifice of Christ. This is the long-awaited "day

³⁸ Cf. A. Feuillet, "L'heure de Jésus et le signe de Cana," *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 36 (1960), 5-22.

of the Lord" and the fulfillment of Messianic expectation; this is the end of the O.T. in the triple sense of termination, goal, and fulfillment.³⁹ From one point of view, this is the *eschaton* beyond which nothing else can lie; yet it itself, as a fullness that must flow out to share itself, is ordered finalistically to Christian history and to the life of man with God beyond history. Two aspects of this eschatological orientation might be mentioned. First of all, and quite obviously, the redemptive intent of Jesus that is the abiding internal core of the events from Cenacle to Ascension is a causal orientation to our salvation through grace (Hebr 7:25). Secondly, and less obviously, the externals of Christ's action point in their significances to a fulfillment beyond themselves, a fulfillment which they already contain *in causa*;⁴⁰ for example, to give food which is source of life points to an expected increase of vitality, an increased vitality already somehow contained in the food. Because it contains in its causal fullness all the future development of the Christian mystery, the redemptive sacrifice of Jesus is truly "realized eschatology."

Even among those Scripture scholars whose view of Christ's human consciousness is limited by their rejection of his divine personality, one finds today a more moderate view of the so-called "eschatological" mentality of Christ. Whereas before some tended to see in him a disappointed visionary, now there is increasing recognition that Jesus was aware that a long interval would separate his death and resurrection from the definitive realization of his kingdom, and that he purposely established a religious society to provide for this interval.⁴¹ Along with this has come an increased understanding of the extent to which the primitive Christian community was

³⁹ In the article cited above, G. Söhngen develops this same three-fold relation regarding Christ and the O.T. Law.

⁴⁰ Speaking of the "eschatological time" of the Church, Y. Congar says ("Le sens de l'économie salutaire dans la théologie de S. Thomas d'Aquin," *Festgabe Lortz*, 2, Baden-Baden, 1958, 90): "... le temps de l'Eglise, celui qui s'écoule entre Pâques et la Parousie, est, en somme, caractérisé, de façon bibliquement si juste et satisfaisante, comme celui dans lequel la *cause* des biens célestes ou eschatologiques est déjà posée et active, mais n'a pas encore sorti tous ses effets ou ses fruits." The same might be said of the "eschatological time" of Christ himself.

⁴¹ Cf. O. Cullmann, *The Christology of the New Testament* (Philadelphia, 1959), 43-50.

aware of the abiding presence of Christ in its midst, in the mystery we denominate the Mystical Body, a mystery accomplished by the continuing gift of the Spirit. Thus, the mystery of Resurrection and Ascension does not involve a separation of Christ from his followers, but rather a new and all-pervading, though invisible, presence.⁴² Christ continues to work redemptively, the driving intent to bring true life to men still continues to move Christ in his human activity, and the sign of this salvific intent and its effective presence in our midst is the mystery of the Church. Just as Christ's deeds, his signs, bespoke his saving love during the days of Palestinian ministry, so now the redeeming word he continues to speak is his Church.

This Church, implementing as it does the redeeming love of Christ who is the source of its life, pertains essentially to the risen glory of Christ.⁴³ Semantic studies have pointed out for us that the revealed notion of "God's glory" is inseparably linked with that of salvation.⁴⁴ It is at the great turning points of O.T. salvation history that the *Kebod Yahweh* is manifested, and the later centuries of Jewish thought looked on the abiding of the "glory" in the Temple as the guarantee of God's saving action in Israel (Ezech 10:18,43:1). From the scene of the Presentation onwards, the Gospels point to Christ as the replacement of the Temple and its *Kebod*; and the Church in turn becomes the glory, the salvific manifestation, of the risen Lord who like his Father "works until now" (John 5:17). Throughout her history, Christ purifies and sanctifies the Church, so that without wrinkle or blemish, she can be his glory in the hereafter (Ephesians 5:27)—as a wife is the glory of her husband (Prov 12:4; I Cor 11:7).

But the salvific intent dynamizing the activity of the Church is not just the human redeeming love of Christ; behind that lies the

⁴² Cf. E. Schillebeeckx, "Ascension and Pentecost," *Worship* 35 (1961), 336-363; P. Benoit, "L'Ascension," *Revue biblique* 56 (1949), 161-203.

⁴³ "Le temps de l'Eglise est d'abord et avant tout le temps de la *présence dans l'histoire* du Christ ressuscité." A. Feuillet, "Le temps de l'Eglise d'après le quatrième Evangile et l'Apocalypse," *Maison-Dieu* 65 (1961), 72. See also, F. Durrwell, *The Resurrection* (New York, 1960).

⁴⁴ Cf. G. Kittel and G. von Rad, "doxa," *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum N.T.*, 2, 236-257; A. Ramsey, *The Glory of God and the Transfiguration of Christ* (London, 1949), 9-28.

divine creative will of the eternal Word. He who abides with his own is the Son of God, and as such there is only one adequate way of expressing the love which is his: by the gift of the Holy Spirit. Christ's own public life had been a sacrament of the Spirit's redeeming work among men; yet the fuller messianic manifestation of the Spirit comes with Pentecost when, through the accomplished mysteries of redemption, the Spirit is able to work towards the *aedificatio corporis Christi*.⁴⁵ It is clear that Pentecost is an eschatological event par excellence: the Spirit is sent to build, to form, to develop life. A new creation, a new man, is in process of being achieved; Pentecost is but a beginning, a beginning of something in a sense already accomplished: the rule of human history by the Incarnate Word. It is not accidental that to establish his rule, Christ sends the Spirit who proceeds from his love, for Christ has made it abundantly clear that the very principle of his own redeeming effectiveness is his love—and the same is to be true of his Church. Those who follow Christ are by their love to be signs of his own abiding love, of the abiding among men of the Spirit of his love (I John 3:23-24). The Church is the word of love that Christ speaks to mankind throughout its history, a word of invitation and promise; it is the Church's role to be the sacrament of this love.⁴⁶

That work of redemptive love which Christ continues to carry on in his Church is a priestly one of mediating his own divine life to men. At the very heart of this work, as we will see shortly, is the act of sacrifice; and at the heart of the act of sacrifice is found that which we have made the object of this present paper, the redemptive intent of Christ. To enable his Church to participate this redemptive sacrificial intent, Christ has communicated to his followers that share in his own priestly power that we call the sacramental character. Situated by rather common agreement in the area of operative power, the sacramental character is a germinal assimilation to Christ in his redeeming sacrificial attitude that is meant to come to actuation in the Christian's conscious participation in sacramental life.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Cf. H. Schlier, "Die Einheit der Kirche nach dem N.T.," *Catholica* 14 (1960), 161-177.

⁴⁶ On the eschatological aspect of Christian love, cf. A. Feuillet, in *Maison-Dieu* 65 (1961), 68-9.

⁴⁷ Cf. M. Schmaus, *op. cit.*, 4-1, 120-146; B. Leeming, *Principles of Sacra-*

It is obvious how prominent finality is in the notion of the character: as an operative power it is an orientation to action, and the very action in question is the entry into communion with Christ's salvific intent. Since it is the character that incorporates us into the Mystical Body,⁴⁸ it is clear that Christ's causing of this character in his members gives to his Church an essentially apostolic—or if you will, eschatological—orientation. The causal finalization of the character is directed towards man's two final goals: towards his internal final goal of unending possession of supernatural life in glory, towards his external final goal, the Father, through an act of sacrificial worship in this life and through beatific vision in the next. By virtue of this character, the members of the Church are able to speak the effective words of Christ, to impart his transforming influence to the world in which they are situated, to mediate the finality of the created universe in an act of worship of the Father.⁴⁹ Or, to put it another way, by virtue of the character members of the Church are rendered apt instruments in and through whom Christ can continue those salvific actions he began two thousand years ago, and the precise acts of the Church in which Christ's continuing activity finds highest expression are the sacraments.⁵⁰

It is in the sacraments above all that Christ continues to give witness to the eschatological action of the Trinity in human history. In the Mass is to be found an unparalleled fulfillment of O.T. and N.T. prophetism, for the Eucharistic action is the continuation of Cenacle and Calvary.⁵¹ Through the self-offering of the Last Supper

mental Theology (Westminster, 1956), 228-230; G. Monsegú, "Sacramento, gracia y carácter en la Teología del sacerdocio cristiano," *Miscelánea Comillas* 34-35 (1960), 525-544.

⁴⁸ Cf. E. Doronzo, *De Sacramentis in Genere* (Milwaukee, 1945), 300-307; *Mediator Dei*, 88; Leeming, *op. cit.*, 236.

⁴⁹ *Mediator Dei*, 99-104. Cf. J. Van Camp, "The Sacramental Character," *Theology Digest* 1 (1953), 28-31.

⁵⁰ Cf. C. Vagaggini, *Theological Dimensions of the Liturgy*, 1 (Collegeville, 1959), 74-83.

⁵¹ Most authors—like Durrwell, *The Resurrection*, 144, and C. Spicq, *L'Épître aux Hébreux*, 1, 312—regard passages in Hebrews, such as 9:12, as indicating the perduring nature of Christ's redeeming action. However, A. Vanhoye, "De 'aspectu' oblationis Christ secundum Epistolam ad Hebraeos," *Verbum Domini* 37 (1959), 32-38, insists that such passages point, not to the continuing sacrifice of Christ, but to the uniqueness of this sacrifice as a past and unrepeatable historical event.

and Calvary, when with full consciousness he fulfilled the prophetic vocation as idealized in the Servant of Yahweh, Christ bore unique witness to God's covenant dispensation by establishing a new covenant in his own blood.⁵² St. John's account of the last discourse emphasizes the new finality of this Christian covenant: the peace towards which it was directed, the inheritance promised to those who accepted it, the promised land in which Christ would join his disciples to himself, the force of fraternal charity which would lead them to this goal. Each celebration of the Eucharist, showing forth as it does the death of Christ until he come in final judgment (I Cor 11:26) bears witness to the triumphant and redeeming power of that death by which we gain life. Each celebration of the Eucharist is a step towards that final manifestation of Christ's risen glory that will come at the end of human history.⁵³

Being the continuation of Christ's action of the Cenacle, which in its significances carries us back to the entire history of Israel, the Mass is a recapitulation of all sacred history; and the same is true in somewhat less complete fashion of the other Christian sacraments. The very fact that the sacraments cannot be understood adequately without a wide and deep knowledge of both O.T. and N.T. happenings indicates the extent to which the meaning of Israelitic and Christian history is involved in the sacramental system. However, we must be careful not to miss the depth of this recollection; the sacraments are not simply a reminder of what happened; they catch up into themselves—and this precisely because they are the personal conscious acts of Christ—all the religious reality of those previous stages of salvation history.⁵⁴ Just as in our human knowing, each

⁵² See p. 22 in my article "Synoptic Presentation of the Eucharist as Covenant Sacrifice," *Theological Studies* 21 (1960).

⁵³ "Dazu ist heute auch wieder klarer geworden, welche eschatologische Dynamik und Tendenz in den Sakramenten der Kirche, ja in der Kirche selber wirksam ist. Sie stellen nicht bloss das Leben der Kirche dar, sie vollenden sich auch durch sie zu ihrer ewigen und herrlichen Gestalt, zum Reiche Gottes." A. Winkhofer, *Das Kommen seines Reiches* (Frankfurt, 1959), 8.

⁵⁴ One might here raise the question of the *Mysterientheologie*, which this paper makes no attempt to evaluate. For good reviews of recent developments in this matter, one could consult J. Gaillard, *Revue Thomiste* 57 (1957), 510-551; or J. Grotz, *Geist und Leben* 28 (1955), 381-386. Perhaps the most important recent contribution to the understanding (or interpretation) of Casel's

experience is conditioned by everything we have known previously and, in a sense, our latest experience is the fullest because drawing on everything before it; so the celebration of the Eucharistic sacrifice is day by day, the fullest expression up to that point of the redemptive mystery of Christ.⁵⁵

In the sacraments Christ still speaks to us of the *Magnalia Dei* which found their fulfillment in him and of the "signs" he worked to prepare for the understanding of the sacraments; but the word he speaks is not just an explaining word, it is an effecting word.⁵⁶ The sacramental word that Christ speaks through the voice of his Church bears witness to the presence of his redeeming act in human history;⁵⁷ not only bears witness, it forms part of that redeeming act, for this sacramental word (and we use this to signify the entire sacramental action which finds its supernatural specification in those words that are the "form of the sacrament") is the bearer of Christ's divine and human intent.⁵⁸ Thus, the sacraments are the key actions—conjoined actions of God and man—in what is the last period of salvation history, in the march of the new man in Christ towards unending glory.

thought was Dom Wegenaer's *Heilsgegenwart* (Münster, 1958) which tried to correlate the position of Casel with the sacramental theology of St. Thomas Aquinas.

K. Rahner, *op. cit.*, 144, has some interesting remarks on the need of anamnesis in human consciousness: "Anamnese und Prognose gehören zu den unausweichlichen Existentialien des Menschen . . . Der Mensch hat sich selbst, verfügt über sich selbst, versteht sich selbst, indem und dadurch, dass er anamnetisch seine Vergangenheit behält und prognostisch die ausständige Zukunft schon anwesen lässt."

⁵⁵ See E. Mersch's stimulating discussion of this aspect of Christ's death: *The Theology of the Mystical Body* (St. Louis, 1952), 264-270 and 278-296.

⁵⁶ "Das wirksame Wort der Messe ist also als Verkündigung des Todes Christi das Urkerygma." K. Rahner, "Wort und Eucharistie," *Aktuelle Fragen zur Eucharistie* (Munich, 1960), 51.

⁵⁷ See the interesting contrast between sacramental history and the Marxist notion of time in J.-Y. Calvez, *La pensée de Karl Marx* (Paris, 1956), 599-600.

Pertinent also to the notion of Christ's redeeming act present in history is Karl Rahner's re-examination of the notion of *opus operatum*, in the article cited just above ("Wort und Eucharistie"), 30-37.

⁵⁸ "Das Wort der Verkündigung ist die wirksame, die Sache selbst herstellende Proklamation der verkündigten Gnade selbst, ist wirklich Wort des Lebens, schöpferisches Wort Gottes." K. Rahner, "Wort und Eucharistie," 21.

That mankind will reach this glory is absolutely assured by the presence in the sacramental acts of Christ's redeeming love. This human love, revealed as present by the sacramental actions, is itself the sacrament of the creative divine love that is operating to transform man supernaturally. The very nature of God demands that this divine love work to draw men to God as their final end; reason can tell us this. Christ's redeeming love in the Church is a sign of something sublimely greater: man has been offered the gift of the divine Persons in friendship; it is their fidelity as lovers that is in question and that is attested to in the Christian sacraments. Since it is this divine love that is the dynamic power at the source of all creation, natural and supernatural, its operative presence in the sacraments is the unshakable foundation of Christian hope. Only man's free acceptance is needed to complement this love, so that it can work out man's divinization; and in the sacramental context this condition is fulfilled, for the human part of the sacramental action is free response in an act of love. The loving union of man with God in the sacraments is actually the beginning, and therefore the promise, of the unending life of union, which is man's destiny.⁵⁹

Not only Christ's word and love in the sacraments make of them a witness to the divine action directing mankind towards supernatural fulfillment; the very presence of Christ in his risen state in the sacraments means that these actions, at least partially, are already *eschata*.⁶⁰ Christian sacraments are actions both of Christ and of his Church: as actions of the Church they are limited by all the restriction of the temporal process, and their enactment can be a progressively more intelligent and meaningful process as the Church

⁵⁹ Commenting on the text of Apoc. 3:20 ("Behold I stand at the door and knock . . ."), Cerfaux-Cambier write: "Le banquet eschatologique est anticipé dans les joies mystiques que les chrétiens peuvent goûter dès maintenant, dans leurs rapports avec le Christ, dans la liturgie." *L'Apocalypse de saint Jean lue aux chrétiens* (Paris, 1955), 39.

⁶⁰ "Gott hat uns die Möglichkeit gegeben, schon während unseres Leben in dieser Zeit in die göttliche Gegenwart und das ewige Heute einzutreten. Möglich ist es uns durch die Kultmysterien. Da gibt es auch für uns nicht Vergangenheit und Zukunft, sondern nur Gegenwart. Was in der Geschichte schon vorbei ist, z.B. der Tod des Herrn, und was noch nicht da ist, z.B. die Parusie Christi, wird im Mysterium Gegenwart." O. Casel, *Das christliche Kultmysterium* (4th edit., edited by B. Neunheuser, Regensburg, 1960), 174.

matures in faith and charity and moves towards its fulfillment beyond history; as actions of the risen Christ the sacraments are already beyond the limiting influences of time, for in Christ himself there is nothing to be achieved, he is already present to the goal of human history because he is himself that goal both as God and as man. In the sacraments we find a rich exemplification of that "realized eschatology" of which we have already spoken. More importantly, we find the key to understanding somewhat the relation of time to eternity, a problem that has vexed human thought throughout the centuries.⁶¹

Earlier in the paper we spoke of the interesting process by which O.T. thought incorporated into itself the religious significances of natural religions and transformed them in doing so; and we then saw later that a similar process takes place in Christ's transformation of O.T. significances. This progressive transformation of the meaning of the world and man's existence is one of the key elements in a Christian understanding of evolution or in the development of a theology of history. It is intrinsically bound up with the institution of the sacraments, which in turn play their role as the focus of the gradually unfolding significance of history.

What interests us here is that it is Christ himself who, working in the sacraments, directs this process of transformation towards the last day when all mankind will see in final judgment the true meaning of man.⁶² There are two levels to this transforming influence of Christ. In so far as he, the Incarnate Word, reveals himself ever more fully and as he gathers the significances of all creation into himself and speaks of them to the Father, he communicates to creation a constantly deepening *Christological* meaning. In so far as he accomplishes this in and through his Mystical Body, which has its own proper though derivative causation, Christ adds the *ecclesiastical* dimension to the significance of human history. It is not just Christ that is the principle of interpreting God's action in

⁶¹ See the provocative remarks of Karl Rahner in "Zur Hermeneutik eschatologischer Aussagen," *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 82 (1960), 155-6, on the need to clarify our theory of knowledge regarding revealed eschatological realities.

⁶² This is the causal correlative to the epistemological principle that Rahner enunciates (p. 155 in the article just cited): ". . . Christus selbst das hermeneutische Prinzip aller eschatologischen Aussagen ist."

history; it is Christ in the continuing mystery of the Church.⁶³

This double transformation takes place supremely in the sacraments which as actions of Christ and actions of the Church are signs of the nature of Christ and of the Church, signs of the role each is playing in the redemption of mankind. Nor is this transformation a static reality, accomplished once and for all when Christ instituted his Church; as the Church moves through history, each succeeding step in the advance of man is given its ultimate significance because the Church of men absorbs into its transforming sacramental life all the deeper consciousness of himself that man has gained, and because the Church then goes out again to men with this transformed understanding so that it can be the root of still further advance.⁶⁴

However, we must not think of this sacramental transformation as a mere natural advance in understanding human life, as something that is quite clear and comprehensible. Such a transformed meaning of life pertains to the vision of faith; for the action of Christ in the sacraments is not mere instruction about the deeper meaning of life.⁶⁵ The sacraments cause what they signify;⁶⁶ Christ in his Church actually is engaged in a progressive supernatural transformation not just of individuals but of man's social existence; and the sacraments are the Christ-Church actions that cause this transformation significantly.⁶⁷

⁶³ ". . . the Church is not only the first of the works of the sanctifying Spirit, but also that which includes, conditions and absorbs all the rest. The entire process of salvation is worked out in her; indeed, it is identified with her." H. de Lubac, *The Splendour of the Church* (New York, 1956), 24; see also the entire chapter 6 ("The Sacrament of Christ," 147ff.).

⁶⁴ "Le seul moyen de rendre présent symboliquement à l'homme immergé dans le flux du temps, l'éternel présent du Christ comme Plénitude de l'histoire embrassant tous les temps, c'est de représenter le Mystère du Christ comme passé, présent et futur." C.-J. Geffré, "Les Sacrements et le temps," *Maison-Dieu* 65 (1961), 102.

⁶⁵ Cf. K. Rahner, "Wort und Eucharistie," 9, 26.

⁶⁶ On origin of this classic dictum, cf. D. Van den Eynde, *Les définitions des Sacrements pendant la première période de la théologie scolastique* (Rome, 1950), 61-3. For a study of its understanding at Trent, cf. D. Iturrioz, *La definición del Concilio de Trento sobre la causalidad de los sacramentos* (Madrid, 1951).

⁶⁷ Cf. H. Urs von Balthasar, "Die Implikationen des Wortes," *Catholica* 13 (1959), 50-64. On the key role of St. Augustine in highlighting this ecclesiastical aspect of sacrament, cf. L. Villette, *Foi et Sacrement*, 1 (Paris, 1959), 325-6.

We can make a mistake in excluding from the significance of the sacraments the interior consciousness of the Church and treating the sacraments as things rather than as personal actions. Schillebeeckx has drawn attention to the *signifying* as the heart of sacramental act;⁶⁸ and in this perspective, whose truth can scarcely be disputed, the deeper the understanding possessed by the Church of the significance of the sacraments (indeed, of the entire Christian mystery) the deeper will be the signifying action performed by Christ through the mediation of his Church. Our task in the Church is to be leaven, imparting a transforming and life-giving influence to human life; the new meaning we communicate in the sacraments is not just the meaning of ourselves as the Church but the meaning of Christ himself, and the extent to which we communicate the meaning of the one and the other is necessarily dependent upon the level of our understanding. The sacraments are the word that Christ speaks and they are simultaneously the word of the Church. This is a word of life, and the life caused by this word will be richer as the word of the Church itself is more meaningful.

If growth in understanding of the Christian mystery is required so that sacraments cause more deeply, the sacraments themselves exist to provide this growth; for they are not only the expression of the Church's faith knowledge, they are the object of that faith. In the experience of the sacramental acts, the Church comes into concrete contact with all the mysteries of revelation; it is here that the Church is meant to gain existential knowledge of the divine persons whose acts the sacraments are, existential understanding of the Incarnation's redemptive fulfillment that is being accomplished in the sacraments, existential insight into itself as it becomes aware of what it is doing in the sacramental acts of redemptive worship.⁶⁹ As a man comes to know his own personal being by observing those acts of cognition and appetition that are proper to him as man, so the Church comes to deeper understanding of that mystery which

⁶⁸ E. Schillebeeckx, *De sacramentele heilseconomie* (Antwerpen 'T Groeit, 1952), 395-402; see also G. Smit (who draws much from Schillebeeckx), "Epiclèse et théologie des sacrements," *Mélanges de science religieuse* 15 (1958), 131-2.

⁶⁹ Cf. E. Schillebeeckx, "The sacraments: an encounter with God," *Theology Digest* 8 (1960), 117-121.

she is by faith experience of her own proper actions, the sacraments. In the consciousness of being redemptively loved by Christ, the Church becomes aware of her own proper role as the "redeemed." In the experience of offering the supreme sacrifice in union with Christ, the Church comes to know her own priestly dignity and vocation, comes to discover the profound role she is meant to play in mediating divine truth and divine love to men.⁷⁰ It is in the Mass alone that man can discover the true nature of religion and therefore the true meaning of man.

It would be interesting to pursue this line of thought, to show the central role that religious tenets and practices play in human cultures, and to point to the reciprocal influence of sacraments and culture. This would be a study all by itself, one that would involve a theology of man's imagination.

We have seen, then, how Judaeo-Christian revelation tells us of the divine intent at work in human history, specified and described by the whole course of O.T. events and religious expression, incarnated in the mystery of the Word become flesh, expressed and implemented by his redeeming actions, finally carrying on through Christ's continuing actions in the Christian sacraments. In this process the human intent of the Church is the instrument of the human intent of Christ which is in turn the instrument of the divine creative intent; the sacramental words that the Church uses to express this intent are the words that Christ is speaking through his Church, and are also the words that the Father is speaking to men in his Son. It is above all in the Eucharistic sacrifice that the Christian community encounters the Word that the Father is speaking to it and through it; but it is also in the Mass that the Christian community speaks the Word back to the Father in worship. This is the concluding point this paper will discuss, for it is this response of worship that is the last link in the eschatological orientation of the Christian sacraments.

With a depth of meaning to which we (who speak of "receiving the sacraments") are unaccustomed, the early centuries of the

⁷⁰ In this context, one might profitably refer to contemporary discussion on "tradition," as e.g. W. Burghardt in his paper to the 1951 convention of the C.T.S.A. (cf. *Proceedings* 6 (1951), 42-75, especially 66-69).

Church looked upon the sacramental actions as professions of faith in the God of revelation.⁷¹ Today, with the added interest in the sacramental character and in the sacrificial nature of the Eucharist, we are again awakening to the sacraments as acts of acknowledging the Fatherhood of God. In this protestation of Christian faith, the sacramental actions serve as the word of worship for the individual Christian and for the Church as a whole; in the sacramental word the human personality finds fullest expression, and the Church fulfills its principal purpose for existing.⁷² But the richness of the Church's sacramental worship is increased immeasurably by the fact that it is Christ himself, standing in the midst of his brethren and joining them to himself, who is the chief agent of the sacramental praise of the Father. If his human intent was directed to the redemption of men, it was directed still more ultimately to praise of the Father; and Christ's intent operative in the Church still bears that finality.

In the task of assimilating his own worshipful attitude to that of Christ in the sacramental actions lies the Christian's most profound application of the Apostle's exhortation, "Put on Christ Jesus" (Romans 13:14). That human mentality of Jesus which the Gospels portray, a mentality that in deep mystery participates in the filial orientation proper to Christ as second Person of the Trinity, is the exemplar and goal of Christian virtue. But more than that, as we already saw, this human attitude of Christ that expresses both his priesthood and his grace, is itself an instrumental cause effecting the Church's sacramental act of worship.⁷³ Through the attitude of sacrificial worship which animates the Christian in his sacramental actions flows Christ's own attitude; and it is this latter that communicates to our Christian sacramental activity its priestly efficacy. Conversely, there is a certain dependence of Christ upon his Church in that the historical manifestation of Christ's worship of the Father is conditioned by the extent to which awareness and

⁷¹ Cf. L. Villette, *op. cit.*

⁷² Cf. J. Gaillard, "Les sacrements de la foi," *Revue Thomiste* 59 (1959), 5-31. Also, O. Semmelroth, "Personalismus und Sakramentalismus," *Theologie in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (Festgabe M. Schmaus, Munich, 1957), 199-218; and R. Egenter, "Das persönliche Opfer des Christen in seinem eucharistischen Bezug," *Pro Mundi Vita* (Munich, 1960), 294-310.

⁷³ Cf. *Mediator Dei* (NCWC), 76-81.

sincere worship characterize the Christian community's sacramental action.⁷⁴ Just as the Church's signifying action does have a genuine effect in the causation of grace, so also does it have a true efficacy proper to itself in the unique Christian act of worship. Christian contemplative effort to probe into and to conform to the mind of Christ should be oriented to the sacramental actions in which the Christian identifies his attitude towards man and God with that of Christ.

If the Christian community in each succeeding stage of human history thus joins its acknowledgment of the Father with Christ's sacrificial acknowledgment, there results a profound consecration of the entire historical process.⁷⁵ Caught up into the lives and experiences of Christians, the otherwise disordered and unintelligible events of human living fall under the influence of an ultimate finality. As the objects of man's knowing and as the goods that man employs to develop himself humanly and supernaturally, even the sub-personal creatures become part of the Christian reference of human life to God the Father. In the sacraments, then, occurs that fulfillment of creation's finality to which the "Per ipsum" of the Eucharistic action refers. In the sacraments Christ is working to reorder, to redeem, man and all creation through man. As the Church moves through history, this process of Christ revealing and effecting his redemptive intent gradually unfolds until it attains to its realization in the final stage of eschatological fulfillment. Until that happens, our Christian sacramental life will remain not only anamnesis and presence but also promise: *Recolitur memoria passionis eius, mens impletur gratia, et futurae gloriae pignus nobis datur.*

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⁷⁴ On the Church's role in the act of sacrificial worship, cf. G. Söll, "Das Priestertum der Kirche," *Theologie in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, 181-198.

⁷⁵ Cf. W. Dürig, "Die Eucharistie als Sinn-Bild der Consecration mundi," *Münchener theologische Zeitschrift* 10 (1959), 283-288.